

# Idaho, a state poised for winemaking greatness

By Sara Schneider, January 15, 2016

Let's say one of your New Year's resolutions was to explore a new wine region. Can I suggest Idaho? With more than 50 wineries and a growing amount of serious winemaking talent on the ground, this is a state poised for greatness.

What's behind the potential here? The bulk of Idaho's vineyards are in the Snake River Valley, east of Boise. (Expect a few strip malls and housing developments on the 45-minute-or-so drive out there.) This is high desert. The winters are cold; the summers are warm. But during that warm growing season, the temperature always drops drastically at night—there might be a 40, 50, even 60 degree difference between day and night. So while the sugar levels rise in the grapes during the day, the cool nights let the vines hoard their acid levels. And acidity is crucial to good (bright, interesting) wine.

Did I mention that it's desert, so it's dry? No mold, no rot ... And don't get me started on propitious soils. A handful of millions of years ago, ancient Lake Idaho was formed ... No, I won't go there. But it matters, and you can get the skinny if you go.

But you don't have to go to taste. Do try these at home:

Fujishin Family "Amatino" Red Blend (Snake River Valley). Syrah leads, joined by Petite Sirah and Viognier. The inky color and intense blueberry and blackberry fruit are belied by beautiful floral aromatics from the Viognier. And underneath the tangy fruit are fascinating layers of cured meat, black olive, and earth.

Huston Malbec (Snake River Valley). Crushed herbs and savory minerals on the nose give way to deep blackberry flavors, brightened by a vibrant, fresh salinity.

Colter's Creek "Koos-Koos-Kia" Red (Idaho). This Cabernet Sauvignon blend starts off with a swirl of spicy cassis, cedar, vanilla, and earth, followed by juicy raspberry and plum fruit wrapped in chalky tannins.

