



Best Up-And-Coming Wine Regions

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by ANNIE WANG on JULY 23, 2013



Wine lovers may currently flock to the well-known hillsides of Napa Valley, but the U.S. has plenty of other wine regions on the rise. Wine aficionados should check out these wine regions for the unique varietals, gorgeous landscapes and boutique wineries. Here are top 10 up-and-coming wine regions around the U.S. and a sample itinerary for intrepid travelers.

Temecula Valley Wine Country, CA

Located 60 miles north of San Diego, Temecula is the heart of California’s South Coast wine region. The microclimate is ideal for grapes, offering morning mists, sunny days and cool nights.

Temecula’s wineries take advantage of their California weather, with a focus on sustainability and the outdoors. [Ponte Family Estate](#) was founded in 1997 and is one of the largest vineyards in Temecula. Ponte Family Estate is focused on sustainability, and they transitioned to become a certified California sustainable winery in 2007. Its neighbor, [Wilson Creek Winery](#), is a family-owned vineyard that is famous for their Almond Champagne and a Decadencia Chocolate Port, served in a chocolate shot glass – perfect for the experimental wine-lover. Down the road, [Thornton Winery](#) is celebrating their 25th year this summer with a Champagne Jazz Series. Musicians perform live shows every Saturday at 7 PM through August.

Find more wineries and growers in Temecula at the [Temecula Valley Winegrowers Association](#).

Finger Lakes Wine Country, NY

With more than 100 wineries, the Finger Lakes are a must-see area for wine lovers looking to experience the New York wine scene. Most of the wineries are located near Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake.

Many of Finger Lake’s wineries emphasize going green and returning to traditional winemaking techniques. [Red Tail Ridge Winery](#) is the first LEED gold-certified green winery in New York and has been recognized for producing great red wines in a primarily white wine region. [Heart & Hands Wine Company](#) brings a traditional approach to winemaking, starting with shoot thinning, green harvesting and field sorting their grapes prior to the fermentation process.

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Find more wineries in the Finger Lakes region at the [Finger Lakes Wine Alliance](#) and at the [Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance](#).

Yakima Valley, WA

Yakima Valley has been the heart of Washington wine country since 1917 when [William Bridgman](#) planted European wine grapes such as Zinfandel, Sauvignon Blanc and Thompson Seedless and founded Upland Winery. Yakima Valley's dedication to wine continues today as it celebrates its 30th year since it was established as the first [American Viticultural Area \(AVA\)](#) in the Pacific Northwest.

Even the schools in the area are devoted to wine. [Washington State University](#) has a Viticulture and Enology extension program in Grandview, providing seminars and talks on wine production and the wine industry.

Yakima Valley's boutique wineries are often small and family-run. [Two Mountain Winery](#) is a family-owned winery established in 2002 in the Rattlesnake Hills that produces 8 varietal wines, including Riesling, Syrah and Lemberger. Keep an eye out for their "wine dogs" – three yellow labs and a basset hound that can be found wandering the site. Further south, in Prosser, [Willow Crest Wine Estates](#) focuses on producing aromatic white wines. Their tasting room offers a delicious sampling of their wines, and their Patio Café offers a seasonal menu of food. The nearby [Desert Wind Winery](#) is a Southwest-inspired winery set in adobe buildings overlooking the Yakima River. In addition to their tasting rooms, guests can enjoy overnight suites, a restaurant, a demonstration kitchen and a gift shop.

Find more wineries in Yakima Valley at the [Wine Yakima Valley](#), an association of growers and wineries.

Texas Hill Wine Country, TX

Texas, the land of beer and barbeques, may be a surprising choice, but the Texas Hill Wine Country proves that the wine scene is growing in the Lone Star State. Texas Hill Country expands from north of Austin to south of San Antonio and has easy access to outdoor activities like horseback riding, cave touring and river rafting.

[Bending Branch Winery](#), a boutique winery near Comfort, Texas, northwest of San Antonio, focuses on creating an organic wine operation by using sustainable practices. Tannat is their signature grape so be sure to try one of their Tannat wines or ports. [Flat Creek Estate](#) is located outside of Austin. They offer a First Saturday Wine Dinner, a four-course Texas Tucson dinner paired with four wines, some of which are exclusively served at the dinner. Further north, [Fall Creek Vineyards](#) is located off of Lake Buchanan, 80 miles northwest of Austin. The loam soil, cool nights and hot days make the perfect microclimate for growing grapes. Their Meritus, a Red Bordeaux blend, enjoys cult status in Texas.

Find more wineries in the Texas Hill Country at [Texas Hill Country Wineries](#) and [Texas Wine](#).

Augusta, MO

Missouri Wine Country is centered on Augusta and dates back to the 19th-century. The wine industry declined during the Prohibition, but Missouri experienced a renaissance in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1980, [Augusta became the first designated AVA](#), gaining that distinction eight months before Napa Valley.

[Augusta Winery](#) was founded in 1988 and is located on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River Valley. August Winery provides locally-produced cheese and sausage with their wines on their outdoor terrace and in their Wine & Beer Garden. For those who also enjoy spirits, [Montelle Winery](#), founded as a winery in 1970 by Clayton Byers, later opened a distillery that produces four types of brandy – apple, peach, cherry and grape.

Find more wineries in Augusta at [Missouri Wine Country](#).

Middle Tennessee Region, TN

The Middle Tennessee Region has been active since 1973, when seven wine growers joined to create the [Tennessee Farm Winegrowers Alliance](#) (TFWA). Now, there are 42 wineries in the region, and winemaking is expanding throughout the state. The [Middle Tennessee Region](#) stretches from

north of Nashville down to Chattanooga.

Learn more about Tennessee's agricultural industry and natural environment at these wineries. [Natchez Hills Vineyard](#) is a family-owned vineyard and winery located south of Nashville near the historic Natchez Trace. Book a tour of the Natchez Vineyard and Winery to learn more about Middle Tennessee's viticulture history and Terroir, then sample some of Natchez Hills's wines. Located in Manchester, 60 miles southeast of Nashville, [Beans Creek Winery](#) sources its grapes from a variety of Middle Tennessee vineyards and growers to create a wide array of Tennessee wines. In addition, there's a farmers' market held on premises every Thursday afternoon from May through October.

Find more wineries in the Middle Tennessee Region at [Pick Tennessee Products](#).

Petaluma, CA

Petaluma lies in the Sonoma County, north of San Francisco, and is known for its amazing pinot noirs, chardonnays and syrahs. Explore [Downtown Petaluma](#) for a perfect showcase of boutique shops and restaurants, historic architecture, including National Historic Landmark [Rancho Petaluma Adobe](#) and of course, access to plenty of tasting rooms.

Port-lovers should head to the tasting room at [Sonoma Valley Portworks](#) in downtown Petaluma, where visitors can taste new ports straight out of the barrel. Right outside downtown Petaluma is [Enriquez Estate Winery](#), a boutique winery specializing in Tempranillo, Pinot Noir and a white farmer's blend "Brisa", all produced with a hands-on approach. Then head south to the [Keller Estate](#), a family-owned vineyard and winery known for their Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. The Keller Estate also focuses on the visual arts, architecture and design aspect of winemaking and features works from local artists in the tasting rooms and around the property.

Find more wineries in and around Petaluma at [Visit Petaluma](#).

Snake River Valley, ID

Idaho's wine market is rapidly growing, jumping from 11 wineries in 2002 to 48 in 2013 – Governor Butch Otter even declared June as Idaho Wine Month in 2009. Snake River Valley is in southwest Idaho, stretching from Payette down past Boise, and is one of the state's fastest growing regions.

The 48 include wineries with distinctive features. [3 Horse Ranch Vineyard](#) is an organic vineyard that uses green methods of maintaining the vineyard, harvesting the grapes and producing the wine. It offers a range of tasting options accompanied by smoked Northwest salmon, cheese and other Idahoan treats. Fans of Bordeaux can head to [Fraser Vineyards](#), planted in 2003 by Bill and Bev Fraser in Canyon County. Their wines comprised of three Bordeaux grape varietals: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot; all wines are aged in French, American or Hungarian oak barrels for two years. [Hat Ranch Winery](#) has it all – they are a bed & breakfast with a tasting room and art gallery that is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 12 PM to 5 PM. Hat Ranch produces Merlot, Tempranillo, Chardonnay and Riesling.

Find more wineries in Snake Valley River and the rest of Idaho at [Idaho Wine Commission](#).

Old Mission Peninsula, MI

Michigan is one of the fastest growing wine regions in the U.S., with [wine grape acreage doubling in the last decade](#). Michigan has been successful growing cool-climate aromatic white grapes like Riesling, Pinot Gris and Chenin Blanc. Old Mission Peninsula, near Traverse City, has emerged as a top destination for wineries and vineyards because of the ideal microclimate gained from its proximity to Lake Michigan. Try the [Old Mission Peninsula Wine Trail](#) to visit seven top wineries in the region.

Old Mission Peninsula's wineries are not just limited to wine tastings. [Chateau Chantal](#) is a bed & breakfast, winery and vineyard estate, with views of East and West Grand Traverse Bays and Power Island. [Black Star Farms](#) is comprised of two wineries that have adjacent tasting rooms, a distillery, an inn and an equestrian facility. [Brys Estate Vineyard and Winery](#) is an 80-acre estate with guest accommodations, private tours and tastings. They mainly produce white wines such as Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Blac and Pinot Grigio but also some Merlots.

Find wineries in the Old Mission Peninsula at [Michigan Wines](#).

Central Virginia Wine Country, VA

Central Virginia has a long winemaking history, dating back to Thomas Jefferson's two vineyards in [Monticello](#). Now Virginia is seeing the birth of its wine industry in the production of single-bottled varieties like Viognier, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. [Central Virginia Wine Region](#) is located on the Eastern slopes of Blue Ridge, clustered around Charlottesville and extending south to Lynchburg and east to Richmond.

[Barboursville Vineyards](#) is located 8 miles south of James Madison's Montpelier and 20 miles north of Monticello. The winery was founded in 1976 and set the standards for wineries in the region. [Kilaurwen Winery](#) is a family-run vineyard that has grown grapes for many of Virginia's wineries since 1994 and branched into making their own wines in 2009. Kilaurwen is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, only 8 miles from Shenandoah National Park. [Pippin Hill Farm and Vineyards](#) is a boutique winery and vineyard, where all wines are made from vineyard grapes and all food is locally produced and sourced.

Find more wineries in the Central Virginia Wine Country on [Virginia Wine](#).

Photo Credit: [Vineyard](#) by Vina Caliterra

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