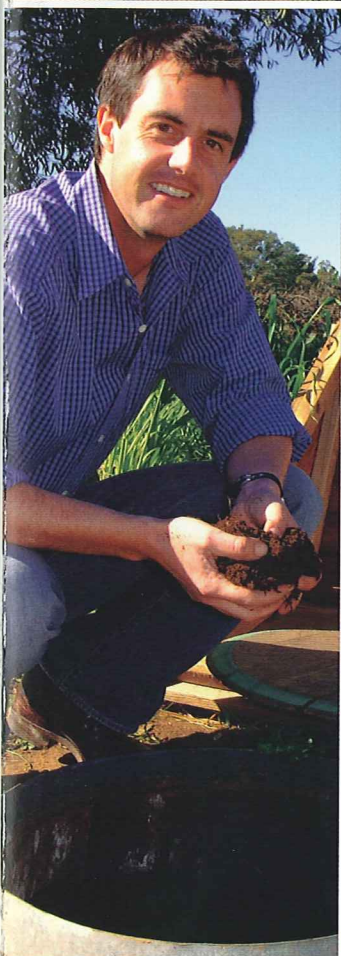
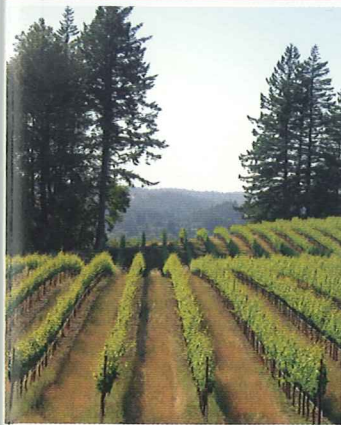


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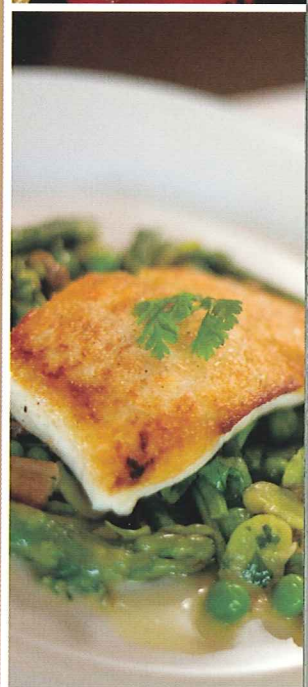
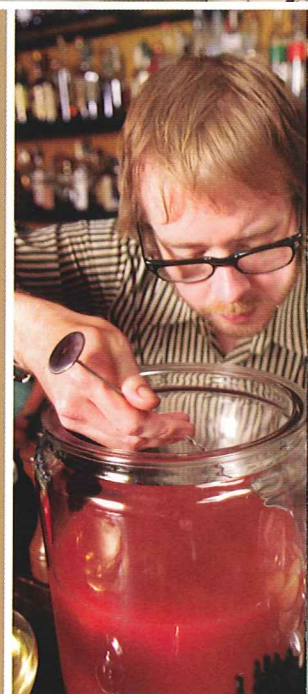


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US: Paso Robles

Paso Robles is not new, but many of its wine growers are. In the past six years, the number of wineries in this San Luis Obispo County AVA has grown from 50 to 170. A century ago, the oaks on these gently rolling hills framed grazing land and a few zinfandel vines. Now they frame the manes and wineries of the latest building boom.

Some of the newcomers have focused on zin. Others have come to make cabernet—even if this would appear to be a hot place for it. But consider the cabernets Gary Eberle made in the 1980s, several of which still provide a lot of pleasure in their gentle maturity. You can see why he settled on the east side of Paso Robles, where cabernet tannins ripen to earthy warmth in the heat of the day. The cold descends at sunset, driving temperatures on this high plateau from 100°F to 50°F.

This is also the spiritual home of California's Rhône wine movement—the place where Eberle planted syrah at Estrella River in the 1970s, a site that provided cuttings to growers around the state. It's also where Robert Haas and the Perrins of Château de Beaucastel imported their own selections to set up a nursery at their vineyard in the western hills. They were attracted by the limestone in these hills, and their Tablas Creek project, started in 1989, now produces some of the best white Rhône in the state. And it's a key source of top quality plant material for other growers.

Paso is also the place where Mat Garretson and John Alban hold their annual Hospice du Rhône bash at the county fairgrounds, an international Rhône wine celebration that brings top growers from as far away as France, Spain and Australia to swap bottles and stories in between margaritas at Villa Creek and rides on the electric bull at *Big Bubba's Bad-to-the-Bone BBQ*. Hospice continues to be a strong force attracting Rhône-centric growers to settle in Paso.

Anchored by the large plantings of J. Lohr and Eos; by zin growers such as Turley, Dusi and Peachy Canyon; and by the Rhône outposts in the western hills, Paso has seen an influx of small wineries. Many mark the launch of a second career (including the Midlife Crisis Winery with its downtown tasting room). Some serious young newcomers have gotten a foothold here, with names such as Saxum, l'Aventure and Linne Calodo emerging out of the explosion of new wineries. As is a movement to split Paso into more comprehensible subregions. All the action makes Paso Robles a region to watch. —JOSHUA GREENE

US: Columbia Gorge

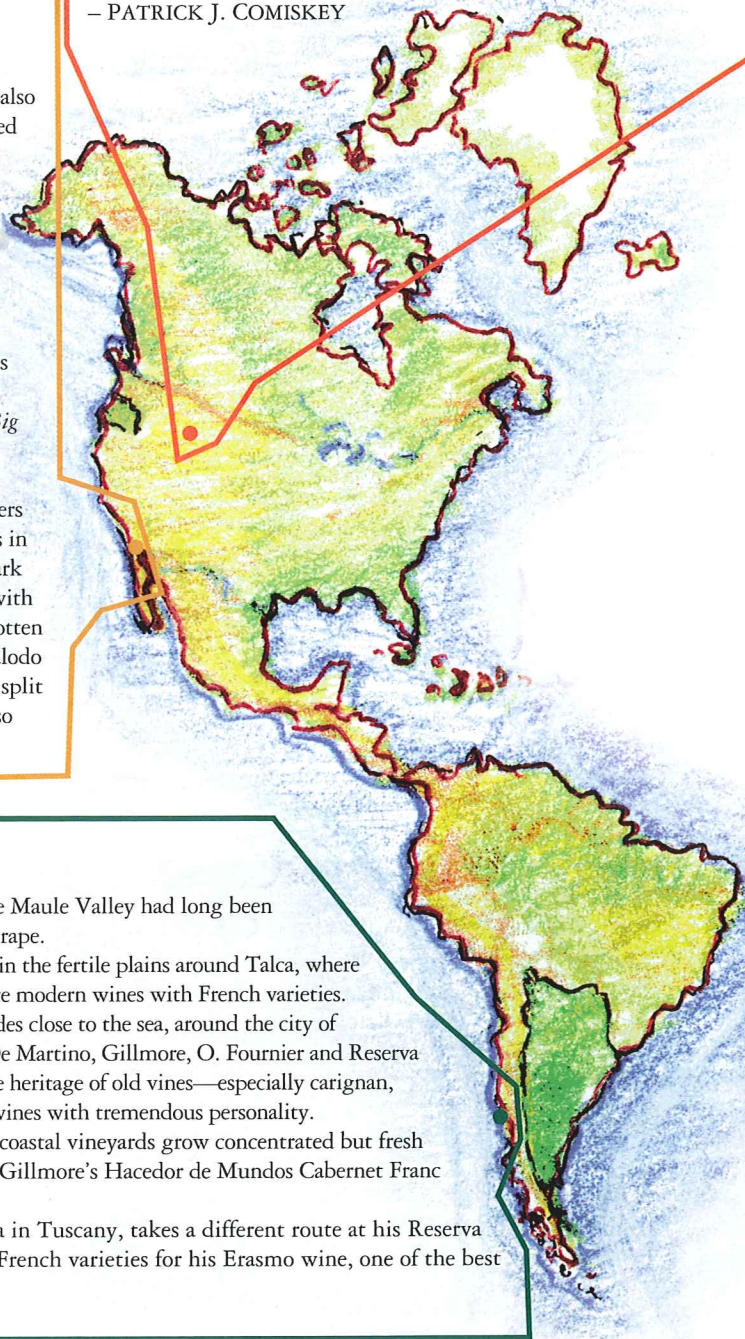
With marine, alpine and high desert environments, the Columbia Gorge isn't really one AVA, it's more like three. There's the western border near Hood River, Oregon, set high on loess soils, its relatively cool climate suited to wonderfully aromatic gewurztraminer.

Ten miles east, some of the northwest's oldest vines are being revived and tended outside The Dalles. It's there that winemaker Lonnie Wright, at The Pines 1852, has traced his zin vines back to 1914.

Another 20 miles east and the trees vanish from the landscape. Here the wind screams through the Gorge, giving intensity to the red wines grown on Washington's lava-scarred benchland.

Each of these zones has new momentum. Oregon winery Frances-Tannahill has been purchasing fruit here, and Patrick Reuter has established a new winery west of The Dalles called Dominio IV. They join established high-performing, regionally dedicated wineries like Maryhill, Syncline and Phelps Creek.

—PATRICK J. COMISKEY



Chile: Maule

Located a couple hundred miles south of Santiago, the Maule Valley had long been associated with simple wines from pafis, the mission grape.

The first inklings of change came in the early '90s, in the fertile plains around Talca, where bodegas such as Terranoble or Donoso began to produce modern wines with French varieties. The revolution, however, is on the gently rolling hillsides close to the sea, around the city of Cauquenes. That is where wineries such as Morandé, De Martino, Gillmore, O. Fournier and Reserva de Caliboro are taking advantage of the climate and the heritage of old vines—especially carignan, along with merlot and cabernet sauvignon—to make wines with tremendous personality.

In an area where dry farming is the norm, the old coastal vineyards grow concentrated but fresh wines such as Morandé's Edición Limitada Carignan, Gillmore's Hacedor de Mundos Cabernet Franc or De Martino's selection of single-vineyard reds.

Francesco Marone Cinzano, owner of Col d'Orcia in Tuscany, takes a different route at his Reserva de Caliboro winery in the coastal hills. He planted French varieties for his Erasmo wine, one of the best red wines in the valley today. —PATRICIO TAPIA