



Yamhill-Carlton AVA

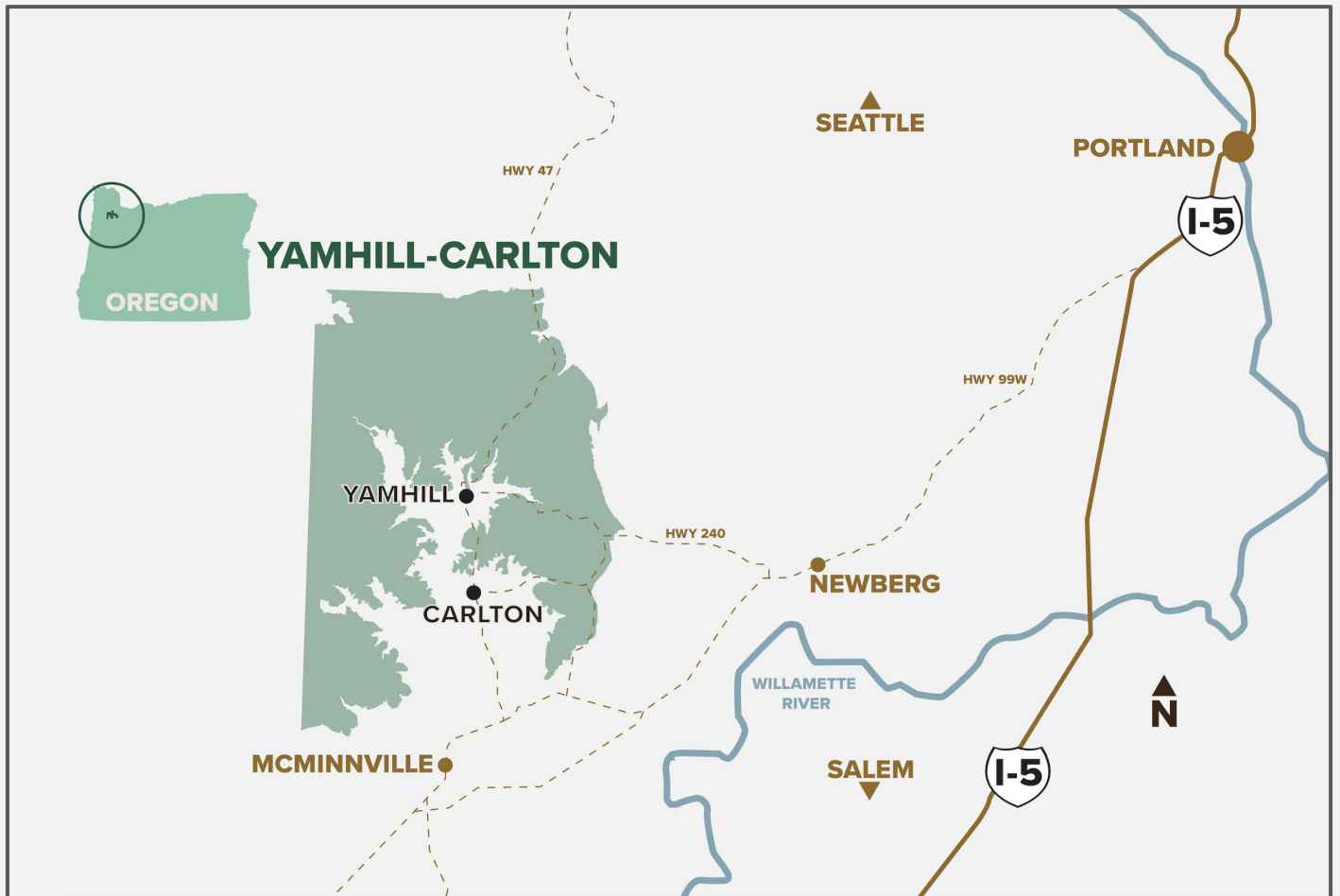
Summer 2020

Press Kit



“Arguably the most beautiful area of the Willamette Valley”

- The Washington Post



Map by Vinbound

Yamhill-Carlton is a nested AVA in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. This horseshoe-shaped winegrowing region is distinguished by its ancient sedimentary soils, creating wines of character with an unmistakable sense of place. Wineries in Yamhill-Carlton are predominantly family owned and operated, producing wines that emphasize quality over quantity. Named for the two hamlets of Yamhill and Carlton, the region has become a destination for wine lovers, collectors, and culinary travelers alike. With its picture-perfect patchwork of vineyards, Yamhill-Carlton produces some of the finest Pinot Noir in the world.

A Horseshoe of Sedimentary Soils

Yamhill-Carlton is a south-facing, horseshoe-shaped viticultural area comprising 58,100 acres, with almost 2,500 acres planted to vineyards. Yamhill-Carlton's unique soil composition, climate and positioning within the larger region, led to the establishment of an nesting AVA in 2004. Yamhill-Carlton was one of the first six established appellations within the greater Willamette Valley winemaking region.

Yamhill Carlton is characterized by its coarse sedimentary soils formed in the Eocene era, between 50 to 40 million years ago, making it some of the oldest parent material in the Willamette Valley. These sedimentary soils were derived from marine sediments and ocean floor volcanic basalt. This unique mix provides moderate water-holding capacity and excellent drainage, enhancing grape ripening and leading to higher levels of tannins and well-balanced acids in the wines.

Yamhill-Carlton's borders were drawn according to its own set of distinguishing features, but also according to neighboring changes in climate and geology. To the west is the Coast Range, a higher-elevation area that transitions abruptly into volcanic soils. To the northeast lie Ribbon Ridge and the Chehalem Mountains, both cooler and with different geological compositions. To the south, a lower elevation area is typified by deep soils of Willamette silts. The unique position of Yamhill-Carlton, then, contributes to a wine profile that is distinct from its neighboring AVAs.

Elevation is another important consideration in Yamhill-Carlton. Planted on hillsides and ridges, only vineyards lying between 200 feet and 1,000 feet above sea level can be labeled with the designation. Higher elevations add further complexity to the wines of Yamhill-Carlton, and generally result in expressive, ageable Pinot Noir.

Yamhill-Carlton is warmer and receives less precipitation than its neighbors. Significant diurnal temperature shifts in the summer, during the final stretch of the growing season, encourage thick, flavorful skins, and optimal ripeness. The AVA averages around 42" of rainfall per year and Growing Degree Days average approximately 2300 degrees, ideal for premium grape-growing.



Fifty Million Years in The Making

A series of geological events taking place over the last 50 million years resulted in the unique parent material of what is now Yamhill-Carlton. However, the process that resulted in the oldest mother rock in the Willamette Valley started much earlier than that, more than 200 million years ago, with the subduction of the San Juan de Fuca Plate under the Pacific Plate. As the Juan de Fuca Plate scarred against the Pacific coastline, an ongoing pillowing effect created an accumulation of sediments and ancient sands.

Fifteen million years ago, before the formation of the Cascade Mountain Range, the violently active Blue Mountains to the east continuously poured lava west. The unhindered activity covered the existing sand with a veneer of lava, cooling to basalt. The Missoula Floods, a final geological play with more than forty acts, deposited layers of silt across much of the Yamhill-Carlton region over three thousand years.

These major geological events come to life in older vineyards, where vines' root systems engage with the parent material, reaching deep beyond the soil that developed on top of marine sediments. When vines are deeply rooted enough (30 to 35 feet), the identity of place becomes more apparent. The sedimentary soils of Yamhill-Carlton are millions of years older than the soils in the surrounding areas, an asset that was discovered in the mid-1990s (see Timeline below).

The influence of geology has, unquestionably, the greatest impact on the wines from Yamhill-Carlton, especially Pinot Noir. Unlike other varieties that have a varietal quality that can override place, Pinot Noir is a transparent grape, a blank canvas that makes a direct connection to a place.

Yamhill-Carlton Timeline

50 to 40 million years ago: Creation of Yamhill-Carlton's parent material

1891: Incorporation of the town of Yamhill

1899: Incorporation of the town of Carlton

1936: The two small farming communities of Yamhill and Carlton come together

1974: First two vineyards planted in what would become Yamhill-Carlton AVA

1991: First vintage at Shea Vineyard, the largest vineyard in Yamhill-Carlton, which quickly became the poster child for the region's potential

1991: In a first example of foreign investment, Burgundy native Bernard Lacroute purchases the 420-acre site that would become WillaKenzie Estate

1994: Ken Wright Cellars moves to Carlton from McMinnville, moving closer to Shea Vineyard and other sites that would greatly influence the positive perception of the region

1994: Wines made from Yamhill-Carlton fruit are the top-scoring wines from Oregon in Wine Spectator, bringing attention to the region's potential

Mid-1990s: Yamhill-Carlton experiences significant expansion as more winemakers discover the ideal combination of the region's geology and climate

1995: Willamette Valley winemakers meet for the first time to collaborate on the forming of nesting AVAs within the larger region

2004: Yamhill-Carlton awarded AVA status, one of the first six nesting AVAs in the Willamette Valley

A Down to Earth Winemaking Community

Yamhill-Carlton is home to more than 50 wineries and 100 vineyards, mostly family owned and operated. “Down to Earth” is the AVA’s motto, a nod to the region’s unique sedimentary soils and the unassuming nature of its winemakers and grape-growers. A collaborative spirit prevails among winemakers in Yamhill-Carlton, whose generosity and unassuming nature contribute to a regional commitment to quality and excellence.

Against a backdrop of rolling pasture and forestland, the first vineyards in Yamhill-Carlton were planted in 1974. These grape-growing pioneers joined Yamhill-Carlton farmers and ranchers descended from early Oregon Trail pioneers, drawn to this pastoral corner of the northern Willamette Valley rich with opportunity. Those first vineyards paved the way for wineries that have shaped the identity of the Yamhill-Carlton region, one that is collegial and forward-thinking.

The region is named for the small hamlets of Yamhill and Carlton, two dynamic communities surrounded on three sides by hillside vineyards. Carlton, with its charming main street lined with tasting rooms, cafés and shops, has become the unofficial hub of Yamhill-Carlton and an important destination in the Willamette Valley.



Photos: Carolyn Wells-Kramer

Hospitality and excellence are at the heart of the tasting experience in Yamhill-Carlton. More than 50 wineries welcome visitors for wine tastings in intimate settings; many of the smaller wineries in the region offer tastings in the winemaker’s own home. Many tasting rooms in Yamhill-Carlton are family and dog-friendly, and a growing number of wineries boast electric vehicle charging stations. In the summer, visitors enjoy wines on outdoor patios overlooking vineyards and forestland, and in the winter, many tasting rooms are warmed with cozy fireplaces. An increasing number of tasting rooms offer food pairings and à la carte menus, while others encourage picnics.

A growing number of restaurants and wine country accommodations add allure to Yamhill-Carlton, where visitors find plenty to see, taste and experience.

Wines of Character and Global Distinction

There are three main varieties grown in Yamhill-Carlton: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Smaller plantings of Gamay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Blanc, Dolcetto, and other varieties are also farmed. The region produces red, white, rosé, and sparkling wines.

Grapes grown in Yamhill-Carlton's ancient sedimentary soils are lower in acid than wines made from grapes grown in basaltic or wind-blown soils. In general, wines made from these grapes have a firm tannic backbone and age beautifully. Wines from Yamhill-Carlton are texturally driven and have distinct aromatic flavors: in Pinot Noir, coffee, cocoa, anise, cedar, and tobacco are common aromas, and in Chardonnay, minerality and floral notes are common.

Perhaps more than any other variety, Pinot Noir has an incredible propensity for expressing the place in which it is grown. Pinot Noir wines produced in Yamhill-Carlton receive consistent domestic and global acclaim; a growing number of Chardonnay wines made in the AVA are earning equally high praise.

What's New in Yamhill-Carlton

Sparkling wines: A growing number of wineries in Yamhill-Carlton are adding sparkling wines to their lineups. From *méthode champenoise* to *méthode ancestrale*, winemakers are finding great success with sparkling wines made from Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, Sauvignon Blanc, and other varieties.

New varieties: While Pinot Noir and Chardonnay remain the most planted varieties in the region, vineyards throughout Yamhill-Carlton are seeing more plantings of Sauvignon Blanc, Dolcetto, Albariño, Marquette, and many others.

The Carlton hub: The small hamlet of Carlton is home to more than a dozen wineries, all within a stone's throw of each other. New tasting rooms in town include Big Table Farm and Tendril Wines, while Résonance, the new venture owned by the Louis Jadot family, is a short drive from Main Street.

Vineyard stays: A number of vineyards and wineries in the region offer guest houses for overnight stays, while the recently opened Abbey Road Farm, an 82-acre working farm and winery, offers five guest suites and one of the best breakfasts in Oregon.

Boutique wineries: Yamhill-Carlton is home to more than 50 wineries, many of them producing fewer than 1,000 cases per year. Boutique wineries like Atticus Wine, Sylvanus Estate and Stag Hollow Wines offer personal tasting experiences, often around the winemaker's kitchen table.



Yamhill-Carlton AVA Fact Sheet

- Location:** Willamette Valley, Oregon
- Planted acres:** 2,500 acres
- Geology:** Silt-loam marine sedimentary soils
- Climate:** Warm-summer Mediterranean
- Elevation:** 200 to 1,000 feet above sea level
- Wineries:** 52
- Vineyards:** 110
- Primary grapes:** Pinot Noir
Chardonnay
Pinot Gris
- Website:** yamhillcarlton.org
- Social media:** Instagram: [@yamhillcarlton](https://www.instagram.com/yamhillcarlton)
Facebook: [@YamhillCarltonWine](https://www.facebook.com/YamhillCarltonWine)
Twitter: [@YamhillCarlton](https://twitter.com/YamhillCarlton)





Yamhill-Carlton AVA Winery Members

Abbey Road Farm	Elk Cove Vineyards	Pike Road Wines
Adea Wine Company	Et Fille Wines	R. Stuart & Company
And... Wine Company	Fairsing Vineyard	Résonance
Angela Estate	Ghost Hill Cellars	Roots Wine Company
Anne Amie Vineyards	Gran Moraine	Saffron Fields Vineyard
Asilda Wines	J.L. Kiff Vineyard	Schönetal Cellars
Atticus Wine	Joyful Noise	Shea Wine Cellars
Battle Creek Cellars	Ken Wright Cellars	Simoni Family Vineyards
Beacon Hill	Kramer Vineyards	Soléna Estate
Belle Pente	La Randonnée Wines	Soter Vineyards
Big Table Farm	Laurel Ridge Winery	Stag Hollow Wines
Boedecker Cellars	Lazy River Vineyard	Stone Griffon Vineyard
Bud's Bloom	Lemelson Vineyards	Sylvanus Estate
Carlton Cellars	Lenné Estate	Tendril Wine Cellars
Carlton Hill Vineyard	Marshall Davis Wines	The Four Graces
Chris James Cellars	Merriman Wines	Wahle Cellars
Craft Wine Co.	Monksgate Vineyard	Wildaire
Denison Cellars	Nicolas-Jay	Willakenzie Estate
Domaine Verdant	Panther Creek Cellars	
Eieio	Penner-Ash Wine Cellars	

Yamhill-Carlton AVA Vineyard Members

Abbey Road Farm	Lonely Llama Vineyard
Bayliss-Bower Vineyard	Marshall Davis Vineyard
Bonnie Jean Vineyard	Matteri Vineyards
Deux Vert Vineyard	McCrone Vineyard
Doe Ridge Vineyard	Mineral Springs Vineyard
Domaine Danielle Laurent	MonksGate Vineyard
Fairsing Vineyard	Old Wagon Road Vineyard
Fir Crest Vineyard	Pheasant Hill Vineyard
Fruithill Vineyard	Quandary Vineyards
Green Acres Vineyards	Rainbow Ridge Vineyard
Gregory Ranch Vineyard	Savoya Vineyard
Greyhorse Vineyard	Stag Hollow Vineyard
Grey State Vineyards	Sylvanus Estate Vineyard
Hirschy Vineyard	Tanager Vineyard
Kalita Vineyard	Two Mules Vineyard
Kiff Vineyard	Yamhill Vineyards
Lenné Estate Vineyard	...and...wine company
Lobenhaus Vineyard	