



# THERE'S A MOVEMENT GROWING IN VIRGINIA VINEYARDS

2022 Press Kit

# PART ONE

## THE MOVEMENT

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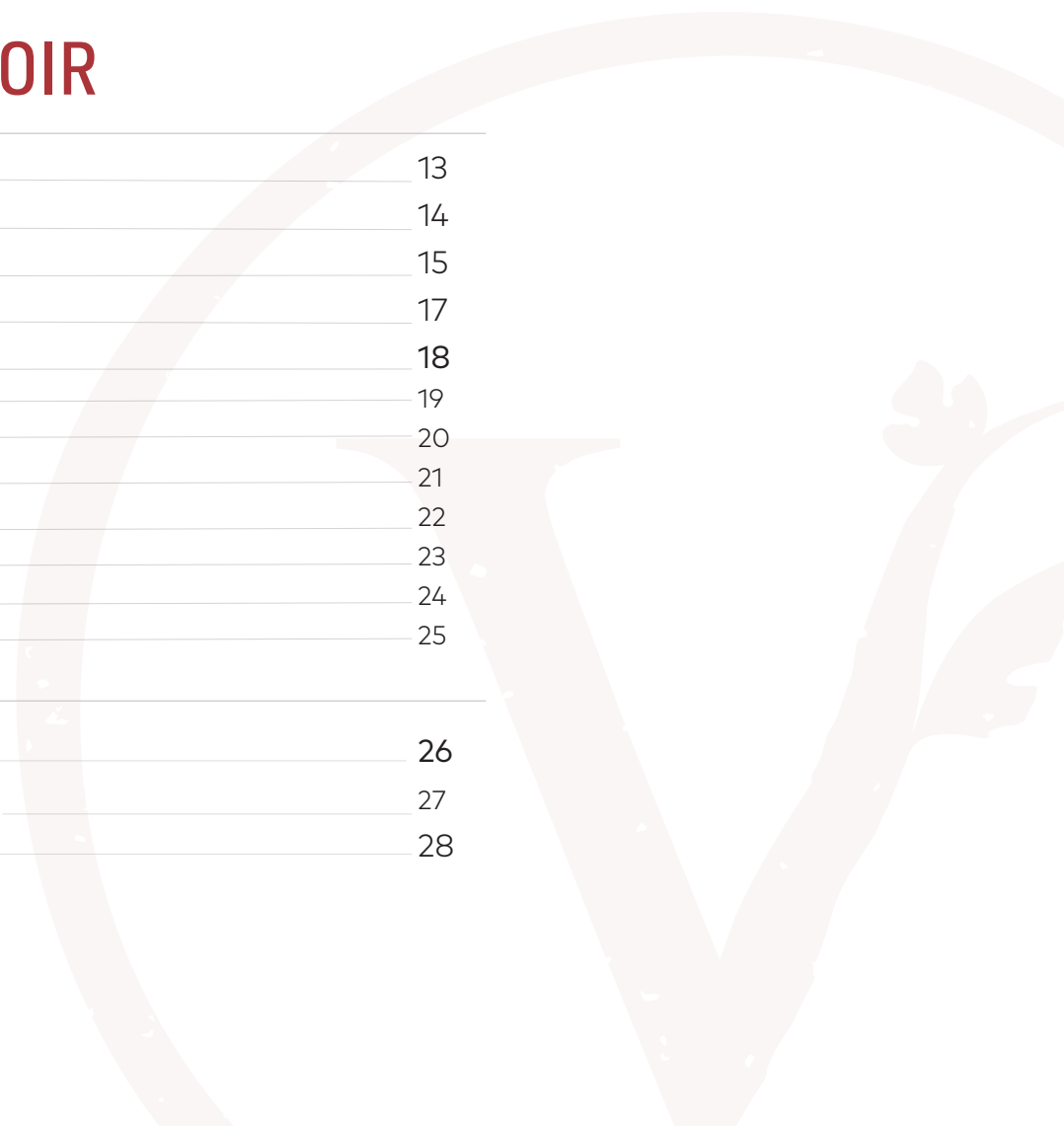
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# PART TWO

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- PART ONE



## There's a movement growing in Virginia vineyards...

A community of farmers perfecting their own agricultural art. They don't bend to trends. They listen to their land, drawing out the story in every vine and every vintage. Crafting wines that embody the grace, grit and experimental spirit of Virginia.



## OLD WORLD GRACE, **SOUTHERN GRIT**

You can learn a lot about our wine just by looking at a map. Virginia sits halfway between Europe and California. Our wines embody this unique position in the world. They are lush but structured; aromatic, expressive and beautifully balanced - blending the subtlety of the Old World with the boldness of the new. Like perfect French spoken with a slight southern

drawl. Home to over 300 wineries across ten wine regions and eight American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), most Virginia wineries are family owned; the median size of a vineyard farm is 40 acres. This means Virginia wines aren't mass-produced - they are local, artisanal and tell a story shaped by Virginia's diverse landscape and unpredictable conditions.



# THE PEOPLE

From the Blue Ridge Mountains to the red clay valleys, granite slopes to sandy shores - incredible geological variation and an unwillingness to conform to a one-size-fits-all approach has made Virginia winemakers true artists in expressing the character of this land.

Those that craft wines come from a wide array of winemaking backgrounds. But there is a common thread - winemaking is a labor of love in Virginia. They grow together – sharing experiments, collaborating and challenging each other. Thousands of talented, hard-working individuals are dedicated to creating the best experience for wine drinkers in Virginia and around the world.





## ROOTED IN RESILIENCE

Though the attempts to produce wine in Virginia can be traced back to the first settlers, and even a few founding fathers, it wasn't until the late 1970s when the industry began to take root.

When much of the wine world dismissed Virginia viticulture as a lost cause, an eclectic handful of individuals pressed on—from European immigrants with wine in their DNA, to dairy farm matriarchs with a thirst for something different. One hard-earned vintage after another, these pioneers set the tone for the

industry to come—curious, collaborative, stubborn in the face of setbacks.

Through their varied perspectives, the region's potential would shift into focus. Virginia, to hear them tell it, was similar to Northern Italy or Southern France. It was like all of these places and none of them. And no two AVAs were the same. Virginia winemakers survived through collective wisdom and thrived by uncovering the characteristics of every microclimate and the particulars of each plot.



## A REGION ON THE RISE

What began as a scattered handful of wineries would approach 50 by the mid-1990s. Successes spread, standards raised higher, and the region grew like wildfire. In less than a decade, that number would double. Today, with over 300 wineries and counting, Virginia winemakers and wine lovers alike are reaping the fruits of those early experiments.

The economic impact of the Virginia wine industry is substantial; it has created 10,420 jobs (FTE) and generates \$1.73 billion annually.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Virginia's wineries are a top tourist destination - more than 2.64 million people visit each year.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Impact Report, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Tourism Corporation, based on visitors traveling 50 miles or further to visit a winery.





# VIRGINIA GRAPES

## Unsung Heroes Who Grew to Greatness

The story of Virginia wine (like the story of Virginia itself) is, in part, a tale of secondary characters from the Old World who learned to thrive in a new environment. Grape varieties like Viognier, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot—relative obscurities and bit-players in Old World wine traditions—are taking center stage in Virginia.

## A Fresh Take on the Familiar

In large part because of the range of diverse growing conditions, a variety of grapes can be found in Virginia. Virginia's grapes include familiar vinifera such as Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, that will upend every expectation with a character all their own.





## TASTE VIRGINIA

### The Best Blends West of the Left Bank

Bordeaux-style red blends make up some of the most beloved and highly acclaimed wines coming out of the Commonwealth. While their blending percentages vary greatly across vineyards and vintages, the end products are consistently lush and layered—built to age but hard to resist right now.

### Norton: Virginia Native

America's oldest wine grape was born in Virginia and credited with helping to save the European wine industry during the 19th century French wine blight. Some talented Virginia winemakers are working to restore Norton to its prominence as America's native grape.



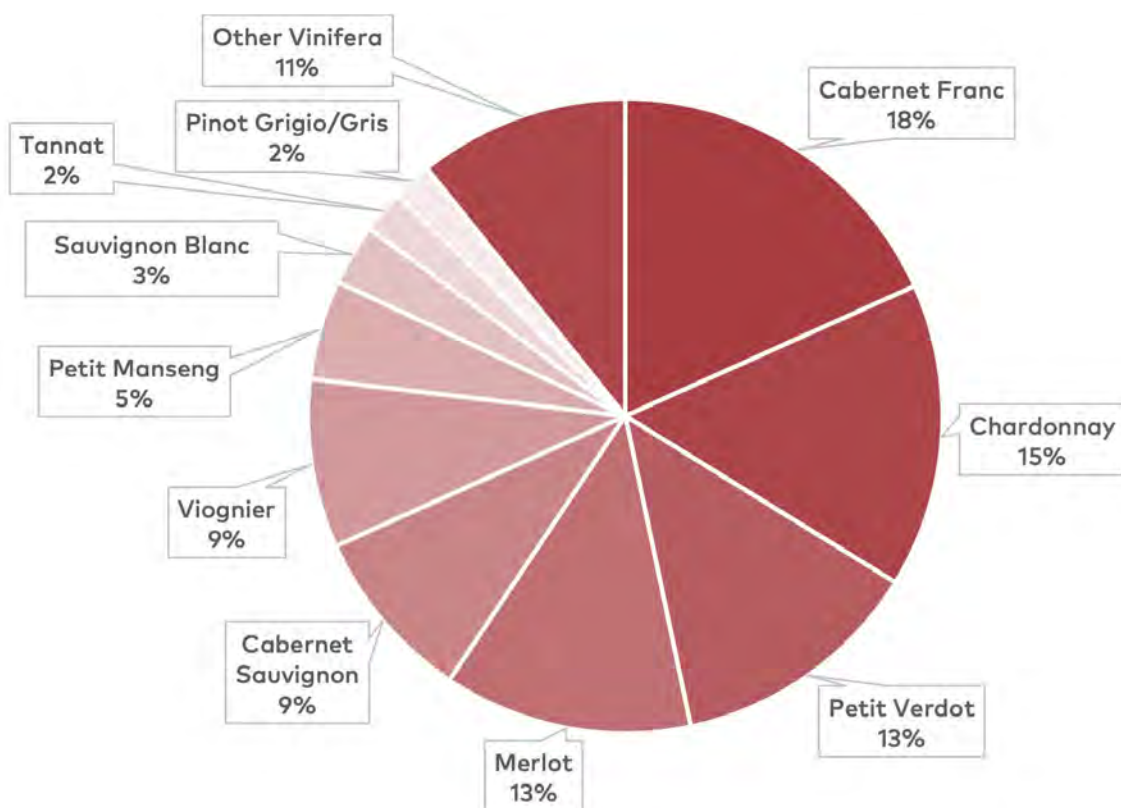
## 2021 GRAPE PRODUCTION

Based on data reported in the 2021 Virginia Commercial Grape Report.

VARIETY	TOTAL ACRES	BEARING ACRES	NON-BEARING ACRES	TONS
Vinifera	3,589	3,122	467	7,688
Hybrid	632	578	54	1,625
American	165	155	10	478
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,386</b>	<b>3,855</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>9,791</b>
<i>Estimated Actual Total*</i>	<i>5,012</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>10,819</i>

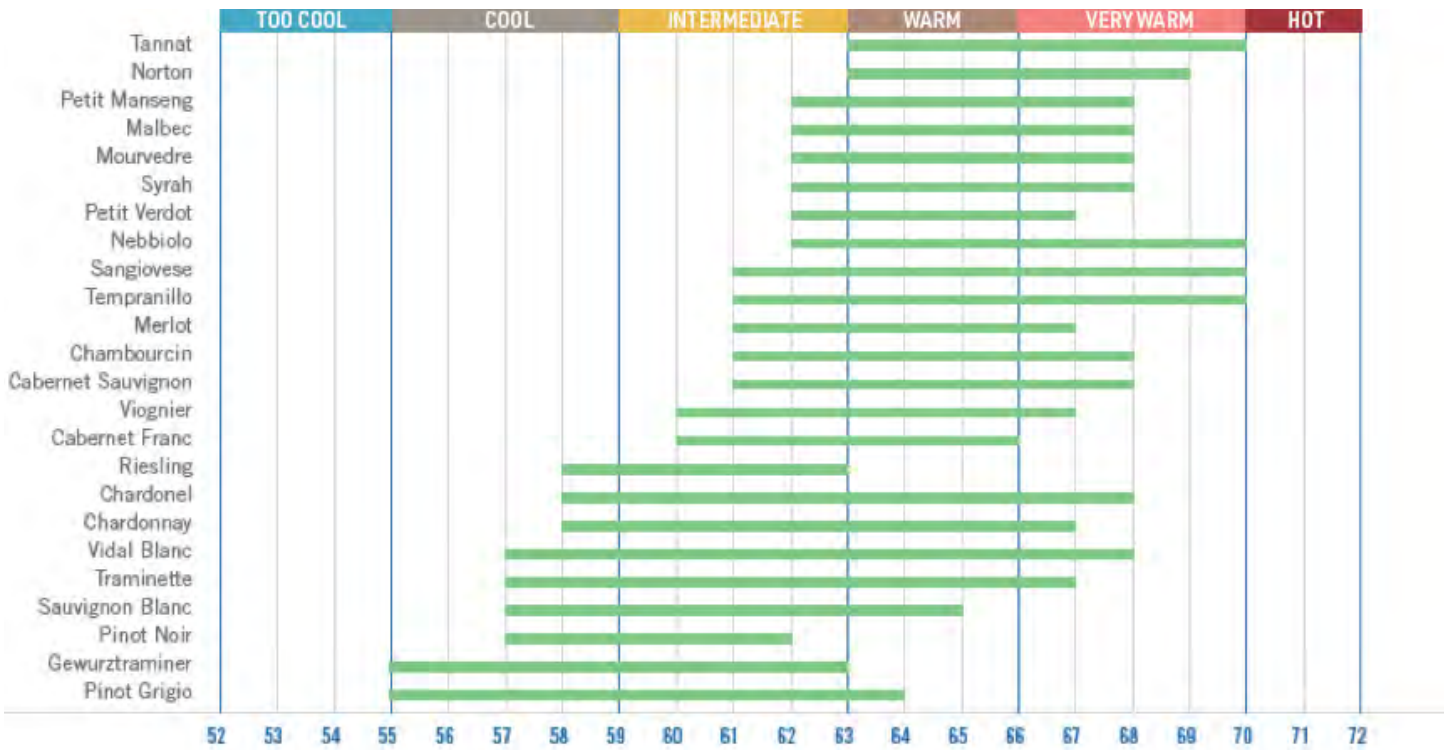
\*Estimated actual total accounts for a minimum of 626 total acres unreported from 98 vineyard non-respondents and 1,028 additional tons processed by 102 non-responding winery operations. These estimates were calculated based on existing industry data and knowledge.

## 2021 VINIFERA PLANTINGS





# VARIETALS AND GROWING SEASON TEMPERATURE



- PART TWO

An aerial photograph of a vineyard. The rows of grapevines are arranged in a grid pattern, with a winding dirt path cutting through the center. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning, with long shadows cast across the vines. The colors range from deep green to golden yellow.

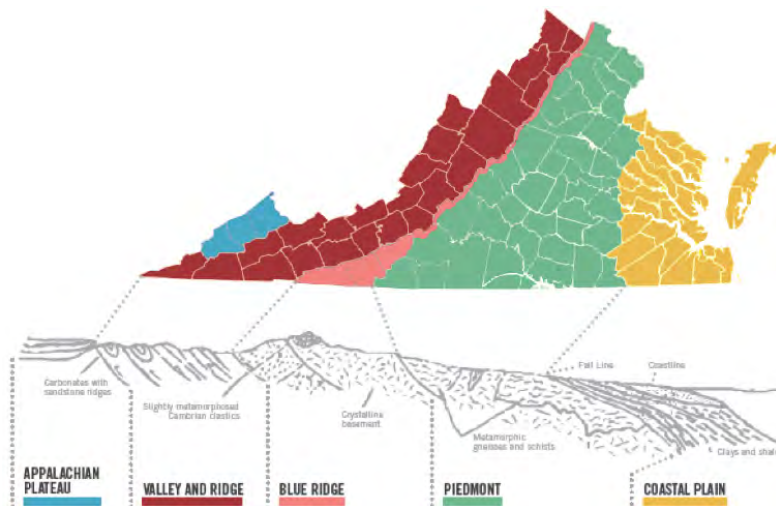
## A shifting **landscape**

Virginia is home to five major physiographic regions that range from zero to 5,729 feet in elevation. Within these distinct geological regions, parent material for Virginia's soils ranges from sedimentary to metamorphic rocks.



# GEOLOGIC REGIONS

Colonial Virginians recognized the importance of elevation in their farming activities. They advocated the planting of frost-sensitive fruits and vegetables in areas that provide cold air drainage – a practice that is still followed by Virginia wine growers.





# VIRGINIA REGIONS

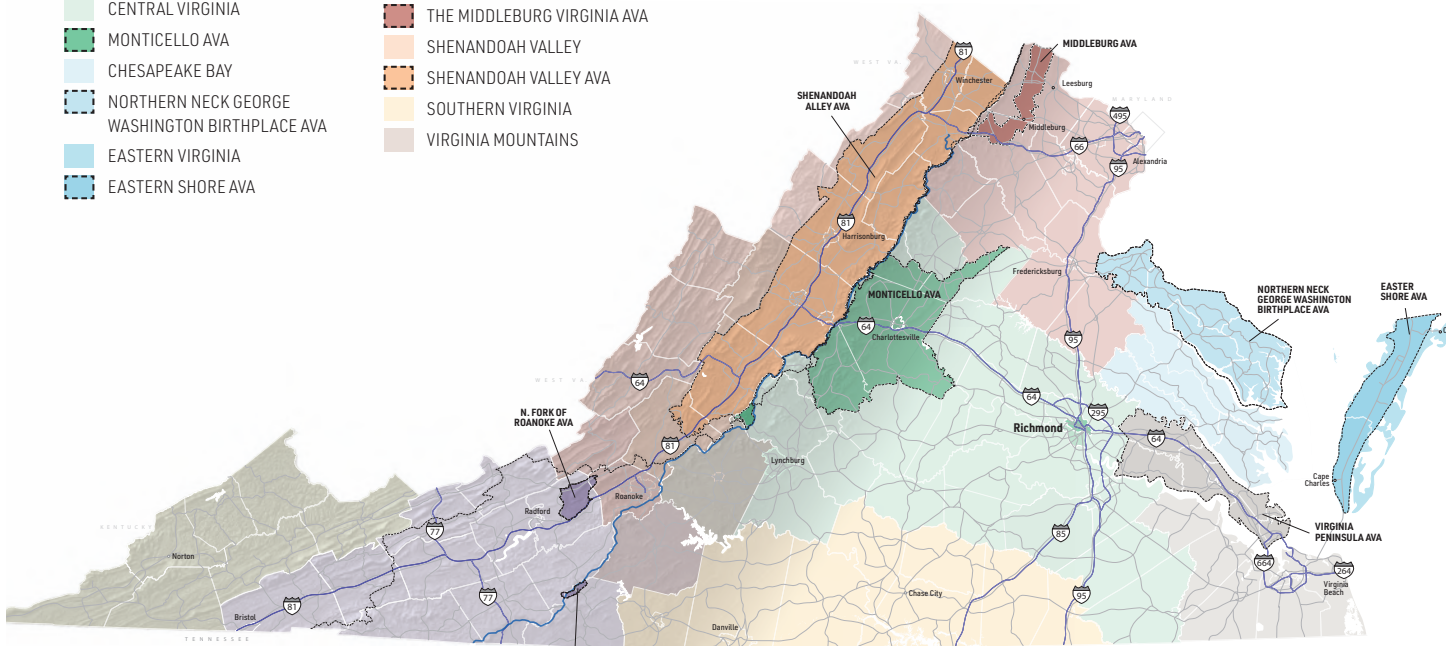
Over 5,000 acres of grapes span the state, with new plantings each year. More than 30 types of grapes grown across 10 regions and within 8 AVAs, due in large part to a variety of different growing conditions. There is an even split between red and white grape production. The majority of vines are planted in Northern and Central Virginia, although high-quality wines can be found throughout the entire state.

## 10 REGIONS

## 8 AVAS

- BLUE RIDGE
- THE NORTH FORK OF ROANOKE AVA
- THE ROCKY KNOB AVA
- CENTRAL VIRGINIA
- MONTICELLO AVA
- CHESAPEAKE BAY
- NORTHERN NECK GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE AVA
- EASTERN VIRGINIA
- EASTERN SHORE AVA

- HAMPTON ROADS
- VIRGINIA PENINSULA AVA
- HEART OF APPALACHIA
- NORTHERN VIRGINIA
- THE MIDDLEBURG VIRGINIA AVA
- SHENANDOAH VALLEY
- SHENANDOAH VALLEY AVA
- SOUTHERN VIRGINIA
- VIRGINIA MOUNTAINS





# VIRGINIA AVAS

AVA (American Viticultural Area) is a grape-growing region that is defined by its geographic features which affect the type and style of the wine it produces. Wineries in the area can identify themselves as being in the AVA if their wines are made from a minimum of 85% of grapes grown in the area.

## **George Washington Birthplace AVA**

The Northern Neck George Washington Birthplace AVA includes Westmoreland, King George, Northumberland, Lancaster and Richmond counties. Among its wines: Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Vidal Blanc and Chambourcin.

## **Middleburg AVA**

The Middleburg Virginia AVA is located 50 miles west of Washington, DC, and encompasses the Town of Middleburg. The AVA is bounded by the Potomac River to the north and mountains to the east, south and west. The viticultural area covers approximately 190 square miles and contains 229 acres of commercial vineyards, 24 wineries and 8 vineyards.

## **Monticello AVA**

The Monticello AVA is in the central Piedmont area. The area is nestled along the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains and encompasses the small ridge known as Southwest Mountain. It is historic in that it is home to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, where Jefferson spent years trying to grow European grape varieties.

## **The North Fork of Roanoke AVA**

The North Fork of Roanoke AVA is on the eastern slopes of the Allegheny Mountains in Roanoke and Montgomery counties. Its wines include Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Norton and many others.

# AVAS

## (CONT.)

### **The Rocky Knob AVA**

The Rocky Knob AVA is located in Floyd and Patrick counties on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The area is located on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains in southwestern Virginia near the towns of Woolwine and Meadows of Dan and astride the Blue Ridge Parkway. The soil is primarily loam and gravel and is well drained.

### **The Shenandoah Valley AVA**

The Shenandoah Valley AVA is located in Frederick, Clarke, Warren, Shenandoah, Page, Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Botetourt and Amherst counties in Virginia, and Berkeley and Jefferson counties in West Virginia. It is bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Appalachian and Allegheny Plateaus to the west. It is located within the Ridge and Valley region and is a portion of the Great Appalachian Valley.

### **Virginia's Eastern Shore AVA**

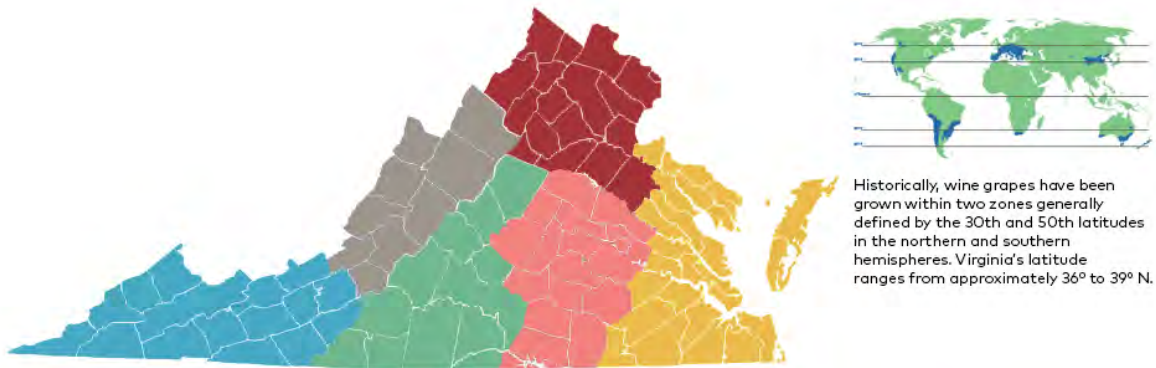
Virginia's Eastern Shore AVA is located on the southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula. The area is defined by the Chesapeake Bay on one side and the ocean on the other. It benefits from breezes from the bay and the sandy soil of the area.

### **The Virginia Peninsula AVA**

Virginia's newest AVA incorporates a cradle of American history—Williamsburg. Bound by the James and York River estuaries, the narrow AVA runs about 50 miles in length, toward Richmond, and varies from 5 to 15 miles in width. A maritime influence moderates the average low and high temperatures. The soil is sedimentary in nature.

# VIRGINIA CLIMATE

Virginia's generally hospitable macroclimate allows us to grow a range of varieties that might be unsuited to colder winter temperatures or hotter growing season temperatures. Consumers benefit by having a range of varietal wines and blends to choose from.

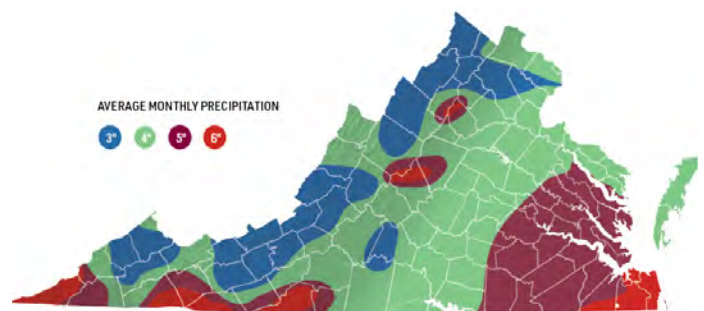


Historically, wine grapes have been grown within two zones generally defined by the 30th and 50th latitudes in the northern and southern hemispheres. Virginia's latitude ranges from approximately 36° to 39° N.

	SOUTHWESTERN MOUNTAIN	CENTRAL MOUNTAIN	NORTHERN	WESTERN PIEDMONT	EASTERN PIEDMONT	TIDEWATER
RAINFALL (INCHES)	41	39	43	45	45	45
GROWING SEASON LENGTH (FROST FREE DAYS)	155	158	189	188	187	199
AVERAGE GROWING SEASON TEMP (°F)	62	64	66	66	66	68

## RAINFALL

Virginia is home to four unique precipitation areas. Rather than a winter-dominated rainfall pattern, as occurs in most wine grape-growing regions worldwide, Virginia's rainfall is generally evenly distributed throughout the year.





## RECENT VINTAGES

Unpredictability is a gift. Virginia's diverse landscape and varied conditions demand an attention to detail that has made our winemakers fluent in the language of their land. Our evolution as a wine region has stemmed from their uncanny ability to read the signs from the soil and follow what the fruit wants, year after year. In Virginia, every vintage is a new adventure, for wine producers and wine lovers alike.



## 2021

In discussion and review of the 2021 harvest, a vineyard manager from the Northern Virginia region summarized it best, sharing, "overall (this was) a pretty 'standard' Virginia vintage."

Several regions across the state experienced some late spring frosts but did not suffer complete losses. The season was generally hot and dry with several severe rain events. The yields seemed to be moderately light, but the quality of the fruit was high. Some varieties did max out on their ripening and overall sugar accumulation.

Downy mildew seemed to be present early and throughout the year but was mostly controllable. Powdery mildew was not nearly as damaging as years past, but it appeared later in the season after the heavy rains. The season was dryer than normal which helped keep things in check. A good and consistent spray program worked for most farms. There seems to have been a smaller yield than expected mid-season with several wineries reporting lower than expected tonnage at the crush pad.

By the Virginia Vineyards  
Association Board



## 2020

Virginia's 2020 season got off to an early budburst with one of the warmest months of March on record. This followed a generally benign winter, but March was followed by an unusually cold April and early May. Widespread frosts occurred on 15, 17 and 19 April, and again on 9 and 10 May. Damage was most severe and widespread in the southern and central piedmont, and well into the northern piedmont, particularly at lower elevations.

What many feared would be an oversupply of fruit in a market depressed by the pandemic, turned into a much leaner and more sought-after crop. The 2020 growing season was cooler than the previous two as measured by heat summation from April through October. July was warmer, and in many cases, much drier than the previous two Julys. The Atlantic produced 30 named tropical storms in 2020, 13 of which reached hurricane strength, and 10 of which brought rain and, in some cases, tornadoes. Most of this precipitation fell in the southern piedmont and southeast Virginia. Richmond saw over 14 inches of rain from Isaias in early August, while the far southwest and northern Shenandoah Valley remained relatively dry. It is always difficult to generalize about fruit quality across the expanse of Virginia's vineyards. Fruit that escaped spring frosts and was carefully managed over the summer months was often of high quality, although titratable acidity was somewhat elevated in cases.

By Dr. Tony Wolf, Virginia Tech



## 2019

Perhaps it's the stark contrast to 2018, but the 2019 season and vintage will be remembered as one of the easier that we've had in recent memory. That's not to say it was without issues, but most were tolerable.

Water-logged soil and poor winter acclimation conditions in the fall of 2018 likely contributed to some localized winter injury of cold-tender vines observed in the 2019 season. An Arctic vortex clipped northern Virginia at the end of January 2019, dropping temperatures close to 0 degrees (F). Spring was undramatic and notable for the lack of frost and the advent of much drier weather conditions, which generally persisted for the summer. Accumulated heat units, a summation of growing season heat, were slightly greater in 2019 than in 2018, and the drier weather of 2019 helped advance harvest, with grapes destined for sparkling and rosé being harvested as early as 10 August. Growers collectively exhaled in relief as Hurricane Dorian first menaced then veered northeast from Virginia in early September, sparing all but the southeast corner of the Commonwealth.

Grape crop yields were up, leaving some growers scrambling to find a home for under-estimated crops. It will take some time to judge the quality of wines coming from the 2019 season, but if the initial results are any indication, it should be a stellar vintage.

By Dr. Tony Wolf, Virginia Tech



## 2018

For dozens of towns and cities throughout Virginia, 2018 was the rainiest year on record. The growing season was characterized by unusually high amounts of rain throughout the state. Almost all of the state had a precipitation surplus in 2018 and several areas along the Blue Ridge Mountains saw more than 80 inches of precipitation during the year. In addition, several hurricanes and tornadoes affected Virginia, bringing flooding and wind damage and compounded an already wet year. Many growers harvested early.

The unusually high amount of rainfall throughout the year caused the worst harvests on record for many growers across the state. Overall yields decreased 35% compared to 2017 and were down 20% from 2016. Growers self-reported 1,763 tons of grapes lost to weather; the actual decrease in yield may be larger than reported as some growers stated they did not report because they lost all or nearly all their crop due to adverse weather.





## 2017

Virginia's 2017 season was characterized by unusually high temperatures. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Virginia's statewide temperate average was 57.3 degrees – making 2017 the state's fourth-warmest year since 1895. Overall, Virginia's precipitation was a bit lower than average causing occasional flare-ups of dry conditions across the state which also contributed to a bumper crop statewide.

Yield per acre was 23% higher than for 2016. Part of this increase was due to low yields last year; however 2017 reported yields were also 14% higher than 2015, a near-normal year. The unusually high temperatures and lower than average precipitation throughout the year gave bountiful harvests to many growers across the state.



## 2016

The year began with a challenging winter, marked by significant snowfall and low temperatures in January and February. Three solid weeks of late winter/early spring rains were followed by a late frost in the first and second weeks of April. The late frost was especially damaging to smaller growers, many of whom lost their entire crops for the year. A hotter-than-usual summer, especially in late July and early August, presented growers with another set of challenges, especially as rain was intense, but infrequent, during this period.

A late start to winter, and an overall warmer-than-usual November and December, extended the time available for harvest, with many growers not completing their harvest before the end of November. Cold weather didn't arrive until the second week of December, when temperatures stayed consistently below freezing for the first time in the 2016 season.



## 2015

The 2015 season followed a generally benign winter, despite some temperatures around 0°F in early January and again in the 17-20 February 2015 periods. While seasons since 2000 have trended toward longer growing seasons and earlier budburst, the 2015 budburst and bloom dates were more typical of 20 years ago. There were no reports of widespread spring frost. Abundant rains from May through early July kept growers busy with disease management and grapevine canopy management chores such as shoot-hedging and selective leaf thinning. Much of July through late September was unusually dry, while temperatures during this late-summer period were very close to 10-year means, resulting in very good grape-ripening conditions.

Fortunately, much of the state's earlier-ripening varieties had been harvested prior to a period of very rainy weather from 29 September to 4 October, which coincided with the offshore passage of Hurricane Joaquin and additional tropical moisture from a stalled low pressure system hanging over the Carolinas. Although this timing was unfortunate, temperatures were cold enough to limit the damage from the excess moisture. Harvest proceeded again through a fairly dry October and the initial indications are quite positive in terms of both the quality and quantity of the 2015 vintage.



## THE VIRGINIA WINE BOARD

The Virginia wine industry is fortunate to have enthusiastic support throughout the state government.

Created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1984 as part of Virginia's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Wine Board promotes the interests of vineyards and wineries in the Commonwealth through research, education and marketing.

The Board fulfills the following duties.

- Receives funding from the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund and dispenses it for wine-related projects and initiatives.
- Contracts research to improve viticultural and enological practices in the Virginia wine industry.
- Promotes education about and appreciation for Virginia wines.
- Promotes the growing of wine grapes and wine production throughout the Commonwealth.

- Disseminates information on wine and viticultural topics.
- Contracts marketing, advertising and other programs that promote the growth of the state's wine industry and the enjoyment of Virginia wines.
- Collaborates with state, regional, national, and international organizations on their work related to Virginia's wine industry.

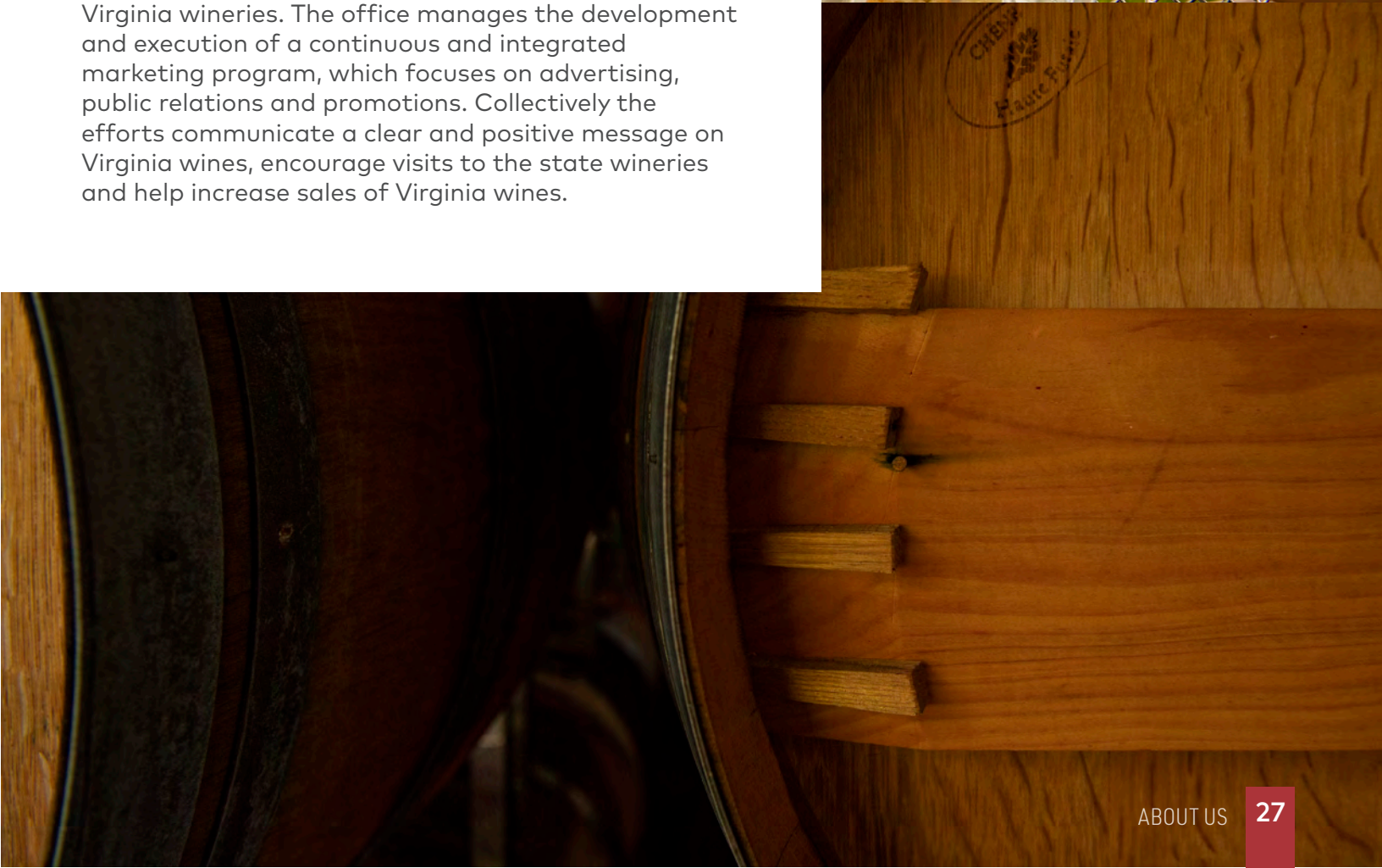
The Board consists of 10 members, nine of whom have voting privileges, all appointed by Virginia's governor for four-year terms. Three of the Board members are growers and six of which represent wineries. Approximately two-thirds of the Board's budget goes towards education and marketing, with the remaining third spent on wine-related research.

The Board is funded by an industry excise tax, with funds collected from the wine industry itself.



# THE VIRGINIA WINE BOARD **MARKETING OFFICE**

Funded through the Virginia Wine Board, the Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office handles the board's education and marketing efforts on behalf of all Virginia wineries. The office manages the development and execution of a continuous and integrated marketing program, which focuses on advertising, public relations and promotions. Collectively the efforts communicate a clear and positive message on Virginia wines, encourage visits to the state wineries and help increase sales of Virginia wines.






## BIGGER THAN A DRINK

Nothing expresses a “sense of place” like well-made wine. But over time, the expectations of the marketplace have stifled the poetry in the vineyard.

Now, most American wine is owned by a handful of corporations pushing an expected product with no sense of place and no story to tell.

What’s happening here is bigger than a drink. It’s a way to reclaim our relationship with the land. It’s a celebration of identity and independence from predictability.

If you ask us, that’s worth raising a glass to.



If you take away anything from this press kit, we hope that it's this: Virginia wines have a sense of place, and they have a story to tell. What's happening here is bigger than a drink. It's a way to reclaim our relationship with the land. It's a celebration of identity and independence from the tyranny of sameness. If you ask us, that's worth raising a glass to.

## SO, HERE'S A TOAST:

To the curious and uncompromising  
Those with the grace be a student of their surroundings  
And the grit to follow their gut.

For more information:

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