



WILLAMETTE VALLEY WINE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINTER 2023

New Openings and Story Ideas in Oregon's Willamette Valley Region

Winter is a restorative time in Oregon wine country. The trees and vines are bare, the wines from the most recent harvest are asleep in the barrel, and tasting rooms are both quiet and cozy. For those who love the intimacy of the Willamette Valley, there's hardly a better time to visit; cellar season. The chilly air is rounded out by warm conversation at the bar, wine flights before a roaring fireplace, and casual chats with winemakers and vineyard managers.

Cellar season is a great time of year to experience the many joys of food and wine together. Many of the restaurants host winemakers' dinners and showcase local wines paired up with hearty, seasonal fare that can nourish to the bone. Visitors often leave with a new favorite winery as well as a new dish or two to pair it with.

For more cellar season info, check out www.willamettewines.com/cellar-season

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OPENINGS, EXPANSIONS AND MORE

ökta Gets National Nod

McMinnville restaurant [ökta](#) has been named in Esquire magazine's "Best Restaurants of the Year" list. The eatery, commanded by chef Matthew Lightner, alum of Michelin-starred Atera, and part of the recently-opened Tributary Hotel, marks the chef's triumphant return to his native Pacific Northwest. It's a fitting award for Lightner, who has worked at some of the top restaurants in the nation and is renowned for his attention to seasonality and beautifully-plated dishes.

Brick House Vineyards Awarded

Acclaimed Willamette Valley winery [Brick House Vineyards](#) was honored by Wine Advocate for its green wine growing philosophy. The Newberg winery received the publication's "[green emblem award](#)," which celebrates producers with a longstanding commitment to environmentally-friendly farming and winemaking. The winery is committed to biodynamic and organic practices, which are proven to be much better for the ecosystem than conventional agricultural methods.

Alloro Bolsters its Culinary Program

In a pronounced effort to expand its culinary program, [Alloro Vineyard](#) has brought on its first-ever executive chef. The winery recently appointed Chris Smith to the role, which will specialize in foods that work in harmony with the label's lineup of estate wines. Smith brings plenty of wine country experience to his newest post, having worked at The Allison Inn in the Willamette Valley and the Barking Frog at Willows Lodge in Woodinville prior to this.

Montinore and Landlines Wineries Take to Third Street

Leading biodynamic winery Montinore Estate and sister-brand Landlines Winery now have a tasting room in downtown McMinnville. The former Forest Grove winery has an idyllic spot on Third Street, where it can showcase wines from both its labels, Montinore Estate and Landlines Estates. The new location, is dubbed [The Grove](#), joining its tasting room in Woodinville. The long-time Forest Grove winery has recently closed. The labels make a wide variety of wines, from Sparkling and Muller-Thurgau to Pinot noir, Riesling, and Gewürztraminer.



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Lenne Sells its Vineyard and Tasting Room

After more than two decades, [Lenne Estate](#) in Yamhill is giving up the farm. The brand will live on, set in a new location at [Distaff Wine Co.](#) in Newberg. Lenne's vineyard and European-style tasting room were sold to Jory Property Holdings, LLC in late 2022, a partnership between a former wine club member of Lenne and Jared Etzel, winemaker and founder of [Domaine Roy & Fils](#) winery. Lenne founder and winemaker Steve Lutz remained on the estate until just before Christmas. While the vineyard and tasting space will shift over to a new brand, Lutz will continue making, pouring, and selling Lenne wines at the new shared Newberg location.

Domaine Willamette

Willamette Valley Vineyards has yet another new location and this one is devoted entirely to sparkling wine. [Domaine Willamette](#) just opened last fall in the Dundee Hills and will be the Oregon winery's home base for making and sharing bubbly. While sparkling wine has been popular in the Willamette Valley for a while, the estate is a first in that it combines a biodynamic estate vineyard with an underground aging room for true, traditionally-made sparkling wines. The beautiful location touts a garden, pairings from an in-house chef, tours, and a range of wine flights.

Mayor Remy

Remy Drabkin is the official mayor of McMinnville. The beloved winemaker and activist was the interim Mayor for a while before being formally voted in November. It's a deserving role for Drabkin, who has carved out a significant audience over the years thanks to her exquisite wines and charming personality. Drabkin, the founder of [Remy Wines](#), makes Italian-style wines in the Dundee Hills. She's also a proud queer winemaker who launched the first-ever [Queer Wine Fest](#), showcasing wines made by the LGBTQ+ community.

Anne Amie's Two Winemakers

What's better than one standout winemaker? Two standout winemakers, of course. That's the new approach from [Anne Amie Winery](#), which finalized the duo just before the 2022 harvest. Jay Somers and Kory Sumner share the vintner reins at Anne Amie, having worked together at Somers' previous label, J. Christopher Wines, in the past. Anne Amie goes back to the late 70s and occupies a gorgeous estate in the Yamhill-Carlton appellation.

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STORY IDEAS

The Globetrotting Winemaker: Ximena Orrego

Most winemakers lack the international resume that Ximena Orrego has. The vintner for [Atticus Wine](#) hails from Peru and has lived everywhere from Venezuela to British Columbia to Miami. The Latinx winemaker is both the co-owner and winemaker of Atticus Wine- set in the heart of Willamette Valley's esteemed Yamhill-Carlton AVA, where she worked for many years in the cellar prior to taking the leading role. In addition to making great wines, Orrego works to celebrate the Hispanic culture within the industry at large and even offers special packages every year to support the cause in some way. In true Willamette Valley fashion, visitors can set up private wine tastings with Ximena herself.

The Late and Great [2022 Harvest](#)

After a wet spring caused delayed bloom in Willamette Valley vineyards, then an unexpected frost event hit the region, some folks thought the Willamette Valley might have trouble getting the quality of fruit we have come to associate with the place. Yet, a warm summer and fantastic early fall not only saved the vintage, but made it one winemakers are calling one of the best in a long time. An exceptionally warm and dry October meant no rush for harvest, and winemakers could allow their fruit to reach the peak level of maturity. Better still, the cool evenings meant great acid levels in the fruit. As it's time to taste these wines out of barrel in early 2023, we'll know for certain that 2022 is an exceptional year for Willamette Valley wine.

It's Truffle Season

The beginning of the year stands for truffle season in Oregon wine country. The delicate edibles are found throughout the valley in January and February and are harvested by pros and interested visitors alike. The fungus, adored for its earthy and delicate flavors, show up on restaurant menus and pair up with local wines to perfection. There's even a [festival](#) devoted to truffles, featuring cooking seminars and foraging parties, along with wine tastings.



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Truffles on the go!

Speaking of truffles, [Black Tie Tours](#), a long-adored Willamette Valley Transportation company, is now offering truffle hunting tours on a limited basis. Explore the wilderness with Black Tie Tours' founder, Stefan Czarnecki (and family member of the famous Willamette Valley mushroom restaurant, [The Joel Palmer House](#).) He and his dog will demonstrate how they work together to unearth the native Oregon truffle. Guests will learn truffle hunting dos and don'ts; and following the hunt, guests will enjoy a truffle-themed lunch while a local winemaker pours some of their favorite wines.

The Rise of Sauvignon Blanc

Like Pinot gris and Chardonnay before it, Sauvignon blanc is gaining a serious and deserved following. Willamette Valley producers are embracing the white grape, turning out wines with incredible energy and character. Makers like [TWOMEY](#), [Sass](#), [Ankeny Vineyard](#), [Aurora Colony](#), and more are taking the zippy wine to new heights, injecting a bit of Willamette Valley flair to a wine long connected to places like France and New Zealand.

Mulled Wine for Winter

As winter sets in, the palate is naturally drawn to heavier fare. That goes for wine too, as we often set aside the light whites and embrace the bigger reds. In much of Europe, it's standard practice to make mulled wine, or red wine warmed up and hit with an assortment of comforting ingredients, from citrus to baking spices. The red wines of the Willamette Valley are perfect for making this offseason treat, with great acid to stand up to things like allspice and cinnamon and the earthy, wild berry flavors that go so well with winter.

Beyond Simply Still Wine

The valley may be synonymous with still wines like Pinot noir, Chardonnay, and Pinot gris, but it's where many other styles of world-class alcohol are made as well. Wineries like [R Stuart](#) make a series of "ports" and [Elk Cove](#) specializes in late harvest dessert wines. Meanwhile, a new generation of spirits makers are setting up shop in wine country, distilling some wonderful liquid inspired by the region. Outfits like [Branch Point Distillery](#) in Dayton and the [Great Oregon Wine Company & Distillery](#) in Dundee are crafting excellent gins, whiskies, and more, which serve as ideal bases for an entire host of seasonally-appropriate, winter cocktails.

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Low to No-ABV Experiences

As more tasters look for non-alcoholic options or engage in annual traditions like Dry January, wineries are evolving with them. Many tasting rooms now offer special flights of [non-alcoholic \(NA\) options](#), from de-alcoholized wines to craft sodas. [Raptor Ridge](#) and [Ponzi Vineyards](#) offer house-made sodas and NA sparkling wines, respectively. Additionally, the valley hosts some wonderful coffee roasters like Caravan Coffee in Newberg and Flag and Wire in McMinnville, where non-drinkers can still get a taste of the area artisan scene. Portland is home to Smith Teamaker, one of the most respected of its kind in the nation.

A FEW SELECTED EVENTS

[A Taste of Time](#)

January 14, 2023

Yamhill Valley Vineyards is turning 40 and celebrating in style. The tasting will feature new and cellared wines, along with barrel samples from the lauded 2022 vintage. Food from Farmer's Plate and Pantry will accompany the wines on this festive afternoon.

[Truffle Feast and Foray](#)

January 21-22, 2023

One of the valley's oldest vineyards is celebrating the height of truffle season with back-to-back events. On Saturday, Knudsen Vineyards host a truffle feast with food prepared by Field and Vine. On Sunday, the winery leads people outside to hunt for truffles via guide Ava Chapman and her truffle-hunting dog.

[Terroir Seminar](#)

January 29, 2023

[Björnson Vineyard](#) is the place to be on January 29th as it hosts a dynamic afternoon devoted to the concept of terroir. Dr. Burns, Professor Emeritus of Geology and Past-Chair of the Dept. of Geology at Portland State University, will be on hand to lead the discussion, which will offer informative insights into the buzzy wine topic, which combines climate, geology, and farming.



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Wine and Cheese Pairings

February 11-12, 2023

[Beacon Hill Winery](#) in Gaston is treating guests to one of the most iconic pairings of all time. The special tasting will feature four hand-selected wines, served alongside cheeses from Cowbell PDX. The event repeats the following weekend as well.

Bubbles Fest

February 18-19, 2023

For two days, Anne Amie is celebrating all things sparkling wine. The gathering features bubbles from 28 producers paired up with local seafood and special bites. Local cheeses and sweets will be on hand as well as music from DJ Jimbo.

Oregon Chardonnay Celebration

February 24-25, 2023

The state's grandest Chardonnay party features 55 producers, extensive tastings, seminars, and a crab fest to boot. The three-part event is co-hosted by Domaine Serene, The Allison Inn & Spa, and Stoller Family Estate and sings the praises of one of the valley's most famous and sought-after white wine.

The Dueling Hobbits

March 11, 2023

An evening of dueling pianos at [Coelho Winery](#) will have two trained pianists go head-to-head. The night will be ripe with wine, laughter, parlor-esque music, and plenty of entertaining shenanigans.

About the Willamette Valley Wineries Association (WVWA)

The WVWA is a nonprofit industry association dedicated to achieving recognition for Oregon's acclaimed Willamette Valley as a premium Pinot noir-producing region. The WVWA has more than 230 members representing wineries, tasting rooms and vineyards throughout the Willamette Valley. The organization also hosts Willamette: The Pinot Noir Auction, Oregon Pinot Camp, Pinot in the City, May in Wine Country, The Giving Season and the Cellar Season. Visit www.willamettewines.com for more info.

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