



# 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, recognized by USA Today as the Best Wine Festival in the USA, which takes place over the third weekend of September every year and attracts thousands of people to the region. Colorado is home to over 170 licensed wineries, including 25 cideries and 16 meaderies, plus 1 sake producer, 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 boasts 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 River 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 Wine Enthusiast Magazine's 2018 list of the Top 10 Wine Destinations in the world.

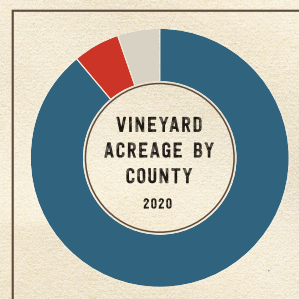
## OUR TERROIR: VINEYARDS WITH AN ALTITUDE

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 important thing, though, is that Colorado wines taste uniquely like Colorado and not like any other region. The extremely dry climate keeps pest and disease pressures very low, so applications of pesticides and other chemicals are almost unnecessary compared to more humid climates.

## OUR PORTFOLIO OF CULTIVARS

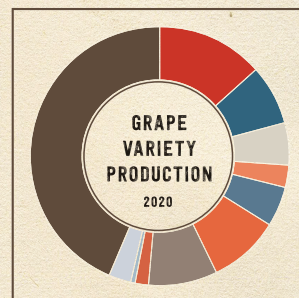
Premium *Vitis vinifera* cultivars account for the vast majority of the vineyard acreage in the state.

- Riesling, in styles from an Alsatian-like bone dry to ultra-sweet desserts, accounted for 13.39% of the 2020 harvest.
- Rhône Valley varieties include Syrah (4.79% of 2020 production) and Viognier (1.82%) plus smaller quantities of Grenache, Mourvedre, Cinsault, Rousanne, and others.
- The red Bordeaux cousins, Cabernet Sauvignon (7.44%), Merlot (8.36%), Cabernet Franc (8.99%) and frequent "Best of Show" winner in the Colorado Governor's Cup lead the production of the other Bordeaux varieties including Malbec, Petit Verdot, Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon.



MESA	(88%)
OTHER	(5%)
DELTA	(6%)

81% VINIFERA 19% NON-VINIFERA



RIESLING	(13.39%)
CAB SAUV	(7.44%)
CHARDONNAY	(5.39%)
CHAMBOURCIN	(2.76%)
SYRAH	(4.97%)
CAB FRANC	(8.99%)
MERLOT	(8.36%)
VIOGNIER	(1.82%)
PINOT NOIR	(3.38%)
GEWÜRZ	(2.79%)
OTHER	(43.45%)





**10%**

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

In 1968, Denver dentist Dr. Gerald Ivancie hired a young winemaker away from Napa's Robert Mondavi Winery to select California grapes and make wine at his Denver winery, Ivancie Cellars. That winemaker was Warren Winiarski who founded Stag's Leap Wine Cellars in Napa and won the Judgement of Paris in 1976. When the Colorado Limited Winery Act was passed in 1977 there were two licensed wineries in Colorado. In 1990, when the Wine Industry Development Act was passed there were five wineries. The last 30 years has seen tremendous growth as Colorado now has more than 170 licensed wineries, including meaderies, cideries, sake producers and vintner's restaurants. These vintners produced 228,000 cases of wine during the 2019 fiscal year, which equaled \$45 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 well beyond 10% 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 [doug.caskey@state.co.us](mailto:doug.caskey@state.co.us).

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## 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.
- Multiple 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 has judged at the Colorado Governor's Cup Competition in Denver most years since 2014. "I am 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." Fellow judge Alder Yarrow, American wine blogger, added, "If you're a curious wine lover (and you should be, as that is a virtue) then I suggest you get a taste of what the Rocky Mountains have to offer."



<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>.

