

WINES FROM WASHINGTON STATE

The Bordeaux blending grapes, including Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, perform very well in Washington's Columbia Valley. Believe it or not (believe it), the valley averages two hours more sunlight per day in mid-summer than the much further south Napa Valley, California. Within the large **COLUMBIA VALLEY** AVA (American Viticultural Area) are two still large AVAs: **WALLA WALLA** and **YAKIMA** that also encompass many others, and two others of note: Canoe Ridge and **RED MOUNTAIN**. These areas produce great wines. Grapes of lesser note are produced in the Puget Sound AVA, with dips right into Seattle proper.

In the nineteenth century, Washington, like many eastern states, grew native American grapes. It was not until 1951 that European grape varieties were planted with any sizable commercial production, but that effort quickly fizzled out for more than decade. It was not until Jimmy Carter was President that Washington launched the industry that is doing so well with its grapes and with its wines today. While Oregon is almost exclusively home to Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, Washington maintains great success with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc, and with Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc – all Bordeaux varieties. Syrah has made great wines in the hands of several producers, as has Riesling.

The higher price wines that are worth the cost include those of Andrew Will, Betz Family, Cayuse, K Vintners, Leonetti, Quilceda Creek, and Spring Valley. Wines of moderate cost that are standouts come from Chateau Ste Michelle, Columbia Crest, DeLille, L'Ecole No. 41, Owen Sullivan, and Russell Creek.

In Houston, look for these wine values from Washington state: 2002 Columbia Winery Cabernet Sauvignon Red Willow (\$32.99 **Houston Wine Merchant**); 2005 Andrew Will Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Blend (\$64.99 HWM); 2003 Cadence Taptail Vineyard Red Wine (\$54.99 HWM); 2006 Leonetti Sangiovese (\$79.99 HWM); 2007 Maryhill Red Blend (\$13.99 HWM); 2006 Owen Sullivan Champoux Vineyard White (\$15.99 HWM); 2006 Andrew Will Champoux Vineyard Red Blend (\$59.39 **Spec's**); 2004 Columbia Crest Walter Clore Private Reserve (\$30.31 **Spec's**); 2004 Russell Creek Tributary Red Blend (\$24.53 **Spec's**); 2006 Chateau Ste Michelle Canoe Ridge Vineyard Merlot (\$21.96); 2007 DeLille Cellars Chaleur White Bordeaux Blend (\$38.51 **Spec's**); 2007 Tamarack Cellars Firehouse Red (\$14.99, **Block 7**); 2007 Goedhart "Bel' Villa Vineyard" Syrah (\$56.00 **Catalan**).

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