



## WINE YAKIMA VALLEY

AN ASSOCIATION OF GROWERS AND WINERIES

### **Yakima Valley Wine Country Viticultural Overview—Grown to Greatness**

Great wine starts in the vineyard. The Yakima Valley is home to a third of Washington State's vineyards, which gives reason to why individual vineyards are as famous as individual winemakers. There are hundreds of growers in Yakima Valley that occupy over 12,000 producing vineyard acres. The grapes produced by Yakima Valley growers are sold to wineries both within and outside the Yakima Valley AVA.

The Yakima Valley has a rich diversity of microclimates, rugged hillsides, and wetlands. These factors contribute to the many wine grape varieties and wine styles achieved from Yakima Valley grapes.

Nothing compares to the nearly perfect grape growing conditions of the Yakima Valley. The basic character of any vineyard is determined by these two primary factors: the soil and the climate. These two factors provide winemakers the fruit to create bold, hearty and luscious wines that are true to their varietal characteristic.

Here is an overview of the viticultural climate that results in grapes that are grown to greatness in Yakima Valley:

#### **Soils**

Located on the same parallel as the famous Bordeaux region of France, the Yakima Valley provides a nearly perfect location to grow grapes. The Valley was sculpted by a number of ancient wrinkles formed in the land when volcanoes cooled and sank, leaving behind a large basalt layer in the earth. Prehistoric floods also aided in creating optimal soils for growing wine. Floods deposited fine silt, layering the ground with soils such as silt, loam, loess, and cobble – each offering the proper drainage necessary to keep the vine's vigor under control.

#### **Climate**

The proximity of the Yakima Valley from the Cascade Mountain range, orientation of numerous valleys, and varying elevations produce different and distinct microclimates within the Yakima Valley AVA.

The sunny slopes of the Yakima Valley foothills are blessed with a long growing period, extended summer daylight hours, and cool evenings that yield bold, hearty and luscious world-class wines. Hot summer days and cool nights provide the perfect growing environment. The region benefits from the large swing between daytime and nighttime temperatures. This fluctuation in temperature is considered key by winemakers and wine grape growers to attain the intense varietal character.

The Valley's cold winters kill pests that are prevalent in other, milder wine growing regions throughout the United States. The Valley does not battle major pests like Phyloxera or Pierce's disease allowing Yakima Valley to be one of the few wine growing regions in the world with non-grafted vines planted on their own root stock.

#### **Rainfall**

The Yakima Valley is a high desert region receiving six to eight inches of rainfall per year. Irrigation water from the Cascade Mountain snow melt allows Yakima Valley growers to control the amount of water each plant receives throughout the growing period. This control of water allows growers the ability to create great concentration and

flavors.

The lack of rain, abundant sun, and ability to control water makes this region the perfect winegrowing region, as a result, the Yakima Valley grows half of Washington State's wines.

**Elevation**

There is a wide range of elevations of vineyards in the Yakima Valley. Vineyard elevations can be found from 800 feet to 2,000 feet above sea level.

**Growing Season**

Due to cool nights, warm days, and controlled water, Yakima Valley vines tend to have a longer growing season (190 day average) giving the grapes more hang time resulting in fully mature fruit. This, in turn, allows the fruit to retain its natural acidity with makes a more balanced wine that ages well and produces a more food friendly wine.