

OREGON

WHITES & ROSÉS

words & wine selections by CERTIFIED SOMMELIER CATHERINE STEFANI

While Pinot Noir has clearly owned center stage when you think of Oregon wines, whites and rosés from Oregon are wines to take seriously (and enjoy!). Oregon's famed Willamette Valley has earned international stardom and a front seat with collectors for high-quality Pinot Noir bottlings. But trending up on the heels of the famed Pinot Noir are some incredible white wines from this region including Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Riesling, and some notable rosés. Certified Sommelier Catherine Stefani takes us on a tour of Oregon whites and rosés.

It is no coincidence that Oregon, which has a nearly identical longitude and latitude as the Burgundy wine region, caught the attention of a number of Burgundian winemakers who found the terroir highly desirable in the early 1980s. A number of winemakers from France found a second home in the Willamette Valley and found success growing grapes. Early Oregon pioneers David Adelsheim and Dick Erath (with eponymous labels) and David Lett of Eyrie Vineyards were quick to recognize why this Northwest region was special.

Wine production in Oregon

is small but mighty. There are just over 600 wineries in Oregon and the average producer puts out around 5,000 cases of wine. Total acreage of Pinot Noir in Oregon is more than all other white varieties combined. As Chardonnay becomes more successful with growers, this number will most likely be changing over the next few years.

Pinot Noir is still the star in this land but now, after years of trial and error to get to the proper clonal selections and vineyard sites, Chardon-

nay is elbowing its way to the main stage. High-quality Chardonnay done right is the next big thing in Oregon. Many winemakers in Oregon are finding more promise and success with the Chardonnay grape in terms of ripeness and balance, and it's smart business as Chardonnay (still the most popular wine in America) holds more prestige and demands significantly more money per bottle in the market than a Pinot Gris or Riesling.

ABOVE: The beautiful and bountiful Dundee Hills area of Oregon's Willamette Valley.

PINOT GRIS

Pinot Gris (pinot grigio in Italy) is grown worldwide. The primary fruit flavors in Pinot Gris are lime, lemon, pear, white nectarine, and apple. Pinot Gris wines from Alsace often show faint honeyed tones while American Pinot Gris wines generally have less acidity than their European counterparts. The Pinot Gris wines from Oregon and Washington offer great bang for the buck. Late in the 1980s, Pinot Gris was planted throughout the majority of Oregon vineyards after rootstock disease threatened the Chardonnay vines. Oregon's King Estate is the largest producer of Pinot Gris in the U.S. According to findings at the Oregon Chardonnay Symposium, things are looking up for the Pinot Gris varietal as these wines are earning praise and gaining in popularity. Winemakers are repositioning themselves with French Dijon clones which seem to ripen better than the original Wente clone that thrives in the warmer California climate. All in all, it's a good time to buy an Oregon Pinot Gris.

CATHERINE'S PREMIUM PICKS CHARDONNAY

If you love Chardonnay, we highly recommend three of Oregon's finest Chardonnays.

- **2012 Evening Land Chardonnay, Seven Springs Vineyard, \$45.** A rich yet gentle entry on the palate is complemented by a citrusy, supple creaminess. The essence of dried pineapple and a sustained lemony fruit core finishes with a balanced acidity and soft minerality. Evening Land is a leader in organic and biodynamic farming for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in the Willamette Valley.
- **2013 Walter Scott Vojtilla Vineyard Chardonnay, \$55.** The *Sommelier Journal* says, "The Vojtilla Chardonnay has a textural component that comes from the age of this 24-year-old vineyard site. The wine shows a wet stone mineral quality that is layered with lemon zest, flowers, and a sweet herbal note. There is hint of savory hazelnut oil in the finish." In a recent review, Raj Parr, Master Sommelier, calls this wine "One of the best Chardonnays from Oregon." Twist our arms.
- **2013 Antica Terra Aurata Chardonnay, \$85.** Winemaker Maggie Harrison—formerly of Sine Qua Non in California—has been hailed by the critics. This wine has also received ample praise... enough praise to pique our interests. Not inexpensive, but highly recommended.



TAKE NOTE: Collectors, consider the Walter Scott Chardonnay for your boutique ultra-premium category.

Follow Catherine and her wine recs on Twitter: @catstefaniwine or visit her website at stefanicellars.com.

CATHERINE'S GOOD BUYS... PINOT GRIS



EYRIE
Pinot Gris (\$19)



ELK COVE
Pinot Gris (\$18)



KING ESTATE
Pinot Gris (\$16)

OREGON'S WINE COUNTRY



ROSÉ REVOLUTION

There is a rosé revolution going on in this country. Dry rosés are hard to ignore and represent great value. From a place where Pinot Noir rules, it makes sense that we might find some of the best rosés of the West. Dry rosés are traditionally young wines meant for early consumption. They are refreshing and inviting easy wines with bright acidity. Many will pair perfectly with summer fare—risottos, salads, and barbecue. They are sophisticated and fun with beautiful color range from salmon to pinks. And while many of these rosés are great wines at reasonable prices, Oregon boasts the most expensive rosé in the country—Antica Terra's rosé is roughly \$150—the most expensive rosé in the U.S.

CATHERINE'S ROSÉ PICKS



2014 ADELSHIEM
Rosé, \$16



2014 SOTER
North Valley Rosé, \$25

RIESLING ON THE RISE

Forget what you think you know about Riesling. A too-sweet, vapid wine? Not anymore. Maybe back in the day when you were pulling bottles off the bottom shelf, but your tastes have grown and you're ready for the more sophisticated Rieslings. Think about it—why else would this varietal be so highly collected among the world's sommeliers and collectors? Do your homework on Riesling and you'll find that Riesling originated in the Rhine River region in Germany/Alsace and Germany still plants significantly more Riesling grapes than any other region (out of 89,000+ acres grown worldwide, Germany claims 56,000+ of those while American producers grow about 9,000+ acres of it). You'll also learn that Riesling is one of the most versatile wines when it comes to pairing it with food. Riesling has been threaded throughout the landscape of the Willamette Valley for years but has never made many waves. Until now. Things are looking up for Oregon Riesling these days. Brooks Estate founder Jimi Brooks saw the potential of this cooler climate valley for Riesling and the winery now makes nine different bottlings from sweet to bone dry.

CATHERINE'S RIESLING PICKS



2013 BROOKS ESTATE
(dry) Riesling, \$24

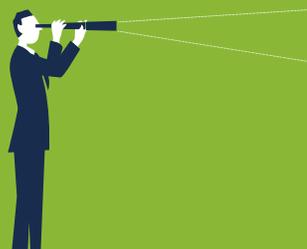


2013 CHEHALEM
THREE VINEYARDS
(off dry) Riesling, \$22

ANOTHER REASON TO LOVE OREGON WINE COUNTRY:

For out-of-state visitors, remember Oregon Wines Fly Free on Alaska Airlines. The Oregon Wines Fly Free program allows Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan members to check one case of wine at no cost on their return flight departing from one of four Oregon airports, as well as Walla Walla, Washington. As a bonus, inbound visitors can receive complimentary tastings at any participating winery by showing their Alaska Airlines boarding passes within a week of arrival.

WINES TO WATCH



Keep an eye on these cultish new producers in southern Oregon who are experimenting and having true success with unconventional grapes from France's Southern Rhone Valley such as Syrah, Grenache, Marsanne, and Roussane and Spanish grapes such as Tempranillo and Albarino.

ABACELA 2014 ALBARINO, \$18

Abacela is located in the Umpqua Valley of southern Oregon. Winemakers there are obsessed with Spanish varietals and the wines they are making are worthy of their obsession. Take note of this Albarino from Oregon. A dry, white, refreshing wine is made in stainless steel. Clean and refreshing with a floral nose and palate of apple, pear and citrus notes. A perfect summer wine!

COWHORN SPIRAL 36 (VIOGNIER, MARSANNE & ROUSSANE), \$28

This is something to try! Cowhorn is making huge waves by producing incredible wines with Rhone varietals, all organic and biodynamic. This full-bodied, rich wine is strong with tropical and citrus on the palate and complemented with a bit of spice from the new French oak barrel. Get this cultish white before it sells out as it does every year. And feel free to drink this wine whenever!

WINE APPS

Track everything you try or find using these two favorite apps. Both provide critical and community scores and reviews and often pricing and availability!



DELECTABLE: This is a very user-friendly app which appeals to true wine geeks and sommeliers providing current and relevant peer and "community" reviews with label images and tasting notes.



VIVINO: Not only can you see labels, scores, and reviews from critics and wine drinkers around the world, but this app will also tell you where you can find the wine at retailers around the U.S.!

