

# Pinot Police on Patrol

YOU'LL FIND ANYTHING BUT PINOT AT THIS PARTY



PHOTO BY LAURYN KAY PHOTOGRAPHY

over 100 wines, including super-rare Ehrenfelser to Trousseau and unique field blends, poured by both emerging and legendary winemakers. Smith continues, “We’ve found that many Oregonians are drawn to the festival out of a curiosity to learn about other grapes beyond Pinot Noir. They are eager to explore and find new varieties! Like discovering a secret, there’s a whole underground wine world right beneath our noses.”

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## ALT WINE FEST WINERIES

Anne Amie Vineyards / Beckham Estate / Brooks Wine  
 Chris James Cellars / Cooper Mountain Vineyards / Dacha Wines / David Hill Winery  
 Day Wines / Demeus Wines  
 Division Wine Co / Franchere Wine Company / Golden Cluster / Grochau Cellars / Hanson Vineyards / Helioterra Wine  
 History Wine / Hope Well Wine  
 Illahe Vinyards / Johan Vineyards / Landmass Wines / Lares Wines / Leah Jorgensen Cellars / Ltd. + Wines / Monument Wine Company / Ovum Wines  
 Parra Wine Co / Quady North Remy Wines / Ricochet Wine Company / RR Winery / St. Reginald Parish / Statera Cellars  
 Teutonic Wines / Troon Vineyard / Upper Five Vineyard

BY MICHELE FRANCISCO

Perhaps you’ve heard the phrase, ‘Anything but Chardonnay,’ often shortened to ABC by those who use it frequently? Sunday School Wine and Alt Wine Fest founders Mallory Smith and Martin Skegg intend to popularize ‘Anything but Pinot’ – an updated version of the saying. Whether it will catch on is anyone’s guess. Since Oregon grows over 80 different grape varieties, ‘ABP’ might just become a commonplace expression after all.

The upcoming Alt Wine Fest allows curious participants the chance to sample beyond Pinot Noir. After a two-year pandemic hiatus, this year’s festival on July 17 from 1-5 p.m. has a new location, Abbey Road Farm in Carlton. Over 35 wineries will feature their unique, non-Pinot Noir wines in the casual, walk-around setting.

Mallory Smith, Alt Wine Fest co-founder, explains “You’ll find a huge spectrum of grape varieties, from



PHOTO BY LAURYN KAY PHOTOGRAPHY

those that are weird and esoteric, for example, Chasselas— with only a few rows planted—to those gaining popularity like Gamay, Syrah and Chardonnay. Wine lovers have the opportunity to taste something new and interesting before these varieties become more prominent.”

Alt Wine Fest is a complete destination for an insider tasting experience like no other. Guests can choose from

TOP: Festival attendees learning about less common Oregon wine varieties.  
 ABOVE: Alt Wine Fest co-founder, Martin Skegg, masquerading as the Pinot police at the event.

## Pinot police on patrol

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As Oregon's first organized festival championing the state's non-Pinot Noir varieties and the winemakers who love them, Alt Wine Fest celebrates the state's wine diversity. "We're so excited to be back and shining a spotlight on the full range of incredible wines that Oregon has to offer," says Alt Wine Fest co-founder Martin Skegg. Smith adds, "People can bring picnic blankets and definitely a hankering for tacos. There will be lawn games and space to spread out at Abbey Road Farm and make an afternoon of it."

Tickets to the festival are \$68 per person and free for designated drivers. Another option is a festival ticket plus transportation by NW Wine Shuttle with pick-up and drop-off locations in Beaverton and Portland, available for \$145. A free souvenir glass, music by DJ Party Marty and lawn games are included with festival admission. Ricky's taco truck will be offering food for purchase; attendees can also buy their favorite bottles to take home. A portion of all ticket sales will be donated to 2022 Alt Wine Fest charity partner Asociación Hispana de la Industria del Vino en Oregon y Comunidad, or AHIVOY. The nonprofit organization provides education and professional development opportunities to vineyard stewards in the Oregon wine industry. Tickets, designated driver signups and more information available at [www.altwinefest.com](http://www.altwinefest.com).

## Ah, Shucks

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pairing for mollusks raised in the clear, clean waters of the glacially-carved Hood Canal. The partnership is the result of two Northwest, multi-generational family businesses keenly focused on environmental stewardship in the face of climate change.

"We've wanted to have a wine partnership for some time, and the centennial inspired us to check some items off our to-do list," says Monberg. "Because we've had such a good working relationship with Cooper Mountain over the years, it made sense to approach them. Not only do we love their wine, but really admire Barbara, who's raising awareness about how

climate change is impacting food production."

Proceeds from Oyster White sales are donated to the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, a nonprofit organization working to increase the resilience of marine systems in the Puget Sound and Salish Sea. Best known for their work restoring the native Olympia oyster, the group also works with kelp, several species of abalone, including pinto. They are pioneering research on how climate change is affecting marine resources and the communities dependent on them.

Find Oyster White at the Cooper Mountain and Arborbrook tasting rooms in Oregon, and at the Hama Hama retail store and Oyster Saloon, both located in Lilliwaup, Washington. For online wine purchases, visit: [www.coopermountainwine.com](http://www.coopermountainwine.com). Oysters lovers can order Hama Hama oysters at: [www.hamamaoysters.com](http://www.hamamaoysters.com).

## Rooted in Ancient Soil

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in around the corner, is perfectly distanced from the perpetually breezy Corridor, while also buffered from the winds over the Luckiamute Valley by Fishback Hill to the south."

Temperature remains another differentiating factor after soil and wind speed. With a total of 2,543 average growing degree days between 2014-16, Mt. Pisgah is significantly cooler than Salem, with an average of 2,903 days during the same timeframe. These averages can be considered high since all three growing seasons were warmer than usual.

Ford, along with Croft and Freedom Hill Vineyard's Dan and Helen Dusschee, originally discussed developing an AVA in 2014. A larger cohort met in 2016, the final petition was perfected in October 2017.

When asked how the Mt. Pisgah terroir is reflected in the finished wines, Scenic Valley Farms winemaker Gabriel Jagle explains, "I have worked with Pinot Noir from Ash Creek and Illahe Vineyards, and they are distinctly different from others in the Willamette Valley. The lower temperatures and higher elevation allow for

lower sugar levels and higher acidity, resulting in wines that are fresh and vibrant— even in the warmest vintages."

Ancient soils also influence the grapevines and subsequent fruit. Jagle continues, "The unique Siletz River Volcanic soils contribute a dark earthiness to the Pinot Noir that cannot be found anywhere else within the valley." Ford adds, "These clay soils, the reduced Van Duzer winds and the warmth of the hills tend to create darker, more tannic skins. After working with four vineyards and tasting nearly all the wine from the new AVA, I can say with confidence that we're growing excellent wine grapes on the mountain." Ford's 80-acre Illahe Vineyard property runs down the south side of Mt. Pisgah, and he is extremely familiar with the area's distinctive wine characteristics.

I believe Don Lange, founder of Lange Estate Winery & Vineyards, sums it up best. "Our family winery has been creating wines from Freedom Hill Vineyards, located within the Mt. Pisgah sub-appellation, since the late 1980s. After a few years of discovery, we were convinced that the unique characteristics of the Freedom Hill wines were profound and sufficiently commanding to merit single-vineyard designation on our labels, a position that has endured to this day. They are among the most distinctive wines made in Oregon and, by turns, some of the most distinctive wines in the world, year after year."

## Progressive Planting

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staying with the program, Fox says that in the end, if the winemakers don't like certain varieties, they could be grafted over.

When asked about the late frost, Fox feels more optimistic now. "Like others in the area, the frost strongly affected us, but the remaining shoots have recovered and are doing well. Flowering hasn't yet occurred, but we could be looking at about half our forecasted production."

Wines from the rare grapes grown in their small blocks will be sold exclusively through the tasting room and wine club. Abbey Road Farm hopes they will interest consumers who want to see what the Willamette Valley can

do with these varieties.

Doubling down on their educational vision, Abbey Road aims to inspire guests to appreciate and create a connection to the land. In fact, they've established a demonstration block near the tasting room where all these grapes are planted together. As for their success in the Valley, only time will tell. I'm willing to hedge my bet on these unique vinifera varieties, for the win. 🍷

## Here comes the rain again

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an "Oregon-style" Pinot Noir. Like us, many wineries feared poor scores. Our industry's shared hunch proved astute, and selling that vintage proved tough.

The same year, after tasting 250 Pinots from our 2011 vintage, Wine Spectator's Harvey Steiman wrote, "... if you want consistency, clearly delineated flavors and a sense of presence, you might be disappointed." He continued frankly, "All but the very best 2011s, however, lack the depth and intensity of a great vintage. The lighter-is-better crowd may not admit it, but a larger percentage than usual whiffed on the vintage and made thin, boring wines. This does not happen in a great vintage." Ouch.

Yet, certain others in the know dismissed the critics' dire proclamations and instead stocked up. Winemakers counted their blessings with each bottle sold. Today, the wines from the 2011 vintage— along with 2010 and 2012— have really hit their stride. Whether a prophet or simply fortuitous, if you've got any in your cellar, consider yourself lucky and drink up.

After speaking with Jones, I wondered how I will remember this wet spring a decade from now? Will I erase the months of endless rain from my memory, in favor of the hedonistic feelings experienced drinking an outstanding glass of Willamette Valley Pinot Noir? Or will I recall the collective drenching suffered by many as ultimately paying significant dividends in the form of Pinot Noir worth coveting? I suppose only time will tell.

Those with patience might just reap the greatest rewards.

Visit [www.climateofwine.com](http://www.climateofwine.com) to read Jones' monthly reports and research. 🍷