

Oregon's Willamette Valley Designates Two New Wine-Growing Regions

Both are nested within the existing Willamette Valley AVA.

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June 04, 2020



A view of Ponzi Vineyards in Oregon's Willamette Valley. PHOTO: JOHN MCANULTY/GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

According to the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB)—which, despite the inelegant name, is in charge of officially defining America’s wine regions—the United States currently has 248 American Viticultural Areas or “AVAs.” But if you had checked the list earlier in the week, it would have been a couple of AVAs short: Two new AVAs have just been added in Oregon.

“Laurelwood District” and “Tualatin Hills” will be allowed on bottles from these new AVAs effective July 6, though the wines will also have to carry the designation of Willamette Valley—because both of these new smaller AVAs are completely nested in that larger AVA. Last year, the state of Oregon passed a law that nested AVAs have to also list

the AVA they are encompassed by, known as “conjunctive labeling,” according to the Portland Business Journal.

According to Ponzi Vineyards, which along with Dion Vineyards, petitioned the TTB for a Laurelwood District AVA back in 2016, this region’s boundary is “defined by the predominance of a unique soil series recognized as Laurelwood.” They continue, “This loess (windblown) soil consists of freshwater sedimentary topsoil over a fractured basalt subsoil. It encompasses over 33,000 acres of the North and East facing slope of the Chehalem Mountains, including the highest elevation in the Willamette Valley at 1633 ft.”

“It’s been a decade-long project so we couldn’t be more thrilled,” second-generation winemaker and winery owner Luisa Ponzi stated. “It’s a natural next step towards further defining the Willamette Valley.”

Speaking of which, Tualatin Hill’s petition has actually been sitting on the shelf longer, since 2015, when it was spearheaded by Alfredo Apolloni of Apolloni Vineyards, Rudy Marchesi of Montinore Estate, and Mike Kuenz of David Hill Vineyard and Winery.

According to their announcement, this higher elevation area, defined by the watershed of the Tualatin River, is actually home to the first commercial vineyard in Oregon. Similar to the Laurelwood District, Tualatin Hill also boasts “a windblown volcanic soil mixed with basalt, known as Loess, deposited by the Missoula Floods 12,000 years ago.” The wineries add, “Laurelwood soils tend to lead to Pinot Noir with elegant structure and texture, with distinctive cherry, blackberry and spice, considered to reflect a more European style.”

Tualatin is also described as the “northernmost 15-mile slice of the Willamette Valley,” covering about 144,000 acres in all.

New AVAs are approved semi-regularly. For instance, two were announced last year: North Carolina’s Crest of the Blue Ridge Henderson County and Connecticut’s Eastern Connecticut Highlands. And currently, the TTB lists 18 pending petitions for AVAs across the country, including two more potential areas in Oregon. Mount Pisgah and Lower Long Tom are both still hoping to join the Oregon AVA party. Though things are already a bit crowded: Oregon now has 21 AVAs in total.

This British Ex-Pat Is Delivering 'Tea and Glee' in Portland

“I suppose it’s calming, comforting and a way to connect,” the tea lady says. “Making someone a tea is a way to make them feel cherished.”

Sure, Americans [drink tea](#), but the beverage isn't ingrained in our culture [like it is in England](#). In the U.K., not offering a guest a cuppa is practically as rude as not shaking someone's hand. But while the coronavirus pandemic has stripped us of many of the small ways we interact with people, a former London resident now living in Portland, Oregon decided that though many of the gestures that connect us have had to go, the tea should remain.

Nell (who prefers to only go by her first name) created [PixPDX](#)—a “tea-and-gee-by-bike-service” launched on the 75th anniversary of VE Day to celebrate “the victory to be found in kindness, compassion and joyfulness.” According to the site, “We offer personally-picked proper British-style tea, a rose and a handwritten note or poem to be delivered to your loved ones by a delightful English lady wearing a vintage-style tea dress on a beautiful bicycle within a few-mile radius of Ladd's Addition in Portland, Oregon.” Also included are “songs from the 1940s (or ones that hold special meaning to your sweetheart)” and “a nice old chat with your darling about bygone days or somesuch smashing stuff.”

A freelance writer, editor, filmmaker, and photographer during her non-“tea lady” time, Nell said she came up with the idea while “thinking of the small moments of joy from interactions with our fellow human beings” during [the COVID-19 lockdown](#).

“For a Brit, tea is something that seems to make everything just that little bit better,” she told me via email. “The kettle is constantly on in your home. Whenever you visit a friend, the first thing they do is make a tea. If you fall down and graze your knee as a child, you get handed a sugary brew as a soothing tonic.”

From there, she took further inspiration from her great-grandfather, who she described as “one of the hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers rescued by boat from the beach at Dunkirk during ‘Operation Dynamo’” in World War II. “Thus this service, which is free for the over 75s (those under 75 I would ask for a donation to cover supplies), is a bit of a homage to my great-grandfather, the power of collective community spirit and the little kindnesses that make us humane rather than just human,” she explained.

Offering tea is a small gesture and—in kind—the service has started small, too. Nell said that, so far, she “can count on the fingers of one hand” how many deliveries have been made. But that would seem ready to grow. “I'm hoping that with articles such as this, more people will find out about it, and people will order this as a gesture of caring

towards elder relatives who have perhaps not been able to leave their homes or have much interaction with people during this time,” she said.

And yet, she’s also already found some support within the community. The Portland-based tea company Smith Teamaker (founded by Steven Smith, the same guy behind Tazo) has donated some boxes of its renowned leaves to the cause. Choose from the British Brunch, Lord Bergamot, or Bungalow blend.

Of course, in a country that runs on coffee, some people may wonder who is actually pining for a cup of tea. But Nell points out that tea—especially the way the Brits consume it—is fitting for this moment. “I suppose it’s calming, comforting and a way to connect,” she added. “Making someone a tea is a way to make them feel cherished. And there’s nothing that cannot be made even just a smidgen better with a cup of tea.”

If you know anyone in the Portland area whose life could stand to be even just a smidgen better, Nell says she plans to offer the service “on an ad hoc basis, as long as people would still like it.” Head over to her website—Pix PDX—to reach out.