



## 2015 Sauvignon Blanc Willamette Valley Appellation

**Location:** The Willamette Valley is 150 miles long and up to 60 miles wide making it Oregon's largest AVA. It runs from the Columbia River in Portland south through Salem to the Calapooya Mountains outside Eugene. Named for the river that flows through it, the Willamette Valley has the largest concentration of wineries and vineyards in Oregon and includes six sub-appellations: Dundee Hills, Eola-Amity Hills, McMinnville, Ribbon Ridge, Yamhill-Carlton and the recently approved Chehalem Mountains.

**Wine history:** Modern winemaking in the Willamette Valley dates back 50 years with the genius of three UC Davis refugees who believed that Oregon was an ideal place to grow cool-climate varieties. Between 1965 and 1968, David Lett, Charles Coury, and Dick Erath separately forged their way to the north Willamette Valley despite negative rumblings from their UC Davis cohorts who told them it was impossible to grow wine grapes in Oregon. They were the first to plant Pinot noir in the Willamette Valley. They also planted small amounts of related varieties, including Pinot gris, Chardonnay, and Riesling. These wine pioneers whole-heartedly believed that Oregon would one day become an important wine-growing region. Other believers were not far behind. Within the next decade, David and Ginny Adelsheim, Ronald and Marjorie Vuylsteke, Richard and Nancy Ponzi, Joe and Pat Campbell, Susan and Bill Sokol Blosser and Myron Redford all planted vineyards in the Willamette Valley. These families worked in a collaborative spirit, sharing advice, humor and encouragement, as they began writing history by producing superior wines in Oregon. Though, it wasn't until David Lett entered his Oregon Pinot noir in the 1979 Gault-Millau French Wine Olympiades and won top Pinot noir honors against France's best labels that the world started to take notice of Oregon as a serious winemaking region. The Willamette Valley became an official AVA in 1983. Today, it is recognized as one of the premier wine producing areas in the world. It is most widely known for its award winning Pinot noir, but consistently earns top honors for other such cool-climate varieties as Pinot gris, Dijon clone Chardonnay and Pinot blanc.

**Climate:** The Willamette Valley is relatively mild throughout the year, with cool, wet winters and warm, dry summers. While moisture is abundant, most of the rainfall occurs in the winter, not during growing season. This temperate climate, combined with coastal marine influences, make the gentle growing conditions within the Valley ideal for cool climate grapes, including Pinot noir. The Valley enjoys more daylight hours during the growing season than in any other area of the state. During this longer growing season, the Willamette Valley enjoys warm days and cool nights, a diurnal temperature swing that allows the wine grapes to develop their flavor and complexity while retaining their natural acidity.

**Soils:** The Willamette Valley is an old volcanic and sedimentary seabed that has been overlaid with gravel, silt, rock and boulders brought by the Missoula Floods from Montana and Washington between 10,000 and 15,000 years ago. The most common of the volcanic type is red Jory soil, which is found above 300 feet elevation (as it had escaped the Missoula Floods deposits) and is between four and six feet deep and provides excellent drainage for superior quality wine grapes. Anything below 300 feet elevation is primarily sedimentary-based soil.

**Topography:** The Willamette Valley is protected by the Coast Range to the west, the Cascades to the east and a series of hill chains to the north. Its namesake, the Willamette River, runs through its heart. The largest concentration of vineyards are located to the west of this river, on the leeward slopes of the Coast Range, or among the valleys created by the river's tributaries. While most of the region's vineyards reside a few hundred feet above sea level, parts of the Willamette Valley do reach much higher. The Chehalem Mountains are the highest mountains in the Valley with their tallest point, Bald Peak, rising 1,633 feet above sea level.

**Winemaking and Notes:** Sauvignon Blanc is only very lightly planted in Oregon with well less than 100 acres currently existing in the state and less than 50 in the Willamette Valley AVA. Despite its modest acreage this white varietal is as well suited for the geology and climate as the other most successful white varietals and far more conducive to be grown in Oregon than the ever-present weed known as Pinot Gris. Historically speaking, Sauvignon Blanc was given a shot prior to Pinot Gris taking over but a combination of poor growing and winemaking practices combined with poor sales of any Sauvignon Blanc (ever wonder why Mondavi calls it Fume Blanc?) led to a slow death spiral of the plantings in the state.

Over the years we have combined our Estate fruit with a handful of other sites in the Willamette Valley however from 2008-2014 phyloxera in a couple of other sites limited our ability to produce much more than our own vineyard could grow and production tumbled into the mid-hundreds of cases the lion's share of which was sold at the winery or to shops and restaurants in Oregon. In 2015 we re-acquired some fruit from one site and more than doubled our holdings in another allowing us to produce a bottling for distribution.

This bottling is made up of grapes planted in 2001 and 2002 from our Estate Vineyard in Ribbon Ridge, fruit from Oster Vineyard which is an older vineyard planted in the mid-1980s on the eastern side of the Willamette Valley past the town of Mt. Angel and from newer plantings (replacing the phyloxerated vines) from Oak Grove Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills AVA. All wines were fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks. Three different yeast strains were used to help create different aromatic characteristics across the vineyards and thus greater complexity in the finished wine. Fermentations were finished in February, 2016 and the wines from the three sites were combined for fining (with clay), cold stabilization, filtration and bottling on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

This is classic Sauvignon Blanc provided you do not think this variety should smell like cut grass and cat pee. This has high-toned and heavily fruited aromatics along with the tinge of straw and minerals which is what ripe Sauvignon Blanc should have as its varietal typicity. The strength of the aromatics resounds in the glass as the wine is deeply fruited with tropical notes at the entry giving way to apples with crisp acidity on the finish. The wine is bright and fresh but retains an enormous amount of texture and richness without being heavy or taking away from its "summertime drinking" sort of nature. This will pair easily with a very wide range of food ranging from summer salads to denser white fish, sushi rolls and nigiri to spicier Asian influenced dishes, risottos with summer vegetables to chicken and pork done on the grill (and while grilling).