

Introduction

If you had asked me fifteen years ago about Oregon wines, I would have replied “they’re good or I am not really sure.” However, during the last decade Oregon winemakers and growers have marched to the forefront of the winemaking world with innovative eco-friendly programs in their vineyards and wineries; what’s more, they are producing some of the world’s best Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. These wines not only show grape typicity, elegance and finesse but they are “food-friendly”. This little northwestern state offers so much more than just wine. If Oregon is the “New World’s” answer to Grand Cru Burgundy—Oregonians are, without doubt, world leaders in organic, biodynamic, sustainable agriculture and low-energy friendly wineries. This eco-friendly state is leading the way for all others. Their winery designs include free-flow (gravity flow), solar power energy generating units, water recycling and energy efficient programs such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). These efforts should not go unnoticed by the wine-drinking public. I can only urge you to celebrate

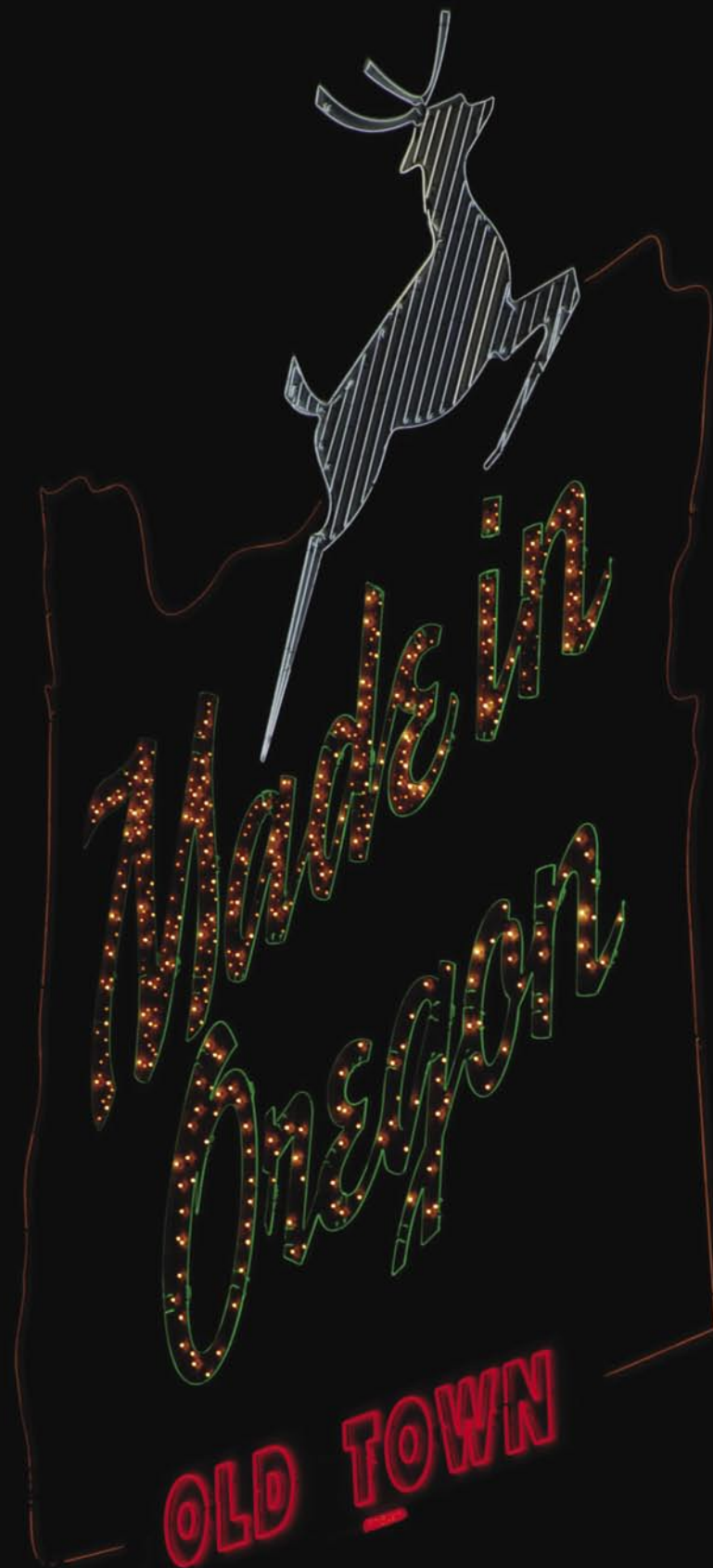
these pioneers by buying and drinking a bottle of wine from them. Oregonians also host the second largest Blues Festival in the world (a continuous three stage, four-day, jam-packed event to raise money for the hungry), various one day open-air jazz concerts in the many parks, the Pinot Camp and the acclaimed International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC), an annual event that draws Pinot Noir producers from around the world to show off their wines with a myriad of activities and culinary events. June, July and August are just filled with these socially oriented activities for both family and friends. Furthermore, Portland, Oregon’s largest city, boasts a thriving arts community with literally hundreds of excellent restaurants serving professionally matched wines and foods. If you haven’t yet found the next best thing to utopia, you should definitely plan a trip to Oregon during the month of July and August.

Terroir is one ingredient that makes Oregon Pinot Noir so good. Naturally, it’s a combination of factors. Oregon has a unique topography with two mountain

ranges running north/south and an extremely rich volcanic and fertile valley in between. This valley is fed with cool Pacific winds and fog through a number of corridors to the west. The Cascade Mountain Range and five very large volcanoes (Mt. Hood, Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Rainier, Mt. Adams & Mt. Helens) which lie to the east, and the Coastal Range to the west. Over 15,000 years ago the region was extremely active with volcanoes and floods. One such flood, called the Missoula Floods (10,000 to 15,000 years ago) and originating in Montana, deposited a bed of gravel, basalt, clay, loam and silt, rock and boulders over the original volcanic and sedimentary seabed. The most common type of soil found is the volcanic red Jory soil; however, it is only found 300+ feet above the valley floor as these were above the Missoula Floods. The higher ground therefore offers very high grade soils with the old volcanic red Jory, a grape vine’s dream. Sedimentary-based soil can be found below the 300 feet. The fertile soils together with the cool evenings and prevailing Pacific winds along with the morning fog and hot warm after-

noons create perfect climatic conditions for grape growing. Oregon's eco-friendly programs (L.I.V.E., Sustainable Agriculture, Organic, Biodynamic, LEED, Salmon Safe, and others), many of which are voluntary, lay the foundation for good wine-making. Without good fruit you will never be able to make good wine. This is a well-known fact and prerequisite which Oregonians have embraced more than any other wine region in the world. If you talk with any of the wineries they'll mention that they are "Stewards of the Land." One thing is for

Large Picture Right: Classic sign which is part of the skyline in downtown Portland. **Next Page:** The annual Salmon Bake at the International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC). The pictures shows how the Salmon is baked over an open fire, wedged between alderwood and horizontally supported by cedarwood over an open fire, served with a tradition buffet. After dinner wine-makers and Pinot Noir enthusiasts from around the world meet and share their wines as they go from table to table and talk Pinot. Tickets cost \$150.00 per person and are worth it!











sure, environmentalists and critics of US environmental policy have never been to Oregon!

I would never have believed that you could drink 14 year old Pinot Noirs from Oregon? Well, let me say that I have and they were spectacular! The wines tasted were excellent, well developed, showing vibrant aromas, subtle fine tannins, superb fruit and acid balance, with excellent length. After this experience I was sold on Pinot from Oregon and began to search for a perfect music scenario that could match the experience and the anticipation of drinking a well made Pinot Noir from Oregon. I came up with a few pieces of my favorite music which might explain what I really feel. I begin with a prelude to Debussy and “La Fille aux cheveux de lin”, which sets the mood for opening one of your treasured Oregon Pinot Noirs. This music only takes about 2.31 minutes. So you’ll have to move with some grace and urgency. I pour the wine into a large glass and put on yet another Debussy, “Clair de Lune” (5.04 minutes) while I probe the wine’s bouquets. Take small, well-refined sniffs—typical, red berry, spicy, flowery characters combined with a velvety balance and the harmony of

Picture Left: *The autumn in Willamette Valley.*

a gentle touch will emerge. The romance of tranquility will begin to emerge. Take your time and enjoy the moment! Swirl the wine a number of times, sit back, relax, and take pleasure in the aromas of a top Oregon Pinot Noir. The anticipation of tasting the characters will only enhance your willingness to relish in its taste. It’s time to change to Rachmaninoff’s “Rhapsody,” on a Theme by Paganini, variation no. 18 (3.22). Feel the finesse, balance, smoothness, growth and depth of the wine—life, romance, friends, food and Pinot Noir. Fantastic! Savor the flavor and aftertaste with Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, K. 466 (II. Romance—9:19 minutes).

If you achieve this in your tasting you have managed to experience what the best Pinot Noirs of the “Modern World” or “New World” can produce. Burgundy’s Côte de Nuits has got competition in Oregon and if they want to retain their number one position they’ll have to pull a few rabbits out of their hats in the near future. Taste your way through Oregon, you will not be let down. Take your time and enjoy its bounty. Its wine, personality, people and culture will stay with you for a lifetime. Once savored, forever treasured.

Cheers,