

NORTHWEST RIDGE



2016 Barrel Cuvée

THE VINTAGE

2016 continued the trend of warm growing seasons in Washington marked by an early start. Bud break and bloom were significantly advanced from historical dates, with bloom occurring in some areas as early as the third week of May, a good two-plus weeks ahead of average. By the end of May, 2016 was easily on pace to surpass 2015 as the warmest vintage on record.

To everyone's surprise, beginning in June, temperatures swung back toward normal. "As we all know weather is very unpredictable and we did not see the cool second half coming," said one winemaker. These cooler temperatures persisted throughout the majority of the summer.

One of the hallmarks of the vintage was a large crop which, notably, caught many winemakers and growers by surprise. As a result, many sites picked out heavier than average and expected, despite successive thinning passes. Most attributed the large crop size to larger than average cluster size. Both berry size and the number of berries were significantly increased.

Several factors were in play to cause this: the warmth of the previous year, the lack of fall or winter freezes, the warm spring, and then cooler summer temperatures. "Everything was set to maximize," one grower reported. As a result of this and additional plantings, 2016 was easily a record crop for the state.

Harvest started early, though not quite as historically early as the previous year. Cooler temperatures in September and October, along with some unseasonable rainfall, stretched the harvest season out to record lengths for some growers, with larger sites not finishing until the first week of November after starting in the third week of August.

Overall winemakers expected high quality fruit due to the extended hang time, with larger berry and cluster size.

THE DATA

Varietals: 63% Syrah & 37% Merlot 112 cases produced

Harvest Date: 9/18-10/13/2016

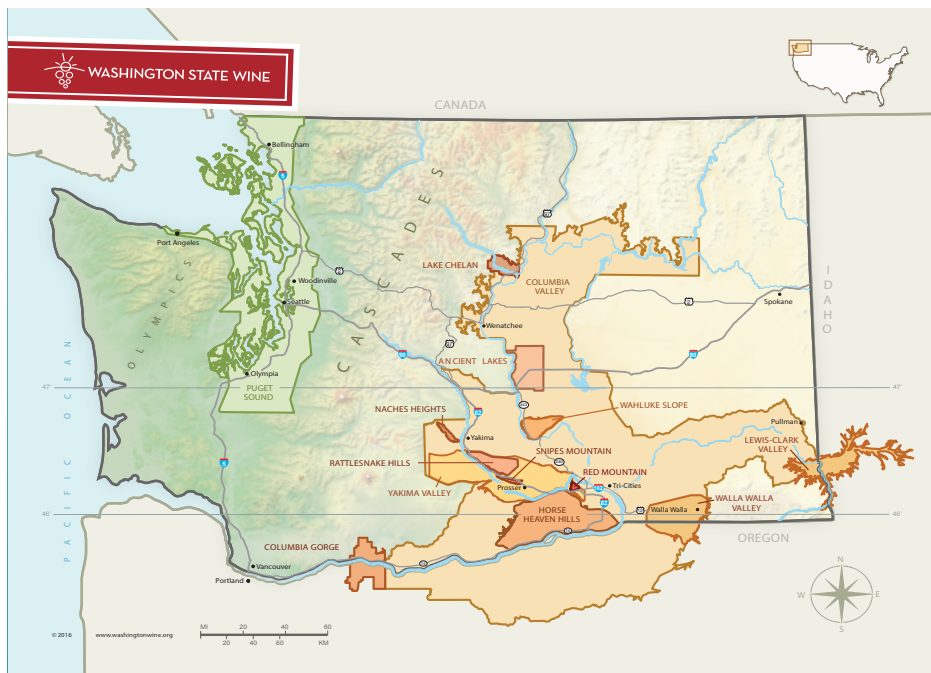
pH: 3.55

TA: 5.7

Alc: 13.7

THE NOTES

Complex fruit character and supple tannins. Aromas of plum, boysenberry and ripe cherries for a fruit-forward palate. Notes of vanilla, toasted oak and brown spice linger on the long finish.



THE AVA

Encompassing more than a third of the state, the Columbia Valley is by far Washington's largest growing region at nearly 11 million acres. The appellation is located in central, south-central, and south-eastern Washington with part of the appellation spilling across the border into Oregon.

The Columbia Valley is home to over 99% of all of Washington's vinifera acreage. Cabernet Sauvignon is the most planted grape followed by Merlot, Chardonnay, Riesling, and Syrah. However, over 30 vinifera varieties are currently planted in this region.

Variety typicity and pure fruit aromas and flavors are the hallmarks of wine from the Columbia Valley. For Cabernet Sauvignon, black cherry, cassis, and light, high-toned herbal notes are often the hallmarks. Merlots are redolent with red fruit aromas and flavors, such as sweet cherries, red currants, and raspberries, along with chocolate and, occasionally, mint. Chardonnays are mildly aromatic with aromas and flavors ranging from fresh green apple to stone fruit and tropical fruit depending on the warmth of the site. In terms of Riesling, cooler sites tend to produce aromas and flavors of lime, lemon, and green apple. In warmer regions this turns to stone fruit, particularly peach. Aromas and flavors for Syrah range from dark fruit, such as blackberries, to blueberries and cranberries. However, many are notable for being less fruit forward and more dominated by savory notes.

The relationship to the Missoula Floods, a series of cataclysmic events, defines the soil types of the vineyards in Washington. Most vineyards lie below the floodwaters with soils of loess—wind blown deposits of sand and silt—overlying gravel and slackwater sediment with basalt forming the bedrock. This provides a diversity of soil types that are well drained and ideal for viticulture. The Columbia Valley lies in the rain shadow of the Cascade Mountain range. The region has an arid and semi-arid, continental climate, receiving an average of 6–8 inches (15–20cm) of precipitation annually. Irrigation is therefore required to grow vinifera grapes.

This irrigation, along with consistently warm, dry temperatures during the growing season, provides growers with a large amount of control over grape development compared to many other regions of the world. This leads to minimal vintage variation and consistently high-quality wines. Early and late season frosts along with hard winter freezes are the main environmental threats. Due to dry temperatures and sandy soils, phylloxera has not as of yet established itself in the area, so most vines are grown on their own rootstock in contrast to many other areas of the world.