RED MTN AVA ALLIANCE

# Designation

Red Mountain became a federally designated American Viticultural Area (AVA) on April 3, 2001. "A viticultural area is a delimited grape-growing region distinguishable by geographical features, the boundaries of which have been recognized by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) and defined in 27 CFR Part 9. A listing of approved viticultural areas is in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 27, Part 9, American viticultural areas." (http://www.ttb.gov/wine/wine-faq.shtml#w2).

Comprised of 4,040 (16 km2) acres, the defined boundary of the Red Mountain grape-growing region is presently the smallest AVA in Washington State. Distinguishable by geographic features including tributary, soil and slope, approximately 1000 acres of the Red Mountain AVA are under cultivation.

The name Red Mountain is attributed to the geographic land mass that rises like a silent sentinel over the region. At an elevation of 1410 ft, Red Mountain rests in the Southeast corner of Washington State as a result of the ice-age flooding of Glacial Lake Missoula. Red Mountain takes it name from a native grass called "drooping brome" or "cheatgrass", which imbues a reddish hue to the mountain slopes in the springtime.



Formed in a southeast to northwest diagonal ridge, the distinctive crest of Red Mountain provides the northern boundary of the triangular shaped AVA. Defined on the western edge by the Yakima River, a Columbia River tributary, the AVA is marked primarily by soil and topography along the southern border.

The Southwest slope of Red Mountain lies within what was once a backwater eddy during the time of the Missoula floods. The predominant soil types within the AVA include the Warden, Hezel and Scootenay series of wind blown soils (loess), which were deposited over the glacial sediments from the giant pre-historic floods. This variety of soil presents a combination of sand, silt and loam which are exceptional for growing vinifera.

For more information on the principles, purpose, and process of AVA designation, please visit http://www.ttb.gov/wine or the Government Printing Office web site at http://www.access.gpo.gov.

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# Terroir

Since the dawn of time, natural forces have worked powerfully and mysteriously, and in rare circumstances have aligned to collectively create earthly wonders, such as exquisite gems that are singular in all the world.

One of those gems remained hidden in plain view, waiting patiently for thousands of years until such time certain adventurous, wine loving souls, would have the wisdom and foresight to reveal it to the world. This is the story of Red Mountain's "terroir".

The Latin word for earth or land, "terra", gives name to the concept of "terroir", which loosely translated means "a sense of place". The term is used to denote the local conditions and unique qualities of a region, including soil-type, macro-climate, micro-climate, weather conditions and topography. "Terroir" is considered to be supremely influential as these collective conditions bestow notable characteristics upon wine grape varietals grown in a particular place.



## Geography

The small geographic region that comprises the Red Mountain AVA was formed by the repeated ice-age flooding of Glacial Lake Missoula over 10,000 years ago. The flood waters redesigned the landscape, configuring the soft mountain slopes and depositing nutrient rich top soils over sand, silt and gravel – as if to anticipate the introduction of wine grapes to the region.

## Soil

The high alkalinity and calcium carbonate content of the soil, along with its granular consistency, allows for each vine to form a well established root system. In soils with this composition, root systems are able to reach deep to obtain the necessary nutrients and moisture.

## Slope

The southwest slope of the Red Mountain AVA provides the vineyards in the region with a directional aspect to the sun that is ideal for prolonged sunlight exposure and warmth. These highly desirable conditions allow for a ripeness in tannins that is recognized as a primary characteristic of Red Mountain fruit.

## Precipitation

The Cascade Mountain rain shadow has its greatest effect in Red Mountain, where the desert climate experiences an average annual rainfall of seven inches, and almost no precipitation during the growing season. The result is dramatically lower mold and mildew pressure compared to most vineyard regions.

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## Microclimate

The high latitude (N 46*) and topography contribute temperature swings experienced during the growing season, with daytime temperatures averaging 90 °F (32 °C) and night time temperatures dropping below 50 °F (10 °C). In the evenings, the AVA experiences a notable drop in temperatures with the Yakima River playing a moderate role in the providing a cooling effect to Red Mountain's gentle slopes. The cooler evenings help to retain acidity levels which allows for the exceptional balance and structure found in Red Mountain grapes, and the wines crafted from them.

## Winds

The prevailing winds come out of the Southwest and are notable for their frequency and velocity. The regular gusts of warm air flow through the AVA's vineyards during the growing season, keeping the grape clusters small and concentrating the flavors of the fruit - which contributes to their richness and intensity.

## Air Drainage

In the autumn, the cooler air from the north flows down the slope of the mountain, toward the river. This natural air drainage provides continual air movement which helps prevent frost from settling in the vineyards and damaging the grapes.

Wines made from Red Mountain fruit express this unique terroir with exceptional color, strength and richness, while demonstrating remarkable balance of fruit, acidity, and tannin.

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# History

Red Mountain is relatively new to the fine wine scene.

The first wine pioneers to the region initially walked the land in the summer of 1972. They found a gently sloping sagebrush covered hillside that had been largely overlooked by both early settlers and local indigenous peoples. There were no roads, wells, power-lines or any other signs of civilization.

These wine pioneers were John Williams and Jim Holmes. They had been greatly influenced by the wine grape research conducted by Dr. Walter Clore and his staff at the WSU agricultural station in Prosser.

Three years later in 1975, after obtaining power, water and rights-of-way to the property, they planted the first ten acres of vineyard on Red Mountain. As wine hobbyists, they had imagined that planting a vineyard might be fun, and maybe even profitable. While they hoped that their efforts may one day produce acceptable wine, they had not envisioned the greatness that was to follow.

The first wines produced were remarkably good, and the reputation of Red Mountain began to grow. Vineyard expansion grew steadily and the pioneers sold their grapes to some of the wineries that are now recognized as some of the best.

The first Red Mountain winery was bonded in 1980. After that time, more people began to purchase land and plant vineyards, recognizing the superior quality of Red Mountain grapes and the potential for world-class wines.

AVA status was achieved in 2001. Red Mountain now hosts approximately thirty five vineyards covering more than 1400 acres - with perhaps 1000 more acres in the works.

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# Technical Information

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| Size | 4,040 acres, the smallest Washington American Viticultural Area |
| Soils | Predominate soils are Warden, Hezel, and Scootenay |
| Elevation | From 540 feet to 1,400 feet |
| Slope | Classic southwest slope, 0-15% |
| Estimated plantable acreage | 2,700 acres |
| First agricultural product | Vitis vinifera |
| First planted | 1975 |
| Root stock | Own-rooted, small amounts grafted |
| Annual rainfall | Five to six inches |
| Irrigation | Mostly drip via deep wells and the Yakima River |
| Sunlight | 2 hours more per day during the growing season than Napa Valley |
| Average yield | 3.2 tons per acre |
| Price per ton | Approximately three times the state average |
| Region | Similar to region IV with approximately 3,200 degree days but with significantly higher total acids than are typically found in this warm a region. |
| Major varietals grown | Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Petit Verdot |
| Number of vineyards | 25 |
| Number of wineries | 15 |

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# Wines

Wines produced from Red Mountain grapes have been awarded impressive scores. The following list contains all wines made from Red Mountain fruit that have scored 90pts or more:

## Coming Soon.