

A Road Less Traveled Wild Wines Forges Its Own Path

BY CHARLES FISCHMAN



CARLA DAVID OF WILD WINES PHOTO COURTESY OF WILD WINES

Carla David, the owner and winemaker of Wild Wines in the Applegate Valley, does not follow trails. She forages in wild lands for Oregon grape berries or elderberries. She drifts through meadows gathering dandelion flowers. And, although her winery is on the Applegate Valley Wine Trail, she produces wines far different from the other seventeen wineries in the Valley—berry, flower, and fruit wines from aronia to rosehips to peach.

“I couldn’t help myself,” David says about choosing to make wine from plants other than *vitis vinifera* (the common wine grape). “I was always trying to find new ways to use plants” which she collected on her frequent outdoor adventures. The combination of creating healthy beverages with the conviviality of sharing wine with family and friends appealed to David and inspired Wild Wines.

Visitors to Wild Wines’ straw-bale construction tasting room and on-site farm will not find undulating acres of grapevines. Since 2008, David has established raspberry, elderberry, and aronia berry crops for producing some of her fruit wines. She pur-

chases other fruit from organic farms in the valley and gathers the rest of her ingredients on expeditions to nearby public lands.

“Wild-harvesting can be tricky business,” notes David. “It requires me to tune in with the seasons and cycles and pay attention to the weather.” For example, “Dandelions are most abundant in spring, when it could be raining or sunny on any given day. I don’t harvest them wet, because their flavor/pollen content is diminished.” Despite such challenges, David only selects wild or organically grown fruit and flowers for her wines and processes it all by hand before fermentation and aging.

What David does have in common with her fellow winemakers in the Applegate Valley is the dedication to craft and resulting quality of the wine. Visitors participating in Applegate Valley’s recent “Uncorked” event brightened at their first sips of the Pear and Blueberry wines David was pouring. A taste of the Rosehips delivered hints of brandy and warmth. The crisp and dry wines—eleven varieties to try—deliver both the essence of their unique ingredients and of Carla David’s care and passion. 🍷