

PORTLAND MONTHLY

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Portland monthly

WINE COUNTRY WEEKENDS

Wine Country *Weekends*

+20
top wine
picks

OCTOBER 2010

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WINE COUNTRY WEEKENDS

CALL THEM INDEPENDENT, RENEGADE, OR JUST MOM-AND-POP, but most of Oregon's 387 wineries are tiny, family-run affairs that produce fewer than 5,000 cases a year—which makes visiting wine country something of a treasure hunt. Just finding the tasting rooms (many located on unmarked, winding gravel roads) can leave you feeling a rush of discovery, to say nothing of the first sip, which, in many instances, might be savored while taking in an unobstructed view of a certain volcano. And often, the person pouring your flight also planted and farmed the grapes, and transformed them into the wine you're sipping. So, while a weekend in the wine country can certainly be about finding the best pinots and chardonnays, it's also a way to connect with the spirit of Oregon. Let us show you some routes—and some of the roots. 

by

HANNAH WALLACE
photograph by Daniel Root



p. 36

WINE COUNTRY WEEKENDS

FOR THE

FOODIE



Some of the finest pinot noir vineyards in the world are perched on the rolling hills of the northern Willamette Valley. But the volcanic and marine soil is ideal for growing more than just grapes. Chefs here have long channeled the spirit of Oregon native James Beard by drawing inspiration from what grows in their own backyards.



THISTLE



TASTE

A few miles north of the inn stands one of the valley's sustainable-winemaking pioneers, **Lemelson Vineyards**. A Lewis & Clark grad in environmental law, owner Eric Lemelson oversees organically certified vineyards and uses gravity instead of pumps to move the wine from fermenter to barrel. *Thu–Mon 11–4; 12020 NE Stag Hollow Rd, Carlton; 503-852-6619; lemelsonvineyards.com*

Tony Soter, the former winemaker for Etude in Napa, serves some of the valley's best pinots at the end of an unmarked gravel road. The modernist tasting room at **Soter Vineyards** also offers sweeping views of the Willamette Valley. *By appointment only; 10880 NE Mineral Springs Rd, Carlton; 503-662-5600; sotervineyards.com; \$20 tasting fee refundable with purchase*

There's no fancy tasting room at **Belle Pente**, but it would be a travesty to miss winemaker Brian O'Donnell's earthy Murto Reserve pinot or his 2007 single-vineyard Estate Reserve pinot. O'Donnell and his wife, Jill, farm biodynamically, treating the soil not as dirt but as a living organism. *By appointment only; 12470 NE Rowland Rd, Carlton; 503-852-9500; bellepente.com*



EAT

Thistle chef Eric Bechard sources nearly everything within a 45-mile radius for a daily menu of delicacies such as light-as-air gnocchi served with fava beans, tomatoes, and shavings of sheep's milk cheese, or albacore tuna with lobster mushrooms and peas in a crayfish broth. The bar next door serves pre-Prohibition concoctions such as the Martinez (gin, dry vermouth, Cointreau, and orange bitters). *228 N Evans St, McMinnville; 503-472-9623; thistlerestaurant.com*

FRIDAY



CHECK IN

The **Brookside Inn** has variously been a sawmill, a pot farm, and a Christian retreat center. The latest owners, Bruce and Susan Bandstra, transformed it into an enchanting nine-room country inn on 22 shaded acres that include lush gardens (edible and floral), a fire pit for roasting s'mores, and a picturesque pond full of rainbow trout and bass. (Fly-fishing encouraged.) Serious foodies themselves, the Bandstras also throw wine dinners with guest chefs from the likes of Seattle's Crush and Portland's Navarre. (Check the inn's website for info.) *8243 NE Abbey Rd, Carlton; 503-852-4433; brooksideinn-oregon.com*



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THISTLE

SATURDAY



EAT

The **Brookside Inn**'s breakfast comes in stages (bring a book): strong coffee from Seattle's Fonté Coffee Roaster and fresh blueberry scones; yogurt and buttery housemade granola with filberts, pine nuts, and, if in season, just-picked marionberries. If you haven't been judicious, you might not have room for Bruce's "wet" scrambled eggs with truffle salt and lardons.



TASTE

At age 39, **Adelsheim Vineyard** is one of Oregon's oldest wineries, with one of the valley's newest tasting rooms. Tour the barrel caves, fermentation area, and press rooms. 11-4 daily; 16800 NE Calkins Ln, Newberg; 503-538-3652; adelsheim.com; \$15 for five pours; \$40 tour includes tastings

Down the lane is **Bergström Wines**, one of the valley's first biodynamic wineries. Trained in Burgundy, Josh Bergström makes famously big-bodied pinots like the Cumberland Reserve but also classically structured chardonnays. Look for November's "Epicurean Experience" lunches (\$45-65). 10-4 daily; 18215 NE Calkins Ln, Newberg; 503-554-0468; bergstromwines.com; \$15 tasting fee



EAT

Grab a fresh baguette sandwich at the **Filling Station Deli** in Carlton (305 W Main St, 503-852-6687), and drive to **Lenné**, just seven miles northeast (off Hwy 240). Winemaker Steve Lutz invites you to picnic on his front porch, provided you also taste. Try the pinots and you'll know why the prime min-

ister of Spain is a huge fan. *Thu-Sun noon-5; 18760 NE Laughlin Rd, Yamhill; 503-956-2256; lenneestate.com; \$5 tasting fee refundable with purchase*



DO

Kookoolan Farms is locally renowned for its vegetable CSA, creamy raw milk, and pasture-raised chicken. The farm also offers three-hour classes on truffle-making, humane chicken butchery (BYOClucker), and cheese-making. 15713 Hwy 47, Yamhill; 503-730-7535; kookoolanfarms.com



EAT

Long a haunt of local winemakers, **Red Hills Provincial Dining** remains one of the valley's top eateries. Richard and Nancy Gehrts serve meals like buttery Dungeness crab cakes with a mirepoix of vegetables, or a tender, flavorful halibut accompanied by a roasted-tomato ratatouille. Try a bottle of Gehrts Vineyard pinot, made by cult winemaker John Paul Cameron. 276 Hwy 99W, Dundee; 503-538-8224; redhills-dining.com

SUNDAY



TASTE

With its clerestory windows and views of mounts Hood and Jefferson, **Penner-Ash Wine Cellars** has one of the valley's most striking tasting rooms. Try a \$5 flight of viognier, pinot, syrah, and rubeo (an unusual blend of 70 percent pinot, 30 percent syrah that's fantastic with barbecue), or do the pinot flight (\$15). *Wed-Sun 11-5; 15771 NE Ribbon Ridge Rd, Newberg; 503-554-5545; pennerash.com.*

ASK A GURU



TASTE OF THE WILD

Ever since Dayton's Joel Palmer House opened in 1997, it has lured gastronomes from far and wide for its wild mushroom-themed fare, from Heidi's three-mushroom tart to a tantalizing candy cap mushroom crème brûlée. We asked chef Christopher Czarnecki for the lowdown on Oregon's wild mushroom bounty.

Where do you find your mushrooms?

Chanterelles are at the coast—as are coral, morels, and lobster mushrooms—all within a 20-mile range of Lincoln City. We get porcini up in the mountains, outside of Sisters. Morels are temperamental—they don't come back in the same spots year after year.

What's your favorite 'shroom?

Matsutake. They've got a unique flavor and aroma. The texture is like abalone: really firm. But they're a pain to clean.

There's no maitake on your menu. How come?

We don't use shiitake or enoki very often, either, because they're cultivated and don't usually have the character of wild mushrooms.

What type of wine goes best with mushrooms?

The wild mushroom/pinot combination is a match made in heaven. The earthiness from the mushrooms and the wine brings forth the fruit. Our wine list has over 500 Oregon pinots on it.

BY CONDÉ COX

WINE PICKS

LEMELSON

These pinot noir wines typically taste like ripe plums. The winery's best is separately bottled from the **Meyer Vineyard** (\$42).

SOTER

Made from 100 percent chardonnay and held for a decade before

release, the 'Blanc de Blanc' is Oregon's best sparkling wine (\$60). Soter's top pinot noir is from Mineral Springs Ranch vineyard (\$48).

BELLE PENTE

The delicate **Yamhill-Carlton District pinot noir** (\$25) is one of Oregon's best values.

PENNER-ASH

The **Dussin Estate** bottling (\$60) has rich berry notes with a leather overtone.

BERGSTRÖM

The 'Sigrid' **chardonnay** (\$78) is a standout with a whiff of elegant French oak barrels. The 'Old Stones' **chardonnay** (\$30) is almost as good, at a fraction of the price.

ADELSHEIM

The **Elizabeth Reserve pinot noir** (\$52) is made from a bottling of the best-tasting barrels from each vintage, with intense black raspberry flavors.

LENNÉ

This **pinot noir** (\$45) exhibits a dark cherry flavor that clearly reflects its terroir of marine sedimentary soils.