

VANCOUVER

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THE WINE ISSUE

13 Sommeliers.
100+ Bottles.
Drink Up.

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DRINKING THE NEW OREGON TRAIL

Undeniably the creative incubator for craft in the United States, Portland and its environs perpetually reinvent themselves—shifting perception and informing opinion on who, why and what is sustainable and of sustenance.

BY Treve Ring

FROM FRESH-ROASTED COFFEE TO savoury ice cream, full-flavoured microbrews to secretly foraged mushrooms, superlative pinot noir to superlative pinot gris, Pacific-harvested sea salt and countless other delicious things, this is a place where driving a spell in any direction yields a new bounty. Here's your road map to figuring which way to point the wheel to dive deep into the area.

NEXUS: PORTLAND

An easy straight-and-narrow down the I-5 from Vancouver (or a much faster YVR-PDX flight, or much longer but more scenic Amtrak Cascades ride), and you're in the pulsing heart of it all, downtown Portland.

Slake that thirst rapidly at one of the city's 60-plus breweries. **Widmer Brothers** is one of the largest and oldest, but that doesn't prevent them from putting out gems in their limited-release level at their brew pub. If bottle-conditioned and

barrel-aged beers are your thing, you need to make it to **Hair of the Dog**, one of the first in America to specialize in this style—and they currently have 180 oak barrels aging beer from six months to eight years. My favourite place to flight through is at the newer Slabtown location of **Breakside Brewing**. The airy double-decker room is as great for people-watching as it is for brew pub fare.

Portland's cocktail scene is, as John Horgan might say, lit, and has been since before bartenders called themselves mixologists. Classics like the **Multnomah Whiskey Library**, a classy, reso-only booze homage of biblical proportions, cements the city as one of the world's greats. I always satisfy my amaro geek at **Solo Club**, a tidy jewel box of a bar that agrees with my credo that bitter makes it better. **Bit House Saloon** will win you over with boozy slushies, fresh tacos and its brick-hewn splendour, while **Rum Club** will warm the blood with one of the best daiquiris you'll come across in this part of the Americas. **La Moule** sates my longing for France, with lusty plates of mussels and briny platters of oysters, plus Euro-potency cocktails, many absinthe-touched. You may think you've been to kitschy bars before, but until you've had a volcano-erupting flaming tiki head of Jet Pilot at **Hale Pele**, you really haven't lived. **Expatriate** is where you want to find yourself drinking up some of this city's Asian flavours in liquid form—the stunning Southeast Asian decor and soundtrack might entice you to sit and absorb all night. That said, you can't go to the city without sitting at the bar at Jeffrey Morgenthaler's **Clyde Common**, or downstairs in the hidden basement bar, **Pépé le Moko**. Home of one of the world's top bartenders and founder of the barrel-aged cocktail boom, this is a place of must-stop stools.

WESTWARD HO

From Portland it's a straight shot west one hour or so to get to the crux of the Willamette Valley and America's most exciting wines. At any point

of the day or evening you can park yourself at **Red Hills Market**, soon to be one of your happy places. Wood-fired breakfasts and pizzas, fresh-baked scones and freshly pulled salads, a

takeaway counter of locally cured meats and cheeses, plus rotating taps of local microbrews and bottles from the valley will keep you satiated and satisfied. Oh yeah, and you can grab many of Oregon's top bottles from the shelf for your future picnic. It's conveniently located in Dundee, mid-valley, so plan on stopping here numerous times during your visit.

Filled with Portland's beer and cocktails, now is your time to drink in what the Willamette does best: wine. Of course, pinot noir reigns supreme, not surprising considering the proliferation of volcanic and marine sedimentary soils. I see chardonnay hot on pinot's heels, and a thrilling direction for the region.

A pilgrimage to the **Eyrie Vineyards** is a must as much for the historical context (David Lett, a.k.a. Papa Pinot, pioneered both pinot gris and pinot noir in Oregon) as for the exciting direction that his son, Jason, is taking the winery in the future. Sustainable, terroir-specific, sensitive wines from melon de Bourgogne, pinot blanc, and trousseau will entice as much as their single-block pinot noirs.

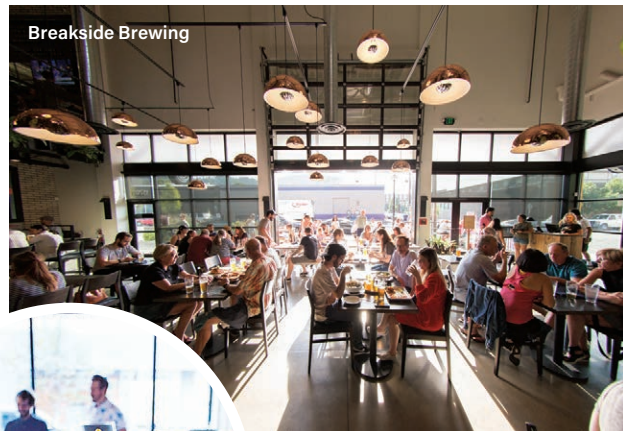
Beckham Estate Vineyard is another winery that pays homage to the far-distant past while having eyes firmly on the future. At their organically farmed estate, pinot noir, pinot gris,



Bit House Saloon



Pelican Brewing



Breakside Brewing



Clyde Common



Rum Club



Headlands Coastal Lodge

grenache, vermentino and other vinous friends

spend time in amphorae that owner/ceramicist Andrew Beckham handcrafted and then fired on-site.

Chad Stock and his **Minimus Wines** are spearheading the future of Oregon wine, working with growers to trial new grape varieties and make wines in a low-interventionist way. Memorable and distinct labels express the individuality in the bottle. Thrill of a time when schioppettino, mondeuse, furmint, petit arbane, chenin blanc and gamay will be players in the scene.

Lingua Franca is one of the newer wineries in Eola-Amity Hills, and it's the most impressive newcomer I've tasted. Though the spacious, simple winemaking facility may be brand new, the men behind the project, Larry Stone, David Honig and Dominique Lafon, need little introduction in wine circles. Watch for masterful pinot noir and chardonnay from young French winemaker Thomas Savre.

In the land of plenty (of pinots) it's a thrill to visit **Brooks**, the picturesque biodynamic-farmed estate that specializes in riesling. At any given time you might be able to taste 20 or so different rieslings, from fizzy to dry to dessert. Plan your visit to include small bites on the patio overlooking the vineyards.

COASTAL GOALS

Unlike our rocky coastline, Oregon has a greater expanse of flat, sandy beaches and a great culture of tiny seaside towns dotting the length of the state. I took the mountain pass out of the Willamette and over to friendly Pacific City and the brand-new **Headlands Coastal Lodge**. Neighbouring Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area, the eco-chic lodge offers full ocean views and patios from all suites, a full-service spa and numerous recreational activities. After a refreshing pint at **Pelican Brewing Company**, I tackled an incredible dune hike up the mega-mountain of sand next door to the resort, slipping and sliding my way to the top and to glorious views up and down the coast for miles. It was easily enough to work up an equally mega-appetite for dinner at Headlands' **Meridian Restaurant**, where chef Andrew Garrison serves up boat- and farm-to-plate cuisine alongside a smartly selected wine program. *TM*

HOW DOES A BOTTLE GET FROM FRANCE TO YOUR LOCAL STORE?

It's a journey where many hands and many decision-makers weigh in.

BY David Kitai

1. The Winery Our story begins at the winery, in this case, **Domaine Faiveley**—a family operation since 1825, with one of the most respected pedigrees in Burgundy. In the past decade their wines, always of very high quality, have been holding up in the hallowed company of famed grand cru producers like **Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**.

2. The Visit In March 2017, Faiveley's long-time importer, **Trialto**, sent Neil Punshon to France. He visited about 12 different suppliers in a one-week trip; at Faiveley, he walked through the vineyards and tasted new vintages from the barrel. He made the trip to show his face at the winery—Burgundian producers are in high demand, and visiting the winery goes a long way in securing an allocation—to learn the stories of each wine, and to see if he could find anything new that might fit the B.C. market.

3. The Wine On that 2017 trip, Punshon found an ideal wine for our market, the **Faiveley la Framboisière**. **Framboisière** is a vineyard site in **Mercurey**, historically less valuable for the simple, fresh, fruit-forward wines made from its pinot noir. Punshon thought that Faiveley's **Framboisière** was a perfect expression of good-value Burgundy, something that's becoming harder and harder to find.

4. The Paperwork **Trialto** is already established as Faiveley's official agent in B.C. If they weren't before Punshon's visit, he

would have had to get Faiveley to complete a formal application to the BCLDB, registering **Trialto** as their sole representative in the province.

5. The Decision Once registered, Punshon has a choice: he can bring the wine in as "spec," for sale to private stores and restaurants, or he can try to get it listed at **BC Liquor Stores**, where it will have much better exposure. To do that, he needs to get **Barb Philip** on board with the **Framboisière**.

6. The Gatekeeper Philip is a master of wine and the European wine buyer for **BC Liquor Stores**. She often invites importers to fill a gap on BCL shelves, sending out an invitation for a style of wine at a certain price point. She'll get samples from the agents and make her decision from there. Importers are also free to send samples unsolicited. There's less of a chance she'll accept them, though, and it's almost certainly going to take longer before she lets the importer know.

7. The Pitch Punshon was confident that the **Framboisière** had the right mixture of acclaim, quality and value, with a compelling enough story to get the wine on the shelf. Philip agreed: when accepting uninvited wines, she looks for "a distinct point of difference, extremely high

point scores, or a wine that is just so delicious we can't help but offer it to our customers." To Philip, the **Framboisière** "scored very high on the deliciousness criterion." She placed a purchase order for 180 bottles.

8. Drink Up Purchase order in hand, it's time to import. Burgundy's popularity meant Punshon had to cajole every case he could from the winery, but by February 2018 he had his allocation. The full shipment arrived in Vancouver in September. To avoid overheating the wines, he tries to ship in autumn, when Canadian ports like Montreal are cooling down. If he shipped in winter, the wines would have to cross the Panama Canal and risk sitting on a boat languishing in the tropical heat.

Domaine Faiveley la Framboisière retails for \$57.

