

Canes and Casks

Spring into wine festivals and tours

Now that winter is winding down and spring is on our doorstep (what happened to our winter rains?) you may have noticed more ATVs in our local vineyards. Pruning crews are out removing last year's growth and getting the vines in shape for another fruitful growing season. In the cellar winemakers are patiently attending to young red wines and putting the final touches on white wines which will soon be ready for bottling. Time seems to move a bit more slowly in winery tasting rooms this time of year as traffic drops off a bit after the busy holiday season.

Winery staff can't get too complacent though, as there are a several upcoming events which lead quickly into a spring of festivals and fun for winery guests. For starters, many vineyard and production managers often head to Sacramento in late January for the Unified Wine and Grape Symposium. Unified is the largest wine industry-related trade show in our hemisphere, and as such it is not to be missed for those interested in purchasing new equipment. Oregon has its own wine trade show called the Oregon Wine Industry Symposium, which fills up the Oregon Convention Center in Portland with many of the same vendors as the California show. The Oregon Symposium is held in late February and in addition to the trade show it features excellent educational seminars for growers, winemakers, and marketing and salespersons.

For wine consumers there are many upcoming events where wines from our local producers may be sampled.

February 13th is the Downtown Roseburg Association "Sweethearts Taste of Downtown": a casual event where local stores and restaurants have small bites paired with local wines.

February 14th is Valentine's Day: many wineries offer special events for couples, and red roses and chocolate make a great pairing with a glass of red wine.

February 20th – 23rd is the Newport Seafood & Wine Festival: many local wineries participate in this busy food and wine event which spans the weekend. For a more relaxed atmosphere, and to actually talk with the winemaker, attending Thursday or Sunday is best.

March 1st is the Greatest of the Grape: a 44 year old Umpqua Valley tradition with a more upscale atmosphere which pairs great local food with some of the best wines in our region at the Seven Feathers Casino in Canyonville.

April 18th – 19th is the Portland Spring Beer & Wine Fest: more beer oriented but also has wine and ciders available to sample.

April 25th – 27th is the Astoria Warrenton Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival: while this festival is a bit farther afield for us southerners, many local wineries pour at this event. The festival is well-attended due to its proximity to Portland.

May 3rd – is the Umpqua Valley Barrel Tour: ride along on chartered buses touring 6 of our local wineries. Bus tours are split between the northern, central, and southern wineries of the Umpqua Valley.

June 7th is the South Willamette Valley Barrel Tour: visit 5 wineries in the Eugene area with special tastings.

These events are a great way to sample many local and/or regional wines at the same time, allowing consumers to compare and contrast different grape varieties, regions, and wine styles. You'll notice wine aficionados spitting out each sample as they taste. Obviously if a person tastes many wines this method is crucial in order to judge all wines equally without becoming befuddled. If you're too embarrassed to spit, try just taking a few sips of each wine and pouring the rest of your glass in the spit bucket. The person pouring the wine won't take it as a personal insult and you will have the opportunity to taste many more wines. Once you find something you like consider purchasing a bottle or two to share with friends and family.