



## **Missouri's Wineries**

According to an expert in Hermann, "This is destined to be the greatest wine-producing country in the world." This optimistic prediction was made in 1866.

By then, Missouri's wine industry was healthy and growing. In the late 1800s, Missouri ranked as the nation's second-largest producer of wine. In 1919, however, Prohibition nearly destroyed the industry. When the 18th Amendment was repealed 13 years later, little remained of the once strong industry. The rebirth of the commercial wine industry in Missouri began with the restoration of several original wineries. The early pioneers worked hard to regain the former stature of the wine industry amid a slowly changing cultural and regulatory environment.

In 1980, the area around Augusta became America's first federally designated American Viticultural Area (AVA). Three additional regions are now AVA designated: the Hermann area; the Ozark Mountains and highlands in the southwest; and the region around St. James. In the new millennium, the Missouri wine industry is thriving. As of August 2013, more than 120 wineries were registered in Missouri. They produce diverse, complex and sophisticated wines that earn awards in national and international competitions.

Visit a Missouri winery and the first thing you'll notice is a warm welcome. Many are small, family operations. At most wineries you'll find a tasting room offering samples of their products; cheeses, sausages and picnic-type foods; picnic areas where you can relax with an alfresco meal; some even have a restaurant. Many wineries entertain you with live bands. Unfermented grape juice is usually available for youngsters and those who choose not to consume alcohol.

Some Missouri wineries plan special events for their guests: live bands; seasonal and harvest festivals; vintage release parties; grape stomp activities; and vintner's dinners. One thing we can say for sure: visiting Missouri's wineries adds an enjoyable, new dimension to touring Missouri.