

Montana Grown Wine



ISU Extension Michael White's Conclusion @ 2019 MTGWA 5th Annual Conference

- New and improved cold-climate winegrape cultivars over the last 20-plus years have ignited an immense growth of local vineyards and wineries across the cold-climate states. Montana, with its mineral soils, dry climate, scenic views and many microclimates, is beginning to see the growth in its local wine industry. It takes some time to get all the major players—growers, winemakers, government, universities and the wine buying public—on board, but I believe that Montana now has all these players on its team. Their local cold-climate winegrape industry should grow dramatically over the next decade.
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- For the past 20 years, I have watched the cold-climate winegrape industry expand in all the Upper Midwest states. When a few good producers deliver high-quality wine from well-grown winegrapes, the rest of the industry starts to step up. The Montana cold-climate winegrape industry has been simmering for the last five years, and I believe production in the state is about to expand rapidly.

Here are some of the attributes I think will fuel this expansion:

1. A semi-arid climate that deters fungus diseases.
2. Excellent water resources for irrigation.
3. A variety of well-drained mineral soil associations well adapted to cold-climate hybrid winegrapes.
4. Overall growing season temperatures and length similar to much of the North Central states where cold-climate hybrid winegrapes flourish.
5. A variety of micro-climates that provide those warm days and cool nights that enhance the production of intense flavor compounds.
6. A strong national and international tourism industry.
7. A deep basket of cold-climate hybrid winegrape cultivars available now, with more to come.

– *Michael L. White*

- **by Michael L. White**

- Michael L. White retired from Iowa State University Extension & Outreach on July 1, 2019. He served as their viticulture specialist and worked closely with ISU MWGWII (Midwest Grape and Wine Industry Institute).

Economic Impact of 200 acres of new vineyards in Montana

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If 200 acres of new wine grape acres become available to Montana wineries, and they used them all and had average crops, these figures suggest to me that we'd be selling closer to 3.58% of the total wine sold in Montana, well above the current 0.25% of Montana grown wine sold.

With 200 acres @ 3.5 tons per acre = 1,400,000 pounds = 107,692 gallons = 538,462 bottles @ average \$25/bottle = \$13,461,550.
(538,462 bottles = 4,038,462 liters which, divided by total liters sold in Montana: 112,545,611, is 3.58%.) That's a great goal for now!

Other States Wine Economies Deliver Huge Economic Impacts

Minnesota has 80 farm wineries with about 250 acres planted to grapes in 2021.

Iowa has about 100 wineries and 250 vineyards covering 1300 acres and supports 2600 industry related jobs with a \$420 million economic impact (4\$ million/acre impact).

Missouri has more than 130 wineries with 1,700 acres of grapes, and 9 different unique wine trails capturing tourist dollars.

Wisconsin has more than 100 local wineries with over 1000 acres of vineyards.

Indiana grew from 9 wineries in 1989 to 118 today covering 600 acres of vineyards. Indiana estimates locally grown wine generates an economic impact of \$600 million (\$1 million/acre impact), sustains 4,000 full-time jobs, and pays 37 million in state and local taxes and 38 million in federal taxes.

Locally grown wine industries in the Midwest return hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and ancillary economic benefit to their rural communities and state. Montana is known as a destination state drawing tourists to its abundance of natural beauty and outdoor activities. Now imagine vineyards and wineries attracting attention increasing visitor days. Montana has the potential for additional ancillary economic development from vineyards and wineries due to Montana being a vacation destination state.

Montana has prime growing sites for several hundred to a few thousand acres of vineyards across western Montana and down the Yellowstone. Montana likely has more prime cold hardy grape growing areas/sites than most Midwestern states have growing now.

Farmers Market Permits- Allow wineries to attend farmers markets to sell MT grown wine in sealed bottles. Requires documentation of farmers market booth rental. Wineries must list MT grown wines they have available for sale at the market on the permit. Local ordinance and/or farmers market policy shall dictate if samples are allowed to be served. The number of farmers market permits should be based on the size and ability of individual businesses to participate, not on an arbitrary limited number of permits other Ag businesses are not limited by.

Farmers market access incentivizes vineyard production operations that sell grapes to wineries by assuring a market and way to build their customer base for their MT grown wines. Customer wineries can help build and maintain their customer base further by selling to those farmers market customers during winter months.

Farm Winery License- Allow farm wineries with 3+ acres of producing wine grapes:

- 1) A license that comes with two sample rooms that only allow tastes and bottle sales. These small footprint tasting rooms are common in Washington where the average visit is 13 minutes with an average sale of \$269.
- 2) A separate endorsement would be available for a full-service tasting room with entertainment, food, etc., to take the place of one of the two bottle sale only sample rooms.

A Farm Winery could also be licensed to sell juice, finished bulk wine or shiners made from MT grown grapes and fruit to other Montana wineries. Many other states allow flexible state grown wine sale of locally grown wine, fruit juice, bulk wine and shiners.