



A "Quick Sip" of Washington Wine Country

Photos & Article by Nancy C. Ross

It's no wonder that the Washington Wine Commission calls their terroir, "the perfect climate for wine." In this article, I will take you on a little trip around the state and highlight a few of the exceptional Washington wineries. You don't have to travel to Washington State to enjoy their wines, as all of the wineries mentioned will ship to other states. However, your experience will be enhanced if you taste the wines while touring the glorious countryside.

Washington wines fit nicely on the world stage of excellent wines. As it grows, the Washington appellation is receiving more attention for its sense of place, with an extraordinary combination of natural elements. These wines are unlike any other domestic wines because they grow in ideal soil with lots of sunlight and just the right amount of rain.

Often, when we think of domestic wine, California wine comes to mind. That's natural, as California is the leading producer of domestic wine, but Washington State is second and catching up rapidly.

In the last twenty-five years, Washington has evolved into a region with over 350 wineries producing over twenty varietals. The reason for their success is that the growing regions are so diverse, yet similar in many ways to the excellent growing regions in Europe. There are six major American Viticultural Regions (AVAs) in Washington and applications are in process for new ones.

Being a lover of big bold blends, I am focusing on a few of my favorites. Here are just a few wineries that we will be "visiting" on our tour.

Amavi Cellars (www.amavicellars.com) draws from grapes grown in the rich Pepper Bridge, Seven Hills, and Los Collines vineyards. Their 2001 Cabernet was awarded a Silver Medal, and has received glowing reviews. I am partial to big wines with carefully crafted blends, and the Amavi Cabernet blends in 14% Merlot as well as 2% Malbec. It is amazing what a difference each of these components makes in that blend. Of particular note is Amavi's luscious 2001 Syrah, awarded several Gold Medals. The 2002 Syrah scored 91 in Wine Enthusiast, 89 in Wine Spectator, and Wine News gave it a 92; this is a wine not to be missed.