



# FAST FACTS ABOUT THE COLORADO WINE INDUSTRY



## COLORADO'S WINE INDUSTRY IS OLDER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

The first recorded wine production in Colorado was 1890. It was Colorado Governor George A. Crawford, the founder of Grand Junction in 1881, who first saw the Grand Valley's potential for grape production and planted 60 acres of wine grapes and other fruit on Rapid Creek above Palisade, along the Colorado River. Palisade is now the current site of the state's largest annual wine festival: Colorado Mountain Winefest, which takes place over the third weekend of September every year and attracts thousands of people to the region. Colorado is home to over 140 licensed wineries, including a dozen cideries and ten meaderies, thanks to the pioneering spirit of our grapegrowers and winemakers, as well as the support and foresight of the Colorado General Assembly. In 1977, the Colorado General Assembly enacted the Colorado Limited Winery Act to permit small "farm wineries." By 1990 the industry had developed to the extent that the General Assembly passed further legislation, the Colorado Wine Industry Development Act, to create the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board under the authority of the Colorado Department of Agriculture.

## TWO AVAS AND MANY OTHER GRAPE-GROWING COUNTIES

Colorado possesses two federally designated American Viticultural Areas (AVAs): the Grand Valley along the Colorado River between Palisade and Grand Junction, and the West Elks along the North Fork of the Gunnison River between Paonia and Hotchkiss. Together, these regions produce 90% of the wine grapes grown in Colorado. Wine grapes have also taken root in Montezuma (Four Corners), Fremont (Arkansas

Valley), Boulder, Larimer (Front Range), Delta and Montrose (Western Slope) Counties. For more information on each area, please visit [www.coloradowine.com](http://www.coloradowine.com). Of Note: The Grand Valley made Trip Advisor's list of the Best Wine Destinations in 2012, alongside Napa, Sonoma and Willamette Valleys.

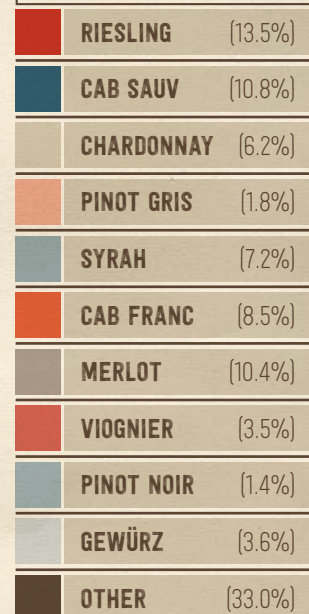
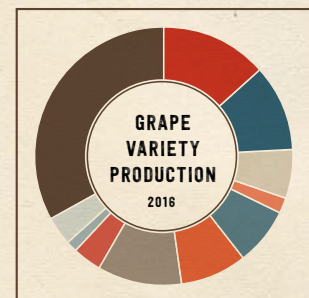
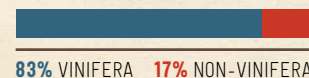
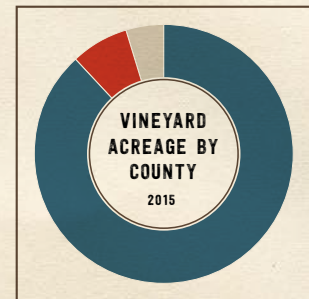
## OUR TERROIR: VINEYARDS WITH AN ALTITUDE

Colorado's grape growing regions range in elevation from 4,000 to 7,000 feet and are the highest in the Northern Hemisphere and among the highest in the world, beneath only Argentina. We average more than 300 days of sunshine each year creating ideal growing conditions. Colorado's soils, similar to the soils of Europe, are generally more alkaline than the acidic soils of California. Consequently, Merlots often taste more like Bordeaux here than in California, and Syrahs are more like Rhône Valley reds than like Australian Shiraz. The extremely dry climate keeps pest and disease pressures very low, so applications of pesticides and other necessary chemicals are almost unnecessary compared to more humid climates.

## OUR PORTFOLIO OF CULTIVARS

Premium *Vitis vinifera* cultivars account for the vast majority of the vineyard acreage in the state.

- Riesling, in styles from an Alsatian-like bone dry to ultra-sweet desserts, accounted for 13.5% of the 2016 harvest.
- Merlot makes up 13.5% of Colorado's grape acreage yet generated only 10.4% of production for the 2016 vintage.
- Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc complemented Merlot, their Bordeaux cousin, at 10.8% and 8.5% of 2016 production.







**15%**

The average annual growth Colorado wines have experienced since 1992—significantly greater than industry average.

**1,665**

The number of jobs wine, wine related activities, and spillover spending from tourism, supports in the state.

**#1**

USA Today named the Colorado Mountain Winefest (3rd weekend of every September in Palisade) as the best wine festival in the country. [coloradowinefest.com]

## GROWING LIKE A VINE

Colorado has approximately 120 grape growers tending nearly 1,000 acres of vineyards and more than 140 licensed commercial wineries - including approximately a dozen cideries and a dozen meaderies. These vintners produced 178,000 cases of wine during the 2017 fiscal year, which equaled \$36 million in sales alone. According to a 2017 study by WineAmerica, Colorado's wine industry contributes more than \$300,000,000 to the state's economy, with the impacts of wine tourism activities on the Front Range and the Western Slope accounting for more than half of the total economic impact.<sup>(1)</sup> The Colorado wine industry also contributes more than 1,665 jobs to the state. The industry has sustained an average annual growth rate of nearly 15% over the last two decades.

For more information about Colorado wines or the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board visit [coloradowine.com](http://coloradowine.com) or contact DOUG CASKEY at 303.869.9177 or [dcaskey@coloradowine.com](mailto:dcaskey@coloradowine.com).

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<sup>1</sup> Economic impact numbers are extracted from a national wine industry study done for WineAmerica, the national association for American wineries, released in fall 2017. See <http://wineamerica.org/impact>.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Colorado wines continue to win top awards at international, national and regional competitions including:

- Colorado Riesling won the top honor at the 2004 World Riesling Championship at the International Eastern Competition and the Best in Style award in 2006.
- Colorado wines have won a Jefferson Cup, from Doug Frost's prestigious competition that evaluates emerging wine regions right beside the established producing areas of the country, for five years in a row.

Warren Winiarski, who founded Stags Leap Cellars in Napa after making wine at Ivancie Cellars in Denver in the late 1960s, judged at the 2014 Governor's Cup Competition in Denver. "I was truly impressed with the quality and direction of Colorado's wine producers," Winiarski said. "The industry has come a long way since I made wine here 46 years ago! Quite a number of the wines I tasted were beyond expressing merely the region but had the character of classics." Judge Linda Murphy, writer and co-author of *American Wine* with Jancis Robinson, added, "The wines that made it to the sweepstakes round, especially the reds, were very impressive. Tempranillo, Malbec, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot appear to have great potential in Colorado, and there was a delicious Lemberger that is a real crowd-pleaser."

Ashley Hausman Vaughters, a Colorado wholesaler representative appointed to serve on the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board, became the first Master of Wine in Colorado.

