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How Does This Unlikely State Produce Such Outstanding Wines?



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Travel

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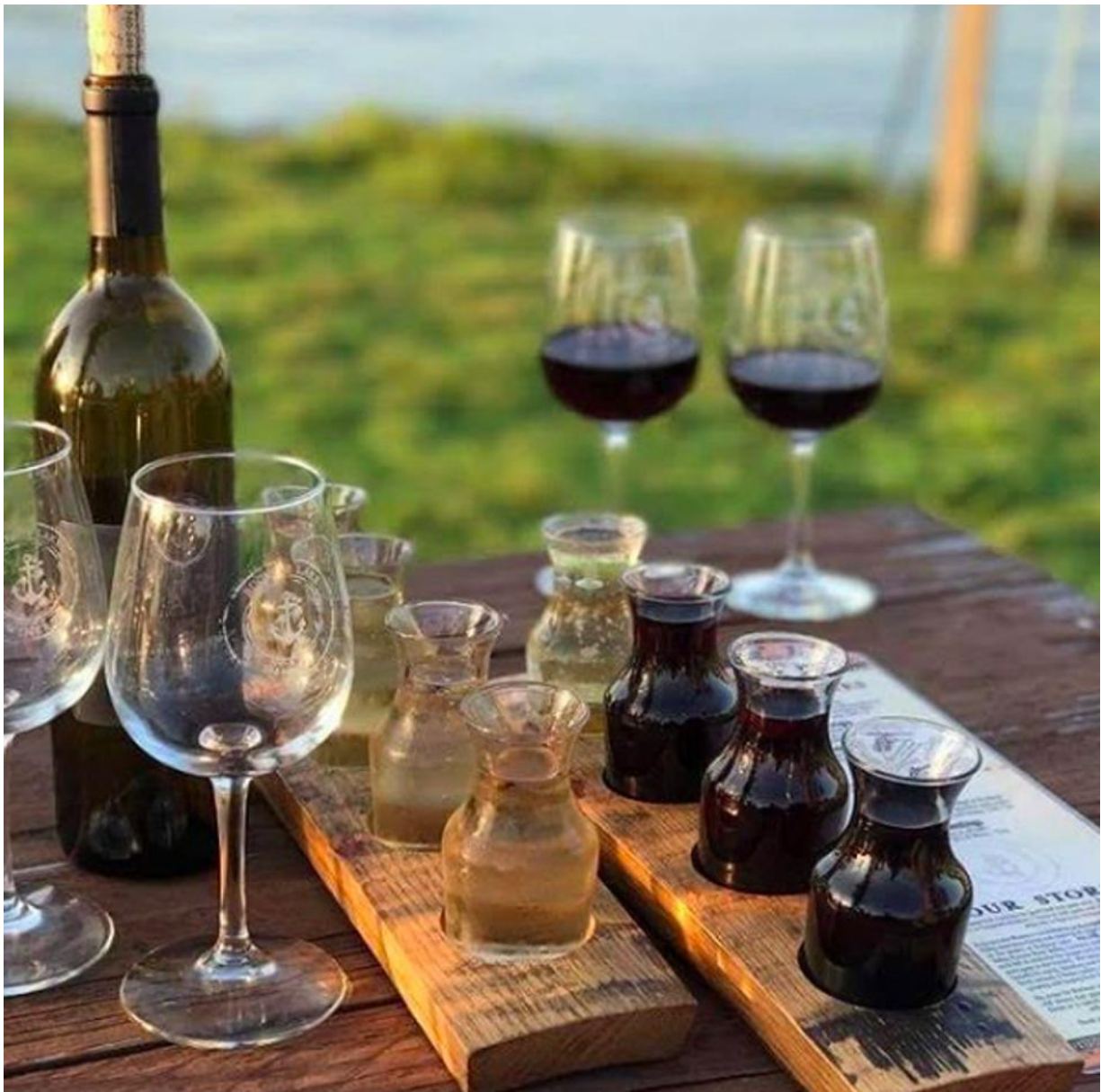


There are 280 wineries operating in Ohio. ROCKSIDE WINERY AND VINEYARDS

When connoisseurs of the grape think of the world's greatest wine regions, Ohio probably doesn't immediately come to mind. Truth be told, Ohio may not even be on their list. But don't let the Buckeye State's lack of recognition by sommeliers fool you. Ohio offers a wide variety of wines that will please even the most discerning palates. In fact, there are 280 commercial wineries operating in Ohio, and there are five designated **American Viticultural Areas** partially or completely located within the state.

Stretching over three centuries, many dedicated people have shaped and nurtured the Ohio Wine Industry. **The Ohio Wine Producers Association** lists six wine trails throughout the state: Appalachian, Canal Country, Capital City, Ohio River, Shores & Islands, Vines & Wines. Each offers distinctive samplings of wines. The Vintage Ohio Wine Festival, held each summer, affords guests the opportunity to sample wines from Ohio wineries ranging from world-class wines like Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc or Riesling to fun-to-drink fruit wines made from fresh strawberries, blackberries, peaches and raspberries.

Fairfield County, Ohio, boasts some of the most gorgeous wineries this side of the Mississippi. What's more, the county is within a one day's driving distance from 50% of the US population. Fairfield County offers a blend of settings from downtown to rural to lakeside. You will also find an assortment of traditional brews with distinctive recipes, and copious amounts of wine varietals made from both Ohio and California grown grapes.



Buckeye Lake Winery uses a hands-on approach. BUCKEYE LAKE WINERY

Buckeye Lake Winery, Thornville, is a quintessentially quaint winery that actually brings in wines from Napa Valley. Guests can enjoy a taste of the coast while on the southern shores of Buckeye Lake. Come for the wine, stay for the views and food. Proprietors Tracy and Laura Higginbotham travel to California each fall to evaluate the grapes and determine when to harvest, coordinate and participate in the harvest, lease space at custom crush facilities, ferment the grapes and coordinate the logistics to get the young raw wine back to their facilities for aging, blending and bottling. Tracy Higginbotham says, “This hands-on approach from start to finish ensures a Napa quality wine since we start with the grape. We are also buying local to

produce a delightful Ohio style wine on premise. We feel like we get the best of both worlds by employing a bi-coastal strategy to procure our wines, traditional vinifera from California and Vidal Blanc from Ohio.”

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Visitors can enjoy German-style reds and whites. [HERRENHAUS ELFLEIN](#)

At **Herrenhaus Elflein**, Ashville, winemakers grow German-derived varietals such as Dornfelder, Blaufränkisch, Kerner, and Traminette, from which they produce German-style reds and whites. They also partner with other growers to produce additional German-style wines such as Müller-Thurgau, Spätburgunder, and Rotling, and offer Federweiss seasonally in the fall at harvest from their own press. Owner Keith R. Elflein says, “The

climate in central Ohio is very similar to northern Bavaria, where many of these varieties are grown. Our vineyard sits on a local plateau above the city of Columbus at an elevation of 928ft, and our silt-loam soil is infused with heavy glacial rubble including pink and blue granite, and sandstone. The three main soils on our estate range from light cocoa-brown to coffee-black, and provide a rich environment for our vines to thrive while imparting a subtle minerality.”



Rockside Winery and Vineyards grow all the grapes on site. ROCKSIDE WINERY AND VINEYARDS

Rockside Winery and Vineyards, Lancaster, specializes in estate wines, growing all the grapes and bottling right on site. Try their Steuben rosé to get a full taste of that Ohio flavor in this spacious setting. Rockside Winery and Vineyards is located just minutes from Columbus. The first vines were

planted in 2007, and the winery opened in 2011. “At Rockside, we grow mainly French American hybrid varieties of grapes including Petite Pearl, Chambourcin, Corot Noir, Steuben, Vidal Blanc and Frontenac Blanc,” explains Robin D. Coolidge Jr., Winemaker/Owner. “The soil is varied amounts of clay, sand, and rock. The sand content tends to make drainage better than in other clay soils, although we do still tile our fields to increase the ability to remove water. The soil makeup is ideal for grape growing because of good drainage, a relatively high mineral content that allows for a good pH, and good organic material content.”

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As a travel journalist for three decades, my articles have appeared in The New York Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, BELLA NYC, US News & World Report and many other...

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