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**CHEHALEM MOUNTAINS BECOMES OREGON'S
FIFTEENTH AMERICAN VITICULTURAL AREA**

*Approval concludes five-year process recognizing six new AVAs
in the north Willamette Valley*

NEWBERG, OR. – December 27, 2006 – Effective today, Oregon wineries are able to further define the origin of their wines with the official recognition of the new Chehalem Mountains American Viticultural Area (AVA) by the US Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). Wines made from grapes grown within the geographical boundaries of the Chehalem Mountains AVA may now carry that designation on their label.

The drive for a Chehalem (pronounced "Sha-HAY-lum") Mountains AVA was carried out by a small group led by veteran Oregon wine industry leader David Adelsheim, who established Adelsheim Vineyard in 1971. "Until now, we have only been able to list the Willamette Valley as our origin, but the sprawling Valley has hugely diverse growing conditions, which result in significantly different wines," said Adelsheim. "We are very pleased that we can now pinpoint where the grapes are grown on our labels. It's an important step in educating consumers on our exceptional region and the characteristics suggested in a wine from the Chehalem Mountains."

"The Chehalem Mountains is one of many unique growing regions in the Willamette Valley and throughout the state of Oregon," confirms Ted Farthing, executive director of the Oregon Wine Board. "This new AVA allows Oregon wineries and vineyards within the Chehalem Mountains to further distinguish themselves in the marketplace, and gives consumers even more information to help them consider which Oregon wines they might enjoy most."

Located approximately 19 miles southwest of Portland, the new AVA is home to 31 wineries and encompasses 68,265 acres of which more than 1,600 are planted to wine grapes in over 100 vineyards. The region spans portions of Clackamas, Yamhill and Washington counties, and stretches 20 miles from the outskirts of Wilsonville in the southeast, past Sherwood and Newberg almost to Forest Grove in the northwest.

To achieve AVA status, the TTB requires petitioners to provide evidence about the proposed boundaries and growing conditions. The Chehalem Mountains are a single uplifted landmass with spurs, mountains and ridges such as Ribbon Ridge, Parrott Mountain and Bald Peak, which, at 1,663 feet above sea level, is the highest point within the Willamette Valley. This fluctuating topography means that growing conditions vary considerably, resulting in grape ripening which can differ by as much as three weeks. "Defining the unique growing conditions of this specific region was a challenge," admits Dick Ponzi of Ponzi Vineyards, a member of the group that submitted the petition. "Yes, our climate and soil combinations differ from the surrounding valley and other AVAs, but there are still many contrasts within the mountains themselves."

Establishing precisely where the mountains stopped and the valley floor began was easier in some areas than others. Several locations such as the foot of Ribbon Ridge (itself an AVA within the Chehalem Mountains AVA) showed clear transitions. But elsewhere, particularly on

the gentle northern slopes of the mountains, the change was indicated only by soil type. The topographic 200-foot contour line was ultimately chosen as the main defining boundary.

Meeting regularly in comparative tasting panels, the petitioners determined that Chehalem Mountains wines shared several common characteristics such as intensity of fruit flavors, often with a certain spiciness, and balanced tannins. The profiles are most evident in the Pinot noirs, which, depending on soil type and meso-climate, can be elegant and spicy with red fruit, or deep and firmly structured with black fruit tones.

Pinot noir is the predominant grape variety in the Chehalem Mountains. Pinot gris and Chardonnay are also widely grown and, to a lesser extent, Pinot blanc and Riesling.

The AVA approval is the final result of a collaborative process started in 2001, when north Willamette Valley winegrowers started meeting to define six new AVAs in the most densely planted of Oregon's wine growing areas. The TTB approved AVA petitions for nearby Dundee Hills, Yamhill-Carlton District, McMinnville, Ribbon Ridge and Eola-Amity Hills as early as 2004.

Differentiating characteristics for the Chehalem Mountains AVA:

Soils: There are three distinct soil types: brown marine sedimentary soils laid down under the ocean 20 million years ago; deep red basaltic soils derived from 13 million year-old lava flows; and gray ice age loess soils blown onto the north side of the mountains in the last million years.

Elevation: Most vineyards lie between 200 and 1000 feet.

Climate: Temperatures vary within this region more than any other in the Willamette Valley because of the significant variations in elevation and exposure. Annual precipitation ranges from 37 inches in the lower elevations to almost 60 inches at the highest elevation.

Wine Industry: There are more vineyards and wineries within this AVA than within any of the others newly recognized. But the vineyards tend to be smaller (12.9 acres is the average) and just 2% of the AVA is planted to grapes, partially because the AVA is so large.

Wineries in the Chehalem Mountains are formalizing an association to spread the story of their location and geography with its important influences on wine style and the common traits of their wines. By working together to market their AVA they intend to bring their message to writers, retailers, restaurateurs, and consumers.

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For a detailed map of all 15 Oregon AVAs, [click here to launch a PDF.](#)