

Central Valley Tour

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This portion of our winery tour encompasses Oregon's Dundee Hills, a 6500-acre American Viticultural Area formed in 2006. It is located west of Highway 99 between Newberg to the north and the Lafayette and Dayton to the south.

The late David Lett, "Papa Pinot" of Eyrie Vineyards, was the region's early pioneer when he arrived in 1965. A few years later, in 1971, Bill Blosser and Susan Sokol Blosser came to start Sokol Blosser winery, which has done much to promote sustainability and organic vineyard farming.

In 1979, Lett's 1975 Pinot Noir brought world attention to the region when it placed twice in the top three at an international tasting sponsored by the French. And when the Drouhin family purchased land in 1987, this underscored the area's acclaim as a top wine growing region.

Today, the Dundee Hills area has more than 50 vineyards with about 2,000 planted acres. The contour line starts at a 200-foot elevation and extends upward to 1,000 feet, offering some of the best views in wine country.

The Chehalem Mountains to the north provide climatic protection from the Columbia Gorge winds, and the Coast Range mitigates heavy Pacific rains, so it is warmer and drier than surrounding areas.

The Dundee Hills are known for red soils, of which over 80 percent is Jory, a red silt, clay and loam volcanic soil series regarded for its mineral content and good drainage. The soils and microclimate together lend a depth of ripe fruit character to the wines made here.

"The volcanic, Jory soils of the Dundee Hills are ideally suited to production of world-class wines," Tony Rynders of Tony Rynders Consulting said. "The pinot noirs are rich and complex with supple tannins, while the chardonnays are vibrant, mineral-scented and possess great structure."

Five to try

Argyle Winery: 691 Highway 99W, Dundee. Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 23 and 24. Contact: (503) 538-8520.

Domaine Drouhin Oregon: 6750 NE Breyman Orchards Road, Dayton. Open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 23 and 24. Contact: (503) 864-2700.

Domaine Serene: 6555 NE Hilltop Lane, Dayton. Open, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 24 and 25. Contact: (503) 864-4600.

Erath Winery: 9409 NE Worden Hill Road, Dundee. Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Contact: (503) 538-3318.

Sokol Blosser: 5000 Sokol Blosser Lane, Dundee. Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 23-25. Cost: \$15 per tasting. Contact: (503) 864-2282, Ext. 10.