

# Eugene Area Wineries

By Lee Juillerat

**M**OVIE GOERS AND popular fiction readers know that Madison County has its bridges, but growing legions of wine lovers are learning that Lane County, at the southern region of Oregon's Willamette Valley, has not only the most covered bridges of any county west of the Mississippi, but an absolutely outstanding array of wineries. Because most have limited releases, many of the wines are not found in stores, so consider purchasing what you enjoy.

The Willamette Valley begins just south of Eugene and extends north to Portland. The valley is home to two-thirds of the state's wineries and vineyards, and is best known for its internationally acclaimed Pinot Noir. While several wineries specialize in that variety, the offerings range from deep reds to fruity whites and even sparkling wines. The northern Willamette Valley, because of its proximity to Portland, is often the focus of attention, but the southern valley near Eugene also offers superb wines and an extra bonus: less-crowded wineries.

Using Eugene as a base, a logical starting point is **Territorial Vineyards & Wine Co.** The vineyards are in the rolling foothills of the coastal range, but the winery and tasting room are downtown in Eugene's historic, funky Whiteaker neighborhood. You'll enjoy delicious Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Riesling, and Rosé of Pinot Noir wines. All of Territorial's vineyards are certified sustainable organic and salmon safe by L.I.V.E., an organization that sets standards for sustainable viticultural practices. (541-684-9463; [territorialvineyards.com](http://territorialvineyards.com))

South of Eugene near Cottage Grove, you'll find **Saginaw Vineyard**, a family winery that specializes in hand crafted Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Blanc, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, and Marechal Foch, made in small batches from mostly estate-grown grapes. The Byler family also creates refreshing blueberry and blackberry wines for summer-evening sipping. The tasting room is in the farm's original red barn. (541-942-1364; [saginawvineyard.com](http://saginawvineyard.com))

Southwest of Eugene near Lorane is a cluster of several wineries, including **King Estate Winery**, the world's largest contiguous organic vineyard and a producer of highly regarded Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris. The 1,033-acre estate is crowned by an elegant French chateau with a tasting bar and full-service restaurant that serves local organic foods. The tasting room overlooks the rolling vineyards, orchards, and vegetable and flower gardens. On weekends the Marketplace offers organic produce and flowers grown on the estate, plus sandwiches, salads, and gifts. (541-942-9874; [kingestate.com](http://kingestate.com))

Just south of King Estate is **Chateau Lorane**. Along with Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Merlot, and other wines commonly found in this area, the winery offers a number of unusual red and white varietals, including Pinot Meunier, Baco Noir, Melon de Bourgogne, Durif, and Viognier. The wine is made in small batches by winemaker Linde Kester, who delights in using obscure grape varietals and creating non-traditional blends. When conditions allow, the winery creates Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Pinot Gris, and Marechal Foch.

(541-942-8028; [chateaulorane.com](http://chateaulorane.com))

Only a few miles north lies the **Iris Hill Winery**, another family-owned operation that produces small volumes of hand-crafted wines, including Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, and Chardonnay, made entirely from their 40 acres of sustainably farmed vineyards. The site was planted with vines in 1996, and Richard Boyles and Pamela Frye offered their first Iris Hill wines in 2002. (541-345-1617; [Iris-Hill.com](http://Iris-Hill.com))

Lane County's oldest winery is **Silvan Ridge-Hinman Vineyards**, established in 1979. The facility, located 11 miles west of Eugene, has been remodeled but the atmosphere remains that of a small European winery. Most of their grapes come from northern Willamette Valley and Rogue Valley vineyards. They feature Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, but also test some wines not typically found in the region, including early Muscat, Viognier, and the Silvan Ridge Del Rio Portage, which they've dubbed the "black hole of wine" because its deep purple/black color makes it appear opaque when poured. (541-345-1945; [silvanridge.com](http://silvanridge.com))

**Sweet Cheeks Winery** attracts first-timers curious about the name, but repeat visits stem from its location and full-bodied wines. Located on a hill that overlooks the Briggs Hill Valley, the elegant tasting room offers expansive views. The sights inside are impressive, too, with vaulted ceilings trimmed in Oregon Chinquapin wood, stone floors, soapstone fireplace, and gourmet kitchen. As with many wineries in the region, Sweet Cheeks features Pinot Noir and



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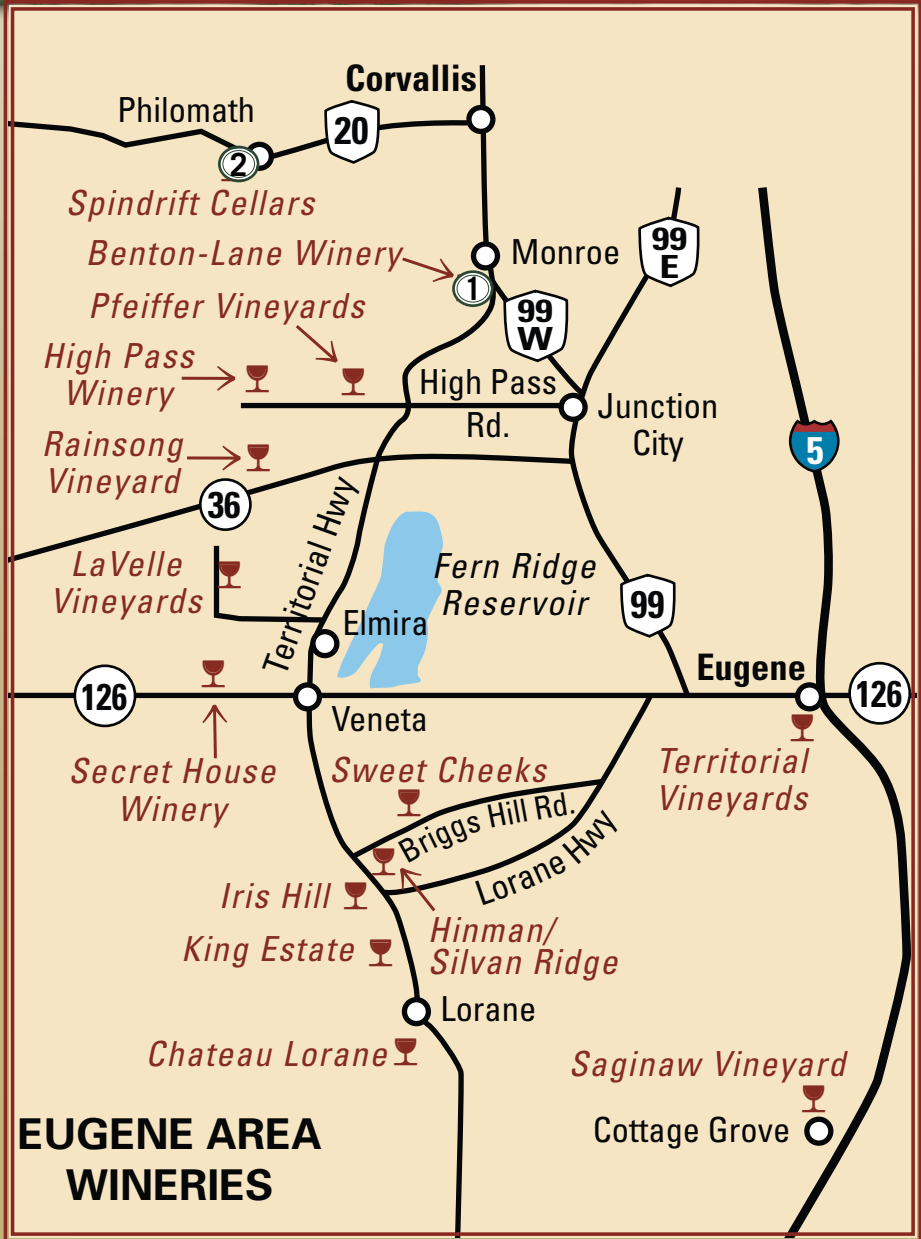


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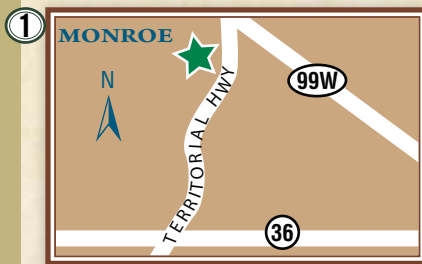
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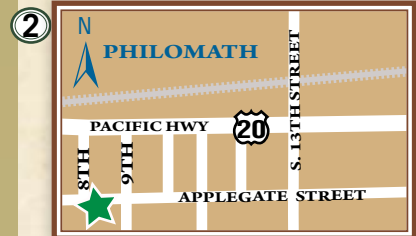
EUGENE AREA  
WINERIES



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If your thirst for great wines is not yet satiated, spend another day west and northwest of Eugene on a loop where the possibilities include **Secret House Vineyards, LaVelle Vineyards, Rainsong Vineyard, High Pass Winery, Pfeiffer Vineyards, and Benton-Lane Winery.**

**Secret House Winery**, owned by the Chappel family, is a short distance west of Eugene along Highway 126. Along with Riesling, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir grapes from their own vineyard, the Chappels buy grapes from other Pacific Northwest vineyards to craft their Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Gris and tasty Muller-Thurgau. Worth sampling, too, is their premium Methode Champenoise sparkling wine. The tasting room features a fine art gallery, and the grounds are a favorite spot for birders and gardening enthusiasts. The winery hosts live music

in the summer. (541-935-3774; *Secret-HouseWinery.com*)

It's just a short drive to **LaVelle Vineyards**. Offerings include Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Gamay Noir, Pinot Gris, Riesling, and even a sparkling wine. The winery, set among terraced lawns and gardens, offers a Northwest lodge look with cedar and stone. Their delicious wines can also be sampled at their tasting room and bistro in Eugene's Fifth Street Public Market. (541-935-9406; *lavelle-vineyards.com*)

At the north end of the loop, near Monroe, you'll find the **Benton-Lane Winery**. Owners Carol and Steve Girard bought the property, which had been the Sunnymount sheep ranch, in 1988. Their 134-acre vineyard is predominately planted in Pinot Noir grapes and produces award-winning wines. Benton-Lane's environmentally conscious vineyard practices earned it certification under the

internationally sanctioned L.I.V.E. (Low Input Viticulture and Enology) program and regionally acclaimed Salmon Safe Program. (541-847-5792; *Benton-Lane.com*)

**VISITOR INFORMATION**

**LANE COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS ASSOCIATION**  
800-547-5445  
TravelLaneCounty.org

**WHERE TO STAY**

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