

600+ WINES REVIEWED

GREAT SPIRITS OF THE MIDWEST

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AUSTRIA'S SEXIEST WINE

WINE ENTHUSIAST

JULY 2017

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COLORADO

Wine Industry

- **689 acres**
under vine
- **147 wineries**
mostly in Mesa
and Delta counties
- **Leading wineries:**
Anemol, Carlson Vineyards,
Colorado Cellars,
Infinite Monkey Theorem,
Kingman, Sutcliffe,
Terror Creek Winery,
Two Rivers Winery
- **Production + distribution**
Approximately 160,000
cases per year, with
wineries gaining more
distribution every year,
and most with direct
shipping to consumers
where allowed.

ILLUSTRATION: KAVEL RAFFERTY

COLORADO HIGH

While Colorado may be best known for mountain and river sports, the state enjoys renown for other resources: fine cattle ranches, organically raised lamb, artisanal cheese and wine from more than 140 licensed producers.

The wine industry got its start in 1890 when Gov. George A. Crawford planted Colorado's first grapevines near Palisade, in the western part of the state. After a nine-year gradual climb to 1,744 gallons of wine, 1916 legislation effectively halted wine production four years before the start of Prohibition.

It was Dr. Gerald Ivancie, a periodontist, who ushered in the modern era of Colorado winemaking, opening his namesake winery in 1968. The first wines were made from Cabernet Sauvignon grapes shipped from California. His winemaker, Warren Winiarski, went on to greater fame at the 1976 "Judgment of Paris" tastings with Stag's Leap Wine Cellars.

Today, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Riesling are the top-planted varieties, with most premium grapevines planted from 4,000 to 7,000 feet above sea level. The state boasts the highest-elevation appellation in the states, the West Elks American Viticultural Area (AVA).

"While the high-elevation vineyards present significant challenges to the grape grower, those same elevations offer the winemaker unique and very desirable wine characteristics," says Brent Helleckson, owner of Stone Cottage Cellars in Paonia, noting that the combination of elevation and intense sunlight

High-altitude vineyards (surprise!) and sunlight drive these wines.

allows grapes to "easily accumulate sufficient sugar in almost any year."

John Garlich, owner/winemaker of Boulder's BookCliff Vineyards, notes that while the climate creates setbacks, it also provides benefits in the way of pest and disease control.

SOILS MATTER, TOO

"We have wonderful soils in the Grand Valley, which are ideal for growing wine grapes," says Kaibab Sauvage, president of the Colorado Association for Viticulture and Enology, and owner of Colorado Vineyard Specialists, a viticultural management company. He noted many soils are mixed with eroded sediment washed down from the mountains.

"This mixing with three different rock types and the components of an ancient sea bed combine to make well-drained, fertile soils ideal for producing magnificent wine grapes," he says.

Kyle Schlachter of the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board, within the state agriculture department, is optimistic about Colorado's future. "I see Colorado producers gaining a larger market share and even being available in select markets around the country. I think Colorado will have the reputation as a high-quality wine producing region." —Mike DeSimone & Jeff Jenssen

