Wine Country REINVENTED

Wine regions are transforming themselves and expanding the wine varieties they grow

WRITTEN BY **CASEY HATFIELD-CHIOTTI**



Corollary Wines



Amaterra Winery

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMATERRA WINERY, BY JOSH PARTEE | OPPOSITE PAGE COURTESY OF COROLLARY WINES, BY LESTER TSAI

Residents in the West are spoiled with a plethora of top-notch wine regions to explore, from the verdant Willamette Valley with its elegant pinot noirs and mineral chardonnays to the arid and high-elevation Snake River Valley in Idaho where robust red varietals thrive. Not prone to rest on its laurels, this vast area offers fresh styles and grape varietals to taste, restaurants reimagining wine-country dining and new events celebrating the determination, hard work and creativity of winemaking. There's never been a better time to plan a wine country getaway in these five distinct regions.

Oregon

WILLAMETTE VALLEY: SPARKLING WINE AND NEW BOUTIQUE INNS

While Argyle Winery has been making sparkling wine since the 1980s, a new crop of makers have realized that the area's cool climate can produce world-class wines. In Eola-Amity Hills, Corollary Wines opened a tasting room, designed with an angular aesthetic and bright red paint, on top of a hill in 2024. Visitors can make an appointment to taste terroir-driven bubbles from the ginger-laced



The Walls Vineyard



Alexana Winery

Namaste Blanc De Blancs—100% chardonnay from a vineyard that doesn't always ripen for still wine—to the 2021 Momtazi Carbonic Rosé made using a fermentation process that brings out the fruit and lowers the tannins.

At independent wine brand Arabilis, husband-and-wife team Kenny and Allison McMahon's goal is to produce sparkling wine on par with top grower-producers in Champagne, France. "We will never be Dom Perignon, but we could be like Guillaume Doyard of Domaine Doyard," said Kenny. The McMahon's believe carbonation should only accent flavors and aromas, and their 2021 Willamette Valley Brut Nature is clean and light, featuring zesty tropical fruit and floral notes.

The hotel landscape is also undergoing a refresh, with the Allison Inn and Spa debuting updated interiors and the opening of the Inn at Dayton in May 2025. However, the most notable new offering is the Grange Estate adjacent to the Four Graces Winery in Dundee. Guests retreat to Oregon-inspired suites featuring tiled fireplaces and views of vineyards and rolling hills. The ground-floor common space—featuring a coffee bar, Chesterfield sofas and an open fireplace—is a light-filled area to plan the day's adventures. Make a reservation for a lively 10-course tasting menu at Anthology, the property's communal dining concept. Guests watch chefs Chase Williams, a James Beard Award nominee, and Zack Ehrlich prepare seasonal dishes, such as a beet topped with caviar and octopus brined with capers made from underripe chardonnay grapes.

ROGUE VALLEY: THE CHAMELEON

During its 150-year history, Southern Oregon's Rogue Valley has remained highly experimental, producing a diverse range of wines, from excellent chardonnay to pinot gris, and Italian varietals to Iberian wines. At the Applegate Valley winery Quady North, visitors can try a varied portfolio that includes Rhône varietals and a dash of France's Loire Valley. The full-bodied Steelhead Run Vineyard Viognier has notes of stone fruit but a mineral backbone, while its Cabernet Franc is structured and smoky.

Set in the foothills outside Jacksonville, DANCIN Vineyards transports guests to Europe with its Tuscan architecture and Burgundy-style pinots. Crisp, complex chardonnays shine, and visitors can pair wood-fired pizzas with award-winning Rogue Valley Barbera. Just 15 minutes away, wine lovers can try an inky malbec or an acidic yet creamy sauvignon blanc at the 26-acre Padigan estate vineyard.

To experience the diversity this hardworking region has to offer, visitors should watch for the date and plan to attend SAVOR Southern Oregon, an annual summer event celebrating local wineries. Wine enthusiasts can participate in tasting events and wine education courses. See *savorsouthernoregon.com*.

PHOTO TOP COURTESY OF THE WALLS VINEYARD, BY JAKE PARRISH



Grange Estate

TUALATIN VALLEY: THE WINE AND DESIGN GETAWAY HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Where wineries sit side by side with hazelnut and wheat farms, the Tualatin Valley—technically the northern part of the Willamette Valley AVA—is more homespun. "The person behind the counter is going to be the winemaker or the son-in-law or the wife of the vineyard manager," said Alloro Vineyard's owner David Nemarnik. The region is conveniently located within 30 minutes of Portland.

Surrounded by grape vines and an old-growth forest, Alloro's stone tasting house is a well-kept local secret. Inspired by Nemarnik's Italian and Croatian heritage, Alloro produces food-friendly wines, including pinot noir and a pale pink Bianco di Nero, a perfect companion to Thanksgiving turkey. Nemarnik notes that the Tualatin Valley's Laurelwood District and Chehalem Mountains AVAs are rich in minerals and iron, lending the wines a distinctive terroir. He has also been experimenting with Italian varieties, including arneis and nebbiolo.

Just minutes from downtown Portland, Amaterra Winery has an organic, modern tasting room, with a vaulted wood ceiling. Locals and visitors toast with a delicate pinot gris laced with lemon rind and peach while taking in panoramic views of the West Hills' tree-covered slopes. The winery utilizes a signature gravity-flow winemaking system and is best known for its cool-climate pinots.

Visitors can turn their Tualatin Valley escape into a getaway by staying at Sosta House, an inn and winery on a historic vineyard site with bocce courts and wine dinners that change with the seasons.

Washington

WALLA WALLA VALLEY: WHERE RHÔNE VARIETALS ARE FLOURISHING

Stay in Walla Walla to sip at its more than 40 tasting rooms within downtown, then explore. With basalt stones similar to those found in France's Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Rocks District of Milton-Freewater AVA (technically in Oregon) is bringing new attention to the Walla Walla Valley. Doubleback, Force Majeure and Spanish winery Valdemar Estates have all recently purchased land or existing vineyards. The region produces singular stony syrah and celebrated its 10-year anniversary as an AVA with an inaugural Basalt Bash in July.

Sip on ruggedly elegant PÁŠXA wines, such as the citrusy and salty PÁŠXA Rockgarden Syrah, at The Walls Vineyards tasting room and winery located a few minutes from Walla Walla's historic Main Street. Tastings of its label entirely devoted to Rocks District Rhône varieties are by appointment in The Walls terracotta Balsamroot Room,



Alloro Vineyard

and tastings of a rotating selection of The Walls wines are offered to those walking in. To see the Rocks District first hand, visitors can book a vineyard tour appointment at the Rotie Rocks Estate, where owner and winemaker Sean Boyd has a passion for French-style Rhône blends.

Fresh off an extensive renovation in 2024, the historic Marcus Whitman Hotel is once again the grandest place for travelers to rest within 150 miles, boasting a meticulously preserved Italian Renaissance-style lobby adorned in jewel tones.

Idaho

SNAKE RIVER VALLEY: THE UP-AND-COMING HIGH DESERT WINE HEAVEN

Sharing a latitude with Spain's Rioja region, Idaho's Snake River Valley AVA offers a particularly ideal climate for producing the medium-bodied Spanish varietal. Some of the best wineries for tempranillo tasting are on the Sunnyslope Wine Trail 30 minutes from Boise.

Founded in 1987, the estate vineyards surrounding Sawtooth Winery were once pastures owned by early settlers. Sawtooth's 2022 Trout Series Tempranillo boasts an aroma of tobacco and deep red fruit flavors. Thirty minutes away, visitors can sample award-winning tempranillo at small producer Vizcaya Winery. Made with grapes from five estate-grown clones, this food-friendly wine offers notes of pomegranate and cherry, complemented by a smooth finish. Just outside Boise, winemaker Melanie Krause of Cinder Wines collaborates with Snake River Valley vineyards to craft a briny Cinder Tempranillo layered with licorice and leather.

The date has already been set for the next Savor Idaho event at the Idaho Botanical Garden, June 7, 2026. The daylong celebration of Idaho wine features over 30 wineries and cideries, live music, charcuterie boards for preorder and a VIP hour, including exclusive pairing experiences and wine pours.

Don't Miss:

20 YEARS OF DUNDEE HILLS AVA

Nearly 60 years ago, the first vines were planted in Dundee Hills to help establish Oregon's Willamette Valley as a renowned wine country. Today the region is exploding with around 100 vineyards, and to celebrate the fruits of the growers' labor, Alexana Winery is hosting a Roots and Reserves wine-tasting event on October 25. Ticket holders can taste a wide variety of reds, whites and library offerings poured by winemakers who take pride in their craft. In addition to exploring a taste of the AVA, guests will enjoy food provided by one of Dundee's finest restaurants,Trellis.

Casey Hatfield-Chiotti is an Oregon-based travel writer and editor with a passion for food, wine and hotels. She has covered hotel openings, dining trends and outdoor adventure for The New York Times, Forbes, Travel + Leisure, Sunset, Afar, Marin Living *and more.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLORO VINEYARD

ADD YOUR TEEN TODAY
(It's on us!)

Make sure your kids are protected, even when you're not around. Add your 16-19 year old to your AAA membership, and they'll be covered for their **first year at no charge**.

Add your teens to AAA today
AAA.COM/ADDATEEN
800.564.6222

HERE FOR YOU

Must be 16-19 years old when added as an associate member to the membership. Offer valid within the AAA Oregon/Idaho coverage area, which includes Oregon and the southern 34 counties of Idaho only. Promo code: **2030**