

# Will the 2020 Wine Vintage Go Extinct?

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Wineries across the West Coast are facing difficult decisions as the recent wildfires have caused what some are calling the single worst disaster the community has ever faced. After the fires subsided, California, Oregon, and Washington were blanketed with smoke that hovered for days. This smoke can permeate the skin of grapes, causing smoke taint, which releases compounds that leave wine undrinkable.

A study conducted by Western Australia's Department of Agriculture and Food found that even thirty minutes of heavy smoke exposure to grapes can cause smoke taint. Sometimes this taint can be detected immediately after harvest, but it can also occur months later during fermentation and barrel aging. It is also possible for the smoke taint to remain hidden until enzymes in the mouth cause the compounds to release as the wine is consumed. Some wineries are finding that it is more economical to forgo the 2020 vintage and not pick at all, while others are planning to divert smoke-exposed reds to rosé programs or release less-than-perfect wines under a lower-tiered label.

The loss of these grapes and subsequent wines could have an even larger financial impact on wineries already reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, which lead to the loss of restaurant and distribution sales. Winemakers are also reporting that some insurers are including exemptions for smoke taint in their policies. Not everyone can even afford crop insurance as factors such as wildfires are driving up premiums. Ultimately, it is too early to make any assumptions about the 2020 vintage and only time will tell how Pacific Northwest wineries will bounce back from the numerous challenges they are facing in 2020.

[AgriBusiness Trading Group](#), an affiliate of Peoples Company, has available for acquisition an elite vineyard property and residence in the center of Oregon's Wine Country, the Willamette Valley. This asset is south of Monmouth and west of HWY 99 in Polk County, Oregon. To learn more about this property [CLICK HERE](#).