

Red Mountain

Where amazing grapes are grown...

The Red Mountain AVA is an American Viticultural Area that includes the land surrounding Red Mountain in Benton County, Washington. It is part of the Yakima Valley AVA, which in turn is part of the larger Columbia Valley AVA. Located between Benton City and Richland, the Red Mountain AVA is the smallest in the state at only 4,040 acres in area. Currently, the area has just over 600 acres under cultivation of primarily red varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah. The reputation of the fruit and wines produced from this area has brought Red Mountain AVA worldwide acclaim. The vineyards in this appellation have produced grapes for some of the most sought after wines in Washington State.

The area of the Red Mountain AVA was formed by the Missoula floods more than 10,000 years ago when flooding changed the rocky landscape, in essence turning the soils over, leaving nutrient rich top soil deposits. Red Mountain contains elevations ranging from 500 feet (152 m) to 1,500 feet (457 m), with these beautiful slopes forming much of the landscape which today dominates this area of the lower Yakima Valley. The red color in the name comes from the dark red springtime hue of the drooping brome or “cheatgrass” in the area. The soil in the area is very gravelly, with high alkalinity (high pH) and calcium carbonate content.

The area has one of the most unusual terroirs in the state with the southwest facing slopes documenting warmer temperatures and more sunlight hours than any other part of the Columbia Valley AVA. The nighttime temperatures drop considerably, helping to preserve the acid levels within the grape. At Benton City, the Yakima River flows past the area and provides a moderating effect on the temperature. Cool air from the north, seeking the lower elevation of the river valley, moves downwards across the hillsides planted with vineyards and helps keep the grapes from being overheated. The constant air movement helps to prevent air from settling in the area and allowing frost to damage the grapes.

The area has a desert climate with average yearly rainfall of five inches. During the growing season, daytime temperatures average 90 °F (32 °C) with nighttime temperatures dropping below 50 °F (10 °C).