

Santé

Ponzi Vineyards, Fifty Years Of Passion



In case you haven't heard, Willamette Valley AVA in Oregon is an ideal place for growing and producing cool-climate varieties of wine, in particular, its award-winning Pinot Noir, which the region is best known for. Other grape varieties that do well here include Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay and Riesling.



Willamette Valley is located in western Oregon and is Oregon's largest AVA stretching over 150 miles long and 60 miles wide. It borders the Columbia River to the north and runs south to the Calapooya Mountains outside Eugene. Willamette Valley has seven appellations within its borders and has the largest concentration of wineries and vineyards in Oregon. There are approximately 23,524 vineyard acres planted and it is home to 564 wineries.

This is a cool-climate, maritime region named after the Willamette River that runs through the heart of it. The region is cushioned from Pacific storms on the west by the Coast Range and borders the Cascades to the east with a series of hill chains to the north. Willamette Valley enjoys a long and gentle growing season with warm summers and cool evenings. This diurnal temperature variation allows the grapes to slowly develop flavor and complexity while retaining their natural acidity.

Many of the region's vineyards are planted on hills consisting of soil derived from an old volcanic and sedimentary seabed. The major soils are marine sedimentary, volcanic and windblown loess. Jory, (red volcanic soil) is the most common soil here and runs four to six feet deep allowing for excellent drainage for these quality wine grapes.

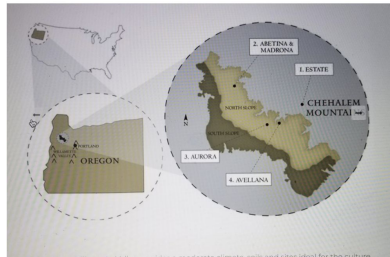
Ponzi Vineyards

Ponzi Vineyards is one of Oregon's original winegrowers and will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. It began with a passion for wine and a spirit for adventure that motivated Dick and Nancy Ponzi to purchase 20 acres southwest of Portland in 1970. As founder Dick Ponzi said, *"it was about the adventure of doing something we truly believed in."*



Dick and Nancy Ponzi Photo courtesy of Ponzi Vineyards

Having moved to Willamette Valley with their young family in the 1960s, they did extensive research to find an ideal location to make world-class Pinot Noir. By 1974, the first barrels of Pinot Noir were produced. Over the next 30 years, Ponzi purchased more vineyards in premium appellations while winning awards and recognition for their wine.



For over 25 years now Dick and Nancy's daughters, President and Director of Sales and Marketing, Anna Maria and Winemaker & Co-owner Luisa have continued their parents' legacy with the methods, philosophies and winemaking passion established 50 years ago. Anna Maria and Luisa acquired ownership of the winery in 2012 and it became one of the country's few sister-run wineries and one of Oregon's few second-generation wineries.



Today, Ponzi has over 140 acres of family-owned vineyards, which are LIVE Certified Sustainable (Low Input Viticulture & Enology). It is the world's highest standard for sustainable viticulture and enology. *"Driven by the concept that the varietal must match the terroir and climate, Ponzi Vineyards continue to set the bar for Oregon."* I was very excited to receive a bottle of Ponzi's Pinot Noir Reserve 2016. Luisa Ponzi said, *"I would liken 2016 to the 2006 vintage where we saw lush, beautiful wines with unexpected elegance and acidity. Truly, a stellar vintage for Oregon."*



Ponzi Pinot Noir Reserve 2016

Grapes for the Reserve were sourced entirely from Laurelwood soils in the Chehalem Mountains AVA. Selected barrels are from Ponzi's prized Aurora, Abetina and Avellana Vineyards, which make up the majority of the blend with a few barrels from Linda Vista Vineyard. This wine did not go through filtration and was aged for 20 months in French oak barrels (30% new) and then aged for an additional five months in bottle before release.



This wine has a ruby-red color with succulent notes of red fruit, cherry, raspberry, violets, baking spice, chocolate and hints of earth on the nose. It is silky and beautifully structured with concentrated layers of red cherry, pomegranate, red plum, refined tannins, and a touch of graphite on the palate. Hints of candy apple, chocolate, nutmeg and a dash of white pepper linger on a long finish. Drink now or hold for a few years.

Alcohol: 14.4%

SRP: \$65

I used my Coravin system to pour a glass of this heavenly wine and I plan to cellar the bottle for a year or so before popping the cork. However, I might be tempted to open it much sooner!