



WILLAMETTE VALLEY WINE

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WHAT'S NEW IN THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY

SPRING 2020

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

NEW OPENINGS AND EXPANSIONS

DOMAINE SERENE EXPANSION

Celebrated Dundee Hills producer **Domaine Serene** has a new tasting room to its name. Set just outside of Portland in Lake Oswego, the label's wine lounge opened in the fall of last year and features a full kitchen along with an assortment of wines. The sleek establishment is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week and offers wines from the Domaine Serene label as well as sibling brands Château de la Créé and Maison Evenstad. The modern space is the second lounge in Domaine Serene's portfolio and is anchored around an eye-catching 2,000-bottle glass wine tower.

OWEN ROE ACQUIRED

Lauded Oregon winery **Owen Roe** was recently purchased by Vintage Wine Estates. The California-based organization formally acquired the label in September of last year, a deal that includes the winery, inventory, vineyards, tasting rooms and the brand at large. Owen Roe launched in 1999 and became famous for both a highly recognizable label often featuring black-and-white photography, and carefully crafted blends showcasing fruit from Oregon and Washington. Founder David O'Reilly will continue to make the wines in his Wapato, Washington facility. The label formerly made its award-winning work in the Willamette Valley.



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New Openings Continued

WINE EDUCATION

Linfield College has expanded its curriculum in its new wine studies program. The school, based in the heart of the Willamette Valley in McMinnville, is now offering Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET) courses and full certification opportunities on campus. It marks a major industry move, allowing students to receive increasingly sought-after formal training locally. The institution received an admirable \$6 million donation from the Evenstads, founders of Domaine Serene, in 2018 and the wine studies program has grown significantly since. It joins schools like Chemeketa Community College and Oregon State University in catering to the ever-growing viticulture and enology fields.

J. SCOTT TASTING ROOM

Southern Willamette Valley producer **J. Scott Cellars** is set to open its new tasting room in Eugene later this year. It will be a fixture in the cultural hub that is the Fifth Street Market section of downtown, set before a backdrop of bars, shops and restaurants. It will be the outfit's second location and will offer small plate items, an assortment of wines and grab-and-go bottles. The move draws more attention to the southernmost stretch of the Valley and the bohemian college town of Eugene, located just 100 miles from Portland.

NEW TENDRIL DIGS

Carlton is the new headquarters for yet another acclaimed Willamette Valley winemaking name. Tony Rynders, the man behind award-winning area wines for decades under an array of labels, is bringing his **Tendrill** project to the quaint wine country town. The new space, which debuted during Wine Country Thanksgiving, will offer expanded hours in early 2020 and will be shared by Rynders' sibling label, Child's Play Wines. Carlton has experienced tremendous wine-related growth as of late, with labels like Flâneur and eateries like Earth & Sea setting up shop there within the last year.

¡SALUD! SUCCESS

Wine country auction and healthcare fundraiser **¡Salud!** broke its own record last year. For the first time in its lengthy career, the annual gathering raised more than \$1 million. As always, the proceeds of the event go towards improved and expanded health care for Willamette Valley wine country laborers,

| [page 2 of 9](#) |



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New Openings Continued

many of whom were previously uninsured or in need of basic services. Taking place in November of 2019 and The Allison Hotel in Newberg, ¡Salud! raised the largest sum of money yet. The auction features one-of-a-kind wines blended specifically for the event by many of the region's most revered vintners.

BATTLE CREEK TASTING ROOM

Portland's Pearl District is now home to the tasting room of **Battle Creek Cellars**. The label, which makes its wine at 12th & Maple in Dundee, sources fruit from three vineyards located throughout the Willamette Valley. The new tasting bar resides in the bustling northwest quadrant of the Rose City, in an inviting venue nestled in the heart of the city's pedestrian-friendly Alphabet District. Battle Creek focuses on Pinot noir, but also turns out Chardonnay, rosé and a couple of blends.

LANGE IN THE HIGH DESERT

Pioneering Willamette Valley producer **Lange** has teamed up with Brasada Ranch in the high desert of central Oregon. Winemaker Jesse Lange created a special lot of Pinot noir for the Bend resort, which features on its impressive wine list. The partnership started casually a couple of years back, with the first installment of the wines—the 2018 Lange Estate Brasada Ranch Pinot Noir—released last November. It's a fitting union, given the resort's stunning location and Lange's outdoorsy motif. The label features a fly-fishing lure and Jesse Lange is known to spend as much time as permits in the water, casting for trout.

KEX OPENS

Nordic hotel **KEX** opened last November in Portland, set on the industrial east side of the Willamette River. The Icelandic inn also features a wine-minded restaurant called Dóttir. The restaurant's wine program, overseen by Sean O'Conner, features keg wine from a wide range of Willamette Valley producers, such as Johan Vineyards of Rickreall. The draft wine approach intends to showcase the freshness of the regional wines as well as offer a certain closeness with the winemakers involved, as the offerings tend to go straight from the cellar barrel or tank to the restaurant.

Ride share outfit **Lyft** is expanding its Willamette Valley presence. Wine tasters will soon have better

| [page 3 of 9](#) |



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SOMEDAY ARRIVES

In early January of this year, industry veterans Jessica Baesler and Graham Files finally opened the bar of their dreams. The appropriately named **Someday** is located on bustling Division Street in southeast Portland and spotlights some of the owners' favorite Willamette Valley wines, along with beer, cocktails, and simple plates. Expect an eclectic and changing list of local wines as Baesler and Files have been close friends with and champions of the local winemaking community for many years.

BARN DOOR BREWING

The wine country hub of Dundee is now home to **Barn Door Brewing**. The operation recently took over the former Deception Brewing space along Highway 99W in the center of town. The petite operation produces a surprisingly eclectic lineup of beers, including a habanero pale ale, a cranberry kölsch and a märzen, which honors the owners' German lineage.

INDEPENDENCE HOTEL

Set just outside of Salem in the rolling hills of wine country, Independence should be on every Pinot noir enthusiast's radar. The quaint and historic town has a new lodging option in the **Independence Hotel**, fit with well-appointed rooms overlooking the Willamette River, in the company of dozens of fantastic wineries and tasting rooms. The hotel is also home to Territory, a restaurant focused on northwest-inspired cuisine and locally crafted wines. The hotel and its surroundings, lined with quiet backroads and riverfront paths, offer a great getaway for cyclists especially.

AMITY FLATS

Visitors looking for apartment-style accommodations in the thick of wine country can now stay at **Amity Flats**. The six units are named after Willamette Valley soil types and occupy a 115-year-old building constructed by masons. With brick walls, raised ceilings, exposed beams and modern amenities, Amity Flats incorporates the best of old architecture and contemporary creature comforts. Amity is a small but welcoming town in Yamhill County just south of McMinnville, in close proximity to countless Willamette Valley winery destinations.

| *page 4 of 9* |



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STORY IDEAS

CEMENT WINEMAKING

It's not just stainless steel and wood in cellars these days. Concrete has become quite popular, especially among winemakers looking to preserve brightness and freshness in their wines. Willamette Valley labels like **Lavinea**, **Helioterra**, **Division Winemaking Company** and more use various forms of concrete fermenters to dazzling results. Their combined work cements concrete's place in the cellar, long appreciated for its porous nature and back in fashion thanks to the experimental current generation of vintners.

THE OFF-SEASON VINTNER

While winemakers are known to take a much-deserved break after harvest, the offseason is still a busy stretch. Quieter tasting rooms and dormant vineyards present lesser-known tasks for Willamette Valley producers, like pruning vines, hosting winemakers' dinners, topping wines in the cellar or traveling for research and new sales opportunities. It's a fascinating stretch of the calendar when a vintner wears many hats and sets their label up for prolonged success.

SOKOL BLOSSER AT 50

Half a century ago, Susan Sokol Blosser and Bill Blosser bought a derelict prune orchard in Dundee and started clearing the site for grapes. Fifty years on, **Sokol Blosser** is one of the most recognizable names in New World wine, known for reflective wines and a family-first approach to ownership. Each coming generation sets the bar a bit higher, leading the industry by example via innovative approaches and pioneering sustainability efforts.

MUSIC AND WINE

Wine and music is an age-old pairing, but some Oregon outfits take the connection quite literally. From former music producers like Jay Bobar of **Nicolas-Jay** to classically trained horn players like Dave Specter at **Bells Up**, there's a certain musical streak to the Willamette Valley wine scene. Given the parallels of the two worlds—the creativity, the performance aspect, the harmony in plurality—it's no wonder that certain characters can flourish in both.

| *page 5 of 9* |



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Story Ideas Continued

BIOCHAR

The concept of biochar has been around about as long as farming but it's only recently come to the Willamette Valley fore. As the Valley grows, so too does the number of vineyards and producers. Bio-char presents a more sustainable approach to dealing with the biomass that comes from clearing land, something typically done via an open burn. Labels like **Big Table Farm** in Gaston are all-in, drawn to biochar's minimal emissions and ability to capture carbon and other nutrients and convert them into useful soils for wineries and other agricultural endeavors.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

It's not uncommon for winemakers to suggest that making a good wine is a lot like raising kiddos. Young parent vintners know this best, as their harvest and cellar schedules tend to overlap with child care runs, diaper changes and nap time. Skilled producers like Brianne Day of **Day Wines** and Cody Wright of **Purple Hands** are master jugglers, raising stand-up children while making some of the most exciting wines in the Valley.

2020 IN HINDSIGHT

The first twenty years of the new millennium have brought amazing changes and immense success to Willamette Valley wine country. From 100-point wines and "region of the year" accolades to big name entrances like **Résonance Wines** (Louis Jadot's first New World enterprise) and **Domaine de Broglie** (by Francis Ford Coppola), the appellation is diverse and thriving. The culmination of fantastic wines and deserved awareness has many calling current life in the Valley the golden era of Pacific Northwest wine.

COOLER COASTAL POCKETS

Climate change has Willamette Valley producers thinking about cooler nooks and crannies built within the diverse landscape of the region. The Coast Range has become an obvious refuge, with its higher elevations and temperate climate that Pinot noir adores. Labels like **Iris Vineyards** outside of Eugene have long appreciated the viticultural potential of the foothills of this expansive mountain range. A growing number of producers have extended their vineyard holdings to these cooler climates more recently, like **DePonte Cellars**.

| *page 6 of 9* |



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EVENTS

OREGON TRUFFLE FESTIVAL

January 23–26, 2020

One of the largest gatherings of its kind on the continent, Oregon Truffle Fest is a feast for senses. The weekend-long gathering features seminars, workshops, cooking demonstrations and plenty of fungus-friendly Willamette Valley wine. The Fest, with weekends in both Eugene and Newberg, even touts a real truffle hunt, fit with trained dogs, expert guidance and friendly pours of wine.

PINOT IN THE CITY HOUSTON

February 4, 2020

One of the most successful trade event stories is undoubtedly Pinot in the City. The roadshow-style event brings dozens of Willamette Valley producers to cities all over the country. The latest installment sees 60 WVWA wineries travel to Houston to share their work. Per usual, Pinot noir is at the forefront of the tastings, poured by the winemakers themselves in an intimate and convivial setting. Participating labels include iconic names like Adelsheim and Shea Wine Cellars along with the likes of deLancellotti Family Vineyards, Failla Wines and more.

BUBBLES FEST AT ANNE AMIE

February 8–9, 2020

An event at Anne Amie is always memorable—ask anybody who's had the pleasure of attending Counter Culture. This time, the venerable Carlton label hosts a gathering devoted to sparkling wine, with 25 producers on hand to showcase their work. Guests will be fed by local purveyors and gain access to delicious bubbles by everybody from Argyle to Youngberg Hill.

VALENTINE'S DAY WEEKEND

February 14–16, 2020

Wine country looks to enhance the inherent romance of the holiday weekend with intimate tastings and an assortment of decadent pairings. Experience the versatility of a good Pinot noir as it's served alongside a lineup of chocolates or share a glass of bubbles with your significant other. Expect the unexpected as no two Willamette Valley labels celebrate Valentine's Day quite the same way.

| *page 7 of 9* |



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Events Continued

OREGON CHARDONNAY CELEBRATION

February 22, 2020

Thanks to hard work in the vineyard and gained knowledge in the cellar, Willamette Valley Chardonnay is approaching legendary status. The Allison Hotel hosts the annual Chardonnay Celebration, a two-part soiree including an informative seminar and a grand tasting. More than 50 Chardonnays will be poured at this year's event, produced by acclaimed outfits like Archery Summit, Cooper Mountain Vineyards and Walter Scott.

DUNDEE HILLS LEAP

February 29, 2020

Wineries from the famed Dundee Hills are taking full advantage of the extra day in February this year. Eleven wineries are taking part in the Dundee Hills Leap, a passport-style event devoted to special tastings and intriguing prizes. A new wine will debut at each stop and visitors who frequent at least three of the tasting rooms will be eligible for a slew of wine-themed gifts and experiences.

SIP MCMINNVILLE

March 13-15, 2020

Now in its 27th year, Sip McMinnville brings scores of Willamette Valley wineries to an unforgettable venue for a weekend of gastronomical bliss. More than 70 wineries team up with breweries, distilleries, chefs, bakers and more to offer a hefty taste of the area's revered food and drinks culture. The Evergreen Aviation Museum plays host, allowing attendees to nibble and imbibe before a backdrop of historic aircraft including the Spruce Goose. Proceeds from the gathering benefit local education through St. James School.



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WILLAMETTE: THE PINOT NOIR AUCTION

April 3-4, 2020

This showcase of the very best of the Valley turns five this year. It's a gathering that puts Pinot noir in the spotlight while raising money for marketing efforts in wine country. Over two days, nearly 90 area wineries host the wine industry's top buyers and media, leading special tastings featuring one-off wines unique to the event. It all culminates with the excitement of the Auction itself, with proceeds funding the ongoing work of the Willamette Valley Wineries Association.

MEMORIAL WEEKEND IN THE WINE COUNTRY

May 22-24, 2020

Summer doesn't arrive in the Willamette Valley until the festivities of Memorial Day Weekend have come and gone. For decades now, the long holiday weekend has been an industry-wide party of sorts, with expanded tastings, special releases and unique events taking place at wineries and tasting rooms all over the region. More than 130 producers take part this year, raising a glass to the long days of summer ahead and another vintage sprouting to life in the vineyard.