

# Wines of Oregon

From Blueberry Supreme  
to  
Voodoo Vintners



Lucia Volk, PhD & CWE  
SWEbinar on April 20, 2019

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- Wine educator with Mindfulvine.com
- Professor at San Francisco State U.
- Researcher of the lesser known German *Anbaugebiete*
- Presenter at the next SWE Conference in Washington DC 😊



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## What we will cover today:

- 1) Fun Facts
- 2) Quick Look at Oregon's AVAs
- 3) Some Oregon Wine History
- 4) Climate and Geography
- 5) Oregon Producers to know
- 6) Conclusion: Keeping Oregon weird

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### 1) Fun Facts about Oregon

- it may be only the 4<sup>th</sup> largest wine-producing state in the US with about 33,995 acres
- but it is #1 grower of Christmas trees in the United States!
- it is the "greenest" grape-growing and winemaking region in the United States
- according to Monty Waldin, Oregon produces the highest percentage of certified organic and Demeter certified grapes
- Georg Riedel created a special glass just for the enjoyment of Oregon Pinot Noir

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a)



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### Fun facts, continued

- since 2011, Oregon has an Official State Soil!



For a list of all existing US State Soils: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_U.S.\\_state\\_soils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_soils)

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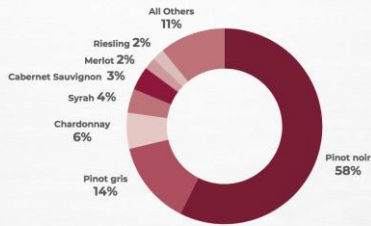
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Pinot noir is the predominant variety grown in Oregon; however, the state's diversity of geography and microclimates make it well-suited to many different varieties.



72 varieties of wine grapes are grown in Oregon  
but 70 have to contend for 28% of the total...

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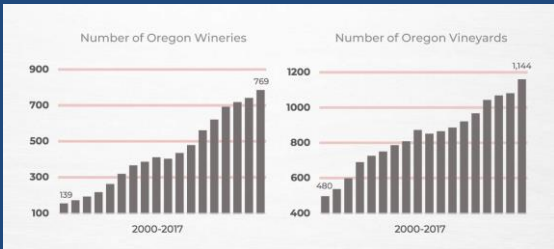
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### Continuously expanding region




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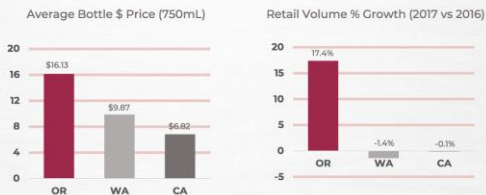
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### Compared with its neighbors...

Small-production wines made from hand-picked fruit are worth a little more... and consumers around the U.S. agree.




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## More Wine Stats

- OR produces only 1% of U.S. wine, yet in 2015 and 2016, it earned 20% of Wine Spectator's 90+ ratings for domestic wine
- 70% of OR wineries make 5,000 cases or less
- 69% of OR wine is produced in Willamette Valley; 24% in Southern Oregon
- 19 AVAs as of 2019

Stats in this presentation come from the Oregon Wine Board: <https://www.oregonwine.org/>

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## 2) Oregon's AVAs

- Willamette Valley (1984)  
 → Sub-AVAs:  
 Yamhill-Carlton (2004)  
 Ribbon Ridge (2005)  
 Dundee Hills (2005)  
 McMinnville (2005)  
 Eola-Amity Hills (2006)  
 Chehalem Mountains (2006)  
 Van Duzer Corridor (2018)




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### Southern Oregon AVA (2005)

- Umpqua Valley (1984)
  - Red Hill Douglas County (2005)
  - Elkton Oregon AVA (2013)
- Rogue Valley (1991)
  - Applegate Valley (2001)

### Oregon's "shared AVAs"

- Columbia Gorge (2004), Columbia Valley (1984), incl. Walla Walla (1984) (w/Washington)
- + The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater (2015) inside Walla Walla on the OR side
- Snake River Valley (2007) (w/Idaho)

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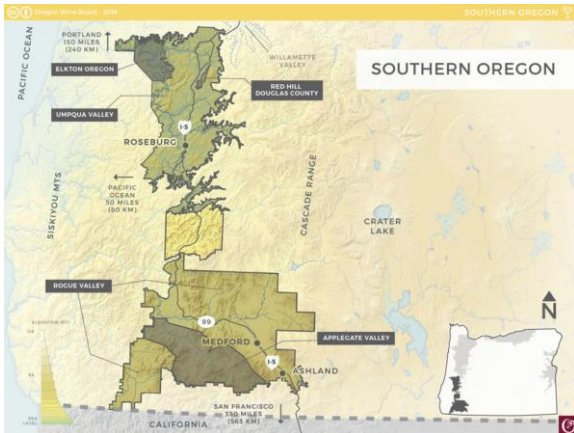
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### 3) Wine History

- 19<sup>th</sup> century: no Spanish missionary grapes, no Italian settlers, but *Germans* who planted vineyards on their farms.
- 1933-1965 Doerner Winery in Roseburg, OR



Adam Doerner

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## More OR Wine History

- In 1938, there were 28 wineries in Oregon producing over a million gallons of fruit and berry wines.
- Only Honeywood Winery in Salem has survived, which makes it the oldest continuously operating winery in the state.




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## OR Pioneers I

- 1961 *Richard Sommer* plants Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir at HillCrest Winery (bonded 1963) in Umpqua Valley
  - 1965 *Charles Coury* plants Alsace varieties in Forest Grove, west of Portland
  - 1966 *David Lett* plants Pinot Noir near Dundee; his first Eyrle Vineyard release: 1970
- All 3 men were trained at UC Davis, and wanted to prove their professors wrong.

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## OR Pinoneers II

- Richard and Nancy Ponzi (1970)
- David and Ginny Adelsheim (1971)
- Susan Sokol and William Blosser (1971)
- Richard Erath (1972/1968)

The pioneers lobbied county planning committees to protect designated farmland from residential growth (1973 Senate Bill 100) and established the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. That is why we have all those vineyard areas today, rather than urban sprawl.

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### Some more OR history

1977 The Oregon Wine Grower's Association decides that a varietal wine must contain 90% of that variety (rather than 75%)

1979 Wine Olympiade organized by GaultMillau in Paris had 330 wines from 33 countries participate: 2 OR Pinot Noirs outscored top Burgundy wines

1980 Robert Drouhin organized a rematch in Beaune: his 1959 Chambolle-Musigny is first, in second place is Eyrie Vineyard 1975 South Block Reserve Pinot Noir

1987 Drouhin buys 225-acre property in Dundee Hills

1987 First Annual International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville

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### Still more History

- The 1990s saw an inflow of CA investors-- Benton-Lane Winery, Pine Ridge Winery, William Hill, Tony Soter, etc.
- In 1991, aircraft electronics mogul Ed King Jr. from Kansas City bought 600 acres outside Eugene and built Oregon's largest winery. Now at 1,033 acres, King Estate has been Demeter certified since 2016 and remains family owned and operated.

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## Current Trends: Green, Greener, Greenest

- Six certification programs operate in OR
  - Demeter
  - LIVE (low input viticulture & enology)
  - Oregon Certified Sustainable Wine (2008)
  - Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (1974)
  - Salmon-Safe (1995) to eliminate run-off/erosion
  - VINEA (Winegrowers’ Sustainable Trust)

In 2013, 12% of OR grapes were grown organically; compare with 2.5% in WA (2011) and 4% in CA (2011) [*Oxford Companion to Wine*]

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## 4) Climate and Geography

- West of Cascades, exposed to ocean influence
- Mild winters, wet summers
- Vineyard elevation between 250-750 feet
- No frost problems, but possible heat-stress OR rot/fungus or underripeness
- Annual rainfall of up to 80 inches, thanks to the Pineapple Express (moist air from Hawaii) between October and June, followed by 100 days of sunshine during the growing season

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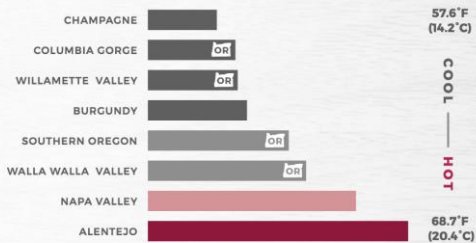
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AVERAGE GROWING SEASON TEMPERATURE °F (°C)




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## Soils

- Volcanic
  - lava eruptions as long as 15 million years ago covered much of the Northwest with basalt
- Marine-Sedimentary
  - former ocean sea floor; lifted by collision of tectonic plates that formed the Coastal Range and Cascade Mountains
- Loess
  - Youngest and shallowest of soil types; fine silt that was deposited by wind and erosion on Willamette hillsides about 1 million years ago

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## Soils

- Main Volcanic Soil Type: JORY
  - high in clay and iron, sufficiently water-retentive and nutrient-rich, but not overly fertile
- Main Marine-Sedimentary Type: WILLAKENZIE
  - super-dry, chalky, difficult soil that needs fertilizing and that forces roots to go deep
- Main Loess Type: LAURELWOOD
  - fertile soil, but well-draining; erodes easily and therefore needs good soil management

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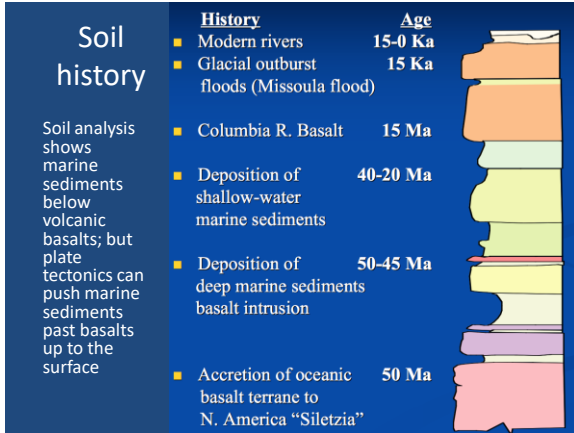
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Source: <https://elkcove.com/event/soil-seminar/>




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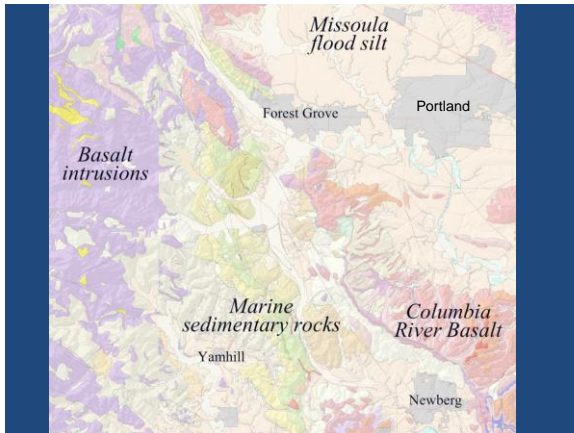
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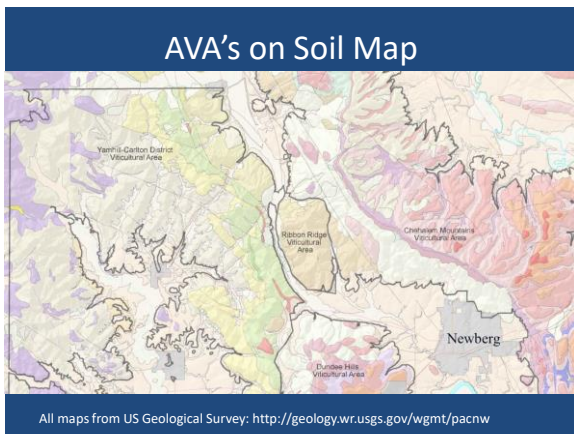
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### Soils and Flavor Profile

- JORY
  - lighter in color, aromas across the red fruit spectrum, fragrant; lighter tannins, higher acid
- WILLAKENZIE
  - deeper color, black-fruit aromas, more pronounced tannins, likes some time in bottle
- LAURELWOOD
  - lighter in color, bright red fruit, yet earthy, with white pepper on the finish; lighter tannins, higher acid

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### Soils and representative AVAs

- JORY
  - **Dundee Hills**, most uniformly volcanic AVA in a mini-rain shadow, which keeps AVA a bit dryer than surroundings; David Lett first to plant here
- WILLAKENZIE
  - **Ribbon Ridge**, most uniformly sedimentary AVA, island-like character is shielded from extreme weather; Brick House and Beaux Frères operate here
- LAURELWOOD
  - Can be found in **Chehalem Mountains** which also features the other two soil types; Dick Erath set up shop here in 1968

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### 5) Oregon Producers to know



Richard Sommer, in the 1960s  
"Father of the Oregon Wine Industry"



David "Papa Pinot" Lett, circa 1970

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### And here are some Voodoo Vintners:

- Jimi Brooks started his winery in the Amity Hills in 1998
- Biodynamic since 2002




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Brooks Winery grows Riesling in 15 different vineyard locations, resulting in several single vineyard bottlings (dry, medium dry, medium sweet) as well as blends, sparkling Riesling, and dessert wines (sweet). According to Ass't Winemaker Claire Jarreau, they will make 25 Rieslings this season!




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### Moe Momtazi of Maysara Winery

- McMinnville AVA
- Moe was born in Iran and fled to the US after the 1979 Revolution
- via engineering in TX and truss-production in GA to wine-making in OR in 1997
- embraced biodynamic practices after course with Andrew Lorand: it all reminded him of how his grandfather had farmed back in Iran




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### Tahmiene Momtazi

- Winemaker at Maysara since 2007, the year Maysara became a Demeter Certified Biodynamic® Winery
- Graduated from OSU in Food Science and Fermentation Science and worked for Kim Crawford in New Zealand for a year
- Wants to continue working biodynamically




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### Michael Etzel (Ribbon Ridge)



- Bought Beaux Frères property, a pig and dairy farm, in 1986 with brother-in-law Robert Parker, Jr.
- After working several harvests for Ponzi Winery, Etzel started bottling his own
- Beaux Frères is managed following biodynamic principles

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### Barbara and Bill Steele of Cowhorn Winery & Garden (Applegate AVA)

- Bought dairy farm in 2002 and farmed biodynamically from the beginning
- Produce an annual 4,500 cases of Rhone blends on 25 acres
- Also sell 7,000 pounds of asparagus a year




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### Conclusions: Keep OR weird

Bo, of  
Cowhorn  
Vineyard  
& Garden



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### Whole Cluster Riesling, anyone?



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### Mix it up!!

- 2017 Brooks Amycas blends Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Muscat, Gewürztraminer, and Pinot Gris



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## “Mad Scientist” Jason Lett

- ferments identical grape juice in separate tanks “listening” to jazz vs. Gregorian chanting-> wines ferment and taste differently!
- 2008 Pinot Gris Original Vine Rose
  - From original vines planted in 1965
  - 100% skin fermentation
  - 3 years on lees



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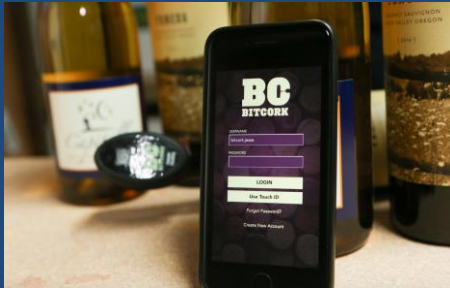
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Any restaurant that runs out of a bottle of wine a customer wants, can order one...



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...and Bitcork promptly delivers the item from its warehouse to the restaurant...



Eugene-based entrepreneurs Todd Edman, Jesse Ralston, and Justin Bloom in their warehouse.

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... via bike courier, solving the on-demand sale/as-needed delivery problem!!



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### Questions? Comments?

- Feel free to reach out to me with questions or comments at lv@mindfulvine.com.
- Hope to meet you in person in August in DC at the next SWE Wine Conference!!

Thank you for joining the Oregon SWEbinar today!!!

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### Main Sources

Cole, Katherine. *Voodoo Vintners: Oregon's Astonishing Biodynamic Winegrowers* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011)

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