



# THE Rocks District

*“This incredible terroir produces an exotic, perfumed, and textured style of wine that’s one of the most unique and identifiable in the world”*

*-Jeb Dunnuck*

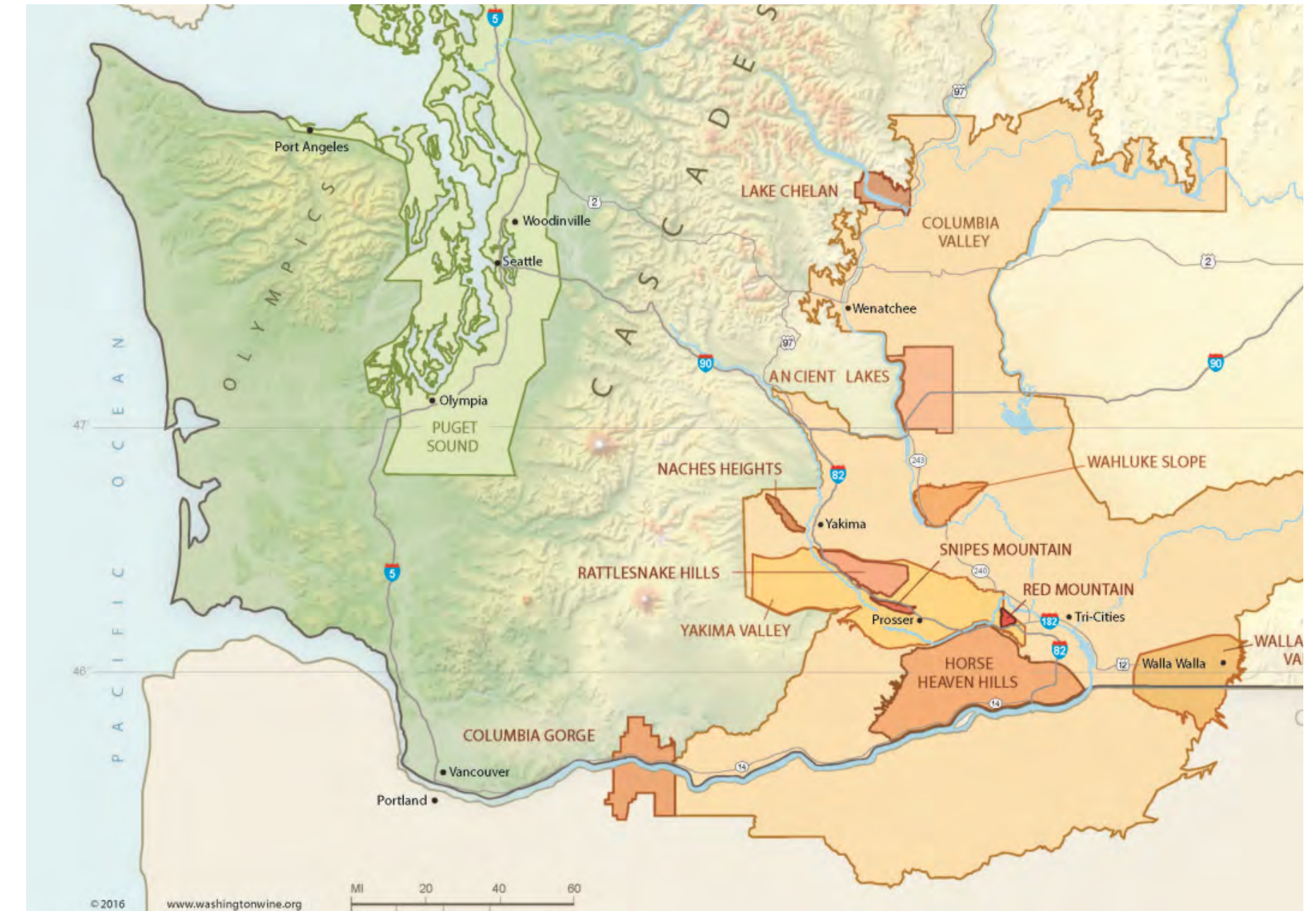


# What is The Rocks District?

*The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater is an American Viticultural Area (AVA) approved by the TTB on February 9, 2015.*

The Rocks District is known for producing a unique flavor profile that is recognized by wine aficionados around the world. The wines from The Rocks District are of the highest quality, and have a track record of receiving some of the highest scores on average of any wine region in the new world. The Rocks District is also the only wine region in Oregon to receive a perfect 100 point score from one of the four (4) major wine publications; Vinous, Wine Spectator, Wine Advocate and Wine Enthusiast.

The Rocks District AVA resides on the Oregon side of the larger, cross-state, Walla Walla Valley AVA.



[www.rocksdistrict.com](http://www.rocksdistrict.com)



Milton Freewater, Oregon



# What Makes The Rocks District AVA Unique?

The singular Freewater soil series found within The Rocks District is unlike any winegrowing region in the new world. Different from the compacted sand, silt and ash of the surrounding Valley, The Rocks District is easily identified by its composition of volcanic basalt stones and gravels at the surface.

Derived from the Blue Mountains this cobblestone-rich soil type was deposited by the Walla Walla River.

Specialized farming practices and training forms are being developed to support growing vines in this distinctive soil focusing on capturing and radiating the sun's energy by virtue of exposed cobbles, assuring phenolic ripeness/ flavor development.

The additional heat provides protection from extreme temperature fluctuation and facilitates aromatic wines with savory complexities and umami character.



*The cobble/gravel layers extend many feet below the surface, making for extremely well-drained soils, encouraging deep root penetration in pursuit of water.*





# Walla Walla Valley History

## ***1 Million BC to 100,000 BC:***

*Continental shift forms the basalt base of the Walla Walla Valley*

***100,000 BC to 15,000 BC:*** Volcanic activity prior to the last ice age leaves layers of compacted volcanic ash.

***13,000 BC to 10,000 BC:*** The receding ice shelf causes the Missoula Floods, which remove layers of topsoil and deposit massive amounts of silt loam throughout the Valley.

***10,000 BC to Present:*** Erosion causes volcanic basalt to break off of the surrounding Blue Mountains and

*find its way into the wild Walla Walla River, eventually being deposited, hundreds of feet deep, within The Rocks District as an alluvial fan.*

***7,000 BC:*** People of the First Nations, the ancestors of the modern day Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes, arrive in Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon.

***1805 & 1806:*** Lewis and Clark become the first eastern explorers to travel through the Walla Walla Valley, then part of the English territory known as the “Columbia District”.

***1818:*** The Canada-based Northwest Company establishes Fort Nez Perce as a fur trading outpost. This is the first permanent, non-tribal, settlement in the Walla Walla Valley.

***1856:*** Fort Walla Walla is built and the city of Walla Walla is founded.

***1868 & 1873:*** The independent cities of Milton and Freewater are formed in the Walla Walla Valley as processing towns for lumber and local agriculture.



# A History of Walla Walla Valley Wines

**1859:** A.B. Roberts establishes a nursery and brings in the first recorded vinifera to the Walla Walla Valley.

**1859-1883:** Walla Walla develops as a wine region. Settlers produce wines for consumption and to sell to travelers on the Oregon trail and heading to the gold fields of Idaho.

**1883:** Severe frost kills most of the vinifera in the Walla Walla Valley, and other crops are planted in their place.

**1917:** Prohibition ends any remaining commercial production of wine.

**1974:** Gary Figgins plants Leonetti Vineyard, beginning the modern wine era in Walla Walla Valley.

**1981-1985:** Woodward Canyon, L'Ecole, Waterbrook and Seven Hills are founded, forming a firm foundation for the Walla Walla wine industry.

**1984:** The Walla Walla Valley appellation is approved by the TTB.





# A History of Rocks District Wines

**1997:** Cayuse Vineyards plants the first modern day vineyard in what is now known as “The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater”.

**1998 & 1999:** Tom Waliser plants Waliser and Eidolon Vineyards; making Rocks District fruit available to the larger marketplace.

**2005:** A Rocks District wine is rewarded a perfect 100 point score from the Wine Advocate. Wine Enthusiast follows with another perfect 100 point score in 2008...many more 95+ scores follow.

**2006:** Plantings increase and for the first time orchards are removed to make way for vinifera wine grapes.

**2011:** Work begins on the AVA formation; spearheaded by Steve Robertson. Geologist, Kevin Pogue Ph.D is hired to provide the technical petition requirements, and to delineate the boundaries of The Rocks District, predicated upon the Freewater soil series.

**2015:** The TTB grants formal AVA designation status to “The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater”.

**2018:** The Rocks District Winegrowers is formed (non-profit), recognizing the need for a Vision-keeper; supported by a repository of current/accurate data, for the benefit of its Membership.

**2025:** Rocks District Winegrowers hosts inaugural Basalt Bash Barrel Auction. This new, annual, event is focused on addressing the mental health needs of Milton-Freewater students.

**2026:** Vinous Media publishes the Rocks District AVA Map; its first AVA Map outside of California.



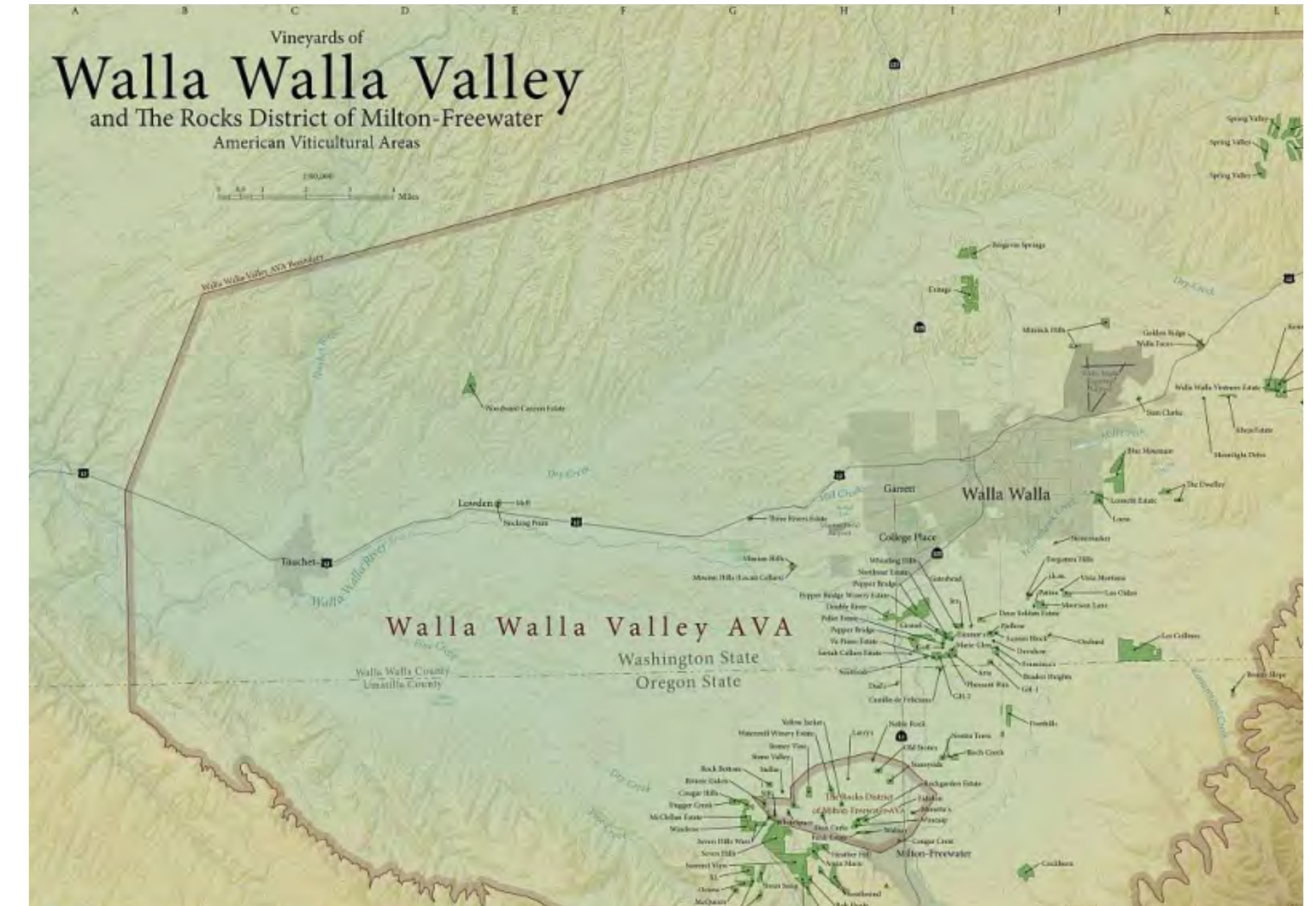


# Where is The Rocks District?

*The Rocks District is a nested AVA, residing entirely in Oregon and within the WA/OR, cross-state Walla Walla Valley AVA.*

The 3767 acre (5.9 square mile) AVA was defined by the wild Walla Walla River; which formed an alluvial fan when it found the Valley's floor, depositing basalt cobbles and gravels hundreds of feet deep from its Blue Mountain headwaters.

Located in the rain shadow of the Cascade mountains, the Walla Walla Valley receives an average of 12 inches of rain and nearly 300 days of sunshine annually. While the dry and sunny conditions make for excellent growing conditions, The Rocks District lies in close proximity to the foothills of the Blue Mountains, making it more temperate than other winegrowing areas in the Columbia and Yakima Valleys. In addition to grapes, The Rocks District is also a major producer of tree fruit.





# Who farms in The Rocks District?

*As of 2024, there exists 707 planted acres spread across 57 vineyards, with another 50+ acres scheduled for development over the next three years.*

Of the total of 3,767 AVA acres, approximately 2,800 acres are plantable (with water). With only 17% of land currently being utilized for wine-grape production, there exists tremendous potential for growth. The Rocks District is one of the smallest AVA's in the United States. Legal parcels within the appellation are also small. Subsequently, the residual benefits of “farming small” predominate; via hands-on, timely, attention-to-detail.

The AVA's Rhone-variety focus has captured the wine world's attention by showcasing PLACE.

## MEMBER VINEYARDS

<i>A &amp; K Estates</i>	<i>Orsell</i>
<i>Ancient Stones</i>	<i>Petros Vineyard</i>
<i>Ansbah Vineyard</i>	<i>Proper Estate Vineyard</i>
<i>Borderlands</i>	<i>Rasa Estate</i>
<i>Cougar Hills Vineyard</i>	<i>River Rock Vineyard</i>
<i>Daedalus</i>	<i>Rockgarden Estate</i>
<i>Elle</i>	<i>Rotie Rocks</i>
<i>Freewater Rocks</i>	<i>San Tomasso</i>
<i>Funk Estate Vineyard</i>	<i>SHW Estate Vineyard</i>
<i>Gibbon</i>	<i>SJR Vineyard</i>
<i>Hooker Vineyard</i>	<i>The Stones Speak Vineyard</i>
<i>Hurley</i>	<i>Valdemar Estates Vineyard</i>
<i>Icarus</i>	<i>Waliser Vineyard</i>
<i>Lafore Vineyard</i>	<i>Watermill Estate Vineyard</i>
<i>Le Mani</i>	<i>Waterstone Vineyard</i>
<i>Maison Bleue Estate</i>	<i>Yellow Jacket Vineyard</i>
<i>Noble Rock</i>	



# Who makes wine from Rocks District fruit?

*More than 50 producers source Rocks District fruit for their wine(s).*

Currently, there are five (5) production facilities and four (4) tasting rooms located within the Rocks District AVA. (Many more tasting facilities sourcing Rocks District fruit exist in Walla Walla, just eight (8) miles to the north.)

Estimated Rocks District producer production is currently around 75,000 cases. In comparison, the Walla Walla Valley AVA (exclusive of Precept) is approximately 500,000 cases, Red Mountain is closing in on 500,000 cases and the Dundee Hills about 125,000 cases.

## MEMBER WINERIES

*Betz Family Winery*

*Bledsoe McDaniels*

*Canvasback*

*Cimento*

*Cougar Crest Winery*

*Delmas*

*Devison Vintners*

*Dusted Valley*

*Echolands*

*Eternal*

*Force Majeure*

*Grosgrain Vineyards*

*Maison Bleue*

*PÁŠXA Wine*

*Proper Winery*

*Rasa Vineyards*

*Rotie Cellars*

*Saviah Cellars*

*Seven Hills Winery*

*Siren Song Vineyard*

*Sleight of Hand*

*The Walls Vineyards*

*Valdemar Estates*

*Violet Vines*

*Walla Walla Vintners*

*Watermill Winery*

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Milton Freewater, Oregon



# The Rocks District by the numbers

- ▶ **3,767** and **5.9** - acres and square miles (respectively) of Rocks District land surface
- ▶ **2,800** - Plantable acres within the AVA
- ▶ **2015** - The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater is approved by the TTB
- ▶ **1997** - Cayuse Vineyards plants the first (modern day) vineyard in these soils.
- ▶ **707** - planted acres within the AVA
- ▶ **50+** - acres in development within the AVA
- ▶ **45.4** - percent of vines that are Syrah, the most common variety in the AVA
- ▶ **57** - number of vineyards in The Rocks District
- ▶ **50** - number of wineries currently producing wine with Rocks District fruit
- ▶ **12** and **2,935** - annual rainfall inches and average GDD 's (Growing Degree Days) of the AVA
- ▶ **10** - number of perfect 100 point scores which have been awarded to wines from the AVA by Wine Enthusiast, Wine Spectator, and Wine Advocate
- ▶ **11** - current number of production and tasting facilities within AVA boundaries



# A Promising Future for a Youthful, Vibrant AVA

*The Rocks District will continue to focus on winegrowing; producing world-class wines that showcase the typicity of terroir found in this unique region.*

Winegrowers will work to promote cooperative partnerships within the Walla Walla Valley, as well as the northwest region; increasing the AVA's recognition within the wine industry and with consumers worldwide.

The standard of quality and limited availability of wines will keep demand high and increase investment interest in The Rocks District.

Many new vineyard acres will be developed within the AVA, supported with new destination facilities.

Increased production will allow those wineries making wines from Rocks District fruit to reach new consumers in new markets, further spreading the message that The Rocks District produces some of the most distinctive wines in the world!

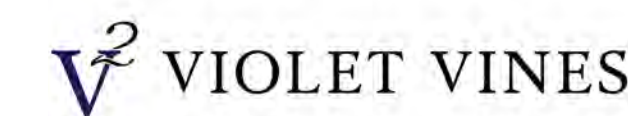


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