

New AVA Proposed For Arizona

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The proposed Verde Valley American Viticultural Area in Arizona includes Yavapai College's vineyard. The 13-acre vineyard is mostly planted in southern European varieties, said Michael Pierce, Viticulture and Enology director at Yavapai College - Verde Campus. The college winery produces wine. Submitted photo courtesy of Patrick Coulie.

A group of Arizona vintners proposed the creation of a **third American Viticultural Area** in the Southwestern state, home to a growing wine industry.

The U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau last week posted the application for the new Verde Valley American Viticultural Area, a 200-square mile wine region in central Arizona about 100 miles north of Phoenix. The proposed AVA would include the cities of Jerome and Cottonwood--Jerome lies at 5,000 feet in altitude and Cottonwood, at about 3,300 feet.

There are about 20 pending AVA applications before the TTB, including the proposed Palos Verdes Peninsula AVA in Los Angeles, Long Valley-Lake County AVA in Lake County and Ulupalakua AVA in Maui. Altogether, there are 246 established AVAs in the United States, including 139 in California, according to the TTB.

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If approved the Verde Valley American AVA would be Arizona's third wine region recognized by the TTB. The other two established AVAs in Arizona are: Sonoita south of Tucson and Willcox in southeastern Arizona. Sonoita was recognized in 1984 and Willcox in 2016.

The new AVA would be a recognition of Arizona's growing wine industry and showcase its geographic diversity and the uniqueness of Verde Valley wines, winery representatives said recently.

"It helps further spread the word," said Kevin Grubb, general manager at Arizona Stronghold Vineyards in Cottonwood. The winery produces wine with fruit from Willcox but has plans to plant a vineyard in the proposed Verde Valley AVA.

If approved, the Verde Valley AVA would include two dozen vineyards and 11 wineries, including Yavapai College, which operates a teaching winery and a 13-acre vineyard.

As of 2016, growers in the proposed Verde Valley AVA farmed about 125 acres, according to a survey completed for the application. More than 80 percent of the crop was red varieties, including Syrah, Petite Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese, and Zinfandel. The top white varieties included Malvasia Bianca, Viognier, Chardonnay and Vermentino.

Members of the Valle Verde Wine Consortium started working on the application three years ago, said **Daniel Wood**, who owns **Heart Wood Cellars with wife Valerie**. "I think it was a good team building exercise," said Daniel Wood, whose assignments included the history of Valley Verde.

The wine industry in Arizona shut down in 1914 – five years before the Prohibition. Wine production resumed in the 1980s. There were nine bonded wineries statewide as of 2000, according to the application. There were 84 bonded wineries in Arizona as of 2017, according to the application proponents of the Verde Valley AVA sent to the TTB.

The TTB takes comments on the proposed Verde Valley AVA through April 28 at: <https://bit.ly/2TGA11b>