

Wine Spectator

10 Exciting Oregon Reds

New reviews of Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley's signature grape, as well as Bordeaux-style reds from the stellar 2008 vintage

Augustus Weed Posted: September 3, 2010

Pinot Noir fans have something to get excited about with this selection of Oregon reds. The wines featured here come from the outstanding 2008 vintage, which looks like the best yet in Oregon. Vintners experienced a cool summer in 2008, but the weather turned warm and dry in October, lasting through the harvest. Consumers can expect the best Pinots to show finesse, with vivid flavors and light textures.

Lange, which released its first vintage in 1987, produced two of the top-scoring wines in this report. The Estate Vineyard comes from Lange's property in the Dundee Hills, while the Three Hills Cuvée is a blend of the winery's three single-vineyard Pinot bottlings. The Zenith Vineyard Barrel Select might be harder to find, but it's worth a look. Winemaker Mark Vlossak, who makes his own line of Pinots under the St. Innocent brand, produced a vibrant and polished wine in 2008.

There are plenty of Oregon Pinot Noir values to be had. Coeur de Terre, located in McMinnville, a subappellation of the Willamette Valley, used estate grapes in its wine but doesn't break the \$20 mark. Maysara's Tahmiene Momtazi crafted a standout for \$18 with the Three Degrees, also from McMinnville.

Oregon's wine regions aren't limited to the Willamette Valley, and the state's vintners are trying their hands at more than just Pinot Noir. This week's list includes a Cabernet Sauvignon and two Merlot-dominated wines that use grapes from Rogue Valley, a viticultural area that is south of the Willamette Valley and extends to the California border.

PURPLE HANDS Oregon 2008 Score: 88 | \$20

Bright and jazzy, delivering a lively mouthful of blackberry, sage and orange blossom aromas and flavors, lingering easily on the deft, slightly tart finish. Merlot, Syrah and Pinot Noir. Drink now through 2013. 1,000 cases made. —H.S.