



Tri-Cities Wineries

WINE IS BIG BUSINESS and lots of fun all year long in the hub of southeast Washington. Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland form the Tri-Cities at the confluence of the Snake and Columbia rivers.

By Vickie S. Higgin

Vineyards dot the rolling hills that surround the cities, home to several wineries that welcome visitors for tasting and within a 50-mile radius you'll find more than 150 wineries to visit.

An easy way to try three premier wineries at once is to visit Tulip Lane in Richland. Take Exit 3 off Interstate 182. Travel south on Queensgate Drive for less than a mile. Turn left onto Columbia Park Trail, then turn left again onto Windmill Road and you'll come almost immediately to Tulip Lane on the right.

Barnard Griffin is at 878 Tulip Lane. It is owned by Rob Griffin, who began his winemaking career in 1977, and his wife Deborah Barnard, an artist who creates fused glass works available in the tasting room's art gallery.

The winery's Rose of Sangiovese continues to win sweepstakes awards at the *San Francisco Chronicle's* wine competition. Tasting room manager Kim Gravenslund describes the medal winner as "crisp and clean, with flavor reminiscent of strawberries with a nice amount of acidity, making it very food-friendly."

The tasting room faces east, so the peaceful garden patio, graced with wisteria and other exotic plants, is shaded in the afternoon.

Griffin, who has produced his own label since 1983, is discriminating

about his fruit. He says his award-winning reds couldn't do without grapes from the Wahluke Slope overlooking the Columbia River. During harvest, he frequently drives along the lonesome Highway 240 through the Hanford Reservation to inspect the grapes. "It's critical to harvest the grapes when they aren't overly ripe or with underdeveloped tannins," he says.

Barnard Griffin's 2006 Tulip Cabernet continues to be outstanding, bringing home three gold medals. The Viognier, introduced with the 2006 vintage, is a limited-production white wine with an aroma that is abundant with ginger, lime, and spice. (509-627-0266; barnardgriffin.com)

J. Bookwalter Winery is aptly named, as three J. Bookwalters are involved. Jerry and Jean Bookwalter bottled their first vintage in 1983 at Pasco. The couple's son John joined the operation in 1997. The family-owned business expanded and relocated the winery to 894 Tulip Lane in Richland. Now Jerry nurtures the vineyard and Jean cares for the gardens while John handles the winemaking.

Sit-down tastings are offered in an inviting garden, where wines are paired with artisan cheeses from local producers. "We have a sort of tapas menu—light fare, meats, and appetizers," says general manager Betsy Pimente, "and music Wednesday through Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon."

Two J. Bookwalter wines have been recognized by the *Wine Enthusiast* maga-

zine: the 2004 Merlot, rated in March 2007 as among the editor's top 45 Merlots in the world, and the 2005 Riesling, ranked in November 2006 as 22nd among the magazine's top 100 wines in the world. (877-667-8300; bookwalterwines.com)

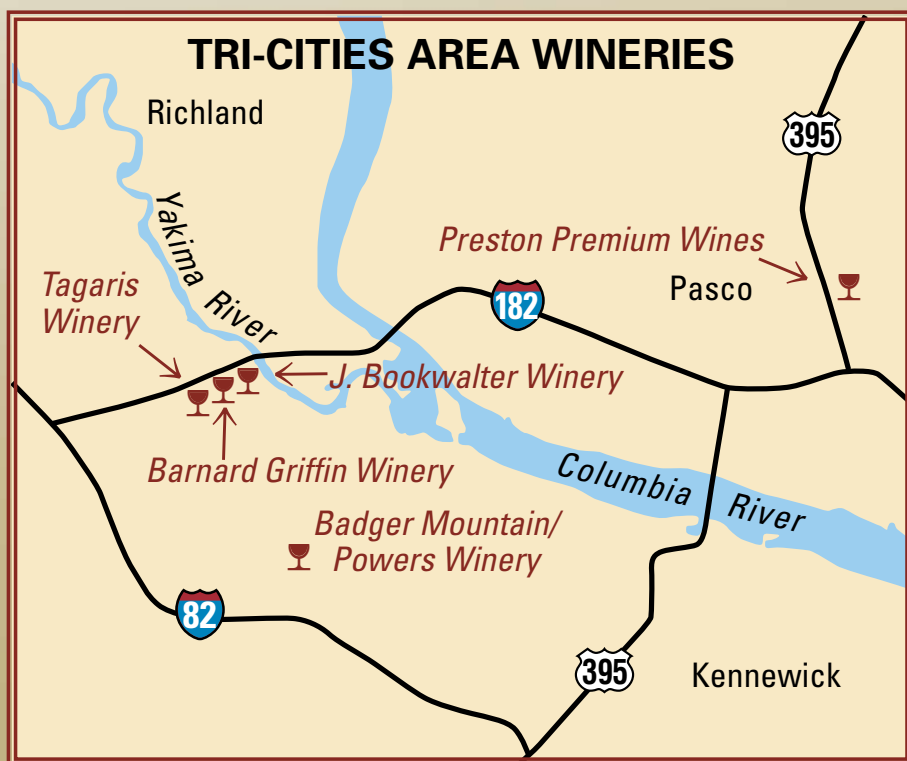
Michael Taggares founded **Tagaris Winery** in 1987, honoring the Greek spelling of his family name. Today's wines reflect the work of three generations of Taggares grape growers in the Columbia Valley, where Michael's grandfather settled because the climate and soil reminded him so strongly of his Greek homeland.

The operation moved its facility to 844 Tulip Lane and opened both the indoor fine-dining Taverna restaurant and the casual outdoor Patio Kouzina in time for the crush in 2005.

Frank Roth has been the winemaker at Tagaris since 2006. Previously Roth worked for several years at Sumac Ridge Estate Winery in Summerland, British Columbia, and served as cellar master at Barnard Griffin for a decade.

Roth-crafted wines have repeatedly been recognized at international competitions. In April 2008, the winery's Eliseo Silva brand garnered two gold medals and a bronze at the Pacific Rim International Wine Competition in San Bernardino, California. Roth describes the Eliseo Silva wines as "the best \$30 bottle of wine \$10 can buy." (509-628-1619; tagariswines.com)

Overlooking the valley north of Pasco, off Hwy 395, sits the granddaddy



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- Red Wine & Chocolate

April

- Yakima Valley Spring Barrel Tasting

May

- Untapped Blues Festival

June

- Cool Desert Nights Classic Car Festival

July

- Art in the Park Juried Art Festival

August

- Prosser Wine & Food Fair
- Tumbleweed Music Festival

September

- Fiery Foods Festival
- Catch the Crush Wine Festival

October

- Savor the Art Wine Festival

November

- Thanksgiving in Wine Country
- Tri-Cities Wine Festival

*sip
sample
celebrate*

Artwork by Connie Soto Murphy, www.soGart.com

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ALICIA SPOONER

of wineries in the entire Columbia Valley, **Preston Premium Wines.**

Every Friday during the summer months, visitors are invited to “Vino Notte,” when hours are extended until 10 P.M., musicians serenade, and wines by the bottle are available for purchase along with light foods and desserts.

Bill and Joann Preston planted their first vineyard in 1972 and produced their first wine in 1976. Preston was the first in Washington to plant and produce Merlot, and is the only operation in the Tri-Cities producing port, a sweet dessert wine fortified with brandy.

“Our ports date back to 1989,” advises Chenyn Preston-Johnson, tasting room manager and event coordinator. “We have 14 varieties of port within two main products, a 15-year blend and a 10-year blend.” Preston’s Royal Port is made with Royalty grapes, while the second port product, Tenrebac (that’s Cabernet spelled backwards) is, of course, made with Cabernet grapes.

Bill Preston, who died in 2001, was honored in 2006 with the first Legends of Washington Wine Hall of Fame award at the Inaugural Gala for the Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center in Prosser. (509-545-1990; prestonwines.com)

Perhaps one of the best-kept secrets around is the second largest producer of organic wines in the United States, **Badger Mountain Vineyard.**

Father and son Bill and Greg Powers established the vineyard in 1982 and began their transition to organic viticulture in 1988. Since that time, they have not used chemicals of any kind. In 1990, their vineyard was the first to be certified organic by the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

“Our success story has been the organic Reisling, the only one of its kind in the country. We sell as much of it as we can make,” says Mickey Dunne, marketing manager. Badger Mountain, now in its 26th estate vintage, produces 40,000 cases of organic wines annually. The organic wines are sold at natural food retailers such as New Seasons in Portland and Hagggen grocery stores in the Seattle area, as well as the Fred Meyer Wine Steward stores.

The father/son team also developed **Powers Winery** to create wines from varieties not grown in the organic vineyard, and began bottling in 1992. Powers has been recognized by *Wine Enthusiast* magazine for its delicious Cabernets. (800-643-9463; badgermntvineyard.com)

Tri-Cities

BENTON CITY

September 27–28, 2008

Catch the Crush

509-588-5332 • oakwoodcellars.com

November 28–30, 2008

Thanksgiving in Wine Country

509-588-5332 • oakwoodcellars.com

HORSE HEAVEN HILLS AREA

July 19, 2008

Horse Heaven Hills Wine

Growers Trail Drive

509-894-4528

horseheavenhillswinegrowers.org

KENNEWICK

October 4, 2008

Grapefest 2008

509-582-7221 • visittri-cities.com

PASCO

March 2009

TASTE Tri-Cities

509-736-0510

tricityregionalchamber.com

PROSSER

August 9, 2008

Wine & Food Fair

800-408-1517 • prosserchamber.org

TRI-CITIES

November 7–8, 2008

Tri-Cities Wine festival

509-547-4849 • TCWineFest.com

February 2009

Red Wine and Chocolate Weekend

800-254-5824 • visittri-cities.com

VISITOR INFORMATION

PULLMAN CHAMBER

415 North Grand Ave

509-334-3565; 800-EnjoyIt

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