

Discover **wines** of the Northwest

The sixth annual Savor Cannon Beach wine festival takes place March 12 to 15

"I always thought that Cannon Beach was the perfect place for a wine festival," said Gary Hayes. "And since nobody else started one, I decided I would."

And so, in 2010, Hayes hatched Savor Cannon Beach, an exploration and exultation of Northwest wines. But, to be fair, the idea wasn't all his.

"Although this is the sixth year for Savor Cannon Beach there was a Wine Walk that existed for several years before that," said Hayes, the festival director and publisher of Coast Explorer magazine.

With Hayes at the helm, the Wine Walk blossomed into a weekend whose fragrant bouquet blooms March 12 to 15. The centerpiece, though, remains Saturday's Wine Walk, from 1 to 5 p.m. (tickets are required). Like the original inspiration, this current iteration too benefits the Cannon Beach Preschool and Children's Center.

"It's our largest event," Hayes said of the Wine Walk. "We'll have 500 people participating and about 40 wineries."

Of those vineyards, all sprout from Northwest soil.

"We've got all regions," said Hayes. "We've got Southern Oregon wineries that are making the trip up. We've got Willamette Valley wineries, who have a strong pinot noir presence. And then we've got some of the big Washington reds from Walla Walla and the valley. We're going to represent the entire region pretty well."

Tucked into Cannon Beach businesses, from the galleries to the boutiques and beyond, representatives from numerous vineyards—including some winemakers themselves—will be pouring.

"It's good to do a bit of research and know who's going to be there and don't plan on tasting everything," Hayes said. "I'd recommend sipping and spitting. That's not something that a lot of wine-tasters do unless they're more professional, but that's the way the professionals do it. You can taste the wine just as well by sipping and spitting. We encourage that. It lets you taste more wines without losing your palate completely."

Indeed, Hayes added, the event is more

about education than revelry. And if that attracts a label of wine snobbery, well, so be it.

"I won't say that we encourage it," Hayes said of wine's occasionally pretentious-sounding overtones. "But I would say that our event, more than most others, attracts a more serious enthusiast. It's not really about a big party. It's about discovering new wines and wineries of the Northwest."

Such is evidenced in the weekend's schedule: most events wrap before nightfall. That said, Hayes and Savor Cannon Beach aren't wearing white gloves either. A handful of whimsical events are planned.

"Bruce's Candy Kitchen, they have a winery coming in, and they are actually making a candy for the weekend that's made from that winery's wines," Hayes said. "It's everything from the Cannon Beach Treasure Company—who also has a collection of bottles that they have recovered from ship wrecks—to the dog store, who'll host a winery—and they also have a treat-tasting for dogs."

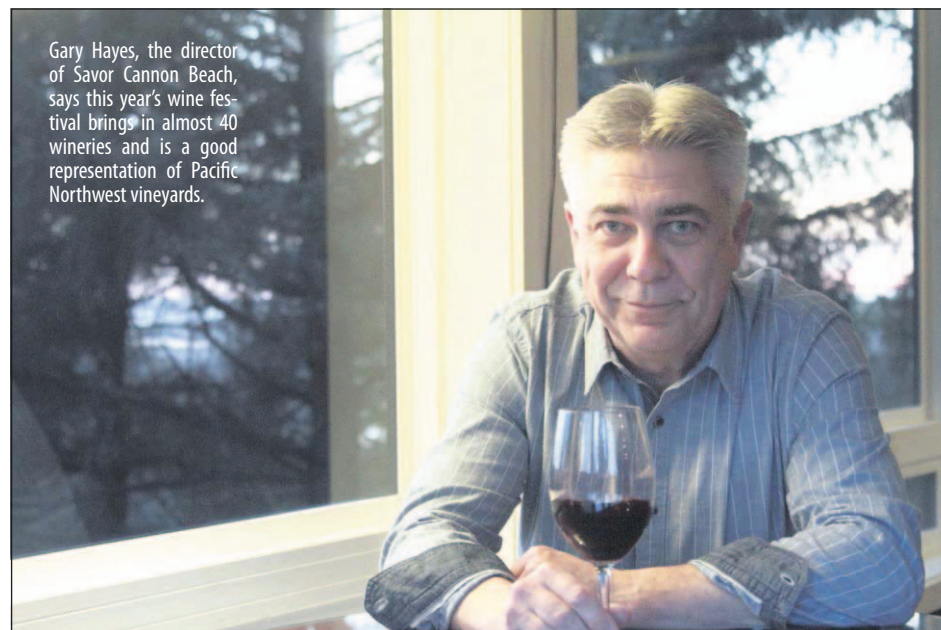
Of course, there are a few events scheduled for after dark. Most revolve around pairings. As the towering chef Julia Child once put it, "Wine is meant to be with food—that's the point of it."

Three distinct dinners featuring four-course meals and specific winery pairings punctuate the evenings. Two will take place at renowned local restaurants, the Stephanie Inn and EVOO Cannon Beach Cooking School. The third, to be hosted by Chef Jonathan Hoffman, the reigning champion of Iron Chef Goes Coastal, takes place at a private, ocean-front residence in Arch Cape on Saturday.

Hoffman, along with EVOO's Bob Neroni and with three other of Cannon Beach's finest, will go toe-to-toe at the Battle of the Bites, Friday, a component of the Battle of the Blends. Alongside the chefs, wines too will compete. Yet another tussle, the Thursday Night Throwdown, kicks off the weekend.

"We pick a cabernet from Oregon and a cabernet from Washington, and a merlot from Oregon and a merlot from Washington and so on," said Hayes. "There are six different varietals that match up, state-by-state, and the people who participate will vote on their favorites

Gary Hayes, the director of Savor Cannon Beach, says this year's wine festival brings in almost 40 wineries and is a good representation of Pacific Northwest vineyards.



You can taste many varietals from different Northwest wineries during Savor Cannon Beach.

and we kind of declare a winner among the states."

Really though, Savor Cannon Beach is not about winners and losers, or choosing a Best in Show. Said Hayes: "It's just kind of a fun way to explore all of the Northwest wine regions."

It's also an opportunity for wine enthusiasts to cultivate closer relationship with the many varietals and vineyards in their midsts.

"I think what sets Savor Cannon Beach apart from other events and festivals is its more intimate nature," said Hayes. "A lot of events will pack in thousands and thousands of people. With our Wine Walk event being 500, it's a little more intimate."

Savor Cannon Beach

Thursday, March 12

5 to 7 p.m. Thursday Night Throwdown

Friday, March 13

1 to 2:30 p.m. What Varietal Is It?

4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Battle of the Blends

Saturday, March 14

10:30 a.m. to noon Bordeaux, Burgundy & Rhone

1 to 5 p.m. Wine Walk

Sunday, March 15

10 a.m. to noon Sparkling Wine & Brunch Bites

www.savorcannonbeach.com

\$149 Festival Pass offers admission to all six wine tasting events

\$35 tickets available for individual tastings

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