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Two Frenchmen & a German Walk Into a Bar...The Story Behind Idaho Wine

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from [Chip McLaughlin](#)

When you think about Northwest wines, we all know about the elegant Pinot Noirs from Oregon and the big, bold reds from Washington. But what do you know about the Northwest's first wines? The state of [Idaho](#) has been making wine longer than anyone else in the northwest. Idaho first started making wine in Lewiston, Idaho in 1864 and the story behind the beginning of Idaho's wine industry is something reminiscent of the start of a joke.



the other Bill Murray of Sawtooth Wines

Two Frenchman, Louis Desol and Robert Schleicher, and a German, Jacob Schaefer, recognized Idaho's potential to produce world class wines. Schleicher was the most successful as he won numerous awards and medals in various competitions in Omaha, Buffalo, St. Louis and Portland. Idaho wines were nationally renowned and the industry was thriving until the state implemented prohibition in 1919, thus closing the industry down.

Prohibition ended in 1933 and took its toll on the region, its growers and winemakers. It wasn't until 1970 that wine grapes were once again planted in Idaho, this time along the Snake River, in the southern part of Idaho.

Today, the Snake River Valley, established in 2007 and the state's first AVA, is home to most of the state's wineries. It is there, in southwestern Idaho, that over 8,000 square miles of land is dedicated to the Snake River Valley AVA.



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Tammy and Mike of Indian Creek

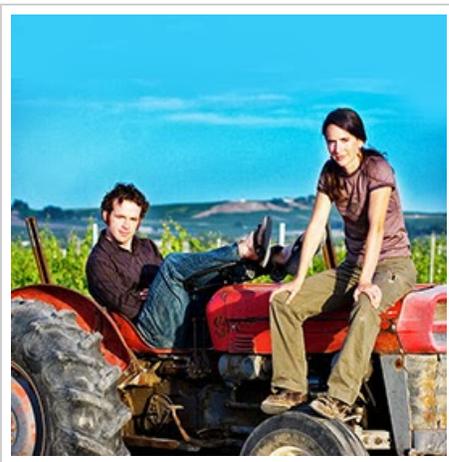
Growers and winemakers from around this great country of ours have certainly taken notice of Idaho's potential in the last ten years. In 2002, there were 11 wineries and today, Idaho now has over 50 wineries and over 1,600 acres of grapes planted.

Idaho's industry is made up of an eclectic mix of original generation Idaho winemaking families like Indian Creek, founded by the Stowe family in 1982, to Idaho natives returning home after spending time in other winemaking areas along the west coast like Periple's Angie Shaltry and Cinder's Melanie Krause to transplants like Sawtooth's Bill Murray.

Today, it is winemakers and wineries like these that lead the charge for Idaho's winemaking community. [Indian Creek](#) has stayed true to

their Idaho roots, working with various vineyards throughout the valley, including their own estate vineyard. Second-generation husband and wife team, Tammy Stowe-McClure and Mike McClure, now run the show at Indian Creek. When they're not climbing the best mountains the Northwest has to offer, this dynamic duo produces a wide variety of wines ranging from Germanic inspired Rieslings, to the ever-temperamental Pinot Noir, to red blends like their Star Garnet.

At [Cinder](#), another husband and wife team, Melanie Krause and Joe Schnerr, are looking to continue Idaho's rich winemaking heritage. Krause has worked under well known Washington winemakers such as Chateau Ste. Michelle's Bob Bertheau, Goose Ridge's Kendall Mix and Bunnell Family's Ron Bunnell. During her time at Chateau Ste. Michelle, Krause helped make over 400,000 cases of wine for the Chateau and in 2003, she was promoted to assistant winemaker at Canoe Ridge Estate Winery. In 2006, Krause moved back to Idaho and started making wine for herself in addition to consulting for various wineries throughout the valley. Today, Krause and Schnerr make various small lot wines, but really take pride in their Syrahs and Viogniers.



Melanie and Joe of Cinder

At [Périphe](#), Angie Shaltry, an Idaho native, is taking a different approach. Shaltry got her start in the industry at Healdsburg's Alexander Valley Vineyards, working in their lab. She quickly discovered her passion for the art of winemaking and began working with California icon Helen Turley. It was there that Shaltry discovered her love for Pinot Noir and has since brought that love back to Idaho in the form of different Pinot

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Noir offerings from both California and Oregon. In 2008, Shaltry began working with Washington fruit, sourcing Syrah and Cabernet from various Red Mountain vineyards.



Lastly, let's talk Bill Murray. Yes, I too, love the idea of that cannonballing, gopher hunting maniac making wine, but alas, it's not THAT Bill Murray that heads the winemaking team at [Sawtooth](#). However, Sawtooth's Bill Murray is also charismatic, outgoing and hilarious, and he knows also knows his way around a vineyard and a cellar. Murray got his start in California where he worked for Buena Vista Winery, Acacia and Bouchaine before moving to the Northwest to work as heir to his long time friend, John Abbot, at Canoe Ridge Estate Winery.

With its roots running deeper than most, Idaho knows that it lies in the shadows of its neighbors to the west, but that isn't deterring anyone from working hard to prove that they, too, can make world-class wines.

Angie of Periple

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