

# Forget the spud, Idahoans love vines



Aaric Bryan/IPT

Gregg Alger, owner of Huston Vineyards in the Snake River Valley wine region of Canyon County, pours a glass of Chicken Dinner Red at his winery. Alger is also chairman of the Idaho Wine Commission and a leading advocate for the wine industry in the Gem State.



• Posted on Jun 27, 2014

by [Justin Dalme](#)

CALDWELL — June is Idaho wine month, but there's no need to tell Idahoans that.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism report on alcohol consumption, Idaho is second in the nation for the amount of wine consumed per capita.

And local wineries are benefiting from those wet whistles, especially during June.

Gregg Alger, of Huston Vineyards, saw a 35 percent growth in sales in June over last year, adding Idaho Wine month has taken off.

"People are finding our wines and saying, 'this is good, this is good stuff,'" Alger said.

Idahoans, those 14 years old and older, drink 8,653,000 gallons combined each year. Only residents in the District of Columbia drink more wine than Idahoans per capita.

That equates to 36 bottles per year, a breakdown of three bottles per month or three glasses per week for the average Idahoan — or if preferred, nine boxed wine pouches per year.

According to the institute's report, after seeing a crash in the amount of wine consumed in the early 1990s, regions across the country have seen a continual increase in popularity of fermented grapes.

The amount of wine consumed has steadily increased from the late 1970s when Idahoans drank about a quarter that amount.

"We're seeing a lot more local support for the Idaho wine industry," said Moya Shatz Dolsby, Idaho Wine Commission executive director.

She said Idaho wine is getting good press throughout the country. The Sunnyslope-region winery Koenig Vineyards had three wines in its 2010 vintage that received 90-plus ratings from Wine Spectator, one of the biggest wine magazines in the country. Alger said that's good for everyone selling wine in the region.

Alger and his wife, Mary, opened Huston Vineyards in 2011 after planting their first vines in 2007. Since then, the Idaho wine industry has grown exponentially, he said. And with local wineries only making up about six percent of the Idaho market share, Alger said there is room to grow.

"We're finally getting Idaho to accept that we are making quality wines," he said. A big part of having Idaho wine taken seriously was establishing the Snake River Valley American Viticultural Area. The area separates the Snake River Valley as a distinct grape-growing region, due to ancient volcanic sediment, according to the Idaho Wine Commission. There are about 8,000 square miles, stretching from Twin Falls to eastern Oregon.