



Few vineyards in the state equal the sheer beauty of surroundings, excellence in wines, and tasting room hospitality of **Tualatin Vineyards**. Magnificently situated in the foothills of the Coast Range, a few miles northwest of Forest Grove, they offer spectacular views along with their award-winning wine.

Tualatin (a native word meaning "gentle or easy flowing") refers to the Tualatin river which runs nearby. The vineyard is one of those places in the world that is blessed with some mystical property which makes it stunningly beautiful in any weather. The vineyards roll down from above the winery, almost 750 feet above sea level, facing directly south so the midday sun beams down directly on them, and into the tasting room. And at this altitude and proximity to the mountains they also receive snows and mists which hang between the rows, picturesque, fascinating, and eerie.

The only drawback to the 180 degree panorama is a couple of year-old clearcuts to the west. Though small by Oregon timber industry standards, the view is an unfortunate vantage point to reflect on the contrast between the two industries. The wine industry is blossoming, (making Oregon known for something other than a patootie-fondling Senator and an ice-skater with bad taste in husbands). The tree cutting industry, due to their plan of action over the last 50 years, are forced to solicit federal clearance to cut the last old growth forests, because they have cut down everything else.

The parallels between these two industries moving in opposite directions is interesting. Grape vines are similar to trees, they take decades to mature, and live to be over 100 years old. The root system in some varieties extend 30 feet into the soil and they are amazingly large and complex, becoming increasingly vibrant, pulchritudinous and valuable with age. Perhaps if we had decided, years ago, to let trees mature so they could be of greater value, rather than turning them into products that could be made of more easily harvested plants, we wouldn't have people losing their "way of life" because the cutting has gone too far.

Tualatin is one of the state's older and larger vineyards. 85 acres produce about 20,000 cases of wine, 240,000 bottles, each year. All of the wine is "estate vintage", meaning the wine is made exclusively from grapes grown on the property, which is still fairly rare in Oregon. In fact, everything is done right at the winery: crushing, bottling, labeling, etc.

If you go at the right time, weekdays, slow weekends in winter or early spring, you might get a tour, and if you have never toured a winery I recommend the experience. As well as being interesting, there is something peaceful and calming about hundreds of casks of fledgling wine waiting to turn into something wonderful.

If you need to be impressed by statistics and awards before you allow yourself to be impressed by the flavor of the wine, try these: an awards list that fills two pages, over 60 different awards. The Wine Spectator (THE wine magazine, if you know what I mean. Also THE highly provincial California wine magazine, if you know what I mean) in 1992 selected the 1989 Reserve Chardonnay as one of the top 100 wines of the year from a field of over 5,700 wines around the world. The crown jewels came in 1984 at the International Wine and Spirits Competition held in London. That year their 1981 Chardonnay took the John Sutcliffe Trophy (don't ask I don't know) and their 1980 Pinot noir won the Robert Mondavi Trophy (you shouldn't have to ask). These trophies had

never before been awarded to the same winery in the same year. These trophies mean that in 1984 Tualatin Vineyards in little Nowhere, Oregon had produced the best Chardonnay and Pinot noir on the planet. Impressed?

Although those two wines are difficult to come by, they do still have some in the cellar, so if you are hot to get ahold of a great bottle of wine, ask them. However, you are not losing out in the least by sampling and purchasing some of the more current vintages. The Chardonnay and Pinot are top notch. The Pinot noir is quite smooth and I recommend drinking it with something and someone completely sinful. At \$8-\$12 a bottle you get some fine wine at a great price.

The wines that surprised me were the Rieslings, their most popular variety. I have always shied away from this particular variety of wine. I am not much for sweet wines and the first couple of times I tried Rieslings I undoubtedly tasted a sweeter version of this wine. Tualatin has two Rieslings they are tasting now. A Dry Riesling and a White Riesling. The Dry is interesting because it is one of the few 1993 wines you will see around at this time. The White however caught my attention because of its unmistakably apple flavor. Both are very crisp and light and would go well with summer foods like salads or with powerful spicy foods, like Thai.

Most days Kathy Doans, the tasting room manager, will be pouring your wines for you. She is a great person to talk to about what foods go well with the wines. Tualatin has published a cookbook that is available in the tasting room. If you are on a diet do not even go near this book. The first recipe calls for over two pounds of cheddar and brie cheese, and while it will no doubt be incredibly good, it certainly won't increase your vertical leap any.

Kathy formerly owned her own catering company and has her own recipes throughout the cookbook. She also does the cooking for the periodical Winemakers' Dinners at the Tualatin Winery. The menus for these affairs, generally five course meals with a different wine for each course, come directly from the cookbook. (Take it from me, she can REALLY cook. I had lunch with Kathy and Virginia Fuller, one of the owners, and I won't even mention what we had because of all the flak I received by innocently mentioning downing a few oysters in my February column.) If you have never had, or even thought of having, Pinot noir with a rich chocolate cake or, hell, with M & M's, then you should definitely talk to Kathy about food/wine combos.



Tualatin knows how to make it fun and worth-while to come see them. Aside from their excellent wines and location they do great events and give you an opportunity to get some great bargains. Last year, on their 20th anniversary, they did a "Wine Grab Bag" where you got a random sampling, a few bottles that is, of some of their cellared wine for \$1. Any place that is willing to let you walk away with wine for \$1 is my kind of place. Unfortunately they aren't always inclined to such amazingly rash acts but they will do some other things to get your attention.

On April 10th, (I hope you pick this up in time, I know it's hard to find a copy of the Upper Left Edge these days, especially in Portland. I write for it, yet it still often takes me a couple of weeks to get ahold of a copy. I suggest sending the Rev. Hults \$30-\$500 so that you can have it sent to your door) Tualatin is having an Estate Tasting Reception. They will release the '91 Chardonnay, '91 Chardonnay Private Reserve (the really good stuff), and '92 Pinot noir Private Reserve. The tasting as always is free, and there will also be hors d'oeuvres, special deals on a variety of wines and probably a chance to buy wine that has been hidden away in the cellar for years. The atmosphere at events like this is always great and they do it in the winery, so do not pass up a chance to see a top quality winery in action. It will still be Spring so bring the binoculars and the camera, the view should be spectacular.

Recommended wine tour for April: I would call this a new feature, but, seeing how this column isn't even old enough to drive yet, I won't. Suffice to say that I wanted to take a moment in each column to suggest a particular tour of two or three wineries that would be interesting. This month presents you with an intriguing possibility. On Sunday April 10th head over to Tualatin's Estate Release Tasting then hop on down Hwy 47 to Kramer Vineyards on Olson Rd., just south of the sprawling metropolis of Gaston, Or. for their Chardonnay Lovers Weekend and Weird Food Festival. Weird food in abundance. One of the rare opportunities in life to actually eat bugs in a socially acceptable situation. Hey, I know most of you out there ate a worm or a fly when you were 6 or in college (what's the difference?) but this time the insect will be prepared as gourmet food, so give them another shot. Remember, buy a bottle of wine, (at least one, what have you got to lose) wherever you taste, and tell them you read about them in the Upper Left Edge.



- UPPER GALLERY
March 24 through April 3
Holocaust Photos
- MAIN GALLERY
March 24 through May 15
In The Spirit: Indigenous Inspiration
- SHIMODA READING ROOM
March 24 through May 15
Featured artists: Fred Dwello, Joyce O. Hollingsworth, Asher Donaldson, & Andre Boon
- MAIN GALLERY
May 26 through June 12
The Artist As Student
Artists as Students & Students As Artists, with local and regional artists & students in both categories.
- SHIMODA READING ROOM
May 26 through June 12
Guerilla Art: A Works In Progress
- MAIN GALLERY
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