

Columbia Cascade Wineries

By Braiden Rex-Johnson

THE 34 WINERIES and tasting rooms in North Central Washington—informally known as the “Columbia Cascade” region—offer a wide variety of wine-touring experiences that center around small, atmospheric towns.

Just five miles south of the Canadian border, the turn-of-the-century gold-mining town of Oroville is home to three of the northernmost wineries in the Columbia Cascade region. **Okanogan Estate & Vineyards** enjoys the distinction of being the first Okanogan Valley winery. Since the release of its first vintage in 2000, it has garnered the acclaim of wine connoisseurs, along with many awards. Be sure to try the multi-award-winning Pinot Noir, an earthy, berry-rich wine that gives Oregon contenders a run for their money. A second tasting room is open in downtown Leavenworth (509-476-3646; okanoganwine.com).

Heading south on Highway 97, a second hotbed of activity in the Columbia Cascade region—Lake Chelan Wine Valley—revolves around the 55-mile-long lake and the 14 wineries located there. An application for American Viticultural Area (AVA) status for the Lake Chelan Valley is pending, with hope that action will be taken sometime in 2008.

While making the south loop around Lake Chelan, don't miss stopping at **Tsillan** (pronounced “Chelan”) **Cellars Winery**. Established in 2000 and opened to the public in 2004, the 135-acre estate winery, with 36 acres of vines under growth, is the Valley's largest producer. Dr. Robert Jankelson bills his creation: “The romance of Tuscany on the shores of Lake Chelan.” You'll be romanced by the Tuscan-style villa (replete with a 35-foot bell tower) that welcomes you into the 3000-square-foot tasting room. A full kitchen offers lunch

and dinner during the summer months. Three waterfalls surround the island stage, backdrop for the popular summer concert series. Twelve grape varieties, many of Italian origin, are grown on the property. Tsillan Cellars' estate-grown Pinot Grigio, Riesling, and Gewürztraminer, as well as the winery's Columbia Valley Syrah and Bellissima Rossa (a Bordeaux-style blend), have won awards in regional and national competitions. (509-682-9463; tsillancellarswines.com)

Heading through downtown Chelan around the north end of the lake, start at **Vin du Lac**, a French-inspired winery housed in two remodeled orchard sheds set amidst seven acres of vineyards and orchards dating from the 1920s. Enjoy views of Lake Chelan, Chelan Butte, and the city of Chelan on the sunny-bright patio while savoring a tasty assortment of small plates, grilled sandwiches, crêpes, and entrées. In the French-country-style tasting room, colorful bottles with whimsical labels announce Vin du Lac's award-winning white wines, such as Savvy! Blanc, Grisant! Pinot Gris, and Les Amis Riesling. Outstanding reds include Cuvée Rouge (a red blend) and Cabernet Franc. (509-682-2882; vindulac.com)

Lake Chelan Winery offers something for every wine-and-food aficionado. When available, a winery tour will explain the winemaking process from vine to tasting room. At the nightly Barbecue in the Vineyard (held May through October), you'll enjoy baby-back ribs and bratwurst. Besides an open-air Wine Garden, there's a 3,000-square-foot gift shop and tasting room. The winery's estate-grown Syrah, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Sauvignon are award winners. (509-687-9463; lakechelanwinery.com)

Wapato Point Cellars, which opened in 2003, is housed in a modern shed-like

structure with a large outdoor terrace and rolling lawns that invite children to play while their parents enjoy wine tasting, live music, and tasty nibbles. Another big draw is the full-service restaurant, the Winemaker's Grill, whose popular dinner menu features Chicken Piccata, Prawn & Scallop Pasta, and three different steaks (all with suggested wine pairings), as well as a daily-changing Fresh Sheet. The gift gallery overflows with unique items and the staff is friendly and helpful as they taste you through such intriguing options as Chelan Nouveau, a light red wine reminiscent of Beaujolais, and Red Delicious, a robust blend of Syrah, Sangiovese, and Merlot. (509-687-4000, wapatopointcellars.com)

A healthy nucleus of wineries and tasting rooms is located in or near the Bavarian-inspired town of Leavenworth, which gives wine lovers many chances to sip and savor while enjoying the spectacular scenery and ambiance of a small European-style town. Downtown you'll find the tasting room of Okanogan Estate and Vineyards (mentioned above), as well as well-known wineries such as Kestrel, Glen Fiona, and Ryan Patrick Vineyards.

Just four miles from Leavenworth, in the tiny town of Peshastin, **Icicle Ridge Winery** embraces visitors in its rustic hunting-lodge ambiance. Enjoy samples of outstanding Three Blondes Gewürztraminer, Asian Pear Wine, Estate Pinot Noir Ice Wine, and Chocolate Cherry Passion, a darkly decadent dessert wine. Mounted animal heads peer down while you explore the large log-cabin tasting room. Winemaker's dinners and the Summer Jazzamatazz Concert Series are other popular draws at this uber-friendly, family-run winery. You




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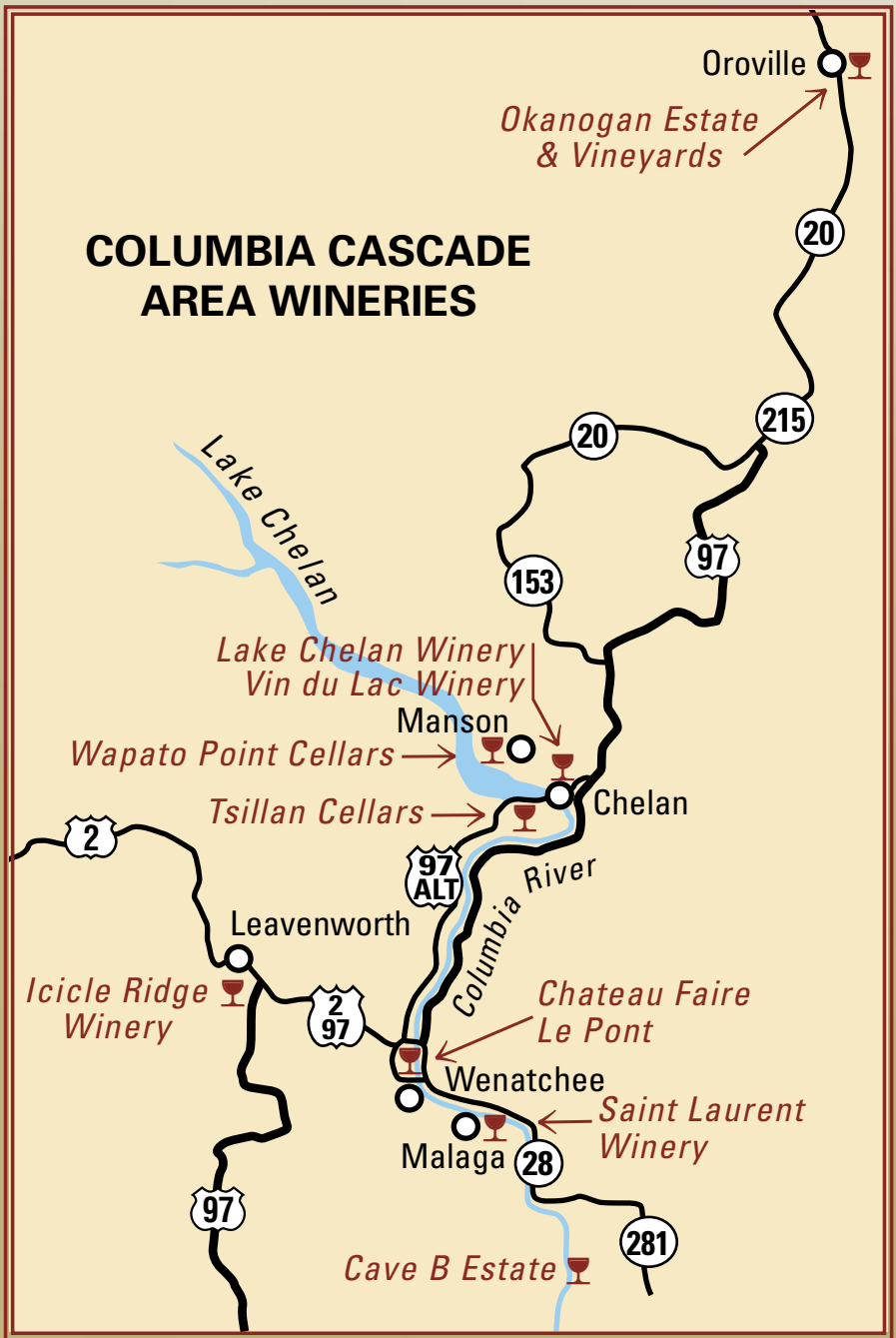
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20

215

97

153

Lake Chelan

Lake Chelan Winery
Vin du Lac Winery

Manson

Wapato Point Cellars

Tsillan Cellars

Chelan

Columbia River

97 ALT

Leavenworth

Icicle Ridge Winery

2

97

Chateau Faire Le Pont

Wenatchee

Saint Laurent Winery

Malaga

28

Cave B Estate

281

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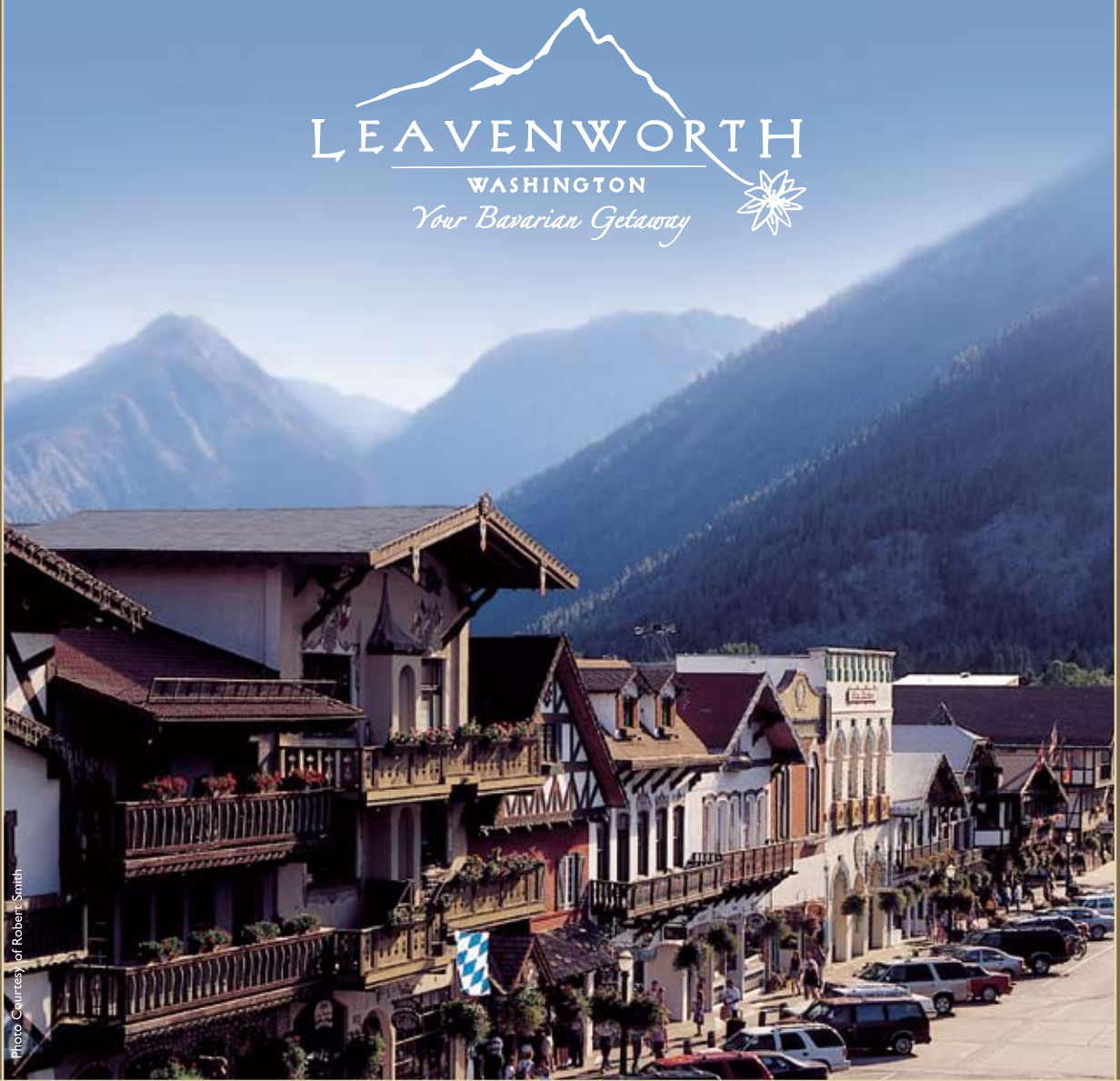


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wenatcheevalleymuseum.com

EVENTS

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June 2009

Leavenworth Wine Walk

509-548-6784
visitwashingtonwineries.com

Wine Tasting Festival

August 23, 2008
509-548-6784
visitwashingtonwineries.com

WENATCHEE VALLEY

July 12, 2008

Wine Gala at Ohme Gardens

509-662-5785
visitwashingtonfarms.com

September 6, 2008

Tour de Vine Bike and Wine Tour

800-572-7753
tourdevine.com

VISITOR INFORMATION

CASCADE FOOTHILLS FARMLAND ASSOCIATION

509-548-6784
visitwashingtonfarms.com

LEAVENWORTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

940 Highway 2
509-548-5807; leavenworth.org

WENATCHEE VALLEY CVB

25 N Wenatchee Ave, Suite C111
800-572-7753; wenatcheevalley.org

WHERE TO STAY

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IcicleVillage.com

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can also try their wines at A Taste of Icicle Ridge Winery in downtown Leavenworth. (509-548-7851; icicleridgewinery.com)

Heading south toward Wenatchee, two wineries warrant stops in the "Apple Capital of the World." Housed in a 1920s-era brick fruit-staging warehouse replete with fir floors, faux-painted brick walls, and a central fireplace, **Chateau Faire le Pont** stands out as one of the Columbia Cascade region's "must-visit" venues. The winery includes a tasting room, barrel room, gazebo, and large outdoor decks, not to mention A Vineyard Bistro, which features lovingly prepared southern Italian specialties. Chateau Faire

le Pont's myriad bottlings run the gamut from Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Merlot, and Syrah to Chateau Blanc (a Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc blend) and two impressive red blends—Provence and Confluence. (888-874-9463; fairelepont.com)

In the town of Malaga, overlooking the mighty Columbia River just four miles south of downtown Wenatchee, **Saint Laurent Winery** was chosen "Washington Winery to Watch" by *Wine Press Northwest* in 2007. Saint Laurent's tasting room is filled with French antiques and Old World charm; in the open-air Gothic Gazebo, with its sweeping views of the valley below, weddings are a common sight. The European-themed gardens afford sensuous delights, as do Saint Laurent's multi-award-winning wines. These include a brilliantly crafted Rosé, as well as Riesling, Chardonnay, Syrah, Merlot, and La Boheme, a red blend. A new line, Lucky White and Lucky Red, offers well-crafted blended wines at everyday drinking prices. Saint Laurent has a second tasting room in Quincy, Washington, which is open on weekends, noon to five.

(509-888-9463; saintlaurent.net)

Further south, near the towns of Quincy and Vantage and next door to the Gorge Amphitheater (a popular summertime music venue for national touring acts), sits the monolithic **SageCliffe**, Washington's first luxury wine resort. Centered around Cave B Estate Winery, the complex includes the Cave B Inn at SageCliffe and the Spa at SageCliffe; the Center for American Food & Wine; and Tendrils Restaurant. At the proposed Golf Club at SageCliffe, the course will flow through the vineyards of the Cave B Estate Winery and play to the very precipice of the Columbia River Gorge. At Cave B Estate Winery, winemaker Freddy Arredondo works directly with 15 of the 16 varietals that are grown in the 103-acre estate vineyard to produce wines under two labels—Cave B and SageCliffe. The tasting room, located in the Roundhouse, includes a 17-foot tasting bar. Award-winning wines to try include Semillon, Syrah, and Cuvée du Soleil, a Bordeaux-style red blend. (888-785-2283 for the inn, 509-785-3500 for the tasting room; caveb.com)

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