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OCTOBER 2021



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Crossing the Piquette Line

A humble European vineyard workers' drink fizzes up in the U.S.

Many modern culinary staples can trace their roots to simple countryside recipes, and the latest wine trend, piquette, is no exception.

The fizzy, low-alcohol wine derivative has been a staple for vineyard workers throughout Europe for centuries. It begins with the grape skins, or pomace, that are left over after the fruit is pressed for wine. Vintners add water back to the pulp to kick-start a natural yeast fermentation, and then press the skins a second time. The resulting funky, steeped grape juice is kind of like wine tea.

"It's definitely an acquired taste," says Dave Cho of Oregon's CHO Wines. "If you're looking for a classic representation of wine, this isn't it. It's a rustic, farmworker's drink that was served during the day's lunch."

There are several reasons for piquette's stateside resurgence. First, corresponding with current trends, it's sustainable. "I'm really excited about the idea of getting extra mileage out of our grapes, making tasty drinks, and reducing waste," says Dave Potter of Municipal Winemakers in Santa Barbara.

Second, while there are strict rules surrounding the production of many fine wines—encompassing grape varieties,



Above: piquette producers Dave and Lois Cho in Oregon's Willamette Valley

barrel aging, and production techniques—making piquette is a free-for-all. Potter's first piquette, which he made after reading about the beverage in 2019, was a mead hybrid that used local honey. He has also expanded what he's learned from piquette production, rehydrating pressed grape skins but blocking fermentation to make non-alcoholic drinks that maintain a sense of terroir.

For his part, Cho noticed during harvest how much high-quality juice was

left in the grapes after they were gently pressed for sparkling wine. The Korean-American winemaker now produces three different sparkling wines from single-vineyard Willamette Valley pinot noir—a *méthode champenoise* blanc de noirs, an unfiltered *pétillant-naturel*, and a piquette from the leftovers.

"We consider it a wine drink rather than wine," Cho says. "Most folks have a firm take on piquette: Either you love it or you don't."

Four to Try

2020 MAXIMUS PIQUETTE, TWO SHEPHERDS, SONOMA COUNTY

Fans of kombucha or gose beers will enjoy this canned sparkler made from carbonic Carignan grapes. \$7 for 375 ml, twoshepherds.com



PIQ-A-GLOU, MUNICIPAL WINEMAKERS, SANTA BARBARA

With its ruby color (courtesy of syrah skins), this light, sour drink could easily be mistaken for red wine. \$15 for 500 ml, municipalwinemakers.com



2020 LAUREL VINEYARD PIQUE ME PIQUETTE, CHO WINES, WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OREGON

This elegant expression of pinot noir grapes tastes like a dry French cider. \$20, getchowines.com



2020 PIQUETTE!, TROON VINEYARD, APPLIGATE VALLEY, OREGON

Clocking in at 10.5 percent ABV, this strong piquette is made from a blend that includes vermentino and roussanne. \$25, troonvineyard.com

Courtesy of CHO Wines (portrait)



Electric Blue

Circling Crater Lake in a hybrid Polestar 1



Greg Jenkins/Unsplash (Crater Lake); Engin Akyurt/Unsplash (map background)

I feel a bit like a celebrity when I check out of **The Gordon Hotel**, an art-centric modern property in downtown Eugene, Oregon, and make my way to my car. Everyone is staring, and for good reason: I'm driving a gray Polestar 1 coupe, which is seen in the wild nearly as infrequently as Oregon's endangered gray wolf.

Today, my cousin and I are heading into the mountains, where a chill can strike even in summer, so we make a quick stop for activewear (Nike by Eugene) and sweaters (Pendleton

Woolen Mills) at the **5th Street Public Market**. Is "sporty lumberjack" a look? Apparently it is in the Pacific Northwest...

We keep our browsing to a minimum, though, as we have a two-hour climb through the Cascades ahead of us. Our destination, high in the mountains 120 miles to the southeast, is **Crater Lake National Park**. The lake that gives the

park its name is sunk into a collapsed volcano top, and at 1,943 feet it's the deepest one in the U.S. The brilliant blue water glistens like a

Wizard Island, in the middle of the 20-plus-square-mile Crater Lake

THE DRIVE



Ceylon sapphire, and it's hard to imagine that such a serene setting was the result of a violent eruption, followed by hundreds of years of the caldera filling with rain and snow. We circumnavigate the 33-mile Rim Drive, stopping here and there to peer down steep shale cliffs at the water—and to snap a few photos of my cousin for his dating profile.

I hand my cousin the keys for the next leg of the journey, because I'm eager to try some wine. Southern Oregon is home to around 150 producers, growing more than 70 varietals amid numerous microclimates. First on our list is Medford's **Dancin Vineyards**, where we pair Barbera and Sangiovese with crisp pizzas

Clockwise from top left: the lobby of the Ashland Springs Hotel; Dancin Vineyards; a mushroom dish at Alchemy Restaurant and Bar

and mushrooms stuffed with sausage. Then it's on to **Wooldridge Creek Winery**, just south of Grants Pass; since this is the state's first combined winery/creamery, we can't help but order a platter of house-made cheese and charcuterie.

Our final destination is the quaint downtown of Ashland, which is best known for hosting the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. We didn't snag tickets to a show this time, but we do a bit of shopping (**Diana's Records**, **Bloomsbury Books**) on the nostalgia-inspiring Main Street before popping into **Alchemy Restaurant and Bar** for a dinner of steak tartare, harissa-seared scallops, and savory porcini flan.

It's time to call it a night, and while there's no turndown service at the **Ashland Springs Hotel**, I do have a stash of chocolate from Central Point's **Lillie Belle Farms** for one final bite. The Bard wrote that parting is such sweet sorrow—but for tonight I'll focus on the sweet part.



THE CAR

2021 Polestar 1

The halo car launching Volvo's new luxury performance electric brand, the Polestar 1 combines Porsche power with Prius efficiency. The longest-range hybrid on the market, this grand touring coupe goes from zero to 60 mph in four seconds, and it's capable of traveling 52 miles in pure electric mode on a single charge. Package all that in a sleek carbon-fiber body, and you have a vehicle that will undoubtedly attract attention—especially since there are only 1,500 of them in the world. What's more, future Polestar models will be entirely electric, meaning this one will be a truly coveted collector's item.

From \$155,000, polestar.com

