



The Wines and Wine Regions of Washington

Presented by:

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The Wine of Washington

- Washington State has emerged as a powerhouse in American winemaking, producing high-quality wines that compete on the global stage.
- With a unique blend of diverse climates, soils, and passionate winemakers, the state's wine industry has evolved rapidly over the last few decades.
- The combination of a distinctive terroir, wide varietal range, and dedicated vintners has made Washington a destination for wine lovers.



A Brief History of Washington Wine

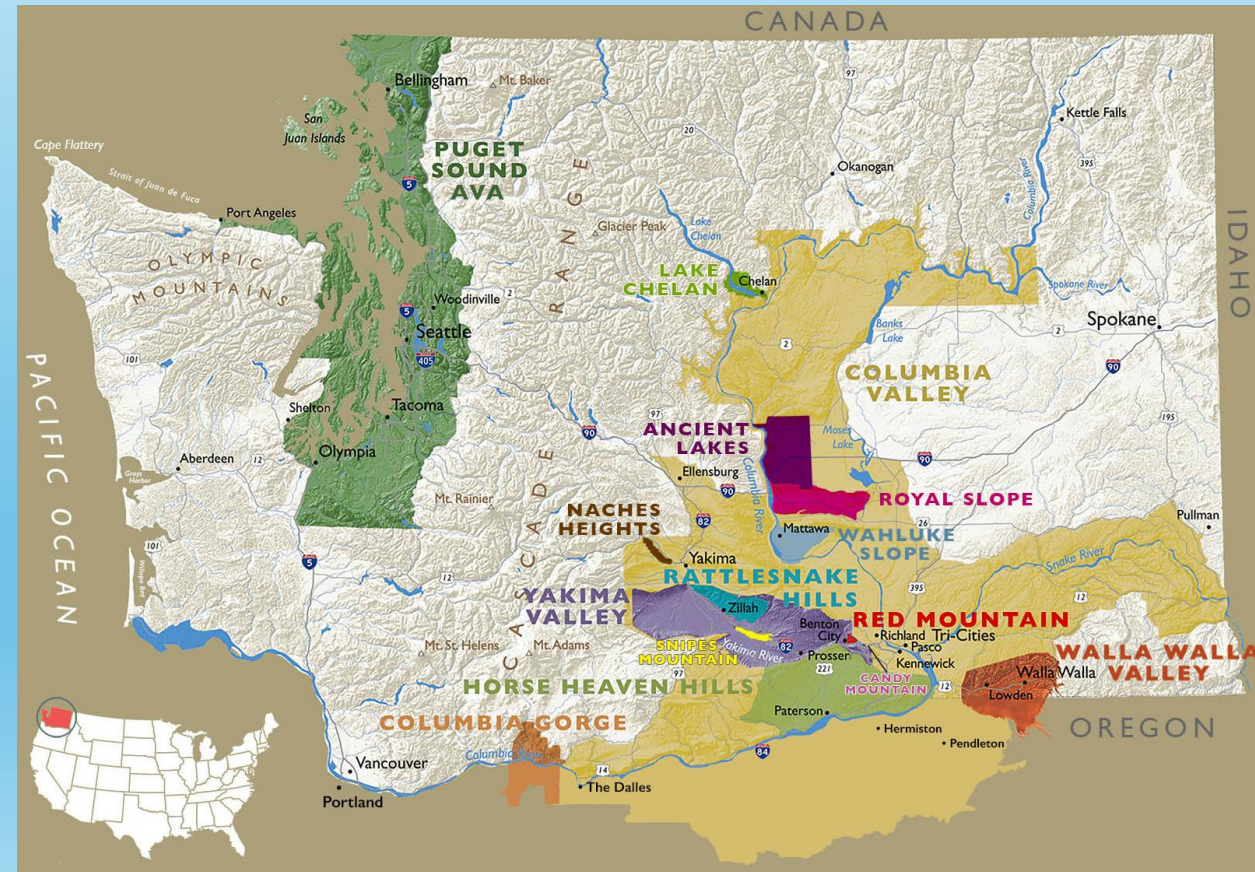
- Washington's wine story began in the late 19th century when European immigrants planted the first grapevines in the region.
- However, the industry didn't gain significant traction until the 1960s when pioneers like **Chateau Ste. Michelle** and **Leonetti Cellars** laid the foundations of the modern Washington



- In the 1970s and 1980s, these early winemakers experimented with various grape varieties, learning how Washington's distinct climate could shape the character of their wines.
- By the 1990s, Washington's wine industry had exploded, with many small, boutique wineries cropping up alongside larger commercial operations.
- Today, Washington is the second-largest wine producer in the United States, second only to California, with over 1,000 wineries and 60,000 acres under vine.

Washington's Wine Regions

- Washington's vineyards are primarily located on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountains, benefiting from the rain shadow effect, which creates dry, sunny conditions perfect for viticulture.
- The state is divided into several **American Viticultural Areas (AVAs)**, each with unique characteristics.
- American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) are designated wine grape-growing regions in the United States, recognized for their unique geographic features, climate, and soil characteristics that influence wine production.
- Each AVA has distinct boundaries, and wines to be labeled with a specific AVA, at least 85% of the grapes must come from that area.



Columbia Valley AVA



- The largest AVA in Washington, covering a third of the state's landmass, the Columbia Valley is home to more than 99% of Washington's vineyard acreage.
- It includes many sub-AVAs such as Yakima Valley, Walla Walla Valley, and Red Mountain.
- Columbia Valley benefits from long, sunny days and cool nights, which contribute to wines with both fruit-forward flavors and balanced acidity.

Signature Varietals:

- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** Known for rich flavors of blackcurrant, cedar, and ripe tannins.
- **Merlot:** Washington Merlot is lush and fruit-driven, often with notes of dark cherries and chocolate.
- **Chardonnay:** Crisp and clean, often showcasing apple, pear, and subtle oak notes.

Columbia Valley Notable Wineries

- **Chateau Ste. Michelle:** One of the oldest and most significant producers in Washington.
- Ste. Michelle Wine Estates has grown to a collection of distinctive wine estates, each allowed to explore to the fullest extent the unique growing conditions and individual winemaking practices that give the wines from these estates their extraordinary character.
- It was founded as the American Wine Growers in 1954 by the merger of two companies that were set up following the repeal of Prohibition in the 1930s: the National Wine Company and the Pomerelle Wine Company.
- Before the merger, the National Wine Company had planted *Vitis vinifera* grapes in the Columbia Valley.
- However it was legendary winemaker Andre Tchelistcheff, as a consultant, who introduced higher quality *vinifera* wines in 1967. These were produced under the name Ste. Michelle Vintners and the first wines released were Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Semillon and Grenache.



Columbia Valley Notable Wineries

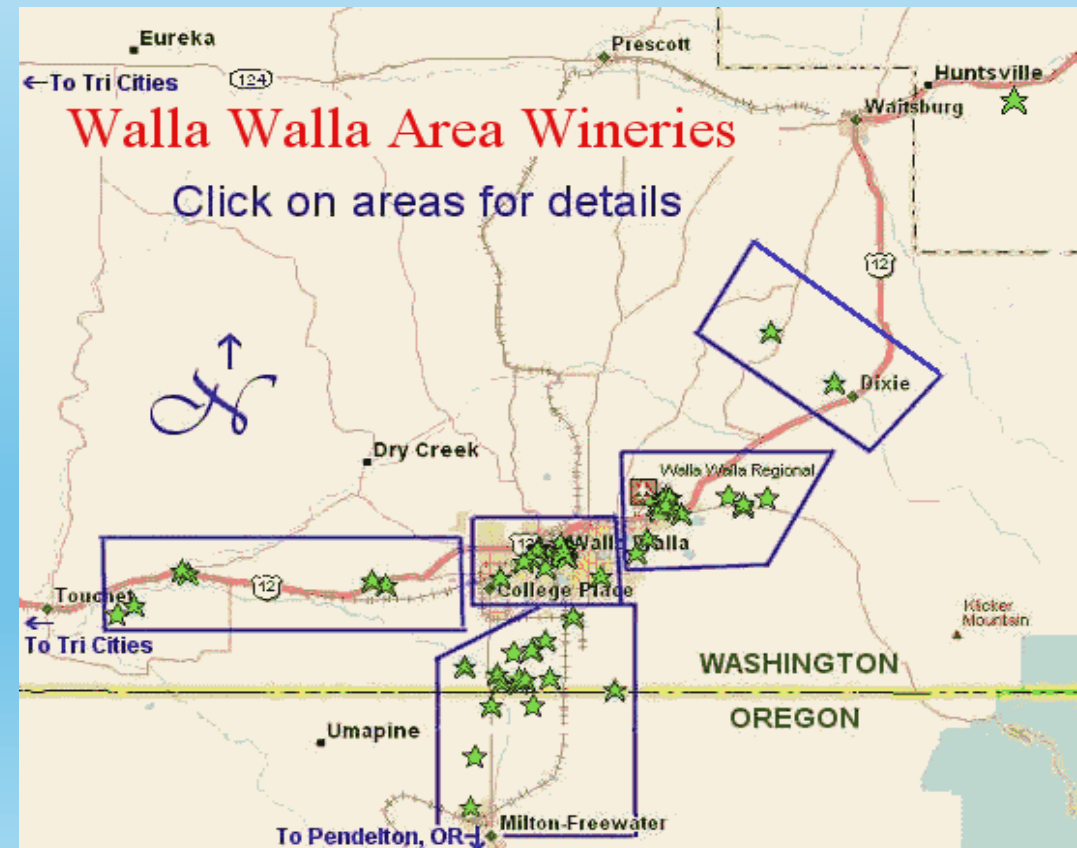
- **Chateau Ste. Michelle:** The winery continues to grow in stature and in 1974 Groundbreaking begins for Chateau Ste. Michelle in Woodinville, which will become the Company's headquarters.
- The business has grown considerably since its beginnings, entering into several partnerships and acquisitions.



- Columbia Crest Winery opened in 1983 as a second Washington label, and Ste. Michelle bought Erath in Oregon in 2006.
- In 1995, the company formed a partnership with Antinori to make luxury Cabernet Sauvignon under the label Col Solare.
- Then in 1999, Ste. Michelle began to make Eroica, a high-quality Riesling from the Columbia Valley with Ernst Loosen.

Walla Walla Valley AVA

- Nestled on the southeastern border with Oregon, Walla Walla Valley is one of Washington's most prestigious wine regions. The valley's unique terroir is influenced by riverbanks, fertile loess soils, and varying elevations.
- **Signature Varietals:**
 - **Syrah:** Walla Walla Syrah is bold, complex, and peppery, often with a smoky, savory character.
 - **Cabernet Sauvignon:** High-quality, age-worthy Cabernet with notes of black fruits, tobacco, and leather.



Walla Walla Valley Notable Wineries



Pepper Bridge Winery: Specializes in Bordeaux varietals, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

- Owned and operated by three families, the winery is a leader in quality winemaking, innovative technology and vineyard development.
- For over twenty years their hard work and dedication to the Walla Walla Valley has helped define it as one of the great wine regions of the world.
- The winery received a Top Family Winery award along with Top 100 Winery worldwide award in (2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2021, 2023)

Walla Walla Valley Notable Wineries

- **L'Ecole No 41:** One of the oldest wineries in the region, producing a range of red and white wines with a focus on elegance and structure.
- It is a third-generation, family-owned artisan winery located in the historic Frenchtown School depicted on their label.
- Founded in 1983, they are the third oldest winery in the Walla Walla Valley. They have become one of the most prominent and visible Walla Walla Valley wineries with national and international distribution.
- *Wine & Spirits Magazine* gave **L'Ecole No 41** a Top 100 Winery of the Year seventeen times.
- **Their 2021 Ferguson Vineyard Estate Red Received a 94 Rating – Price \$75**

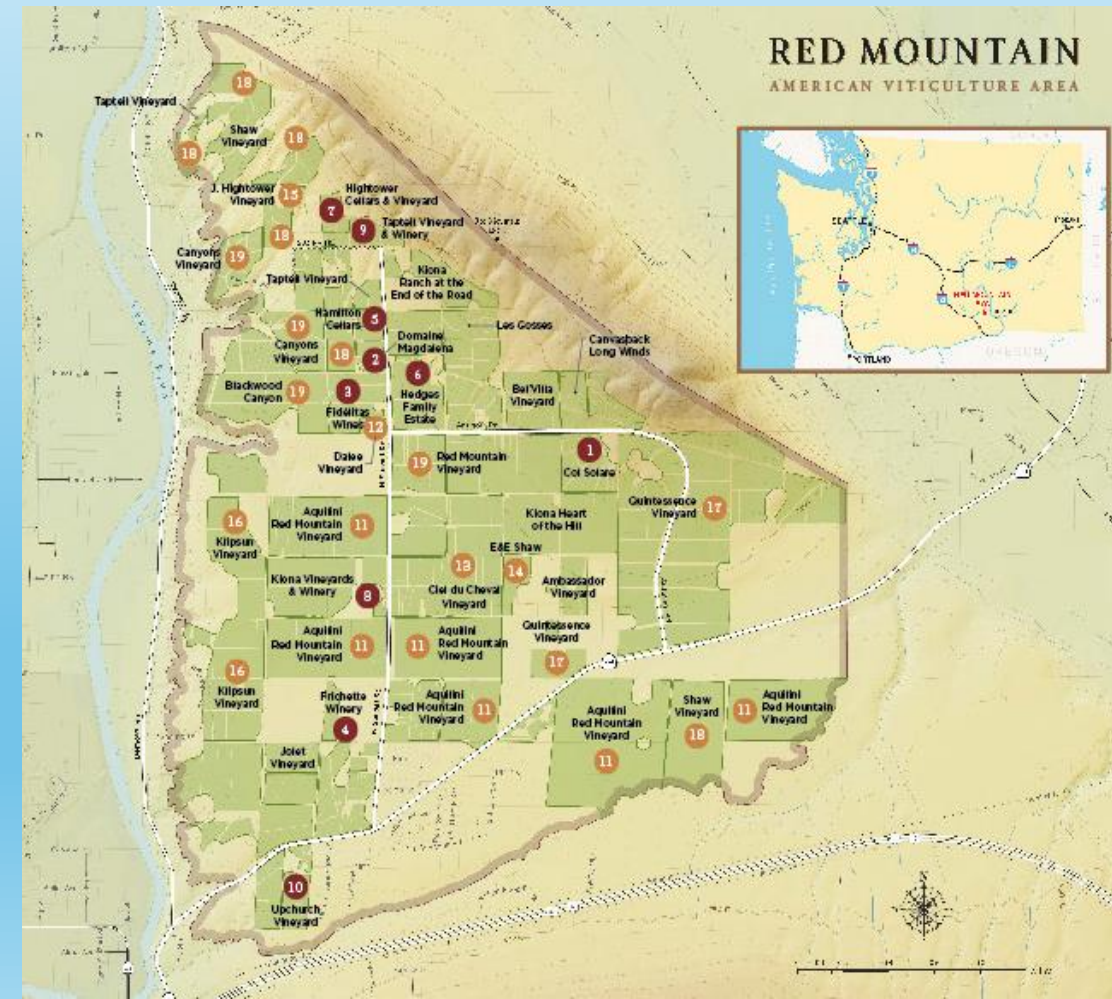


Red Mountain AVA

- Red Mountain is a premier wine region in southeast Washington known for world class Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot and other varieties. The first vines were planted in 1975, and the AVA is now home to many of the state's most celebrated vineyards. Red Mountain wines have intensity, power and elegance.
- Red Mountain, one of the warmest AVAs in the state, is known for producing intense, bold red wines.
- Its southwest-facing slopes and gravelly soils offer optimal conditions for ripening grapes.

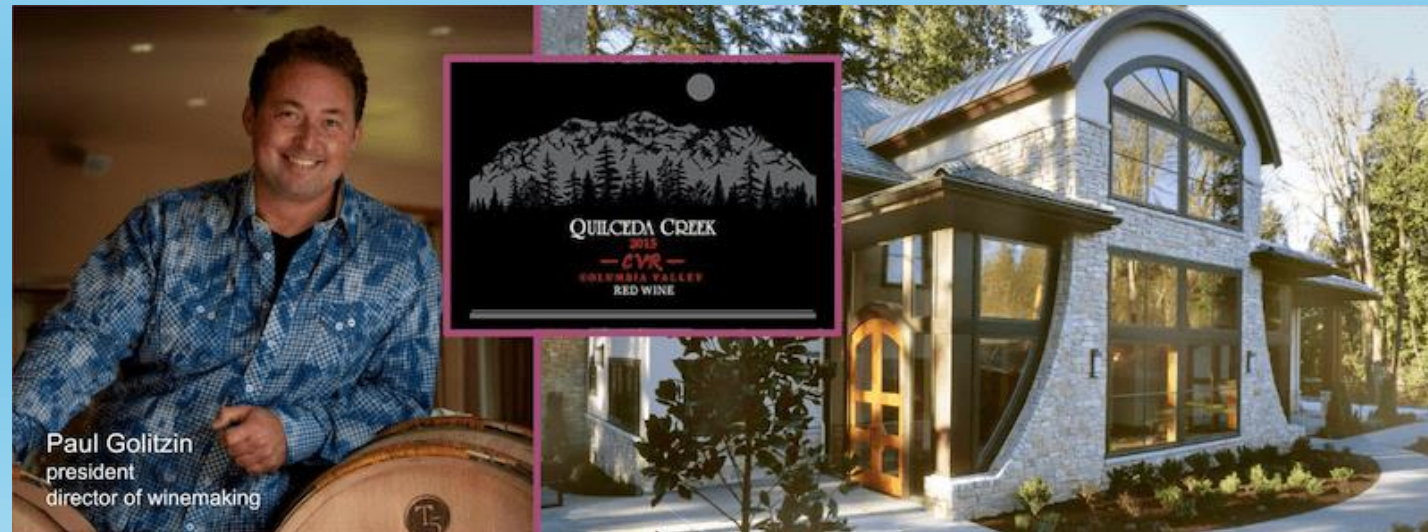
Signature Varietals:

- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** Wines are structured, tannic, and full-bodied with intense black fruit and mineral notes.
- **Merlot:** Deep and concentrated, often with dark plum and mocha flavors.



Red Mountain Notable Wineries

- **Quilceda Creek:** One of Washington's most acclaimed wineries, producing consistently high-scoring Cabernet Sauvignons.
- Quilceda Creek is a quiet, unassuming winery making evocative, world-class cult wines in the desert, almost steppe-like conditions of Washington State.
- in 2006, Quilceda Creek became the first domestic winery outside of California to receive a 100-point score from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate.
- Indeed, Quilceda Creek's Cabernet Sauvignon has received more 100-point scores by Robert Parker than any other North American winery, five flawless vintages to be exact.
- Founders, Alex and Jeannette Golitzin, started making wine in 1979 but the family legacy of winemaking reaches as far back as Russian Czar Nicholas (he is a descendant of Prince Lev Sergeevich Galitzine, the acclaimed winemaker to the Tzar).



Red Mountain Notable Wineries



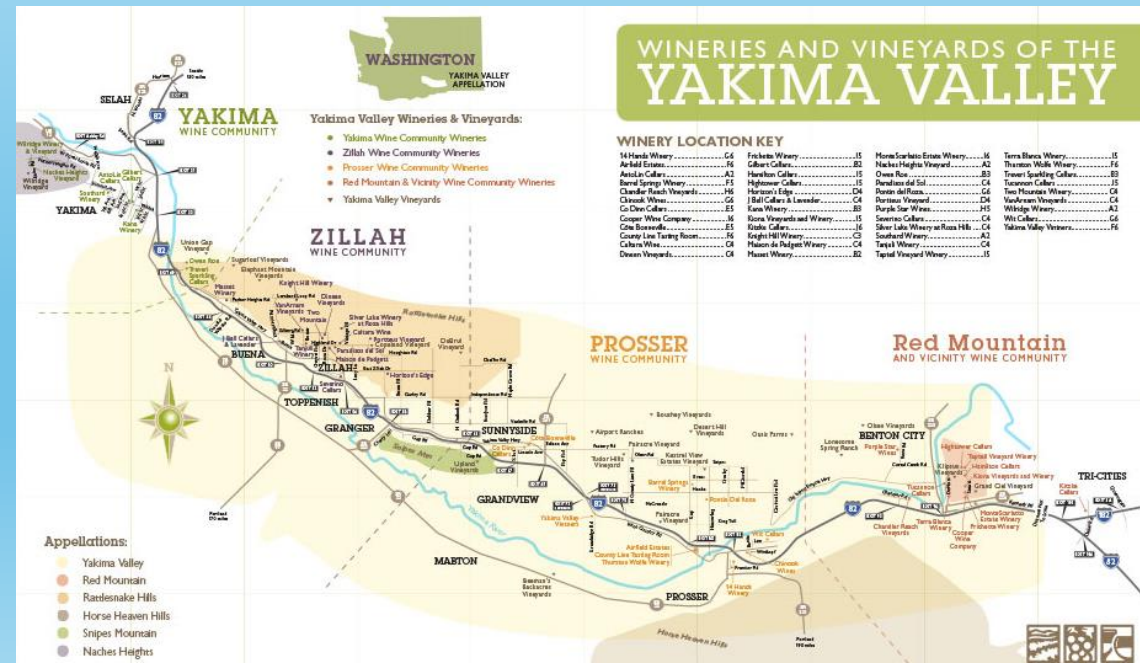
- **Hedges Family Estate:** Located in the famed Red Mountain AVA of Washington State and a leader in biodynamic and organic farming Hedges Family Estate is located in a beautiful French-inspired winery.
- When Pete Hedges, longtime winemaker for Hedges Family Estate, decided to retire, the family kept the winery all in the family by promoting Sarah Goedhart to head winemaker.
- Goedhart, daughter of founders Tom and Anne-Marie Hedges, came to work at the Red Mountain winery in 2005, creating a job for herself as gardener and cook. Just before the 2006 harvest, she moved into the cellar – where she has remained ever since.
- They use pure farming and time-honored wine-making techniques to produce French style red wines.
- Known for its exceptional Bordeaux blends, particularly its iconic Red Mountain red wines including Shiraz/Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Malbec.

Yakima Valley AVA

- The Yakima Valley AVA is Washington's oldest federally approved grape-growing region. It is home to almost a third of the state's planted acreage.
- The Yakima Valley VA, established in 1983, and it remains a critical hub of the state's wine industry. Its varied climate and soils allow for a broad range of grape varieties to thrive, from cool-climate whites to bold reds.
- A French winemaker from Alsace-Lorraine named Charles Schanno is credited with planting the first vines in the area in 1869 purchased from vineyards in Oregon and the Fort Vancouver.
- Yakima Acreage Under Vine: 18,924 acres
Main Varietals include: Riesling, Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon
Soils: Deep silt-loam over basalt bedrock and gravel

Signature Varietals:

- **Riesling:** Known for its crisp acidity and vibrant citrus and stone fruit flavors.
- **Chardonnay:** Often unoaked, with bright fruit flavors and refreshing acidity.



Yakima Valley Notable Wineries

- **Kiona Vineyards and Winery:** A family-owned estate known for its rich, bold reds, especially Lemberger, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.
- The Williams family planted its first Lemberger in 1976, thanks in no small part to Walter Clore, viewed by many as “the father of Washington” who brought the red grape into Washington from British Columbia in the 1940s.
- Kiona Vineyards & Winery produces more than 4,000 cases of Lemberger per year – which might just be more than anyone else in the country.



Yakima Valley Notable Wineries

- **Owen Roe Winery:** Produces elegant, cool-climate reds like Syrah and Cabernet Franc with depth and finesse.

Horse Heaven Hills AVA

- South of the Columbia Valley, Horse Heaven Hills is one of Washington's most productive and consistent AVAs. The region's steady winds and well-draining soils help produce highly structured wines.

Signature Varietals:

- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** Wines from Horse Heaven Hills are balanced, with bright acidity, structured tannins, and bold flavors.
- **Merlot:** Known for its silky texture and flavors of ripe red berries, chocolate, and earth.

Horse Heaven Hills Notable Wineries

- **Col Solare:** A collaboration between Chateau Ste. Michelle and the renowned Italian winery Antinori, focused on premium Cabernet Sauvignon.

Horse Heaven Hills Notable Wineries

- **Canoe Ridge Vineyard:** Produces refined wines with excellent aging potential, especially Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Washington's Terroir

Washington's terroir is incredibly diverse, influenced by several natural factors:

- **Climate:** The eastern half of Washington enjoys hot, dry summers and cold winters, ideal for growing a wide range of grapes. The diurnal temperature variation—hot days followed by cool nights—helps preserve acidity while allowing for optimal ripening.
- **Soil:** The soils in Washington's vineyards are primarily volcanic in origin, with a mix of sand, silt, and loam. The region also benefited from ancient floods (the Missoula Floods), which deposited fertile topsoil across much of the area, giving the vines a unique minerality.
- **Rain Shadow Effect:** The Cascade Mountains block much of the moisture from the Pacific Ocean, creating arid conditions perfect for growing grapes. The Columbia River also provides an additional water source for irrigation, ensuring steady growth.

Washington's Best-Known Varietals

- While Washington produces a wide range of varietals, a few have become signature grapes of the state:
- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** Known for its rich, bold profile with dark fruit flavors and strong tannins, Washington Cabernets are some of the most acclaimed in the world.
- **Syrah:** Especially from regions like Walla Walla and Yakima Valley, Washington Syrah often has savory notes of smoked meat, olives, and blackberries.
- **Merlot:** Once considered secondary to Cabernet Sauvignon, Washington Merlot has gained a strong reputation for its plush, fruit-forward style and smooth tannins.
- **Riesling:** Washington Rieslings are some of the finest in the U.S., offering crisp acidity and fresh fruit flavors, often with a touch of residual sweetness.

Conclusion

- Washington State has established itself as a leading wine region, offering a diverse portfolio of wines that reflect its unique terroir.
- From the sun-drenched vineyards of Columbia Valley to the cool, elevated sites of Yakima Valley and the robust, full-bodied wines of Red Mountain, Washington's wine regions each contribute to the state's reputation for excellence.
- Whether you're exploring a rich Cabernet Sauvignon or a crisp Riesling, Washington wines deliver a distinctive and memorable experience.

Acknowledgement

My seminars are the result of many years of experience combined with many hours of research over the internet.

I would like to acknowledge the many source I have accessed.

These include Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast, BKWine Magazine, Wine & Spirits Magazine, American Vineyard Magazine, The Grapevine Magazine, Wikipedia.com, Britannica.com, and the various Government websites.

Referances

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"Washington State Wine." Washington State Wine Commission. Accessed September 2024. www.washingtonwine.org