



WINE YAKIMA VALLEY

AN ASSOCIATION OF GROWERS AND WINERIES

Yakima Valley Wine Country History

As the oldest and largest wine growing region in Washington State, Yakima Valley has a rich history in producing grapes that attract winemakers from around the world. Today, over half of all Washington State wines include grapes that have been grown to greatness over the past 25 years.

Early Years – Washington’s Wine History Begins Here

There is evidence that wine grapes were planted in the upper Yakima Valley as early as 1868. However, it was in 1914 when a Seattle-area lawyer, W.B. Bridgman, planted his first vineyard in Yakima Valley that the region would begin to take off. Shortly after, wine grapes were planted in the Sunnyside area in 1917, and vineyards began to spring up around the region.

The next chapter of Yakima Valley wine history started in 1937 when Dr. Walter Clore began his career at the Washington State University Research Station near Prosser. Clore started experimenting with wine grape growing and, as they say, the rest is history. In 1964 the fruits of Clore’s labor were realized when the Washington Wine Project, led by Charles Nagel, made wine from grapes grown by Clore in the Yakima Valley.

The Recent Years

On May 4, 1983 Yakima Valley was recognized as the first appellation in Washington State. Since then, the region has gained recognition as a premiere wine-growing region, not only in the Pacific Northwest, but worldwide.

In the past decade, three new sub-appellations have been formed to focus on premium wine production: Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills and, most recently, Snipes Mountain. The distinct microclimates and diverse soils of these regions, combined with warm days and cool nights, make growing conditions ideal for producing more than 30 types of wines.

Today, the Yakima Valley is in the midst of a wine renaissance. While the region is the state’s oldest, it continues to have the most growth opportunity due to its size. New vineyards are constantly being planted, and the number of wineries has increased nearly 75 percent in the past five years—from 47 in 2004 to 82 in 2009.

Known as the ‘soul of Washington wine,’ more than one-third of all wine grapes grown in Washington State come from Yakima Valley – a number that is sure to rise in the near future.