

VOL. 13 | MARCH 2020



# VINVERATION



In the summer of 2018, I made my first visit to the Columbia Gorge of Oregon. As soon as Interstate 84 leaves the Portland metro area, it becomes the most stunning stretch of highway I've ever driven. Weaving along the Columbia River (the same one Lewis & Clark explored), we made a pit stop for lunch in the town of Hood River. Besides the scenic gorge and charming small downtown, I was intrigued to learn there existed a growing wine industry.

When I returned to Oregon in January 2019 to finalize some deals with other Veneration winery partners, I made a point to revisit The Gorge. My research leading up to the trip clearly pointed to one producer that stood above the rest - Analemma. On a cold, winter afternoon, my dad and I walked the Analemma estate vineyard with Greg Valitchka, the Director of Hospitality and Production. Located on precipitous slopes with vistas across the gorge, Analemma is at the forefront of viticultural experimentation. They're growing a variety of Spanish and French grapes biodynamically, and the resulting wines are incredibly good - the best I tasted in the region.

This month, you'll taste two wines from this West Coast region few others have heard of, much less tried wine from. Analemma's success proves there are still frontiers of American wine yet to be discovered.

Cheers!

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The Columbia River forms the primary border between Oregon and Washington states. After the river meanders westward through Oregon's high desert plateau, it crosses the Cascade Mountains near the town of Hood River and forms a dramatic gorge through the peaks. Situated 30 miles directly north of picturesque Mount Hood, the town of Hood River is known as an epic outdoor sports destination. The combined attributes of a wide point in the river and the gorge-channelled winds make this a windsurfing and kitesurfing mecca. And its proximity to Mount Hood makes it the launching point for many snow skiers. However, the best kept secret is its emerging wine industry. The Columbia Gorge may be the most unique and pioneering viticultural area on the West Coast.



ANALEMMA

Mosier, Oregon  
analemmawines.com

Husband and wife team Steven Thompson and Kris Fade found their way to The Gorge in a roundabout way. Steven spent several years as a bicycle tour leader in various global destinations. When business started to decline, he decided to try his hand at vineyard work in Italy. It hooked him, and Steven later enrolled in winemaking courses in Walla Walla, Washington. He spent four years as the assistant winemaker at Cayuse Vineyards, Washington's most celebrated and exclusive wine producer. In 2009, Steven and Kris took a winemaking sabbatical to New Zealand. He worked in the cellar at Craggy Range, my personal favorite New Zealand winery, while Kris worked in viticulture at Marlborough's biodynamic Seresin Estate. Upon their return to the U.S.A., the couple were tipped off to the availability of the Columbia Gorge's oldest vineyard and jumped on the opportunity to farm it.

In 2010 they founded Analemma Wines, which is named after the figure eight shaped journey the sun takes across the sky during a calendar year. From the outset, Thompson and Fade decided to produce their wines biodynamically. This hyper-organic farming method treats the land as a living organism and relies on homeopathic remedies to control pests and fertilize the land. Much like the farmer's almanac advised generations ago, biodynamic producers also follow the lunar cycles to make planting, pruning, and picking decisions. It's the most pure and environmentally-friendly way to farm grapes, and Analemma achieved Demeter certification, the industry's highest level, in 2017.



Steven & Kris

In 2011, Analemma acquired their own 52 acre estate and planted a vineyard in the town of Mosier, just east of Hood River. Here they are experimenting with obscure grape varieties from France and Spain, trying to carve out a new identity for the region's wine industry. It's pioneering work, and when you taste the wines, you'll be amazed by the results.

# 2017 Tinto Mosier Hills Estate



## BASICS

Origin  
Columbia  
Gorge AVA

Varietals  
See opposite  
page

Production  
2,736 bottles

## SENSATIONS

Color  
Garnet &  
Purple

Acid  
Moderate

Body  
Medium

Texture  
Leathery

## AROMAS

Bubble Gum

Blackberry

Cedar

Fennel

# Vino de la Casa

In Spain, the word *tinto* is used for any inexpensive, simple red table wine – the “house red”, if you will. Analemma’s *Tinto* is far from simple, but it does best exemplify their “house” style. Deep garnet colored with a purple core, its concentrated aromas are not too expressive upon first opening. Decant the wine a few minutes to breathe and a kaleidoscope of essences will greet you.

The components of this blend change each year, and the fascinating result is that you can detect evidence of what each grape contributes to the aromas. Subtle notes of bubble gum and soil come from the *mencia*, candied cherry from *grenache*, fig and leather from *tempranillo*, and dark blackberry, plum, olive tapenade, and fennel aromas from the *syrah*. Aromas of cedar and graphite, combined with the leathery tannins that capture all sides of your mouth, give this wine an authentically rustic Spanish feel – exactly what the Analemma team intended to do. You can feel the fresh, zesty acidity on the sides of your tongue which gives way to a long, dark fruit finish with palate-drying tannins.

The second time I drank this wine, I savored it over the course of several days. Amazingly, after 2 days, it continued to develop more prominent cherry Jolly Rancher aromas while the herbal/earthy elements faded. *Grenache*, *tempranillo*, *syrah*, and *mencia* are rarely, if ever, blended together in Spain, but the Analemma *Tinto* deliciously exemplifies their experimental house style while paying homage to humble, everyday Iberian wines.

Varietals | 40% Grenache | 25% Tempranillo | 25% Syrah | 10% Mencia



MSRP: \$32  
ABV: 13.8%

## *Mosier Hills Estate*

A year after Thompson and Fade returned to Oregon to start Analemma, they found their 52 acre estate in Mosier Hills, just east of the town of Hood River. Mosier is situated at a convergence of cool, wet maritime and warm, dry continental climates. This makes it well-suited to mid-season ripening varieties.



Mosier Hills Estate

Thompson had seen a lot of parallels on trips between Mosier and Galicia (northeastern Spain) in soils and climate. So they decided to plant mencia and godello, the primary wine grapes of that region. They also planted syrah, grenache, viognier, albariño, tempranillo, trousseau, and cabernet sauvignon in the spirit of exploration. The estate is also home to 15 acres of Bing cherries and lavender.

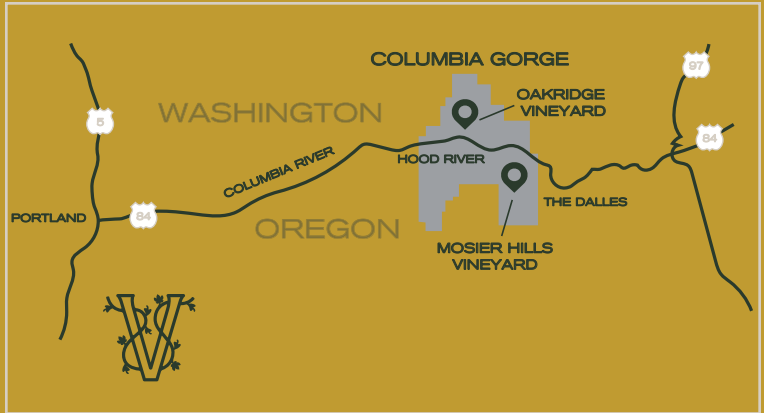
In 2014, Analemma opened their wine production facility on the property, along with a tasting room in a remodeled barn.

### *About Mencia*

While it only comprises 10% of this blend, it's important to highlight a grape called mencia (pronounced men-thee-a if you're Spanish). It's an aromatic, light-bodied, dark-colored wine with similar characteristics to cabernet franc and gamay. Mencia is most well known for the red wines of Galicia, but it's actually a native of the central Portuguese region of Dão, where it's called jaen.

Hardly anyone in the United States is growing mencia, and their pioneering experimentation with the grape is one of the first things that drew my attention to Analemma. They make a single varietal mencia which is palate-redefining and delicious. That wine wasn't available for this club release, but I encourage you to buy some from Analemma and try it out.

APPELLATION



PAIRINGS

The Tinto wine channels the spirit of Spain, so the obvious complement is Spanish cuisine like seared octopus, ropa vieja, empanadas, croquetas, and paella.

It will also pair well with bold Italian dishes like pasta arrabiata and short rib ragu.

Cheese plate: Spanish cheeses - Manchego, Mahon, and Tetilla.

COMPARE

Domestic - There isn't much else in America being made just like this Tinto. The closest comparisons would be petite sirah or cabernet franc for the rustic tannins and complex fruit characteristics.

International - You should definitely taste this wine in contrast to its Spanish inspiration. Mencia from Ribeira Sacra, Bierzo, or Valdeorras, which are sometimes blended with tempranillo, will have similar profiles.

Fine wine shops that carry a respectable collection of Spanish wines should have several examples of Galician reds for under \$30.

# 2016 Oak Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir



## BASICS

Origin  
Columbia  
Gorge AVA

Varietals  
100%  
Pinot Noir

Production  
3,900 bottles

## SENSATIONS

Color  
Dark Ruby

Acid  
Tangy

Body  
Light

Texture  
Delicate

## AROMAS

Cherry Pie

Raspberry  
Jam

Rose

Nutmeg



# Hello Springtime!

We've featured pinot noir wines several times in the Veneration club selections. I've been amazed during my travels at how much delicious, affordable pinot noir exists on the West Coast, especially in Oregon. With how many excellent wines they produce, I didn't intend to highlight Analemma's pinot noir, but this one is too beautiful to pass by.

Instantly pleasing and bright, the aromas promptly perk up your attitude. Brambly raspberry preserves and cherry pie saturate your sense of smell, with a burst of roses and spring florals. Spice notes like nutmeg and cinnamon lurk below the surface if you take a long inhale.

This wine was aged for 14 months in neutral oak barrels and concrete tanks, which explains the scant oak barrel evidence. There are some sweet woody notes likely from stem inclusion during fermentation. Analemma says this wine was primarily made with whole clusters, and it's the finest treatment of stems I've tasted.

Cherry juice, nutmeg, spiced orange peels, and sweet florals occupy your tastebuds while your midpalate tangs from the abundant acidity. Texturally, this pinot is light bodied and slick on the edges of your tongue. The tannins delicately surrender a savory, woody drying effect on your tongue upon the finish. The acidity is fully integrated into the wine; it continues to cause your mouth to water as you drink the last sip.

With its fruit-forwardness, bursting florals, subtle wood notes, and graceful character, this pinot noir evokes all the great things about the new beginnings of springtime. It's made to drink young and bound to be a crowd-pleaser.



MSRP: \$32  
ABV: 13.9%

## *Oak Ridge Vineyard*

Located across the Columbia River in Husum, Washington, the Oak Ridge Vineyard sits in the foothills of Mt. Adams - the 2nd highest mountain in the state after Mount Rainier. This wine is the first Veneration has featured from the state of Washington. The Columbia Gorge AVA was classified to include both states because of the common climate conditions.



Oak Ridge Vines

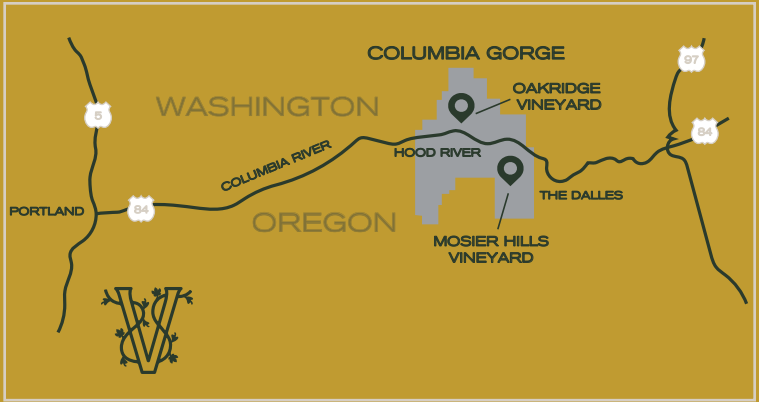
The Woodward family organically farms their 15 acre vineyard without irrigation. At a lofty elevation of 1500', the vines send roots far down into the ground, making them very resilient to the seasons.

To help counter against the cooler temperatures of high elevation, the vineyard was specifically planted in 1984 on a south-facing slope to enjoy the maximum sun exposure. Analemma also produces a spectacular light-bodied chardonnay from the Oak Ridge Vineyard.



Kris & Steven hand-sorting grapes

APPELLATION 



PAIRINGS 

Bring on the sweet and savory dishes!

Baked brie and apricot jelly, maple glazed duck, roast turkey with cranberry sauce, rotisserie chicken, and sweet potato casserole all will hit the mark as a complement to this wine.

COMPARE 

Similar delicate, fruit-forward pinots include those from past Veneration partner Kelley Fox Wines, Russian River Valley standout Williams Selyem, and Sonoma Valley's Hanzell Vineyards.

In Burgundy, look to the appellations of Volnay, Monthelie, and Santenay, which generally yield gentle and floral pinot noirs.

# VINERATION

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