Welcome to Oregon! We are pleased you have joined us to investigate the New World home of Pinot noir—to explore Oregon’s uniqueness in climate, geology, and people.

Oregon is different. We have a relatively small wine industry, even though the state is third in number of wineries and fourth largest in wine volume in the U.S. Our approach to viticulture, winemaking, and marketing is personal and handcrafted. There is a pioneer spirit here that speaks of the vision, innovation, and independence required to succeed in a challenging cool-climate growing region. There is a camaraderie and collaborative spirit that values common good over individual benefit. There is accountability to the environment and for the well being of our neighbors.

**Points to Investigate:**
Basic questions need to be answered to begin to understand *Why Pinot noir?* and *Why Here?*
- What is special about our climate and what does it mean for our wines?
- What distinguishes the places Pinot noir grows best in Oregon, and are there real “terroir” differences in those places attributable to the site?
- What innovations in vineyard and winery practices have made it possible to make great wine in Oregon?
- What kind of people made the Oregon industry what it is today—pioneers, new waves, first and second generations?

**Presenters:**
David Adelsheim, Adelsheim Vineyard
Maria Ponzi, Ponzi Vineyards

**Contents:**
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2. The Cool Climate – latitude, sunshine, temperature and rainfall (pages 3-6)
3. Diversity of Viticultural Areas within the Willamette Valley (page 7)
4. Innovations in Cool-Climate Viticulture and Winemaking (pages 7-8)
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Oregon Pinot noir Country – the Willamette Valley and more
Oregon is a large state with seven major growing regions and 16 approved American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). Pinot noir is the most important variety only in the Willamette Valley, though there are plantings in the Umpqua and Rogue Valleys, Columbia Gorge and Columbia Valley. Almost 90% of the plantings of Pinot noir are in the Willamette Valley. Further, 83% of the State’s Pinot noir comes from the 40-mile-long, half-moon-shaped region stretching from west of Portland to the hills just south of Salem. This region has no official name, though it is often called the “North Willamette Valley.” Those who try Pinot noir from Oregon most likely will be drinking a wine from this small area. For the purposes of this discussion we will adopt, with apologies to the rest of the State, the common usage “Oregon,” even as we recognize that we might be speaking accurately of only a much smaller area.

[Diagram showing distribution of Pinot noir plantings by region in Oregon]

Oregon’s wine pioneers came to the Willamette Valley looking for the perfect place to grow Pinot noir—a place where longer hours of summer sun combined with cool temperatures at the beginning and end of the growing season. Wine grapes ripen slowly here, with a long period of flavor development at the end of the growing season and harvest in late September or early October.
The Cool Climate – latitude, sunshine, temperature, and rainfall
The weather conditions of the Willamette Valley—and of most places in the rest of the state where Pinot noir is grown—are described as cool-climate.

• Latitude
The 45th parallel cuts through the Willamette Valley just north of Salem. We are sitting halfway between the equator and the North Pole, but so is Newfoundland. So what does that mean? Being so far north, between March 21 and September 21, we have more daylight hours than growing regions further south. On June 21 we have 1.5 hours more sun than in Napa.

• Sunshine
Latitude supplies a convenient, but only hypothetical calculation. When one looks at the hours of sunlight, the real uniqueness of Oregon’s climate starts to emerge. Up through June, our vines get about the same amount of sun as those in Burgundy. Then suddenly, from July through September, we have more—in July, we actually have more sun than northern California. That very spiky growing season may explain why Oregon Pinot noirs have more fruit intensity than most Burgundies.
• **Temperature**
  Ripening requires heat sufficient to physiologically mature grapes, but not so much as to deprive the grapes of acid, finesse, and complexity.

Northern latitude plus proximity to the ocean brings moderate temperatures year round with no vine-killing cold in winter or serious frost in spring.

Ocean breezes bring cool nights that are especially important for Pinot during the ripening period.

The Cascade Mountains to the east protect us from the hot and cold extremes of the continental interior.

- Our winters are very mild with a mean January temperature of 42°F.
- Our summers are cool with July's average temperature being 68°F.

Harvest in the Willamette Valley usually occurs in late September-early October, compared to mid-September in Burgundy, and late August-early September in California. Big implications for Pinot noir style!

[Diagram: Average monthly mean temperatures for three regions growing Pinot noir]

We have less heat than Burgundy through almost the entire growing season—our Septembers are similar and we’re only warmer in October. Thus, the events during our growing season—bud break, bloom, veraison, and harvest—take place a week or two after Burgundy in most years. Oregon depends on a long, but cool, period of flavor development at the end of the growing season. This is a key difference between cool- and warm-climate wines.
## Heat Summation

*Given as Degree-Days above 50F for Selected Sites Worldwide*

<table>
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Source: Winkler, *General Viticulture*

- **Precipitation**
  Moderate rainfall at the right time is the second key to the cool-climate advantage.

  The Willamette Valley is protected from extreme coastal rainfall (80” annual) by the Coast Range.

  Still a lot of rain:

  44” per year (compared to 28” in Burgundy). However, most of it falls in the winter. Average rainfall in January is 7”, but only 0.5” in July and August.

Dry summers, compared to even rainfall through the year in Burgundy, mean low pressure from diseases like downy mildew and botrytis, but more issues with drought and irrigation.
Climatic challenges and global changes.

- Timing of bud break: early bud break can mean increased risk from spring frosts and can lead to earlier bloom and harvest. Late spring bud break can mean late bloom (leading to excess crop) and late harvest (in the rain!).

- Rain at critical points in the growing season: cool and rainy weather during flowering can lead to excessively small crops. Early fall rains can reduce wine quality and can threaten winegrower blood pressure levels.

- Global climate change poses the greatest long-term threat to Oregon viticulture. The uncertainty of how badly it may affect us is sobering and should prompt us to action to mitigate its effects.
Diversity of Viticultural Areas within the Willamette Valley

Much is said about how and why the Willamette Valley is the perfect place to grow Pinot noir. But once that most fundamental choice has been made, it must be added that not every acre in the Willamette Valley is suitable for growing great Pinot noir. Indeed, most of the acres of the Willamette Valley are deep, rich valley floor soils that are paradise for a great diversity of crops, but they can spell trouble for Pinot noir. Pinot noir at low elevations is subject to frost damage in the spring, and in such deep soils it can become overly vigorous, and unable to ripen its fruit properly.

In almost all cases, great Willamette Valley Pinot noir grows on hillsides, often quite rocky, facing southeast, south or southwest, at least 200 feet above sea level and avoiding cooler hilltop microclimates over 900 feet. This is a common factor amongst the six new AVAs within the Willamette Valley, regardless of soil types and weather patterns.

The hillsides within the Willamette Valley are composed of a complex series of soils formed at different stages of geological history. There is no doubt that the fascinating diversity of Pinot noir wines grown in the Willamette Valley depends in part on the diverse origins of the soils in which our vineyards are planted - a topic you will have a chance to explore in depth in your Soil into Wine workshop at OPC. See Reference Section map: Willamette Valley AVAs: Geologic Origins of their Soils.

Innovations in Cool-Climate Viticulture and Winemaking

Innovation, invention, curiosity, keen observation, energy, and dedication are all appropriate descriptors of the Oregon wine industry. In the vineyards, every phase of grape growing, from the dirt itself to consideration of the weight impact of tractors on the dirt, has been and continues to be examined in serious, sometimes painful, detail. Inside the wineries, the same sort of reevaluation, rethinking, and searching is constant. Many vineyard and winery practices now common in the U.S. were originally explored, innovated, and refined in Oregon.

- Site Selection and Matching Clones

Oregon pioneered the now accepted practice of matching site, climate, variety, and clone. See Reference Section White Clones in Oregon and Pinot Noir Clones in Oregon.

- Trellising, Canopy Management, and Spacing

Vertical trellising has been standard Oregon practice from the first vinifera plantings. The goal is to maximize the amount and effect of sunlight on individual leaves and minimize shading. It also enhances airflow and aids in prevention of mildew. Leaf pulling around the clusters, an idea from Switzerland, is widely practiced—with thoughtful variations—to enhance ripening and prevent mildew. The effect of dappled sunlight heightens flavor and aroma development, while decreased leaves increase the efficacy of sprays to prevent mildew. There will probably never be consensus on the correct spacing between vines and rows. However, to compensate for low tonnage per vine—and perhaps get increased body and flavor in the grapes—there has been general movement toward tighter spacings over the years. You will hear more about this in the Farming for Quality workshop at OPC.
• Harvest and Processing

In Oregon, every aspect of winegrowing and winemaking is permeated with the fundamental finding that gentle handling is intrinsic to the production of premium cool-climate varieties, Pinot noir in particular. Some of those gentle handling techniques, perhaps reinvented from old practices but certainly identified and valued in Oregon, include:

1. Handpicking fruit into very small containers rather than gondolas.
2. Moving grapes with conveyor belts rather than augers.
3. Using sorting tables to remove any damaged fruit.
4. Destemming while keeping each grape berry whole rather than crushing.
5. Cold maceration (after all, Oregon’s harvest is usually in October; the cellars are cold).
6. Moving must and wines with gravity or gas rather than pumps.
7. Fermenting in small containers (commonly 1.5- to 5-ton capacity) rather than huge tanks to provide appropriate temperature control and a manageable cap for punch down.
8. Punching down by hand rather than pumping over and, the corollary to all that work, less frequent punch downs. Innovative machines simulating hand punch down are now common.
9. Refraining from filtering: long before the first issue of the Wine Advocate, some Oregon winemakers chose to preserve the complete integrity of their Pinot noir wines by not filtering them.
10. Using Burgundian processes: Oregon was one of the first New World wine regions to adopt traditional Burgundian process elements, such as widespread use of only French oak barrels to complement Pinot noir.
A General History of the Oregon Wine Industry and Oregon Pinot Noir
A Tale of Vision, Creation, Courage, Blind Luck, and a Rosy Future

Pre-History
Vinifera winegrapes have been grown in Oregon since the first settlers put down roots in the nineteenth century. Accounts of vines being grown in the Oregon Territory go back as far as 1825. (By comparison, winegrapes were introduced into California in 1779, New Zealand in 1819 and Australia in 1832.) Over the next decades, settlers poured into Oregon lured by the tales of fertile open farmland, water, moderate weather, and the excellent quality of the Oregon Territory’s produce. Many early pioneers came from Europe, bringing dreams of producing wine in the “Promised Land.” Indeed, by the 1890s, Oregon wines were winning awards and general acclaim.

Oregon’s early adoption of Prohibition (1914) effectively put an end to that early chapter of Oregon winegrowing. After 1933, there remained no demand for local table wines. The wineries that started up focused on sweeter fruit wines.

The California industry managed to survive the socio-political-economic crisis, but just barely, and certainly not with an emphasis on quality table wines. Even by the 1950s and 60s, the majority of California wines were of the bulk and sweet types produced from undistinguished varieties. Premium wines were in the future; Pinot noir was essentially unknown.

As the California industry refocused on quality in the 1960s, Oregon quietly began an era, not of revitalization but actual discovery and birth of a wine region. In the early 1960s Richard Sommer planted vinifera vines in the Umpqua Valley, while both David Lett and Charles Coury founded vineyards in the Willamette Valley. More wine pioneers joined in: the Eraths, Ponzis, Blossers, Adelsheims, Campbells, Vuylstekes, and Fullers in the Willamette Valley; the Wisnovskys in the Rogue Valley; and the Bjellands and the Giradets in the Umpqua Valley. In 1970 there was one vinifera winery in Oregon and fewer than 100 acres of vines planted. By 2010, there were 418 wineries with over 20,300 acres planted in 848 vineyards.

The wine industry in Oregon has changed the face of the land. Hillsides in the northern Willamette Valley—the nucleus of the industry—that once were planted with walnut, hazelnut, prune, peach, and cherry orchards, and dotted with prune and nut dryers, are now covered with vineyards and architecturally imposing wineries as well. The transformation began in the last decades of the twentieth century as canneries closed, and fruit and nut processing was transitioned to more efficient commercial dryers. Land-use laws passed in 1973 limited residential building in agricultural zones, raising the value of farmland dramatically and encouraging vineyards to be planted. A new wine economy thrived. In the 2004 elections, a new threat surfaced as a state measure was approved by voters to roll back the land-use laws. Three years later, Oregonians reaffirmed their desire to keep development off of farmland and maintain the tradition of valuing farmland as a resource.

The wine industry has improved the quality of life in Oregon on many fronts. Vineyards are scenic, as well as being one of the most environmentally friendly agricultural sectors. Most vineyards are farmed with a very conscious goal of sustainability. Oregon has earned a fine
reputation for its excellent wines now sold nationally and internationally. The wineries themselves have become tourist destinations, attracting visitors from all over the world who come in order to appreciate the beauty and quality of Oregon wine country. The wine industry brings millions of dollars into the state in wine sales, and has a total annual economic impact on the state of more than $1 billion.

The Pioneers
The primacy of Pinot noir was super-imposed on the state of Oregon by a group of people who had done their homework in the late 1960s and early 70s. The early Pioneers studied the potential for vineyards in Oregon at UC Davis and at research centers in Colmar, France and Wädenswil, Switzerland. They used that background to select the North Willamette Valley as the prime place for superior New World Pinot noir production. Their sights were set on the flavor ripening capacity and low disease pressure provided by long, warm sunny summer days. Of equal importance, acid and structure-building derived from cool nights also made the region ideal. Abundant moisture during the dormant season to establish deep roots and mitigate irrigation issues added to the appeal of the Willamette Valley. Most of the first wave came from California, and they never looked back, because their science told them that they were planting the right grape in the right place and their heads told them they were home.

The early wine pioneers were individualists. They didn’t necessarily share a defined common goal: their original motivations varied with each stubborn, overly confident person. There has never been a single crusader, champion, or leader in Oregon. Instead there has always been a collaborative approach, based on mutual respect, admiration, and friendship. Whatever their personal reasons for placing themselves in Oregon, the early pioneers quickly recognized their interdependence. As a group they were highly educated, strong, and resourceful, but short on experience. Naïve dreams of making quintessential Pinot noir in a land where no one knew or wanted Pinot noir bonded them like blood brothers and sisters. In truth, no one really knew how to grow or make wine in Oregon. The awareness of this somehow made the whole project even more attractive to that early odd lot.

They had more in common than unsupported ideals. They shared the common experience of limited finances and were forced to begin on very low budgets, buying used equipment and working other jobs to make ends meet. Having found each other, they met often to share information as they adapted and invented techniques to deal with their uncharted terrain. They learned to farm, incorporating the finer aspects of viticulture; they discovered the details of delicate winemaking; they navigated their way through bureaucracies and legislation. They learned that they had to learn how to promote and sell.

New Waves
By the mid-80s, the word about Oregon wines, especially Pinot noir, had gotten out. New wineries, vineyards, and out-of-state investments flowed in. Outside confirmation of Oregon as a wine region was welcome and exciting. In 1988, the wine world sat up and took notice when Robert Drouhin, of the prominent Burgundian producer Maison Joseph Drouhin, bought a large property and started vineyards and a winery in the Dundee Hills. Drouhin declared there were only two places in the world he would grow Pinot noir: Burgundy and Oregon. This investment proved the catalyst for a series of increasingly expensive and sophisticated winery facilities. Individuals with personal fortunes built many of these facilities, like WillaKenzie Estate, King
Estate, Domaine Serene, and Lemelson Vineyards. Others, like Archery Summit and Willamette Valley Vineyards, were built by groups of investors. The days of used equipment and individual owner sweat equity were long gone. The original pioneers found they needed to keep up, or be left in the dust. The state-of-the-art, both in viticulture and winemaking, had evolved considerably, and the new players had all the bells and whistles—grape sorting conveyors, gravity flow processing, actual barrel caves, commercial kitchens, culinary staff, entertainment facilities, gracious guest housing, and more.

Many of the older wineries stepped up to the bar. Sokol Blosser engaged Oregon’s prestigious architect, John Storrs, to design its new tasting room. Elk Cove Vineyards, Chateau Benoit, and Rex Hill Vineyards constructed attractive hospitality facilities to accommodate large corporate and private events. David Adelsheim researched winery design throughout Europe before building his impressive new winery. Ponzi Vineyards established their wine bar and restaurant in Dundee to attract and accommodate wine country tourism. Most wineries reviewed and strengthened their marketing programs with renewed seriousness.

On the sustainability front, Sokol Blosser led the way to earth friendly building with an underground barrel cellar that became the first winery in the world to earn the U.S. Green Building Council’s prestigious LEED (Leadership in Engineering and Environmental Design) certification. At almost the same time, the Carlton Winemakers Studio won LEED certification for the entire new winery. Stoller winery followed with the first Gold LEED certification for a winery in the United States. It integrates gravity-flow winemaking techniques, energy-efficient heating and cooling, and wastewater reclamation to reduce negative environmental impact.

Outside Confirmation
Two major wine-tasting events, in 1980 and 1985, focused the world’s winepress attention on Oregon. In Paris, in 1979, Gault Millau sponsored an international Olympiad of wine. An Oregon Pinot noir, The Eyrie Vineyards 1975 South Block Reserve, scored in the top ten in its category. In 1980, the winners of the Olympiad were challenged to a rematch, and the same wine placed second. This surprising achievement was widely publicized. Wine writers and consumers became aware of Oregon, and its place as a wine-producing region was confirmed. In New York, in 1985, the International Wine Center held a “Burgundy Challenge” to compare 15 of the top Oregon Pinot noirs with a similar number of high quality Burgundies. All were from the 1983 vintage. The tasters were all experts. When the wines were revealed, the august tasters learned they could not distinguish Oregon Pinot noir from Burgundy; moreover, the top five scoring wines were all from Oregon. The tasting had an immediate impact on the prestige and actual sales of Oregon Pinot noir. The combination of press attention and the demonstration of a critical mass of top quality Oregon wineries set the industry leaping forward.

Steamboat Conference
In 1979, two devotees of both Pinot noir and fly-fishing, Stephen Cary and Mick Richmond, came up with the idea of combining their obsessions with other like-minded folk in a sort of retreat/seminar/party. Their idea was to invite Pinot noir winemakers only for three summer days at an idyllic fishing lodge on the wild North Umpqua River in Southern Oregon to talk (incessantly) about, and drink, Pinot noir—at least when they weren’t fishing. Amazingly, there were like-minded winemakers, and the annual Steamboat Conference has developed into the
Winemakers from around the world—honored to be invited—candidly discuss their observations, discoveries, and difficulties with this fickle variety. From these honest exchanges, the quality of Pinot noir around the world has soared.

Oregon Wine Advisory Board
Established in 1983, Oregon growers and producers elected to tax themselves at the highest rate in the world, $25 per ton. These funds, still relatively minor from a small region, have enabled Oregon to conduct vital viticultural and enological research and creative marketing programs.

The International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC)
IPNC was founded in 1987, the brainstorming result of a small group of Oregon wineries and business people from the city of McMinnville. Their idea was to develop an event based not on competition, but on celebration. It has proven a continuing overwhelming success. Pinot noir producers, consumers, and trade have responded with enthusiasm. The IPNC has gently and joyfully enhanced the position of Pinot noir, and Oregon, in the wine world.

¡Salud!
In 1992, the Oregon wine industry, joining with a hospital located in the wine area and with local businesses, stepped up to the plate in recognizing their responsibilities for the health care needs of vineyard workers and their families. ¡Salud! (meaning health and a toast “to your health” in Spanish), an event and program very loosely modeled on the Hospice de Beaune Auction, was developed and set into action. The wineries who were invited to participate agreed to produce and donate a half barrel of Pinot noir each vintage...a half-barrel of not just Pinot noir, but their very finest, an exceptional, exclusive cuvée. The wine is presented by barrel tasting and purchased at an elegant, lively auction each fall. Pinot noir lovers and collectors have responded with enthusiasm and generosity. All proceeds go to the ¡Salud! Health Care Program that now provides dependable and consistent services for vineyard workers and their families throughout the wine region. Administered through Tuality Hospital, ¡Salud! supports a full-time Spanish-speaking medical staff, clinics, classes, and mobile health vans that go directly to the wineries and vineyards. The innovative and effective ¡Salud! program has received numerous awards and recognition throughout Western states, serving as a model for other agricultural industries attempting to meet the needs of their valued workers.

Low Input Viticulture and Enology Program (LIVE)
In 1997, a group of Oregon winegrowers, led by Ted Casteel of Bethel Heights Vineyard and Carmo Vasconcelos of Oregon State University, researched a program that had been developed in Switzerland to define global standards for sustainable agricultural practices, and then initiated the LIVE (Low Input Viticulture and Enology) program. In 2001, Oregon LIVE became the first sustainability program in the U.S. to be certified by the International Office of Biological Control (IOBC). In addition, LIVE expanded its environmental protection rules to comply with Salmon Safe™ certification, encouraging farming practices that restore and protect healthy streams and rivers. As of May 2011, there were a total of 5,922 LIVE certified vineyard acres in Oregon. Wines made from LIVE certified grapes are entitled to display the LIVE, IOBC, and Salmon Safe logos on their labels, speaking to consumers who seek out sustainably grown products.
Oregon Pinot Camp
Realizing the very best way for people to learn about Oregon wines, vineyards, and winemakers is to see and experience the region firsthand, a group of winemakers dreamed up Oregon Pinot Camp. The idea was to invite people actually involved in selling Oregon wines—people who already knew and often loved Oregon wines—to come learn even more. Rather than a series of social tastings and marketing spiels, it was understood the campers deserved serious, substantive information, and experiences—with a little fun on the side. The first Oregon Pinot Camp in 2000 proved a great success from all perspectives. Begun as an experiment, it has become an annual event, booking up as soon as invitations are received, with requests for invitations coming in from all over the country.

Oregon Certified Sustainable Wine®
In 2008, the Oregon Wine Board created the Oregon Certified Sustainable Wine® (OCSW) program to help consumers more easily find wines that are certified by third-party programs as sustainable. OCSW focuses on the shared principles of Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE), Food Alliance, National Organic Program and its certifying agencies (e.g. Oregon Tilth, Stellar Certification Services, and others), and Demeter Biodynamic®. See Reference Section, Sustainable Winegrowing in Oregon.

The Future
The Oregon industry is a story by itself, but is also a significant part of an international wine industry rebirth, which occurred simultaneously throughout the United States and in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, France, Italy and Germany. It began in the early 1970s with countries working individually. Now the wine industry has become genuinely global. This is evidenced not only through international ownership of wine brands, but also through cooperation, friendship, international symposia, and joint research that have been helpful to all. In addition, touring “wine country” has become a popular international pastime, stimulating the development in every nation of wine country inns, bed and breakfasts, related tourist attractions, and fine restaurants serving wine-friendly cuisine.

As the Oregon wine industry continues to expand, most of the early winegrowers who developed the industry are still around. What a success story they have to tell. Out of nothing, an industry was built, one that has given Oregon a reputation as a visitor destination more romantic and glamorous than its stereotypical rugged outdoorsiness. It’s an industry that contributes substantially to Oregon’s economy through its many facets: agriculture, winemaking, support services and equipment, tourism, and sales. The proximity of metropolitan Portland to the Willamette Valley wine-growing region has mutually enhanced wine-country tourism, the hotel industry, top-quality restaurants, and markets committed to all manner of locally-grown and produced items.

For a lucky few of the early winemakers, the second generation is stepping up to the helm, working with their parents in some cases and taking over in others. They have a rich inheritance. When their parents started, no one noticed or cared what they were doing up in the northwest corner of the U.S. somewhere between California and Washington. Today, Oregon wine, especially Oregon Pinot noir, is recognized internationally.
The early winemakers are also substantiated and supported by hundreds of younger, talented, well-trained, and energetic people who revel in the continuing spirit of discovery and possibilities of Oregon. This next generation’s challenge is to keep the momentum moving forward, to build on the earlier successes without losing the passion and focus on quality that fueled the pioneers, and to continue the commitment to sustainability so they can in turn pass it on to their next generation. The world will be watching.

Oregon Wine Milestones

1961 Richard Sommer planted Oregon’s first post-Prohibition vinifera grapes, including Pinot noir, in the Umpqua Valley.


1968 First Oregon Pinot noir, from Hillcrest Vineyards in the Umpqua Valley, becomes available in Oregon market.

1970 Five bonded Oregon wineries with 35 vineyard acres.

1972 Passage of Senate Bill 100, which created Oregon’s revolutionary comprehensive statewide land use planning goals and the great legacy of Governor Tom McCall. Many people involved in the then infant Oregon wine industry actively worked on the passage of this legislation, and continue to support the intent Senate Bill 100. Their work is credited—in large part—for keeping the hillsides in agricultural rather than residential use. The result, even near urban centers, is acres of lush vineyards and orchards rather than “view” developments.

1973 The seven wineries in Oregon produced approximately 8,500 cases of wine.

1974 The importance of clones is first recognized and Oregon’s specific needs defined. The concept of matching variety to climate drove the establishment of the earliest Oregon vineyards. At the time, growers ordered the desired cool climate varieties—there was little understanding in the U.S. of clonal variations within the varieties. Oregon was blessed—by blind luck—to start with our “Pommard” and “Wädenswil” Pinot noir clones. Clones of other varieties were not as perfect. In 1974 Dick Erath led the effort to bring more clones of Pinot noir and Chardonnay from UC Davis and monitor the plant material through State quarantine at Oregon State University. In France, David Adelsheim and Charles Coury, Jr. arranged for selections of white varieties and Pinot noir to be sent to Oregon State University from research stations in Espiguette and Colmar.

1975 L’Omelette Restaurant, the trendy Portland spot in the 70s, introduced the first wine list featuring an all Oregon wine section. The wine list was created by David Adelsheim, then sommelier, now president of Adelsheim Vineyard.

1977 The first coffee table book about the wines of the region, The Winemakers of the Pacific Northwest by Elizabeth Purser, was published. Though perhaps way before its time, this book with its full-page color photographs (and naïve text) is now considered a rare wine collector’s item.

Table Wine Research Advisory Board was established to conduct needed research support for the young but growing wine industry. It received $12/ton, levied on grapes harvested in Oregon.
Oregon’s strict wine labeling regulations, proposed by the industry, were adopted by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. The innovative regulations are a bold component at the foundation of the Oregon wine industry. Although the Federal government had raised the national standards during the time these Oregon regulations were being debated, Oregon’s remain the stricter, and continue to set the national standards for honesty and integrity in wine labeling.

1978  A handful of Oregon winery owners gathered over a kitchen table to create the first “Discover Oregon Wines” brochure, to function as both a backgrounder and as a tourist guide. Printed regularly until 2002, it grew into a book-like publication called *Vintage Oregon*. Over 500,000 copies were printed of the last edition. It was singularly effective in developing basic economic viability for small wineries as well as the Oregon wine region as a whole. It also proved useful as another Oregon specialty came about, joint winery promotions, particularly the extremely popular Memorial and Thanksgiving Weekend Wine Tours. It has been supplanted by a series of regional guides, an overarching Oregon brochure, and a consolidated system of distribution.

Oregon Winegrowers Association is founded, a statewide trade organization merging the former Winegrowers Council of Oregon (representing the Willamette Valley) and the Oregon Wine Growers Association (of Southern Oregon).

1979  Gault-Millau French Wine Olympiad placed The Eyrie Vineyards 1975 South Block Pinot Noir in their top ten in the Pinot noir category, resulting in the first international recognition of Oregon.

Hugh Johnson visited Oregon. His discussions with Oregon vintners convinced him to add an Oregon map to his definitive *World Atlas of Wines*.

Steamboat Conference established by Stephen Cary (Yamhill Valley Vineyards, OR) and Mike Richmond (Acacia Winery, CA). It is an annual three-day summer gathering of winemakers only...initially from Oregon and California, but now from all around the world. The approach is simple: tastings and endless unrecorded honest discussions on the true nature and maddening elusive beauty of Pinot noir help to increase the wealth of knowledge about Pinot noir production and appreciation. The conference was named for the setting, Steamboat Inn, a world famous fly fishing lodge on the wild, remote North Umpqua River in Oregon.

1980  **Thirty-four bonded Oregon wineries with 1,100 vineyard acres.**

A Robert Drouhin-sponsored French blind tasting reconfirmed the high rating of The Eyrie Vineyards 1975 Pinot Noir. International coverage of the upset brought widespread attention to Oregon Pinot noir.

The dramatic volcanic eruption of Mt. St. Helen’s brought world focus to the region. Feature stories speculated on the fate of grapevines and wines. In fact, some vines were
damaged and a major industry-funded research project was launched to study the effect of volcanic ash on juice and wine. Oregon vintages are never normal, but this one was spectacularly unique.

1981 Ponzi Vineyards was the subject of the first New York Times exclusive profile/review coverage of Oregon. Frank Prial featured the Ponzi 1979 Willamette Valley Pinot noir.


1983 Cary Oregon Wines, the first national brokerage for Oregon wines, was established by Stephen Cary (now winemaker at Yamhill Valley Vineyards) and Reuben Rich. They carried the message, and the proof, of premium Oregon wines to distributors and the trade throughout the United States. Although the business no longer exists, many of the distributor/winery relationships developed then remain intact and successful today. The efforts of Cary Oregon Wines established acquaintances and set the foundations for many of the pivotal media events of the future.

Publication of the first edition of Oregon Grape Growers’ Guide, the only basic handbook on cool-climate viticulture written by growers—Marilyn Webb, Ted Casteel, David Adelsheim, Susan Sokol-Blosser, and others—for growers is released. The Guide has since been in continuous demand and publication.

The Oregon Wine Advisory Board was established, replacing the Table Wine Research Advisory Board. Oregon growers and producers elected to tax themselves at the highest rate in the world, $25 per ton. Funds collected as taxes by the state and administered through the Oregon Department of Agriculture and a volunteer board of directors are restricted to projects equally divided between research and marketing.

1984 Robert Parker of the Wine Advocate was contacted by Rachel Starr (founder of the Portland wine shop, Great Wine Buys). At Parker’s request and expense, Starr selected and shipped him varied lots of Oregon Pinot noirs. The samples sparked a quiet, curious, exploratory trip to Oregon by Parker and his assistant in 1985. They toured, tasted and subsequently discovered Oregon. [Overheard comment, “These guys don’t know what they have here…”] The Advocate’s enthusiastic review of Oregon’s 1983 vintage brought the wine world’s focus to Oregon. Parker and his brother-in-law, Michael Etzel, later partnered in establishing an Oregon vineyard called Beaux Frères, whose first vintage was 1990.

Oregon State University and Oregon’s wine industry organized and hosted the first International Cool Climate Wine Symposium. The quadrennial event is held in various cool climate regions of the world.

“Dijon clones” arrive at Oregon State University. Though commonly referred to as Dijon clones, the selections of Chardonnay and Pinot noir came from many parts of Burgundy. Their arrival has resulted in a profound improvement in Oregon Chardonnay, and greater
complexity of flavors and earlier ripening times in Oregon Pinot noir. David Heatherbell—then of OSU, now home in New Zealand—and Raymond Bernard of the ONIVINS Research Station in Dijon demonstrated international wine colleagueship in jointly overcoming many obstacles to this project.

1985 The Burgundy Challenge at the International Wine Center, New York was organized by Al Hotchkin and Peter Morrell. The intriguing event, where a combination of 30 high-profile Burgundies and Oregon Pinot noirs were tasted blind, piqued the curiosity of the New York press, wine trade, and connoisseurs. The experts could not distinguish Oregon from Burgundy, and went on to choose a top five consisting entirely of Oregon bottlings. Fortunately, when the blanket of positive press and sudden demand for Oregon Pinot noirs hit, the early marketing efforts had already placed Oregon wines in national outlets. All previous inertia vanished, and the market’s interest in Oregon wine leaped forward. 

_Wine Spectator_ at last acknowledges Oregon. The article featured the astonishing results of the Burgundy Challenge and included photos exhibiting the beauty of Oregon vineyards.

1987 The inaugural International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC) was held in McMinnville. It was the world’s first wine forum, created by local winemakers and community wine lovers, to focus exclusively on Pinot noir. Speakers included several rising star winemakers from Burgundy. Gerald Asher also spoke, and subsequently wrote a long, beautifully romantic story detailing the Celebration in _Gourmet_ magazine. The event was launched; Oregon was blessed; and the future of the IPNC was not only assured, but also mandated.

The Drouhin Family, of the highly respected and venerable Maison Joseph Drouhin in Burgundy, purchased 100 acres for vineyards and a winery in the North Willamette Valley. Robert Drouhin had made several visits and appearances in Oregon, earning the respect and friendship of the larger wine community. Véronique Drouhin was appointed winemaker, and 1988 was their first vintage. This extraordinary Franco-Oregon venture was widely reported, denoting the seriousness of Oregon wines and underscoring credibility of the Oregon wine industry. The flow of established winemakers from other regions to Oregon continues, from Australia, New York, Canada, and California (among other corners of the world).

While the IPNC demonstrated that Oregon knew exactly how to put on a great wine event, it was also the year Oregon learned a hard but vital marketing lesson. Fueled by highly positive national reception to the 1985 vintage, glowing press releases touted a glorious 1987 vintage. On release, the vintage failed—in the main—to meet the promise. The national market backfired. Reminded that honesty remains the best policy, Oregon vowed that unsubstantiated hype would never happen again.

1988 Governor Neil Goldschmidt presented Oregon Wine to Burgundy. Goldschmidt, always a wine lover and later a wine producer in Dundee, elegantly traversed a minefield of potential social, cultural, economic, and trade challenges to lead a group of government
officials and winery owners on a mission to the heart of Burgundy. He and his selection of Oregon wines were warmly and enthusiastically received by the cream of Burgundian wine society. He thus cemented a relationship between the two Pinot noir regions that thrives today, not only in friendships, but exchanges of grape growing and winemaking techniques. Many an aspiring young winemaker on both sides of the Atlantic can list work in Oregon and Burgundy on their resumes.

1990 **Seventy bonded Oregon wineries with 5,682 vineyard acres.**

1992 The ¡Salud! Wine Barrel Auction—the first U.S. hospital initiated and financed collaboration with local wineries—was founded. Half-barrels of one-of-a-kind Pinot noir cuvées are auctioned in a suitably swishy setting. All proceeds provide health care for vineyard workers and their families. ¡Salud! now offers a full-time staff and basic services (including permanent prenatal, child health, cancer, and other disease screening and dental clinics). Mobile medical vans bring these services directly to the workers at vineyard locations.

1994 The Oregon Wine Marketing Coalition was founded. The cooperative marketing group of more than 40 wineries, with roots in the startup activities of Cary Oregon Wines, took Oregon on the road. For nine years, the Coalition presented educational seminars and tastings of Oregon wines throughout the United States.

1995 ¡Salud! Auction Road Show. ¡Salud! wineries hosted an extremely well-covered major Manhattan press tasting/lunch/seminar, followed by an all-Oregon cuisine dinner at the James Beard House in New York City.

1997 The Low Input Viticulture and Enology Program (LIVE) was created by Ted Casteel of Bethel Heights Vineyard, Carmo Vasconcelos of Oregon State University, and a group of winegrowers. LIVE is modeled on a program developed in Switzerland, which has set out to define global standards for sustainable agricultural practices. Organic, biodynamic, and/or sustainable farming practices have long been widely embraced by Oregon winegrowers.

1998 Wine industry adds $120 million to Oregon’s economy.

2000 **One hundred thirty-five Oregon bonded wineries with 9,000 vineyard acres.**

The first Oregon Pinot Camp (OPC) was held. Forty Oregon wineries combined their talents and resources to organize a remarkably creative and successful event. Selected retailers and sommeliers from throughout the U.S. were invited to Oregon’s vineyards to learn about the region’s winemaking, winemakers, and hospitality. Guests’ enthusiasm transformed the experimental event into an annual one.

Oregon becomes the first American region to have a sustainable agriculture program certified by the International Office of Biological Control (IOBC). The certification endorses LIVE, a non-profit Oregon corporation, with the authority to certify Oregon
vineyards. To obtain enological certification, wines must be approved by the LIVE Tasting Panel and meet all other standards through submission of reports. Bethel Heights Vineyard was the first to display LIVE Certification on its label, thus assuring the consumer of definite, definable standards of viticulture and enology.

2002 Oregon redefines winery design and architecture with the construction and opening of the world’s first “green” wineries: the Sokol Blosser Winery underground barrel cellar, Stoller Winery and the Carlton Winemakers Studio. All three facilities boldly demonstrate that wineries can at the same time be beautiful, functional, state-of-the-art, and environmentally proactive. Sokol Blosser’s cellar is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified by the U.S. Green Building Council. The green concept is comprehensive, encompassing innovation in building materials, siting, labor, and financing. Stoller followed with the first Gold LEED certification for a winery in the United States. It integrates gravity-flow winemaking techniques, energy-efficient heating and cooling, and wastewater reclamation to reduce negative environmental impact. The Carlton Winemakers Studio took an innovative step in creating the world’s first multiple independent winery producers facility.

2003 Two hundred twenty Oregon bonded wineries with 12,200 vineyard acres.


2004 Grand opening of the Enology and Viticulture Center of Chemeketa Community College, a new and specifically designed facility featuring a model winery and teaching vineyard. The Oregon wine industry contributed heavily to this project with cash and dedicated advisory committees. Wine-related industries contributed equipment and expertise. Three hundred students are currently enrolled.

The streamlined Oregon Wine Board replaces the Oregon Wine Advisory Board, making way for greater latitude in hiring and increased flexibility in achieving the goals of statewide marketing and research. The legislation removed the organization from the auspices of the Department of Agriculture and created a semi-independent state agency with its board members appointed directly by the Governor. The agency is still funded by the wineries’ self-imposed $25.00 per ton grape tax.

2005 Three hundred three Oregon bonded wineries with 14,100 vineyard acres.

The first four sub-Willamette Valley American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), of six petitioned for approval in 2001, are finally approved. They are Dundee Hills, Yamhill-Carlton District, Ribbon Ridge and McMinnville.
2006  Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Washington’s oldest winery, announced that it would acquire the assets of Erath Vineyards, one of the Willamette Valley’s pioneer wineries. The Erath Vineyard label has been preserved for Oregon-produced wines.

The last of the proposed new Willamette Valley AVA’s, Eola-Amity Hills and Chehalem Mountains, were approved.

2007  Three hundred seventy Oregon bonded wineries with 17,400 vineyard acres.

2008  Three hundred ninety five Oregon bonded wineries with 19,300 vineyard acres.

29% of Oregon's vineyard acres are certified sustainable by independent third party certification programs, including USDA Organic, Demeter Biodynamic®, Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE), and Food Alliance.

The Oregon Wine Board launches the Oregon Certified Sustainable Wine (OCSW) program and logo to communicate the shared principles of the Oregon wine industry’s commitment to responsible, sustainable vineyard and winery practices.

The Oregon wine industry establishes the Oregon Wine Research Institute at Oregon State University in Corvallis. The OWRI is a partnership between the industry and OSU to provide leadership and information on important issues related to our vineyards and other critical areas.

2010  Four hundred eighteen Oregon bonded wineries with 20,300 vineyard acres.

2011  In July, The International Pinot Noir Celebration celebrated its 25th Anniversary. The event, which featured many of the inaugural wineries as well as today’s top stars from all over, sold out 6 months early and continues to earn its reputation as one of the most influential and enjoyable wine celebrations in the world.

In November, ¡Salud! celebrated its 20th Anniversary, and remains an innovative healthcare delivery program for vineyard workers.

2011  Four hundred fifty Oregon bonded wineries with 20,400 vineyard acres.
THE OREGON PINOT NOIR STORY
The Place – The History

Presenters

David Adelsheim
David Adelsheim is President of Adelsheim Vineyard, which he founded with Ginny Adelsheim in 1971. His principal role today is strategic planning, focused on marketing and sales (export in particular), financial planning, and overall direction of vineyard and winemaking activities. In the course of his company’s 40-year history, he has been the vineyard manager, winemaker, and the person in charge of sales, marketing, accounting and fixing broken plumbing. His early winemaking experiences included work at the experimental winery of the Lycée Viticole in Beaune, France, and at the Eyrie Vineyards in Oregon. On behalf of the Oregon wine industry, he has led work on clonal importation, wine labeling regulations, establishing statewide and regional industry organizations, and creation of industry events, such as the International Pinot Noir Celebration and Oregon Pinot Camp. As one of the founders of the Oregon wine industry, he helped set standards of excellence for that industry. He was given the industry’s highest honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award, in February, 2012 by the Oregon Wine Board (which he helped bring to life and on which he served for eight years, appointed by Oregon’s Governor).

Maria Ponzi
Maria Ponzi represents her family winery as a Principal and Director of Sales and Marketing. Over the past two decades, her love for the industry and the region led her to various leadership roles within Oregon’s wine and tourism industries. For more than six years, Ponzi has been a member of the state board of Oregon Travel Experience. She is also an active board member of Oregon Pinot Camp and the Willamette Valley Wineries Association. Ponzi has enjoyed her position as co-emcee at the ¡Salud! Oregon Pinot Noir Auction for the past three years. In the mid-90s Ponzi chaired the Promotions Committee of the Oregon Wine Advisory Board for several years and was a founding Director of the National Women for WineSense and first President of the Oregon Chapter.

Raised in Beaverton on the family’s Estate Vineyard, Ponzi attended Oregon schools—with exchange years spent at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Universite di Perugia, Italy—graduating with a Bachelors Degree in Journalism from University of Oregon. After graduation, she escaped to Boston’s sophisticated, urban business and social environment, where she worked for nearly three years as a Sales Manager for a national business publication. She left a lofty promotion to return to the family business in 1991 to continue to build the family brand. Ponzi and her Portland-based architect husband Brett Fogelstrom, reside minutes from the winery on 15 acres with their teenage daughter and son and beloved dog, horse and alpacas.