

Oregon's wine industry by the numbers

Number of wineries

2000 139
2015 702

Number of vineyards

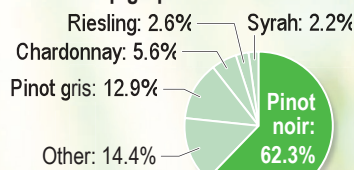
2000 480
2015 1,052



Location of vineyards

1. North Willamette Valley: 57.6%
2. Rogue Valley: 15.5%
3. South Willamette Valley: 10%
4. Columbia Gorge/northeast Oregon: 9.9%
5. Umpqua Valley: 6.6%

Top grape varieties



Oregon wines made from estate-grown fruit: 52%

Oregon vineyards certified sustainable: 47%

Economic impact

- Number of wine-related jobs in Oregon: 17,100
- Wages paid in wine-related jobs: \$527 million
- Wine-related tourism revenue: \$208 million
- Charitable donations made by Oregon's wine businesses: \$11 million
- Statewide economic impact of the Oregon wine industry: \$3.35 billion

Wine average bottle price (750 ml)

Oregon: \$16.07
Washington: \$9.76
California: \$6.68

Wine retail volume growth from 2015 to 2016

Oregon: 13.5%
Washington: 3.1%
California: 2%

Source: Oregon Wine Board

Alan Kenaga/Capital Press

Winemakers, distillers get into the spirit

By MARGARETT WATERBURY
For the Capital Press

Distilling and winemaking have been linked for hundreds of years, but most wineries balk at the cost and logistics involved in starting their own in-house distillery.

Now some Oregon winemakers are bridging that gap by partnering with local distilleries to make brandy from their wines.

Winery licenses allow wineries to possess distilled spirits for sanitation and fortification purposes without applying for a Distilled Spirits Permit or paying federal excise tax on the spirits. Many winemakers find the prospect of making brandy from their own wine enticing, especially when confronted with a batch of wine that didn't turn out exactly as hoped. But contract distillation can be costly, so winemakers should carefully examine their goals for contract distillation.

"It's a part of our business because we like getting to help people make something delicious," says Andy Garrison, distiller at Portland's Stonebarn Brandyworks and Trail Distilling in Oregon City. "But if they don't have a goal in mind and are distilling just to get rid of bad wine, it can be a bit of throwing good money after bad."

Tad Seestadt, owner of Ransom Winery and Distillery, echoes that sentiment. "Whatever comes out of the still is a reflection of what you put in," says Seestadt. "It's not a magic wand you pass over the wine and you have a beautiful Cognac-style brandy."

Making a good brandy or fortifying spirit means producing a high-quality, non-sulfited wine without significant flaws, although Garrison mentions that winemakers do have opportunities to cut costs, since wine for distillation doesn't



Margarett Waterbury/For the Capital Press

Distiller Andy Garrison processes Pinot noir pomace from a winery partner at the Stonebarn Brandyworks distillery.

need to be aged in oak, filtered, cold-stabilized, extensively racked, or stored for very long.

"It can also be a great way to utilize saignée or press cuts that don't fit your wines' profile," says Garrison. "With good planning, we can be distilling weeks or months after the wine is done fermenting, which reduces the risks from not adding sulfites."

At Anne Amie Vineyards, winemaker Thomas Houseman has been producing fortified products for more than 10 years. At first, he bought commercial brandy for fortification, but eventually, he decided he wanted to use his own wine to make the fortifying spirit for port-style wine and Muller-Thurgau dessert wine.

"So we started making extra wine" and sending it to local distillers to turn into brandy, says Houseman. Anne Amie experimented with several wines, ultimately settling on Muller Thurgau as their favorite varietal for distillation. "It makes a really clean, nice, pretty brandy," says Houseman, "it's really aromatic. And I think it's a great story. I have a dessert wine fortified with

its own brandy from the same grapes. I don't think anybody's making a fortified Muller-Thurgau dessert wine with its own brandy anywhere else in the world."

When it comes to selecting a partner, Houseman says the best thing winemakers can do is taste the distiller's existing products. "If you like their product, chances are good you're going to like the result." Then, be prepared to play an active role in the process, but rely on your distilling partner for technical advice. "I'm not a distiller," says Houseman, "I don't know how to make good brandy, so you work with somebody you trust."

Winery-distillery collaborations are still relatively uncommon, but Garrison predicts growth in the high-quality ready-to-drink segment may buoy the trend. "Spirit for Port-style dessert wines is still most of what I distill, but there is more interest in vermouth and lighter, aperitif-style fortified wines. With the wine-in-cans trend, imagine vermouth spritzers made with all estate grapes, or 100 percent Pinot noir sangria."

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