

OREGON'S WILLAMETTE VALLEY GAINS TWO NEW AVAS

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The US Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) has approved two new AVAs in the Willamette Valley: Tualatin Hills and Laurelwood District.



Image: Ponzi Vineyards

Tualatin Hills covers an area of over 58,000 hectares straddling the counties of Multnomah and Washington in Oregon, while the smaller Laurelwood District encompasses more than 13,500 hectares across portions of Washington and Yamhill counties.

The two new AVAs lie within the existing Willamette Valley AVA, while Laurelwood District also is located within in the Chehalem Mountains AVA.

TTB's ruling will come into effect on 6 July, meaning that wines made in 2020 can carry the name of the AVA.

The Willamette Valley AVA now has a total of nine smaller AVAs within in it, which as well as two new ones, include: Chehalem Mountains, Dundee Hills, Eola-Amity Hills, McMinnville, Ribbon Ridge, Yamhill-Carlton and Van Duzer Corridor.

The Tualatin Hills, located in the north of the Willamette Valley, is home to 33 commercial vineyards and 21 wineries. Rudolf Marchesi, president of Montinore Estate; Alfredo Apolloni, owner and winemaker of Apolloni Vineyards, and Mike Kuenz, general manager of David Hill Vineyard and Winery, led the movement to apply for an AVA.

According to the TTB document, the Tualatin Hills is characterised by its distinctive laurelwood soils (which unlike other areas have almost no exposure to volcanic or marine sedimentary soils), elevation, and climate. Elevations in the region range from between 200 and 1,000 feet, while the area is described as having moderate rainfall with a high diurnal range.

Laurelwood District, meanwhile, gained approval after Luisa Ponzi, president of Ponzi Vineyards; Maria Ponzi, winemaker of Ponzi Vineyards; and Kevin Johnson, winemaker of Dion Vineyards sent an application back in 2016. Located west of Portland, the new AVA is home to 25 wineries and approximately 70 commercial vineyards.

According to the application, the distinguishing feature of the AVA is its soil type, which like the Tualatin Hills, is also described as laurelwood. However, the applicants said that there are differences between the Laurelwood soil of the Laurelwood District AVA and the Laurelwood soil of the Tualatin Hills AVA. For example, Laurelwood District's soil consists of loess combined with basalt which is older than that found in the soil of the Tualatin Hills. The petition also stresses the continuity of the laurelwood soil in the Laurelwood District AVA in comparison to the Tualatin Hills, where it is interspersed with other soil types.

Commenting on the news Anna Maria Ponzi, president and owner of Ponzi Vineyards, said: "Our hope is that this AVA will better define this part of the Willamette Valley that is unique due to its geology and therefore, its wines. As consumers are eager to know more about the products they purchase, this designation enables us to tell the story of this place and why and how our wines are different."

Alfredo Apolloni owner and winemaker of Apolloni Vineyards, told *Portland Business Journal* (<https://www.bizjournals.com/portland/news/2020/06/03/tualatin-hills-gains-recognition.html>): "Talking about the AVA could give us entree to some publications, or a retailer. But you want to be careful not to put up barriers to the casual wine consumer, which we sometimes have a tendency to do in wine."

"The Willamette Valley certainly has a business impact right now. Educating people about the Tualatin Hills will take time. I've talked to people in the Chehalem Mountains [established in 2006], and they're still developing recognition for their AVA."
