



WINE YAKIMA VALLEY

AN ASSOCIATION OF GROWERS AND WINERIES

Yakima Valley Wine Country Yakima Valley Wines

In the Pacific Northwest, the Yakima Valley growers tend to set the trend for the new wine varieties to emerge from Washington State. The optimal growing conditions allows for a truly diverse variety of grape plantings that simply isn't possible in other regions. Only in Yakima Valley is it possible to grow a quality Cabernet Sauvignon grape at one vineyard and literally down the road at another vineyard successfully grow an award winning Riesling grape. The diversity is truly unique.

The most widely planted varieties in the Yakima Valley appellation are Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Syrah, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Gewürztraminer, and Sauvignon Blanc.

New varieties such as Sangiovese, Malbec, Viognier, Mourvèdre, Barbera, Tempranillo, Dolcetto, Roussanne, Grenache, Marsanne, Cinsaut, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah and Nebbiolo to mention a few are on the upswing in the Yakima Valley.

Here is a snapshot of the best wines to emerge from the Yakima Valley:

Merlot

Yakima Valley Merlot is known for its sweet cherry, berry flavors and complex aromas that include plum, mint, cigar box, and sweet spices. Traditionally used in blends in much of Europe, Merlot gained popularity as a stand-alone wine in the USA in the early 1970s. Yakima Valley Merlot, with its cherry flavors and aroma, tends to be full-bodied with typically soft tannins, slightly higher in alcohol than its Bordeaux cousins and higher in acidity than Merlots from California.

Cabernet Sauvignon

The king of the red grapes grows magnificently in the Yakima Valley. The heady, fruity character of this complex grape develops slowly. In its youth, the wine appears more subtle and restrained than Washington Merlots. Its character can emerge as black currants, cherry, berry, chocolate, leather, mint, herbs or any combination of these. This wine ages beautifully. While several years of bottle aging are often needed for the wine to show its best, most can be appreciated in their youth. Many of the Yakima Valley vintners employ traditional blending practices, adding Merlot or Cabernet Franc to the wine.

Syrah

The first Syrah grapes in Washington were planted in the Yakima Valley in 1986. National recognition for Yakima Valley Syrahs, together with the wines wide consumer appeal has led to a substantial increase in Syrah plantings in the past few years. Syrah is just one of the Rhône varieties sparking new interest in Washington State. A spicy, rich, complex varietal, Syrah grapes turn into big, dark, intensely concentrated wines with aromas and flavors of blackberries, black currants, roasted coffee and leather.

Chardonnay

Yakima Valleys most widely planted grape is also the best manifestation of the states special winemaking character. Diverse styles made by Yakima Valley winemakers vary from crisp non-oak versions to richer barrel fermented wines. Both of these styles showcase Chardonnay varietal intensity and typically good Washington acid balance. Many wineries also use secondary malo-lactic fermentation to add rich vanillin and buttery nuances. Yakima Valley Chardonnay's will typically include floral, peach, apricot, nectarine, lightly spiced pear with some light minerality.

Riesling

Yakima Valley Riesling is one of the original grape varieties grown in Washington and one of the first to bring national attention to Washington wines. The Valleys Rieslings tend to be very floral in the nose, with vivid apricot-peach flavors. Most Washington Rieslings are vinted in an off-dry to slightly sweet style, all balanced with typically good acidity. Occasionally, "noble rot" works its magic on Riesling, concentrating the sugars and flavors to produce a late-harvest or ice wine of incomparable intensity.