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Washington awarded official designation of 11th AVA

Lake Chelan is 2nd regional designation in state this year

SEATTLE (April 28, 2009) – As the Washington wine industry continues to grow, so does its number of officially recognized vineyard areas. Washington is adding another American Viticultural Area (AVA) to its list of ten. The newest is the Lake Chelan AVA, which falls entirely within the Columbia Valley AVA, the larger appellation now containing eight of the state’s designated grape growing regions. The new appellation has received final approval and will officially go into effect in late May.

“The increasing number of Washington AVAs really speaks to the phenomenal growth and maturity of our state’s wine industry,” said Robin Pollard, Executive Director of the Washington Wine Commission. “We celebrate the great variety of soils and climates in our state and the AVA designations allow each appellation to distinguish their wines from the others.”

Lake Chelan is already a beloved tourist destination, especially during the summer, when visitors enjoy sunshine and abundant water recreation. Now, in addition to those activities, travelers can enjoy the emerging Lake Chelan wine community by visiting the vineyards and wineries within the official Lake Chelan American Viticultural Area.

Due to its higher elevation and proximity to a large, deep body of water, the Lake Chelan AVA has distinctive properties not found in its neighbors to the south. For one, the natural processes that formed the topography of Lake Chelan gave the area soils components and textures different from those that formed the Columbia Plateau region to the south. Second, grapes planted near Lake Chelan benefit from what is called the “lake effect”, whereby a large body of water absorbs heat during the summer to re-radiate during the fall and winter months and inhibit frost formation. Thus, these unique soils and special climate system give the grapes complex structure and allow a longer growing season with a reduced risk of frost damage.

Lake Chelan is home to 15 wineries and 260 planted acres of grapes, with more expected in the near future. The majority of varieties produced in the new AVA include Syrah, Merlot, Malbec, Riesling, Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir.

For more information on the Washington wine industry and its many unique regions, please visit www.washingtonwine.org.

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