



Press Release

The Washington State received its 12th American Viticultural Area (AVA) – Naches Heights on the December 12, 2011.

Naches Heights is situated in Yakima County, laying between the small towns of Naches and Tieton, northwest of the city of Yakima. A million year old andesite lava flow, originating from the Boat Rocks, formed the region. A sub region of the Columbia Valley Viticultural area, Naches Heights is bounded by the Naches River to the north and east; the lower Tieton River to the west; and Cowiche Creek to the south and west. Andesite cliffs also help form the boundary to the north, east, and south. The area is 13,254 acres in size.

Elevations at Naches Heights range from 1,200 to 2,100 feet, making it considerably raised from much of the surrounding area. The plateau is generally flat, increasingly gently in elevation from southeast to northwest. The elevation and gentle grade help colder air drain into lower lying areas.

Naches Heights is distinct from a number of Washington's growing regions in that it is above the level of Missoula Floods, a series of cataclysmic events that occurred repeatedly 10,000 years ago. Unlike these areas, which have alluvial soils, Naches Heights is all windblown soil, or loess, which continues to accumulate. The soil also contains a significant amount of clay, helping to retain water.

As a vinifera grape growing region, Naches Heights had its commercial start less than ten years ago when Phil Cline, a third generation farmer decided to plant a vineyard.

Although the Naches Heights and Wilridge Winery are currently the only two wineries in the area, other winemakers and growers have begun moving in.

The total plantings are about 40 acres (16 ha) at present and all are farmed sustainably, biodynamically, or organically.

The area receives 10 to 13 inches of precipitation annually. Naches Heights is also quite cool due to its elevation.

Now that the AVA is approved – it will be published in the Federal Register on January 13 – wineries will be able to label any wines that are currently in tank or barrel with the Naches Heights designation as long as at least 85% of the fruit is from the area.

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