

#108

Wines of the United States – 2

Wine Regions. There are nearly 3,000 commercial vineyards in the United States with at least one winery in all 50 States.

- **West Coast** – The majority of American wine production occurs in the states of California, Washington and Oregon.
- **Rocky Mountain Region** – Notably Idaho and Colorado
- **Southwestern United States** – Notably Texas and New Mexico
- **Midwestern United States** – Notably Missouri, Illinois and Minnesota
- **Great Lakes region** – Notably Michigan, northern New York and Ohio
- **East Coast** – Notably New Jersey, New York State, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina

Appellation System. The early American appellation system was based on the political boundaries of states and counties. In September 1978 the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (now Alcohol and Tobacco Tax, and Trade Bureau) developed regulations to establish American Viticultural Areas (AVA) based on distinct climate and geographical features. In June 1980, the Augusta AVA in Missouri was established as the first American Viticultural Area under the new appellation system. For the sake of wine labeling purposes, all the states and county appellations were grandfathered in as appellations. There were 187 distinct AVAs designated under U.S. law as of April 2007.

Appellation Labeling Laws. In order to have an AVA appear on a wine label, at least 85% of the grapes used to produce the wine must be grown in the AVA. With the larger state and county appellations the laws vary depending on the area. For a County Appellation, 75% of the grapes used must be from that county. If grapes are from two or three contiguous counties, a label can have a multi-county designation so long as the percentages used from each county are clearly on the label. For the majority of U.S. States the State Appellation requires 75% of the grapes in the wine to be grown in the state. Texas requires 85% and California requires 100%. If grapes are from two to three contiguous states a wine can be made under a multi-state designations following the same requirements as the multi-county appellation.

American wine or United States is a rarely used appellation that classifies a wine made from anywhere in the United States, including Puerto Rico and Washington, DC. Wines with this designation are similar to the French wine *vin de table* and can not include a vintage year. By law this is the only appellation allowed for bulk wines exported to other countries.

Semi-generic Wines. Current U.S. laws allow American made wines to be labeled as "American Burgundy" or "California Champagne," even though these names are restricted in Europe. U.S. laws only restrict usage to include the qualifying area of origin to go with these semi-generic names. Other semi-generic names in the United States include Claret, Chablis, Chianti, Madeira, Malaga, Marsala, Moselle, Port, Rhine wine, Sauternes (commonly spelled on U.S. wine labels as Sauterne or Haut Sauterne), Sherry, and Tokay. European Union officials have been working with their U.S. counterparts through World Trade Organization negotiations to eliminate the use of these semi-generic names.

Other U.S. Labeling Laws. In the United States, at least 95% of grapes must be from a particular vintage for that year to appear on the label. Prior to the early 1970s, all grapes had to be from the vintage year. All labels must list the alcohol content based on percentage by volume. For bottles labeled by varietal at least 75% of the grape must be of the varietal. In Oregon, the requirement is 90%. All wine labels are required to list if they contain sulfites and carry the Surgeon General's warning about alcohol consumption.

Source: Adapted from Wikipedia