

# Tualatin Hills And The Laurelwood District Are Oregon's Newest American Viticultural Areas



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Spirits

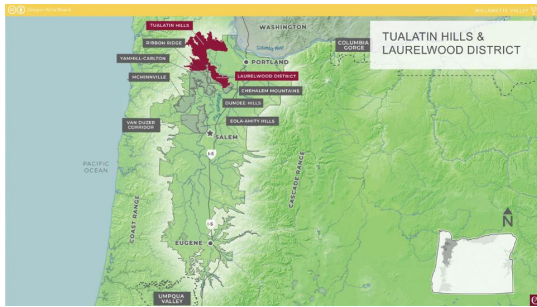
*I write about wines and spirits and the hidden corners of the world*



Ponzi Vineyard, View from Aurora Vineyard PHOTO COURTESY PONZI VINEYARDS/ANDREA JOHNSON AERIALS

Two new American Viticultural Areas (AVA) have been announced by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). Located in the northern end of Oregon's Willamette Valley, in the heart of Oregon's Pinot Noir producing zone, the two new AVAs are Tualatin Hills and the Laurelwood District. The two AVAs, which are partially adjacent to one another, are notable for containing among the highest concentrations of Laurelwood soils in Oregon.

Laurelwood soils consist of an exceptionally fine windblown soil called loess. It consists predominantly of silt-sized sediment that was formed by the accumulation of wind-blown dust and was produced by the grinding down of basaltic and other volcanic rocks by glaciers during the last ice age.



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The Tualatin Hills and Laurelwood District

AVAs PHOTO, COURTESY OREGON WINE BOARD

This soil produces very Burgundian styled Pinot Noir wines. They emphasize flavors of cherry, blackberry and spice. These wines offer a lighter, elegant style and texture with well-defined tannins, which is markedly different than the earthier, more robust, black fruit centered styles typical of Oregon's sedimentary soils. Chardonnay produced from Laurelwood soils, on the other hand, exhibit floral aromas of white flowers, bright acidity and a hint of salinity.

The Tualatin Hills AVA is the northern most location within the Willamette Valley. The area covers approximately 144,000 acres. Its located due west of Portland and just east from the Oregon Coast Range, and is defined by the watershed of the Tualatin River. It sits between the Chehalem Mountains AVA, portions of which also feature Laurelwood soils, to the east and the Yamhill-Carlton AVA to the south.

The AVA's elevation ranges between 200 and 1,000 feet. Elevations below 200 feet are specifically excluded from the AVA. Its location in the rain shadow of the Coast Range gives it a slightly lower rainfall, cooler springs and warmer falls. It is sheltered to the west by some of the highest peaks of the coastal mountains and shielded to the south by the large mass of the Chehalem Mountains.

The region has been a longstanding agriculture area and was home to Oregon's very first commercial vineyard. Among the vineyards located in the Tualatin Hills AVA are [Apolloni Vineyards](#), [David Hill Vineyard and Winery](#), [Elk Cove](#), [Montinore Estate](#) and [Tualatin Estate Vineyard](#). In total, there are 21 wineries along with 33 vineyards, covering approximately 860 acres, in the AVA.

The AVA petition, filed in 2015, was led by Alfredo Apolloni of Apolloni Vineyards, Rudy Marchesi of Montinore Estate and Mike Kuenz of David Hill Vineyard and Winery.

According to Alfredo Apolloni, owner and winemaker at Apolloni Vineyards:

“Our northernmost 15-mile slice of the Willamette Valley is a special place in the Tualatin Hills defined by its soil and climate. The new AVA designation will help highlight the unique and distinctive wines produced from our area and its soils.”

The new Laurelwood AVA is named after the namesake soil that predominates in the area. Its boundary is largely defined by the predominance of that soil type. This soil sits atop a fractured basalt subsoil that provides quick drainage and produces deeply rooted vines.

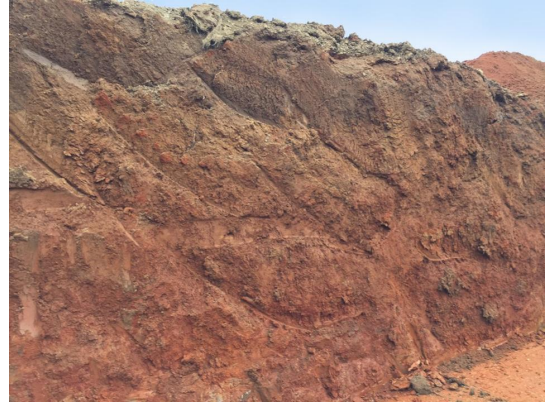
The AVA encompasses over 33,000 acres of the north and east facing slope of the Chehalem Mountains, including the highest elevation in the Willamette Valley at 1633 ft. The AVA contains 70 vineyards with approximately 975 acres of grapevines and 25 wineries. Among the wineries in the new AVA are [Rex Hill](#), [A to Z Wineworks Winery](#) and [Chehalem Winery](#).

The original petition to the TTB to recognize the unique geology of the area and its iconic wines, was made in 2016 by [Ponzi Vineyards](#) and [Dion Vineyard](#).

According to second generation winemaker and winery owner Luisa Ponzi “it’s been a decade-long project” and is “a natural next step towards further defining the Willamette Valley.”

Ponzi worked with her sister Anna Maria and the Johnson family on the research to define the AVA and the eventual application.

Cheers



An example of Laurelwood soil at Paloma Vineyard PHOTO, COURTESY PONZI VINEYARDS