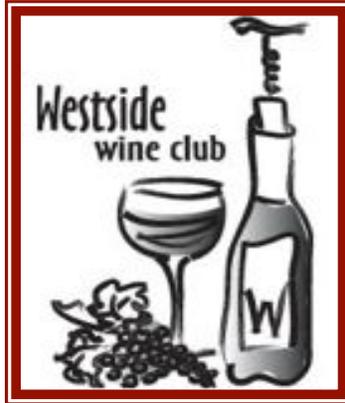


# West Side Wine Club

## August 2011



### Scheduled Meetings

**January 19, 2011**  
Crush Talk

**January 22, 2011**  
Holiday Party/Awards  
Gala

**February 16, 2011**  
Red Bordeaux Tasting

**February 27, 2011**  
Argyle Winery Tour

**March 16, 2011**  
Speaker: Robert Brittan of  
Brittan Vineyards

**April 20, 2011**  
Speaker: Darcy  
Pendergrass, winemaker  
at Amity Vineyards

**May 18, 2011**  
Barrel Sample Tasting

**May 29, 2011**  
Sofer Vineyards Tour

**June 15, 2011**  
Rosé Tasting

**July 17, 2011**  
Annual Picnic

**August 17, 2011**  
Other Whites Tasting

**September 21, 2011**  
Other Reds Tasting

**October 19, 2011**  
Pinot Noir Tasting

**November 16, 2011**  
Pinot Gris/Viognier Tasting

**December 7, 2011**  
Planning, Tours,  
Speakers, Events

The dog days of August are upon us. Luckily, the dogs are giving us a typical Oregon summer with typical warm days. We haven't broken 100 once this summer. The vines look very green and powdery mildew is struggling to gain a foothold on vines. The berries are formed now. Harvest, on average, looks to be around October 15<sup>th</sup>. It is doubtful that the summer will vary much more than a week from this date. This is a late date, but if the weather is fine this could turn out to be a very nice year. Growers, after last year, are dropping a lot of fruit. This bodes well for flavorful grapes provided you could get them ripe from conscientious vineyard owners. We think this is tough, but the France vigerons are cursing their warm weather. Burgundy is warmer than usual resulting in a crop of good but probably less remarkable wine.

I wanted to give a special shout out to Valerie and Lee Robinson for hosting the summer picnic at their delightful home in West Linn. The fire and enclosed patio proved perfect for such a wet day. As the weather cleared, we could see a beautiful view over a green and serene valley. The weather proved wonderful for reds and pinots.

Speaking of which, I admit that I did not go to IPNC as I had hoped. I had some friends who spent the \$1000.00 and went the tastings and seminars throughout the event. It sounded fantastic. Flights that included a Vosne Romanee and other fine Burgundies. I guess they received a tour of Belle Ponte. What can I say? The Westside Wine Club received our own personal tour from Brian. I am always amazed at the opportunities that we have at our club. These tours are fun and help make us better winemakers.

Speaking of which, the results are back for 3 of the 4 main competitions. Congratulations to all! All these competitions help provide us with feedback from judges who know only the wine. The quality and type of judging can vary as well. The State Fair and the WSAWS competitions have outstanding judges who take their tasting seriously. The Washington County Fair also provides experienced judging. The Clark County Fair is a bit more unusual. The judges are amateurs. They typically have many amateur judges sitting at a table with one "experienced" judge. One causality of this type of arrangement is that clearly sweet wines are valued by the judges. The vast majority of blue ribbons were handed out to sweet or fruit wines. That is not to say that they didn't find some vinifera worthy of gold/blue medals, but that clearly, for the average person, a little sugar in their wine is nice. Entering a wine to several competitions gives you a better, well round view of the wine. If your wine didn't quite meet your expectations in awards, it may be that the wine is in a unique style or that it needs to age.

Crush is upon us and but with a variety of events in the summer, my grape decisions are still lagging, just like last year. My winery is as complete as it is going to be so that is not holding me back. I am waiting to see if I can get some good pinot. If not, I will focus more on eastern Washington. Another cool year, but this helps bring acid to those warm weather grapes. The Cascades can protect them from the worst of the rains. Unfortunately, last year there was a freeze in the fall that hit the eastern Columbia Valley bad- especially Walla Walla. The end result is that the Vineyard owners have been delaying commitments. Usually we know in July what our orders are going to be. This year we have had to wait until August. If you want some grapes make sure you get your order in. Also, for some Vineyards like Lonesome Springs, there are many varieties that can be picked at roughly the same time. Sammy will try to make it all work.

Enjoy our summer and get ready for crush!

Jon Kahrs  
President, WSWC

Drink Responsibly.  
Drive Responsibly.

## Quotes & Information

The Oregonian had an article saying, "because of Oregon's reputation as a wine bastion, the Wine Bloggers Conference will hold it's 2012 conference in Portland. Were looking at 375 attending."

### FARM TO FORK

Farm Dinners Celebrating Oregon's farms, wineries & food artisans. Each FARM to FORK Event is a farm-to-table feast, local food showcase, and community celebration rolled into one. Farm Dinners designed to reconnect you to the source of your food, and to celebrate the talented farmers, food artisans, winemakers, and chefs who contribute to the growing local food communities of SOUTHERN OREGON, the WILLAMETTE VALLEY & the HOOD RIVER VALLEY. More info at: <http://farmtoforkevents.com/>

Frenchman **Georges de Latour** came to America in the late 1800's to prospect for gold. He didn't find much gold, but he founded a truly golden winery: **Beaulieu Vineyard**.

"Wine improves with age. The older I get, the better I like it." --- Anonymous

"Compromises are for relationships, not wine." --- Sir Robert Scott Caywood

I like best the wine drunk at the cost of others.  
*Diogenes the Cynic*

Consuming wine in moderation daily will help people to die young as late as possible. ~ Dr Philip Norrie

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, August 17 at 7:00 p.m. at Oak Knoll  
**Agenda:** Other whites - Chardonnay / white blends / Fruit Wine / Mead etc. *however, not Pinot Gris or Viognier.*

**Snacks:** Barb & Ken Stinger, Thanks

**Place:** Oak Knoll Winery

- 1.) Please bring two glasses for tasting wines.
- 2.) For all our protection, all members must sign a waiver every year. You can also pay 2011 dues at this time.
- 3.) Meetings begin at 7pm and end by 9pm. If you can get there a little early to help set up, please do and help to put away chairs and tables at the end.

**WSWC Website:** <http://www.westsidewineclub.com/>

**Message Board:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Westsidewineclub/>

### Annual Picnic July 17

Jon started things off with a short business meeting. He thanked Lee & Valerie Robinson for providing their beautiful home for our picnic this year. They had the perfect covered area to get us all out of the rain.

Kathleen High will provide snacks for the September meeting at Oak Knoll.

Please welcome new members Dennis & Marlene Grant, Ted Johnson and Bill & Sandy Sanchez.

Jon mentioned that the way the summer is going the valley Pinot Noir might experience a similar season as last year. They are 4-6 weeks behind normal now. Craig Bush will try to keep us informed.

Sammy said Chandler Reach; Kiona and Lonesome Springs Ranch grapes are looking good while Zerba was hit hard by the November freeze. He also said Sagemoor is OK but needs to know our order level early.

Bill Brown reported that Merlot & Cabernet Sauvignon grapes would be available from Cliff Creek (southern Oregon) for \$1 per pound delivered to Dundee.

Jon said Schroeder Vineyard is a good source for Viognier, he will check availability.

Miriam Schnepf collected member wines and entry forms for the Washington County Fair.

Rick Kipper was available for Clark County Fair entries but none were brought.

Thanks go out to Jon Kahrs for delivering member wines to the WVAWS & Oregon State Fair competitions.

No sunscreen was needed at the annual picnic held on the covered deck at the home of Lee & Valerie Robinson. Rain was the order of the day for about 35 members. There was plenty of food and member wines to go around. The rain did let up, however, and the view off the deck was worth getting a little wet.





Pictures courtesy of Phil Bard & Ken Stinger - Thanks

## Oak

The use of oak plays a significant role in winemaking and can have a profound effect on the resulting wine, affecting the color, flavor, tannin profile and texture of the wine. Oak can come into contact with wine in the form of a barrel during the fermentation or aging periods. It can be introduced to the wine in the form of free-floating oak chips or as wood staves (or sticks) added to wine in a fermentation vessel like stainless steel. The use of oak barrels can impart other qualities to wine through the processes of evaporation and low-level exposure to oxygen.

### History

In early wine history, the amphora was the vessel of choice for the storage and transportation of wine. Due to the perishable nature of wood material it is difficult to trace the usage of barrels in history. The Greek historian Herodotus noted that ancient Mesopotamians used barrels made of palm wood to transport wine along the Euphrates. Palm is a difficult material to bend and fashion into barrels, however, and wine merchants in different regions experimented with different wood styles to find a better wood source. The use of oak has been prevalent in winemaking for at least two millennia, first coming into widespread use during the Roman Empire. In time, winemakers discovered that beyond just storage convenience that wine kept in oak barrels took on properties that improved the wine by making it softer and in some cases better tasting. Robert Mondavi is credited with expanding the knowledge of winemakers in the United States about the different types of oak and barrel styles through his experiments in the 1960s & 1970s.

### Effects on wine

The porous nature of an oak barrel allows some levels of evaporation and oxygenation to occur in wine but typically not at levels that would cause oxidation or spoilage of the wine. In a year, the typical 59-gallon barrel can lose anywhere from 5½ to 6½ gallons of wine through the course of evaporation. This evaporation (of mostly alcohol and water) allows the wine to concentrate its flavor and aroma compounds. Small amounts of oxygen are allowed to pass through the barrel and act as a softening agent upon the tannins of the wine.

The chemical properties of oak itself can have a profound effect on the wine. Phenols within the wood interact with the wine to produce vanilla type flavors and can give the impression of tea notes or sweetness. The degree of "toast" on the barrel can also impart different properties affecting the tannin levels of the wine as well as the aggressive wood flavors. The hydrolysable tannins present in wood, known as ellagitannins, are derived from lignin structures in the wood. They help protect the wine from oxidation and reduction.

Wines can be barrel fermented in oak or they can be placed in oak after fermentation for a period of aging or maturation. Wine that is matured in oak receives more of the oak flavors and properties than wine that is fermented in oak. This is because yeast cells interact with and "latch on" to the oak components. When the dead yeast cells are removed from the wine as lees some of these oak properties go with them. Characteristics of white wines that are fermented in oak include a pale color with an extra silky texture. White wines that are fermented in steel and then matured in oak will have a darker coloring due to the heavy phenolic compounds that are still present. Flavor notes that are common descriptions of wines exposed to oak include caramel, cream, smoke, spice and vanilla. Chardonnay is a variety that has very distinct flavor profiles when fermented in oak that include coconut, cinnamon and cloves notes. The "toastiness" of the barrel can bring out varying degrees of mocha and toffee notes in red wine.

The length of time that a wine spends in the barrel is dependent on the varietal and style of wine that the winemaker wishes to make. The majority of oak flavoring is imparted in the first few months that the wine is in contact with oak but a longer term exposure can affect the wine through the light aeration that the barrel allows which helps to precipitate the phenolic compounds

and quickens the aging process of the wine. New World Pinot noir may spend less than a year in oak. Premium Cabernet Sauvignon may spend two years. The very tannic Nebbiolo grape may spend four or more years in oak. High-end Rioja producers will sometimes age their wines up to ten years in American oak to get a desired earthy, vanilla character.

The species of oak typically used for American oak production is the *Quercus alba*, which is a white oak species that is characterized by its relatively fast growth, wider grain and lower wood tannins. It is found in most of the Eastern United States as well as Missouri, Minnesota and Wisconsin where many wine barrels are from. In Oregon the *Quercus garryana* white oak has started to gain usage due to its closer similarities to European oak.



French white Oak

In France, both the *Quercus robur* (common oak) and *Quercus petraea* (white oak) are considered apt for wine making, however, the latter is considered far superior for its finer grain and richer contribution of aromatic components like vanillin and its derivatives, methyl-octalactone and tannins, as well as phenols and volatile aldehydes. French oak typically comes from one or more primary forests: Allier, Limousin, Nevers, Tronçais and Vosges. The wood from each of these forests has slightly different characteristics. Many winemakers utilize barrels made from different cooperages, regions and degrees of toasting in blending their wines to enhance the complexity of the resulting wine.

Italian winemakers have had a long history of using Slovenian oak from the *Quercus robur*, which is known for its tight grain, low aromatics and medium level tannins. Slavonia oak tends to be used in larger barrel sizes (with less surface area relative to volume) with the same barrels reused for many more years before replacement. Prior to the Russian Revolution, *Quercus petraea* oak from the Baltic states was the most highly sought after wood for French winemaking. Today Russian oak from the Adygey region along the Black Sea is being explored by French winemakers as a cheaper alternative to French oak. Canadian wineries have been experimenting with the use of Canadian oak, which proponents describe as a middle ground between American and French oak even though it is the same species as American oak.

Oak trees are typically between 80–120 years old prior to harvesting with the ideal conditions being a cool climate in a dense forest region that gives the trees opportunity to mature slowly and develop a tighter grain. Typically one tree can provide enough wood for two 59 gallon barrels. The trees are typically harvested in the winter months when there is less sap in the trunk.

### Differences between French and American oak

American oak tends to be more intensely flavored than French oak with more sweet and vanilla overtones due to the American oak having two to four times as many lactones. Winemakers choose American oak typically for bold, powerful reds; base wines for "assemblage," or for warm climate Chardonnays. Besides being derived from different species, a major difference between American and French oak comes from the preparation of the wood. The tighter grain and less watertight nature of French oak obliges coopers to split the wood along the grain. The wood is then aged or "seasoned" for 24 to 36 months in the open air, in a so-called wood-yard.

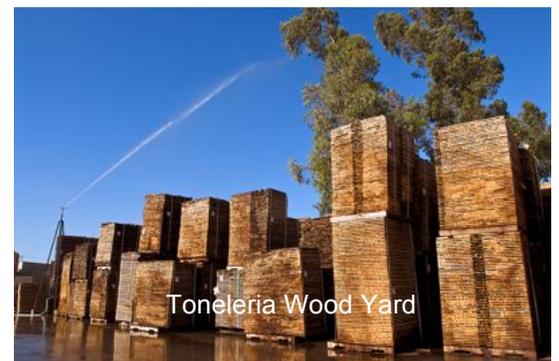
Even though American coopers may use a kiln-dry method to season the wood, almost all others will season American oak in exactly the same way as French. Open air seasoning has the advantage of leaching undesirable chemical components and bitter tannins, mellowing the oak in a manner that kiln-dry methods are incapable of replicating. Even though sun, rain, and wind may suffice in most cases to season oak, in dryer climates coopers - such as Tonelería Nacional - apply up to 2.000 mm. of water a year to their wood stacks in order to facilitate the seasoning process.

Since French oak must be split, only 20 to 25% of the tree can be utilized; American oak may be serrated, which makes it at least twice as economical. Its more pronounced oxidation and a quicker release of aromas help wines to lose their astringency and harshness faster; which makes this the wood of choice for shorter maturations - six to ten months. Because of American oak's modest tannin contribution, the perfect first fill is a wine with abundant tannins and good texture; it allows the fruit to interact harmoniously with the wood, which contributes a wide array of complex aromas and soft, yet very palatable tannins.

French oak, on the other hand, generates silky and transparent tannins, which transmit a sensation of light sweetness combined with fruity flavors that persist in the mouth. Spices and toasted almond are noteworthy, combined with flavors of ripe red fruit in red wines, and notes of peach, exotic fruits and floral aromas like jasmine and rose in whites, depending on the grape variety employed.

### Wine barrel

Wine barrels, especially those made of oak, have long been used as containers in which wine is aged. Aging in oak typically imparts desirable vanilla, butter and spice flavors to wine. The size of the barrel plays a large role in determining the effects of oak on the wine by dictating the ratio of surface area to volume of wine with smaller containers



Tonelería Wood Yard



having a larger impact. The most common barrels are the Bordeaux barriques style, which hold 59 gallons (225 liters) followed by the Burgundy style barrel, which hold 60 gallons (228 liters). Some New World wine makers use the large hogshead 79 gallon (300 liter) size.

New barrels impart more flavors than do previously used barrels. Over time many of the oak properties get "leached" out of the barrel with layers of natural deposits left from the wine building up on the wood to where after 3 to 5 vintages there may be little or no oak flavors imparted on the wine. The cost of barrels varies due to the supply and demand market economy and can change with different features that a cooperage may offer. As of late 2010 the price for a standard American oak barrel was \$400 USD, French oak \$900 to \$1000 USD, and Eastern European \$580 USD. Due to the expense of barrels, several techniques have been devised in an attempt to save money. One is to shave the inside of used barrels and insert new thin inner staves that have been toasted.

## Barrel construction

Barrels are constructed in cooperages. The traditional method of European coopers has been to hand split the oak into staves (or strips) along the grain. After the oak is split it is allowed to "season" or dry outdoors while exposed to the elements. This process can take anywhere from 10 to 36 months during which time the harshest tannins from the wood are leached out. These tannins are visible as dark gray and black residue left on the ground once the staves are removed. The longer the wood is allowed to season the softer the potential wine stored in the barrels may be but this can add substantially to the cost of the barrel. In some American cooperage the wood is dried in a kiln instead of outdoor seasoning. While this method is much faster, it doesn't soften the tannins quite as much as outdoor seasoning.

The staves are then heated, traditionally over an open fire, and when pliable are bent into the shape of the desired barrel and held together with iron rings. Instead of fire, a cooper may use steam to heat up the staves but this tends to impart less "toastiness" and complexity to the resulting wine. Following the traditional, hand worked style a cooper is typically able to construct one barrel in a day's time. Winemakers can order barrels with the wood on the inside of the barrel having been lightly charred or "toasted" with fire, medium toasted, or heavily toasted. Typically the "lighter" the toasting the more oak flavor and tannins that are imparted. Heavy toast or "charred" which is typical treatment of barrels in Burgundy wine have an added dimension from the char that medium or light toasted barrels do not impart. Heavy toasting dramatically reduces the coconut note lactones, even in American oak, but create a high carbon content that may reduce the coloring of some wines. During the process of toasting, the furanic aldehydes in the wood reach a higher level of concentration. This produces the "roasted" aroma in the wine. The toasting also enhances the presences of vanillin and the phenol eugenol, which creates smoke and spicy notes that in some wines are similar to the aromatics of oil of cloves.

## Other wood types

Throughout history other wood types, including chestnut, pine, redwood, and acacia, have been used in crafting winemaking vessels, particularly large fermentation vats. However none of these wood types possess the compatibility with wine that oak has demonstrated in combining its water tight, yet slightly porous, storage capabilities with the unique flavor and texture characteristic that it can impart to the wine that it is in contact with. Chestnut is very high in tannins and is too porous as a storage barrel and must be coated with paraffin to prevent excessive wine loss through evaporation. Redwood is too rigid to bend into the smaller barrel shapes and imparts an unpleasant flavor. Acacia imparts a yellow tint to the wine. Other hardwoods like apple and cherry wood have an off-putting smell. Austrian winemakers have a history of using Acacia barrels. Historically chestnut was used by Beaujolais, Italian and Portuguese wine makers. Some Rhône winemakers still use paraffin coated chestnut barrels but the coating minimizes any effect from the wood making its function similar to a neutral concrete vessel. In Chile there are traditions for using barrel made of rauli wood but it is beginning to fall out of favor due to the musky scent it imparts on wine.

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## Results from the Oregon State Fair Amateur Competition.

A total of 80 ribbons were awarded out of 150 entries.

6 gold	WSWC members won 2
20 silver	WSWC members won 10
54 bronze	WSWC members won 26

The WSWC winners are:

### **GOLD**

Barb Thomson	2004 Bordeaux Blend
Jon Kahrs	2010 Roussanne

### **SILVER**

Randy Carrier	2006 Zinfandel
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Merlot
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2008 Syrah
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Cabernet Sauvignon
Julie Gordon, Nancy Davis, Lori Prichard	2009 Syrah

Juliet Cardinal	2008 Syrah
Jon Kahrs	2009 Pinot Noir #2
Barb Thomson	2002 Pinot Noir
Barb Thomson	2007 Cabernet Sauvignon
Kenneth Stinger	2008 Cabernet Sauvignon

**BRONZE**

Randy Carrier	2007 Pinot Gris
Randy Carrier	2006 Merlot
Randy Carrier	2009 Syrah
Randy Carrier	2009 Merlot
Randy Carrier	2008 Zinfandel
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Pinot Gris
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2008 Riesling
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Riesling
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Viognier
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Pinot Noir
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2008 Cabernet Sauvignon
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Cabernet Sauvignon
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2009 Syrah
John Hooson & Donald Hoffard	2008 Sangiovese
Jon Kahrs	2009 Chardonnay
Jon Kahrs & Craig Busit	2009 Pinot Noir #1
Juliet Cardinal	2010 Marechal Foch
Juliet Cardinal	2008 Syrah/Sangiovese blend
Kenneth Stinger	2009 Merlot
Barb Thomson	2006 Cabernet Sauvignon
Barb Thomson	2006 Syrah
Barb Thomson	2005 Bordeaux Blend
Barb Thomson	2007/2008 Bordeaux Blend
Barb Thomson	2007 Super Tuscan Blend (Sangiovese/Cab)
Bill Sanchez	2009 Cabernet Sauvignon
Dana Blizzard	2008 Red Blend (Syrah/Cab Franc/Merlot)

**Results from the Washington County Fair.** We had 2 great judges this year, one from Domaine Drouhin, and one from Ponzi. Even if you didn't place this year, the evaluation sheets are great information for your future winemaking.

This year's winners are:

Don Hoffard	1st prize	Cab Sauvignon
Rachel and Don Hoffard	1st prize & Best of Show for Fruit Wine	Japanese Plum
John Hooson	1st prize	Merlot 2009
John Hooson	1st prize & Best of Show Red Wine	Malbec
Rick Kipper	1st prize	Chardonnay
John Hooson	2nd prize	Merlot 2010
Barb Thompson	2nd prize	Bordeaux Blend 07-08
Barb Thompson	3rd prize	Sangiovese

There are these results from the **2011 WineMaker Magazine Amateur Competition:**

4,235 Total Entries Judged April 8-10, 2011

Kenneth Stinger - 2009 Malbec - Silver

Kenneth Stinger - 2009 Merlot - Bronze

I don't think anyone else from the WSWC entered this competition.

**Results of the Clark County fair Wine Exhibition**

There were a total of 62 entries.

This year's winners are:

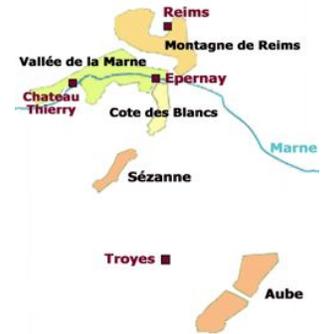
Michael Smolak	Viognier	17.38	Blue, 2 <sup>nd</sup> place overall
Michael Smolak	2009 Syrah Port	16.38	Blue, 7 <sup>th</sup> place overall
Jon Kahrs & Don Robinson	Pinot Noir	13.43	Blue
Jon Kahrs	Roussanne	12.88	Red
Jon Kahrs	Rose	11.19	Red
Jon Kahrs & Don Robinson	Red Table Wine	11.13	Red

**Congratulations to all of the winners**

Members of the WSWC toured the sparkling wine producer "Argyle" last month. I thought it would be informative to learn a little about the Champagne region of France.

## Champagne region of France

The **Champagne wine region** (archaic English: *Champany*) is a historic province within the Champagne administrative province in the northeast of France. The area is best known for the production of the sparkling white wine that bears the region's name. EU law and the laws of most countries reserve the term "Champagne" exclusively for wines that come from this region located about 100 miles (160 km) east of Paris. The viticultural boundaries of Champagne are legally defined and split into five wine producing districts within the administrative province: Aube, Côte des Blancs, Côte de Sézanne, Montagne de Reims, and Vallée de la Marne. The towns of Reims and Épernay are the commercial centers of the area.



Located at the northern edges of the wine growing world, the history of the Champagne wine region has had a significant role in the development of this unique terroir. The area's close proximity to Paris promoted the region's economic success in its wine trade but also put the villages and vineyards in the path of marching armies on their way to the French capital. Despite the frequency of these military conflicts, the region developed a reputation for quality wine production in the early Middle Ages and was able to continue that reputation as the region's producers began making sparkling wine with the advent of the great Champagne houses in the 17th & 18th centuries. The principal grapes grown in the region include Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier. Pinot Noir is the most widely planted grape in the Aube region and grows very well in Montagne de Reims. Pinot Meunier is the dominant grape in the Vallée de la Marne region. The Côte des Blancs is dedicated almost exclusively to Chardonnay.

### Geography and climate

The Champagne province is located near the northern limits of the wine world along the 49th parallel. The high altitude and mean annual temperature of 10 °C (50 °F) creates a difficult environment for wine grapes to fully ripen. Ripening is aided by the presence of forests, which helps to stabilize temperatures and maintain moisture in the soil. The cool temperatures serve to produce high levels of acidity in the resulting grape, which is ideal for sparkling wine.

During the growing season, the mean July temperature is 18 °C (66 °F). The average annual rainfall is 630 mm (25 inches), with 45 mm (1.8 inches) falling during the harvest month of September. Throughout the year, growers must be mindful of the hazards of fungal disease and early spring frost.

Ancient oceans left behind chalk subsoil deposits when they receded 70 million years ago. Earthquakes that rocked the region over 10 million years ago pushed the marine sediments of belemnite fossils up to the surface to create the belemnite chalk terrain. The belemnite in the soil allows it to absorb heat from the sun and gradually release it during the night as well as providing good drainage. This soil contributes to the lightness and finesse that is characteristic of Champagne wine. The Aube area is an exception with predominately clay based soil. The chalk is also used in the construction of underground cellars that can keep the wines cool through the bottle maturation process.

### History

The Carolingian reign saw periods of prosperity for the Champagne region beginning with Charlemagne's encouragement for the area to start planting vines and continuing with the coronation of his son Louis the Pious at Reims. The tradition of crowning kings at Reims contributed to the reputation of the wines that came from this area. The Counts of Champagne ruled the area as an independent county from 950 to 1316. In 1314, the last Count of Champagne assumed the throne as King Louis X of France and the region became part of the Crown territories.

### Military conflicts

The location of Champagne played a large role in its historical prominence as it served as a "crossroads" for both military and trade routes. This also made the area open to devastation and destruction during military conflicts that were frequently waged in the area. In 451 A.D. near Châlons-en-Champagne Attila and the Huns were defeated by an alliance of Roman legions, Franks and Visigoths. This defeat was a turning point in the Huns' invasion of Europe.

During the Hundred Years' War, the land was repeatedly ravaged and devastated by battles. The Abbey of Hautvillers, including its vineyards, was destroyed in 1560 during the War of Religion between the Huguenots and Catholics. This was followed by conflicts during the Thirty Year War and the *Fronde* Civil War where soldiers and mercenaries held the area in occupation. It was not until the 1660s, during the reign of Louis XIV, that the region saw enough peace to allow advances in sparkling wine production to take place.



### History of wine production

The region's reputation for wine production dates back to the Middle Ages when Pope Urban II, a native Champenois, declared that the wine of Aÿ in the Marne département was the best wine produced in the world. For a time Aÿ was used as a shorthand designation for wines from the entire Champagne region,

similar to the use of Beaune for the wines of Burgundy. The poet Henry d'Andeli's work *La Bataille des Vins* rated wines from the towns of Épernay, Hautvillers and Reims as some of the best in Europe. As the region's reputation grew, popes and royalty sought to own pieces of the land with Pope Leo X, Francis I of France, Charles V of Spain, and Henry VIII of England all owning vineyard land in the region. A batch of wine from Aÿ received in 1518 by Henry VIII's chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, is the first recorded export of wine from the Champagne region to England.

The still wines of the area were highly prized in Paris under the designation of *vins de la rivière* and *vins de la montagne*- wines of the river and wines of the mountain in reference to the wooded terrain and the river Marne which carried the wines down to the Seine and into Paris. The region was in competition with Burgundy for the Flemish wine trade and tried to capitalize on Reims' location along the trade route from Beaune. In the 15th century, Pinot Noir became heavily planted in the area. The resulting red wine had difficulty comparing well to the richness and coloring of Burgundy wines, despite the addition of elderberries to deepen the color. This led to a greater focus on white wines.

The Champagne house of Gosset was founded as a still wine producer in 1584 and is the oldest Champagne house still in operation today. Ruinart was founded in 1729 and was soon followed by Taittinger (1734), Moët et Chandon (1743) and Veuve Clicquot (1772). The nineteenth century saw an explosive growth in champagne production going from a regional production of 300,000 bottles a year in 1800 to 20 million bottles in 1850.

## Rivalry with Burgundy

A strong influence on Champagne wine production was the centuries old rivalry between the region and Burgundy. From the key market of Paris to the palace of Louis XIV of France at Versailles, proponents of Champagne and Burgundy would compete for dominance. For most of his life, Louis XIV would drink only Champagne wine with the support of his doctor Antoine d'Aquin who advocated the King drink champagne with every meal for the benefit of his health. As the King aged and his ailments increased, competing doctors would propose alternative treatments with alternative wines, to sooth the King's ills. One of these doctors, Guy-Crescent Fagon conspired with the King's mistress to oust d'Aquin and have him appointed as Royal Doctor. Fagon quickly attributed the King's continuing ailments to champagne and ordered that only Burgundy wine must be served at the royal table.

This development had a ripple effect throughout both regions and in the Paris markets. Both Champagne and Burgundy were deeply concerned with the "healthiness" reputation of their wines, even to the extent of paying medical students to write theses touting the health benefit of their wines. These theses were then used as advertising pamphlets that were sent to merchants and customers. The Faculty of Medicine in Reims published several papers to refute Fagon's claim that Burgundy wine was healthier than champagne. In response, Burgundian winemakers hired physician Jean-Baptiste de Salins, dean of the medical school in Beaune, to speak to a packed auditorium at the Paris Faculty of Medicine. Salins spoke favorably of Burgundy wine's deep color and robust nature and compared it to the pale red color of Champagne and the "instability" of the wine to travel long distances and the flaws of the bubbles from when secondary fermentation would take place. The text of his speech was published in newspapers and pamphlets throughout France and had a damaging effect on champagne sales.

The war of words would continue for another 130 years with endless commentary from doctors, poets, playwrights and authors all arguing for their favorite region and their polemics being reproduce in advertisements for Burgundy and Champagne. On a few occasion, the two regions were on the brink of civil war. A turning point occurred when several Champagne wine makers abandoned efforts to produce red wine in favor of focusing on harnessing the effervescent nature of sparkling champagne. As the bubbles became more popular, doctors throughout France and Europe commented on the health benefits of the sparkling bubbles, which were said to cure malaria. As more Champenois winemakers embarked on this new and completely different wine style, the rivalry with Burgundy mellowed and eventually waned.

## Classifications and vineyard regulations



In 1927, viticultural boundaries of Champagne were legally defined and split into five wine producing districts- The Aube, Côte des Blancs, Côte de Sézanne, Montagne de Reims, and Vallée de la Marne. This area covers 33,500 hectares (76,000 acres) of vineyards around 319 villages that are home to 5,000 growers who make their own wine and 14,000 growers who only sell grapes. The region is set to expand to include 359 villages in the near future.

The different districts produce grapes of varying characteristics that are blended by the champagne houses to create their distinct house styles. The Pinots of the Montagne de Reims that are planted on northern facing slopes are known for their high levels of acid and the delicacy they add to the blend. The grapes on the southern facing slope add more power and character. Grapes across the district contribute to the bouquet and headiness. The abundance of southern facing slopes in the Vallée de la Marne produces the ripest wines with full aroma. The Côte des

Blancs grapes are known for their finesse and the freshness they add to blends with the extension of the nearby Côte de Sézanne offering similar though slightly less distinguished traits.

In 1942, the *Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne* (CIVC) was formed with the purpose of protecting Champagne's reputation and marketing forces as well as setting up and monitoring regulations for vineyard production and vinification methods. Champagne is the only region that is permitted to exclude AOC or *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* from their labels.

For each vintage, the CIVC rated the villages of the area based on the quality of their grapes and vineyards. The rating was then

used to determine the price and the percentage of the price that growers get. The *Grand Cru* rated vineyards received 100 percent rating, which entitled the grower to 100% of the price. *Premier Crus* were vineyards with 90–99% ratings while *Deuxième Crus* received 80–89% ratings. Under appellation rules, around 4,000 kilograms (8,800 pounds) of grapes can be pressed to create up to 673 gallons (either 2,550 L or 3,060 L) of juice. The first 541 gallons (either 2,050 L or 2,460 L) are the *cuvée* and the next 132 gallons (either 500 L or 600 L) are the *taille*. Prior to 1992, a second *taille* of 44 gallons (either 167 L or 200 L) was previously allowed. For vintage champagne, 100% of the grapes must come from that vintage year while non-vintage wine is a blend of vintages. Vintage champagne must spend a minimum three years on its lees with some of premier champagne houses keeping their wines on lees for upwards of five to ten years. Non-vintage champagne must spend a minimum of 15 months on the lees.

## Revision of the Champagne region

The worldwide demand for Champagne has been continuously increasing throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. A record in worldwide shipping of Champagne (including domestic French consumption) of 327 million bottles was set in 1999 in anticipation of end of millennium celebrations, and a new record was set in 2007 at 338.7 million bottles. Since the entire vineyard area authorized by the 1927 AOC regulations is now planted, various ways of expanding the production have been considered. The allowed yield was increased (to a maximum of 15,500 kg per hectare during an experimental period from 2007 to 2011) and the possibility of revising the production region was investigated.

After an extensive review of vineyard conditions in and around the existing Champagne region, INAO presented a proposal to revise the region on March 14, 2008. The proposal was prepared by a group of five experts in the subjects of history, geography, geology, phytosociology and agronomy, working from 2005. The proposal means expanding the region to cover vineyards in 357 rather than 319 villages. This is to be achieved by adding vineyards in forty villages while simultaneously removing two villages in the Marne département that were included in the 1927 regulations, Germaine and Orbais-l'Abbaye.

The proposed 40 new Champagne villages are located in four *départments*:

22 in Marne: Baslieux-les-Fismes, Blacy, Boissy-le-Repos, Bouvancourt, Breuil-sur-Vesle, Bussy-le-Repos, Champfleury, Courlandon, Courcy, Courdemanges, Fismes, Huiron, La Ville-sous-Orbais, Le Thout-Trosnay, Loivre, Montmirail, Mont-sur-Courville, Peas, Romain, Saint-Loup, Soulanges, and Ventelay.

15 in Aube: Arrelles, Balnot-la-Grange, Bossancourt, Bouilly, Étourvy, Fontvannes, Javernant, Laines-aux-Bois, Macey, Messon, Prugny, Saint-Germain-l'Épine, Souigny, Torvilliers and Villery.

Two in Haute-Marne: Champcourt and Harricourt.

One, Marchais-en-Brie, in Aisne.

The INAO proposal was to be subject to review before being made into law and was immediately questioned in numerous public comments. The mayor of one of the villages to be delisted, Germaine, immediately appealed against INAO's proposal, with the possibility of additional appeals by vineyard owners. This will be followed by another review of the specific parcels that will be added or deleted from the appellation. The earliest vineyard plantings are expected around 2015, with their product being marketed from around 2021. However, the price of land that is allowed to be used for Champagne production is expected to immediately rise from 5,000 to one million euros per hectare.

While some critics have feared the revision of the Champagne region is about expanding production irrespective of quality, British wine writer and Champagne expert Tom Stevenson has pointed out that the proposed additions constitute a consolidation rather than expansion. The villages under discussion are situated in gaps inside the perimeter of the existing Champagne regions rather than outside it.

## Production other than sparkling wine

While totally dominating the region's production, sparkling Champagne is not the only product that is made from the region's grapes. Non-sparkling still wines, like those made around the village Bouzy, are sold under the appellation label *Coteaux Champenois*. There is also a rosé appellation in the region, *Rosé des Riceys*. The regional vin de liqueur is called *Ratafia de Champagne*. Since the profit of making sparkling Champagne from the region's grape is now much higher, production of these non-sparkling wines and fortified wines is very small.

The pomace from the grape pressing is used to make *Marc de Champagne*, and in this case the production does not compete with that of Champagne, since the pomace is a by-product of wine production.



# West Side Wine Club Leadership Team – 2010

President: **Jon Kahrs** [jekahrs@aol.com](mailto:jekahrs@aol.com)

- Set agenda for the year
- Establish leadership team
- Assure that objectives for the year are met
- Set up and run meetings

Treasurer: **Bill Spiller** [nrac@msn.com](mailto:nrac@msn.com)

- Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
- Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken and Barb Stinger** [kbstinger@frontier.com](mailto:kbstinger@frontier.com)

- Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- Monthly newsletter on first Wednesday
- Prepare meeting agenda
- Keep updated list of members, nametags and other data
- Club message board invitations

Chair of Education: **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@frontier.com](mailto:pnoir1@frontier.com)

- Arrange speakers for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@frontier.com](mailto:pnoir1@frontier.com)

- Conduct club tastings
- Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chair of Winery Tours: **Mike Smolak** [SmolakM@DimensionResources.com](mailto:SmolakM@DimensionResources.com)

- Select wineries to visit
- Arrange tours
- Cover logistics (food and money)
- Winery Tour 1
- Winery Tour 2

Web Content Editor: **Rick Kipper** [kips@lycos.com](mailto:kips@lycos.com)

Webmaster: **David Ladd**

Chair of Group Purchases **Sammy Nachimuthu** [murugasamy\\_nachimuthu@yahoo.com](mailto:murugasamy_nachimuthu@yahoo.com)

The chairperson makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute.

- Chandler Reach Vineyard – **Sammy Nachimuthu** [murugasamy\\_nachimuthu@yahoo.com](mailto:murugasamy_nachimuthu@yahoo.com)
- Del Rio Vineyard – **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@frontier.com](mailto:pnoir1@frontier.com)
- Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chair of Competitions: **Miriam Schnepf** [mowtnwmn@mac.com](mailto:mowtnwmn@mac.com)

- Work with Washington County Fair staff
- Encourage club participation in County Fair
- President will be the contact for the Oregon State Fair

Chairs for Social Events: **Barbara Stinger and Sammy Nachimuthu**

- Awards Gala / Holliday party