



VIC
POULOS

Oregon excels at pinots — gris and noir

If you're a casual wine drinker, there's probably only one state that comes to mind when you think of American wine — California. But if you're the type of wine drinker who sees California on a bottle and decides it will be good enough, you're missing out on what other states have to offer — especially Oregon.

All of the things that make California great for grape growing make Oregon great, too. There are now more than 450 wineries in Oregon and much of the tourism and production is in and around the Yamhill Valley southwest of Portland.

Oregon has been producing wine since the 1840s, when the Oregon Territory was settled, but significant commercial winemaking in Oregon didn't ramp up until the 1960s. Historical records indicate grapes were first planted in the Oregon Territory in 1847 with the first winery opening in 1850 in Jacksonville. In 1904, according to records, an Oregon winemaker won a major prize at the St. Louis State Fair, a really big deal at the time.

Wine production came to an abrupt stop in the United States during Prohibition, and like other states, the Oregon wine industry lay dormant for 30 years after Prohibition was repealed. In the 1970s, however, out-of-state winemakers moved in and began putting the industry together. The state's land-use laws had long prevented rural hillside from being turned into housing tracts, thus preserving significant pieces of land that were ideal for vineyards.

By the 1990s, the state legislature had enacted several new laws designed to promote winemaking and wine distribution, and Oregon stood out in "green" winemaking, leading the global wine industry in more environmentally friendly practices.

So what kinds of wine should you drink from Oregon? While vineyards across Oregon produce many different varieties, the Beaver state is best known for its pinot gris and pinot noir. Pinot noirs from the Willamette Valley have received the most critical acclaim from wine connoisseurs, and Oregon has quickly become regarded as one of the premier pinot-producing regions in the world.

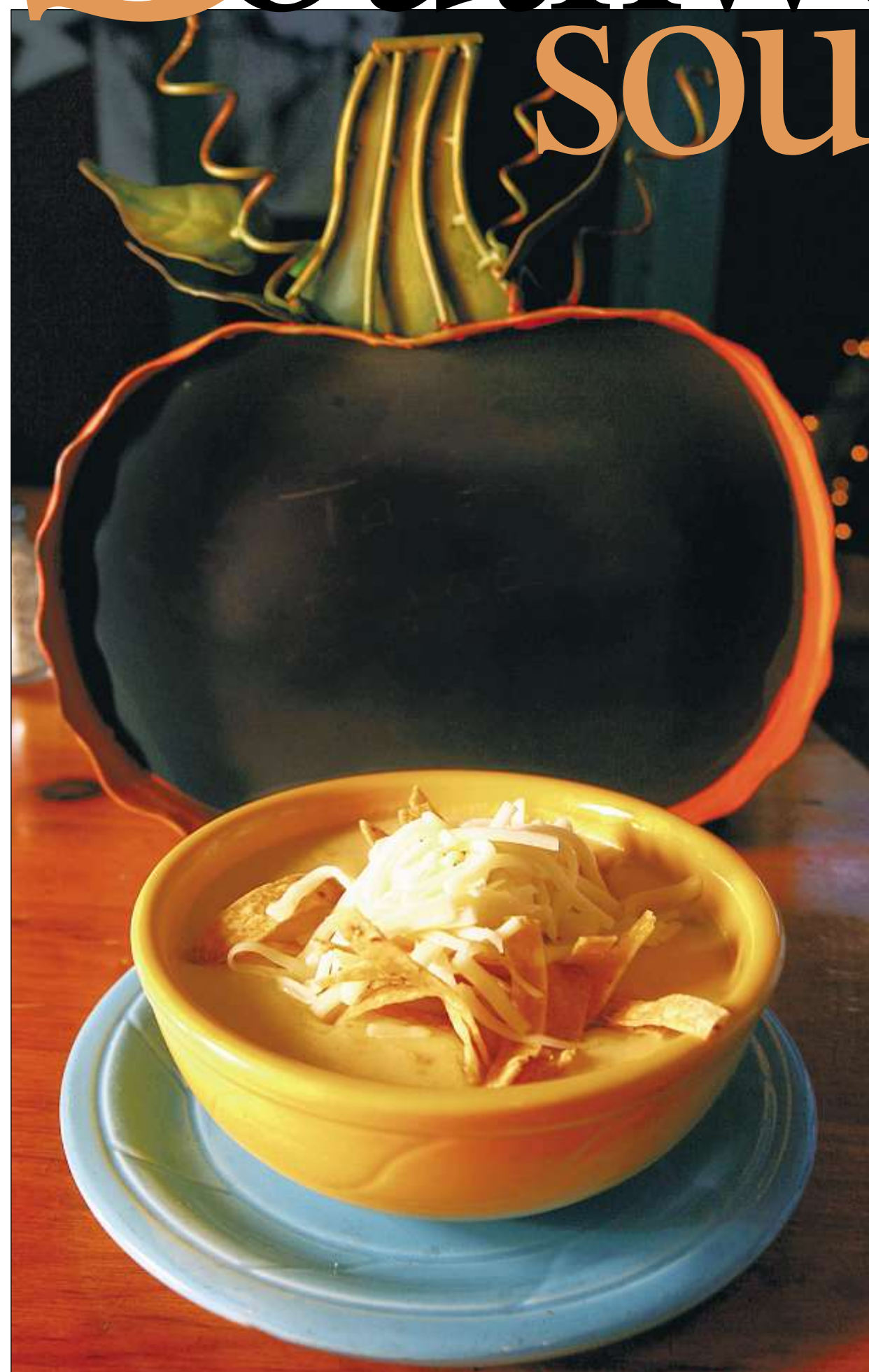
Pinot noir and pinot gris account for about 9,000 acres of vines, while Oregon's next three most popularly grown varieties, chardonnay, riesling and merlot, account for a combined total of about 2,000 acres. Other wines with significant production in Oregon include cabernet sauvignon, gewürztraminer, Müller-Thurgau, pinot blanc, sauvignon blanc, semillon and syrah.

As Oregon's wine region has improved, related tourism has also increased dramatically. Onsite sales are becoming an increasingly important part of the business of Oregon wine-

Please see **Wine 2D**

Flavors of cilantro, chipotle and cheese take the edge off autumn's approaching chill

Southwest soups



Potato and green chile soup from Jaxon's in El Paso uses the flavors of the Southwest.

VICTOR CALZADA / EL PASO TIMES

By Victor R. Martinez
EL PASO TIMES

The warm flavors of cilantro, avocado and chipotle chile can soothe anyone on a chilly day.

As will fresh jalapeño, long green roasted chile, potatoes and shredded Monterey Jack cheese.

"I love soup," Melissa Reyes-Salas said while having a bowl of chicken tortilla soup. "It really doesn't matter what season, either. But yes, soups do taste better when it gets cold outside."

- Recipes**
- ▶ Jaxon's Potato and Green Chile Soup
 - ▶ Caldillo
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When desperate, Reyes-Salas has a well-stocked pantry of the canned varieties of Campbell's and Progresso. "When I go to restaurants, the first thing I look for is the type of soups they carry," she said.

"And when I'm home, I make a caldo de res or, of course, chicken soup."

Unique, savory and rich soups and stews such as tortilla soup, caldillo and caldo de res have become Southwestern staples and El Paso favorites in the fall and winter months.

"People on the East Coast, where it freezes every season, have their New England clam chowder, lobster bisque and their grilled corn chowder," said Christopher Maly, a New England transplant who has been living in El Paso for 14 years.

"Do I miss those chowders and bisque? Of course, but I've learned to appreciate the flavors the Southwest has to offer."

Maly said it's difficult to find fresh ingredients to make his own clam chowder or lobster bisque, so he improvises.

"I do what I can," he said, laughing. "It's not like back home, but then again, you can't find good caldo de res out there, either."

Manuel Enriquez, the manager at Jaxon's Restaurant and Brewing Co. at 1135 Airway, said El Pasoans have plenty of delicious options when it

Please see **Soup 2D**

Crackers great with cheese and toppings — or even bare

On a recent visit to Sprouts (the former Sun Harvest on Mesa Street), I was delighted to discover a full assortment of 34° Crispbreads. These ultra-thin, waferlike crackers garnered a top award at the NASFT Fancy Food Show and were created by Craig Lieberman in Colorado as "the perfect companion to the world's favorite cheeses." Asked about the 34° name, Lieberman explained it was the latitude of Sydney, Australia, where he first tasted a similar cracker.

The six varieties of 34°



RUTH
TABER

Crispbread (natural, sesame, cracked pepper, rosemary, lemon zest and whole grain) are discreetly flavored, and enhance toppings — cheese, veggie, fish or meat spreads.

They're even delicious without any topping — almost addicting — and it's nice to know that nine of these crunchy crackers contain only 35 calories and no fat or oil.

To make things easier for the busy host, each box suggests pairings for foods. I topped



34° Crispbreads come in six flavors.

Rosemary Crispbread with a thin slice of English cucumber, a bit of guacamole and a garnish of quartered cherry tomatoes and chives. Easy, attractive and mmm good! The boxes can be found near the cheese selections and sell for \$3.99 each.

Just in time for September's

National Rice Month, Rice n Simple, a new, microwavable pre-cooked rice and sauce dish in its own serving tray, made its debut at my local Albertsons. Ready to serve in about a minute, use it as a side dish or add leftover veggies, meat, etc., for a main course. Each shelf-stable box (no refrigeration needed) contains a sauce packet to stir into the rice after microwaving. Choose Shoyu (soy sauce), Shitake (Asian mushrooms) or Teriyaki (sweet soy sauce) to stir into the premium whole grain Jasmine rice.

These products are great for quick prep after a busy day at work or for singles and seniors who don't relish long hours in

the kitchen.

I added leftover chicken and vegetables to the shitake sauce rice and the tasty dish was more than enough for two people. I sautéed raw shrimp for about three minutes in olive oil with a bit of minced onion and garlic and added them to the Teriyaki sauce rice with kudos from my feinschmecker husband. You can gild the lily by stirring in a pat of butter with each sauce packet. The boxes sell for \$2.99 each and with a 12-month shelf life make a nice addition to the pantry.

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