



2018 VINTAGE REPORT

The 2020 Auction features wines exclusively from the 2018 vintage. This vintage is consistently described by winemakers as “a classic Oregon vintage,” with a warm start, sunny skies, cool summer nights and a long, moderate growing season that produced the kind of wines our winemakers love to make. From structure to flavors, 2018 thrilled winemakers—and as the results begin to go into bottle it’s clear they have the potential to thrill wine lovers for years to come.

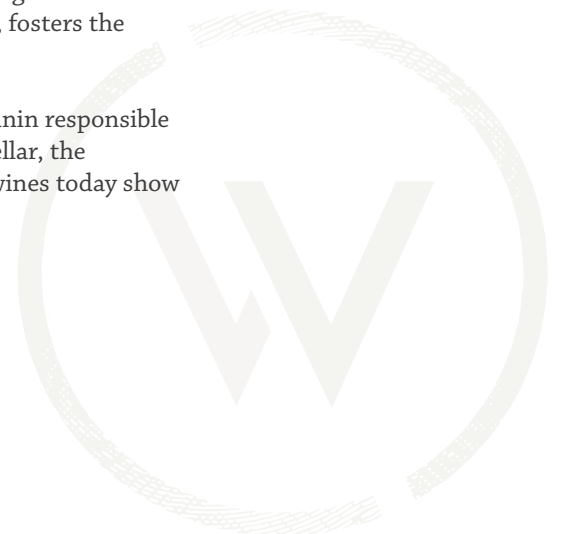
What were the growing conditions?

After the warm years of 2014, 2015, and 2016 and a few significant heat spikes in 2017 as well, winemakers embraced the more moderate 2018 vintage with open arms. A mild and dry winter gave way to a cool early spring and slightly delayed bud break, but the growing season quickly caught up to schedule in an uncharacteristically warm May. From there, a dry, droughty but not excessively hot summer with sunny days, cool nights and a beautiful, dry fall, marked by one of the loveliest Octobers in memory, meant winemakers enjoyed almost negligible disease pressure and few serious environmental obstacles.

“What set 2018 apart from many other vintages was the fact that winemakers were not put between a rock and a hard place,” recalls Josh Bergström of Bergström Wines. Anything from a heat wave or downpour to particularly aggressive birds can force winemakers’ decisions in a given vintage, but in 2018, he explains, he was able to pick fruit for nearly six weeks continuously. “This slow and steady progression meant that we were able to accurately express each individual terroir that we farm because the vines were not under pressure nor were they threatened,” he says. “Every vineyard block was picked at its most precise and perfect time.”

“The growing season in Oregon was intriguing,” says winemaker Thomas Savre of Lingua Franca. “We had a relatively rainy spring which slightly delayed budbreak. The following months were warm but also unusually dry.” This slight drought caused vine roots to dig especially deep in search of water, which, Savre explains, fosters the conduction of complex flavor elements up to the canopy.

“I found the fruit to have thicker skin and a greater pool of anthocyanin responsible for the color and tannin for the structure as well,” he adds. “In the cellar, the extraction was quite spontaneous compared to other vintages. The wines today show present and graceful yet structured tannins.”





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What do winemakers have to say about the 2018 wines?

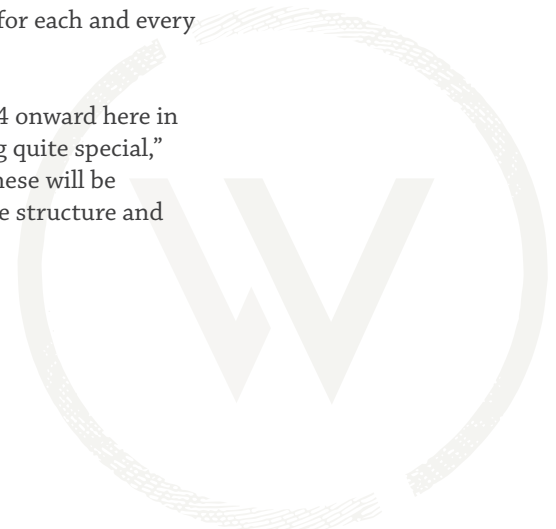
Véronique Drouhin-Boss of Domaine Drouhin Oregon sums up the vintage succinctly: “2018 combines strength, grace and ageability. A good trio of qualities!” It truly did seem to have all the building blocks of exciting wine in place, and the elation among winemakers throughout the Willamette Valley as the wines develop and begin to show their potential is palpable.

“Vintage 2018 was truly blessed with amazing quality from the very beginning and that’s certainly remained true as the wines have aged in barrel,” says Elk Cove winemaker and co-owner Adam Campbell. He says he loves vintages like 2018 not just for the ripe fruit and clear skies but, better yet, “small clusters and tiny berries, which allow us as winemakers to be even more gentle. You know there will be plenty of ripe tannins to frame the wine as well as concentrated fruit at the core—and, because Oregon is an amazing cool climate, powerful freshness.”

“We knew we had something pretty special during harvest—it would be difficult to draw up a more perfect growing season,” recalls winemaker Gina Hennen of Adelsheim. “I remember tasting the wines at the press and trying to play it cool, but on the inside I was absolutely giddy. We continued to taste the wines over the course of the year and my excitement only grew with time.”

Alex Sokol Blosser of Sokol Blosser Winery agrees. “2018 was one of the best vintages for Pinot noir that I have been a part of since I can remember,” he says, recalling as far back as 1990 in his various roles at his family’s winery before taking over as head winemaker in 2013. “Acid, fruit intensity, structure, pH and alcohol were all in balance, and that rarely happens.” He remembers the unmistakable feeling during harvest that this was a special year, explaining, “Great vintages help accentuate more distinct flavors in the wines. So the cornucopia of red fruits coming out of this vintage from the Dundee Hills is vast, instead of just one or two.” Sokol Blosser also works with Eola-Amity Hills fruit and adds that 2018 truly “lifted the tide for each and every AVA in the Willamette Valley.”

“I have fallen in love with the string of successful vintages from 2014 onward here in the Willamette Valley, but I believe that 2018 will become something quite special,” says Bergström. “It has the makings of a classic written all over it. These will be perfumed and colorful wines that have so much early appeal with the structure and poise to age for quite some time, in my mind the perfect scenario.”





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How Did the Nested AVAs of Willamette Valley Perform?

Dundee Hills

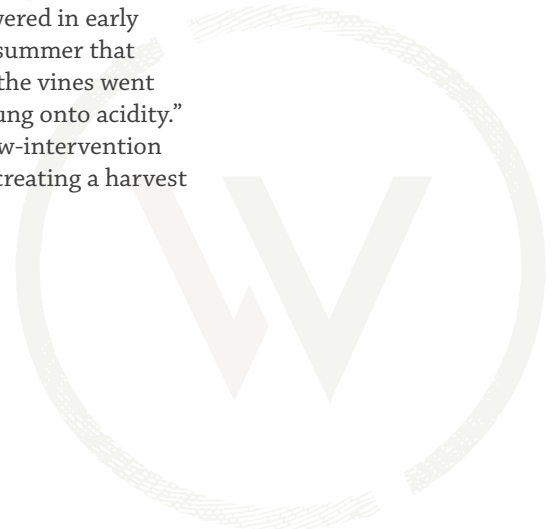
“For the Dundee Hills we benefit from some nice heat, and on our site that faces the Coast Range we get some really good winds in the afternoon that cool the vineyard down pretty quickly overnight,” says winemaker Bryan Weil of Alexana Winery. “It was definitely one of the driest springs I can ever remember. Fortunately our deep rooted dry-farmed vines did just fine throughout the dry spring, summer and fall and were ready for harvest in mid-September.” 2018’s long, relaxed fall harvest period was a boon for this AVA in particular. “One challenge we always face with a good-sized vineyard in the Dundee Hills is a fairly condensed harvest,” Weil explains. “We typically pick our 56-acre vineyard in around 10 days from start to finish and that can make for some late nights, but luckily we have ample capacity to handle it all at once. Lower fruit set compared to recent vintages made for better balance on the vines, too.” Ultimately, he says, “A warm, but not hot summer made for a perfect growing season, and a return to the balanced and elegant seasons that Oregon is famous for.”

Eola-Amity Hills

Savre describes 2018 in the Eola-Amity Hills as “a completely unique experience” when compared to the previous several. At Lingua Franca, he says, “We adapted ourselves in the cellar by driving our extraction program to be more delicate and working on shorter cuvaision. The acidity was still present and the outcome brought some powerful yet precise wine.” He explains that in the Eola-Amity Hills as well as its neighboring nested AVAs, winemakers enjoy the advantage of the cold wind from the Pacific via the Van Duzer Corridor: “Colder nights during crucial periods of maturity will help the vines to take a less sudden path to ripeness.” Savre sums up the vintage as “a beautiful, powerful vintage for Oregon.”

Yamhill-Carlton

In the warmth of May 2018, Gran Moraine winemaker Shane Moore reports that his Yamhill-Carlton vines “pushed with a lot of vegetative vigor and flowered in early June, slightly ahead of normal.” Interestingly, though he recalls the summer that followed as “one of the driest on record” in the region, Moore says, “the vines went through only a slightly ahead-of-average ripening curve and really hung onto acidity.” Overall, he is pleased with the balance of the vintage, allowing for low-intervention winemaking: “Phenological ripeness matched with Brix and acidity, creating a harvest that allowed for almost no manipulation of must once in tank.”





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Chehalem Mountains

“The Chehalem Mountains are special no matter which vintage,” says Gina Hennen, winemaker at Adelsheim. That’s not just personal bias, she explains: “We have such tremendous diversity in our AVA—including the greatest temperature variation and tallest peak of any Willamette Valley AVA. For 2018 it was great to be able to allow some of the higher elevation sites to hang a bit longer and slowly ripen in wonderfully temperate conditions.”

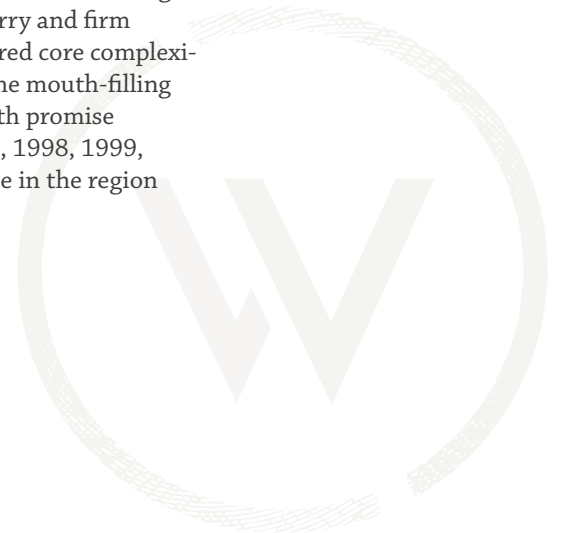
Hennen describes the growing season as “generally pretty ideal,” adding, “it was warm without being too warm, we had some rain but not too much, and during the critical last few weeks prior to picking the temperatures cooled down dramatically.” She praises that final push before harvest as “nothing less than ideal conditions—mid 70s during the day dropping into the 40s at night, meaning the grapes held onto their natural acidity and sugar accumulation was modest and slow. This made for elegant, structured wines with lower natural alcohol and a lovely freshness.”

Van Duzer Corridor

With its unique situation at the foot of an abnormality in the Coast Range where cool ocean air channels through, the Van Duzer Corridor enjoys “a nice long growing season, which translates into more complexity” with long hang time, explains Coelho winemaker Chris Bertsche. The elongated growing season in 2018 with a few scattered inches of September rain, he says, “reinvigorated the vines, positively impacting acidity and phenolic ripeness.” He describes the 2018 vintage for the Van Duzer Corridor as “quite tannic and dark in color, which is comparable to the 2012 vintage, but with more acidity and complexity,” adding that he expects “a solid 10-year window of drinkability.”

Ribbon Ridge

In the Willamette Valley’s smallest AVA, winemaker Harry Peterson-Nedry of RR Wines reports, “The cooler aspects of the vintage’s final ripening and harvest timing ensured acid retention and gave Ribbon Ridge AVA’s natural dark berry and firm structural tendencies a chance for even greater flavor range and layered core complexities.” He found the vintage to be “worthy of all the hype,” adding, “The mouth-filling ripeness and three-dimensional projections from 2018s in their youth promise extended ageing we’ve seen from Ribbon Ridge in vintages like 1994, 1998, 1999, 2008 and 2012.” Peterson-Nedry would know: he’s been making wine in the region since 1980 and coauthored the AVA.



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McMinnville

Winemaker Tahmiene Momtazi at Maysara Vineyards saw an outstanding growing season in McMinnville. “When compared to previous vintages, the difference that made the 2018 vintage such a standout in my mind was that we received consistency in weather and temperature without fluctuating to extremes (either hot or cold),” she says. “This allowed a great yield of grapes that were clear of disease and sunburn and free from other issues that would have surfaced if the weather was consistently warmer or cooler.”

At harvest, she recalls, “The extended time during harvest before the ill weather set in really allowed picking our fruit at optimal numbers and led to very balanced wines as far as acidity, tannin and alcohol are concerned.” The one to three inches of rain that scattered throughout the Valley in September missed McMinnville completely, so “we were able to continue processing without any delays or loss of fruit,” Momtazi explains, adding, “Overall, the 2018 vintage is one of the best to come from the McMinnville AVA.”

