

Welcome to the Coast Starlight Wine & Cheese Tasting

Each day, we will present four different wines and three different cheeses, from places along the route of this great train. We hope you will find it educational, but more importantly, that you'll have some fun exploring the amazing world of wine that is often right outside your window. All of these wines are available for purchase at the end of the tasting at suggested retail prices, and we will include a Coast Starlight wine bag to make sure the wine arrives home safely. These descriptions of each wine are offered to help give you some information – but remember, everyone finds different qualities in wine (that is what makes wine so interesting), so the only opinion that really counts is yours!

California Wine Selections

Taz Pinot Gris 2006

Santa Barbara County, California

If you saw the movie *Sideways*, or are familiar with this wine region, you will know what a nearly perfect climate it is for varietals such as Pinot Gris. The close proximity to the ocean, and the heavy coastal breezes, ensure a long, cool, growing season, and beautiful ripeness and complexity in the fruit. A swirl of the glass should produce aromas of lemon, lime, and some spiciness, along with a touch of minerality. Very refreshing on the palate, this is a perfect match for seafood, poultry, or sipping alongside the California Central Coast. **Price: \$17.00 per bottle**

Estancia Pinot Noir 2006

Pinnacles Ranches Monterey County, California

Considered the "holy grail" of winemaking, Pinot Noir at its best is the most complex, and sought after, wine in all the world. It is difficult to grow, and many efforts end up producing only average quality. That is why it is such a pleasure to find a Pinot Noir of this quality at such a reasonable price. Grown in the Santa Lucia Highlands (which we pass through on our way up the California Coast), this wine has a beautiful aroma of raspberry, cherry, with some vanilla and floral notes. It is among the most delicate and "feminine" of red wines, always drinkable even when young, yet a wine that can age for years and retain its quality. Estancia has been making great Pinot Noir for over 20 years, and their knowledge of the grape and the best places to grow it have resulted in a fine effort. **Price: \$5.00 glass/\$25.00 per bottle**

Greg Norman Petite Sirah 2005

Paso Robles, California

Yes, this is part of the wine estate owned by the legendary golfer, who also has a great passion for wine. We think this is his finest effort yet, working with the Petite Sirah grape (named because the size of the grape is small, even though the wine is a real powerhouse in flavor and weight). This wine works well with so many different types of food – rack of lamb, grilled steaks, smoked pork, rich cheeses, among many possibilities. It has a lovely aroma of plums, violets, and blackberries, with quite a bit of spiciness on the palate. Rich and lush, this wine can be enjoyed for the next 3-5 years, or even this afternoon. **Price: \$18.00 per bottle**

Jekel Riesling 2006

Monterey County, California

There is no faster growing, or “hotter” white wine varietal, than Riesling, and the reason is that once you lift the glass and smell the fragrance of the grape, you are hooked. Think of peaches, apricots, wildflowers, with a touch of sweetness and enough acid to make it refreshing to sip – and the alcohol levels are lower, making it the perfect summertime wine for the patio. Jekel winery was one of the first to make this varietal in California and they are still the benchmark in quality at a fair price point. This is another winery that we pass within a stone’s throw of, in the heart of Monterey County. **Price: \$19.75 per bottle**

Washington State Wine Selections

Hogue Cellars Chardonnay 2006

Columbia Valley, Washington State

Hogue is one of the “founding fathers” of Washington wine and they have continued for 25 years to make an amazing group of wines of the highest quality. This is one of their flagships – we try, in these tastings, to introduce customers to wine varietals they might not have had before, but we loved this Chardonnay so much, we had to put this in the tasting. Grown in the beautiful Columbia Valley, with its endless sun during the summer and cool nights to help slow the ripening, this wine has all vanilla and plum on the palate. A lovely match with heavier cheeses, steak, lamb or most pork dishes as well. A multiple award winner in many wine competitions, we simply call it a great bargain, and representative of the great quality of white wine coming from eastern Washington wine areas. **Price: \$4.00 glass/\$20.00 per bottle.**

Snoqualmie Whistle Stop Red 2006

Columbia Valley, Washington State

We not only loved the label and its railroad theme – we loved the wine, too. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, this wine is softer than most Cabernet-based wines, with classic aromas of currant and blackberry, and baked fruit flavors on the palate. Can be paired with barbecue, burgers, or anything off the grill – or perfect as a sipper on its own. The legend has it that one of the vineyards used in the making of this wine used to have a rail line cut right through the vines, and now all that is left is the crossbar and masthead. **Price: \$14.75 per bottle**

Columbia Crest Shiraz Grand Estates 2006

Columbia Valley, Washington State

There may not be a better winery in the United States for making great wines at outstanding prices. Grand Estates is the “second tier” in the many offerings of Columbia Crest, and this Shiraz (often called by its other name Syrah) represents winemaking genius. With classic aromas of pepper, smokiness, and dark fruit, it has a beguiling flavor which is hard not to love – it uses a small amount of Viognier (a white wine grape) to further enhance the aroma and flavor qualities. Most of the grape production for this wine comes from Horse Heaven Hills and Wahluke Slope, two of the premier areas in eastern Washington for grape growing and production. **Price: \$14.75 per bottle**

Columbia Winery Riesling 2006

Yakima Valley, Washington State

Not to be confused with Columbia Crest, this is a long-established and well-regarded winery that excels at making Riesling, and this vintage is particularly impressive. Crisp, aromatic, with the classic aromas of peaches, apricots, and wildflowers – the sort of wine you could sip for hours (but we only have an hour today, so be sure and buy a bottle to take home with you). It has some residual sugar (1.6%) making it the only wine of the tasting that qualifies as “sweet”, but the acid levels are high enough so that it is perfectly balanced, and matches up well with all sorts of foods – cheeses, spicy foods, Thanksgiving turkey-coq au vin, to name a few suggestions. **Price: \$16.50 per bottle**

Coast Starlight Cheese Tasting

Thanks for participating in today's wine and cheese tasting. As a part of this unique experience, we believe that knowing a little bit more about today's sensory event will enhance your experience. For premium passengers we are proud to offer a regional trio of cheeses, one produced in California, another in Oregon and a last one in Washington State, all designed to complement and contrast today's wine selection.

Southbound on Train 11 – Seattle to Los Angeles

Just Jack – Washington State

There is jack and then there is Just Jack which is simply just NOT your basic jack! This is one of several signature cheeses produced in the Pike Place Market in Seattle by Beecher's. This hand-made, cow's milk selection is produced in small batches from a select herd of cattle. It is exceptionally creamy and rich, full flavored but mellow with a slight tang. It is often considered to be an excellent partner for young, crisp chardonnays and is excellent as a table cheese but is also superior when used in fine cooking.

Tillamook Cheddar – Oregon

This classic American Cheddar has been produced in Tillamook, Oregon since 1909. Since that time, Tillamook has set the standard for traditional American Cheddar production and has been universally acclaimed as an industry leader. Over 130 different family dairy farms supply the finest milk to the Tillamook cooperative which produces this award winning medium aged cheese. Tillamook's rich and creamy flavor is balanced by a slight cheddar tang that grows with age. Young cheddar can be partnered with a variety of medium bodied white wines while aged Cheddar would be well matched with a light to medium bodied red such as Syrah, Shiraz or Pinot Noir.

Tome – California

Laura Chenel richly deserves the accolades she has received over the years for jump starting California Goat cheese production from her Wine Country location. Indeed, even with a plethora of wonderful goat cheeses being produced in the Golden State, Chenel continues to be the benchmark by which all others are judged. Tome is a unique example of her effort to emulate making a French style aged goat's milk cheese from fresh summer milk that once aged, becomes a cheese of rare subtlety and deep, yet pronounced flavor. Tome is a semi-hard cheese with a nutty tang that finishes long on the palate. It is rich and earthy but not over-bearing. It has deservedly won many cheese making awards through the years and we proudly offer it today paired with our regional wine selections.

Northbound on Train 14 – Los Angeles to Seattle

Flagship – Washington State

The fine cheese makers of Beecher's in Seattle's Pike Place Market produce this wonderful cheese, aptly titled Flagship. While young in business years, this award winning artisan cheese producer truly makes handmade products in the old world tradition. Flagship's flavor has oft been described as a combination of a medium aged Cheddar with more than a hint of sweet, nutty, aged Gruyere. While creamy and robust, Flagship has developed its own unique flavor due to the quality of the milk, the vision of its process and its relatively long 15 month aging. This is a distinctive regional cheese, wonderfully balanced and extremely flavorful. We trust you will find this to be a perfect marriage with several of today's premium wine offerings.

Rouge River Blue – Oregon

The Rogue River Creamery is justly known within the region, and we are confident that after sampling this vibrant blue veined cheese, you too will become a fan. This is distinctively rich American blue cheese which takes its production cue from France's Roquefort. Unlike Roquefort, which is produced from sheep's milk, Rouge Blue is made from raw cow's milk cheese, and like Roquefort, is cave aged a minimum of 90 days which promotes the classic blue-green streaking which is so prominent. Tangy, smooth, somewhat creamy and full flavored, this is benchmark blue cheese in the new American tradition.

Purple Moon – California

California has long been known as the crossroads of innovation and creativity. With much inspiration, the artisanal cheese makers at Fiscalini's of Modesto have made a new American washed rind traditional Cheddar unique in all the world. Purple Moon is made from California cow's milk and the resulting cheese is briefly aged prior to being soaked in California North Coast Cabernet Sauvignon. This final step produces an exterior color change to this moderately sharp cheese while also introducing a wine-induced earthiness that provides color distinction and a sweet flavor finish on the palate. This one of a kind cheese offers a wonderful tasting accompaniment to Cabernet Sauvignon and other robust reds.

Prices are in U.S. currency and include all taxes. Amtrak accepts major credit cards.

Gratuity is at the passenger's discretion. Water served upon request.