

best *health*

SLOW- COOKER MAGIC

SET IT &
FORGET IT

NUTRITION MYTHS *BUSTED*

**HOW TO
EAT ALOE**
AND WHY
YOU SHOULD!

BRAIN FOG?
TRY THIS HERB

**SKIN
SECRETS *of*
THE FRENCH**

**THE ANTI-
CANCER DIET**

YES, IT'S
HEALTHY!

PIZZA

MAKE IT TONIGHT!





women and wine

British Columbia's Okanagan Valley is a winemaker's dream: diverse terroir, a favourable altitude and a temperate climate nestled under a sun-soaked sky. Leading the charge at many of the coveted labels here are a significant number of women who are breaking barriers and forging new ground in the wine industry. Writer *Grace Toby* travelled to this vintner's paradise for a first-hand look at the gals behind the grapes.



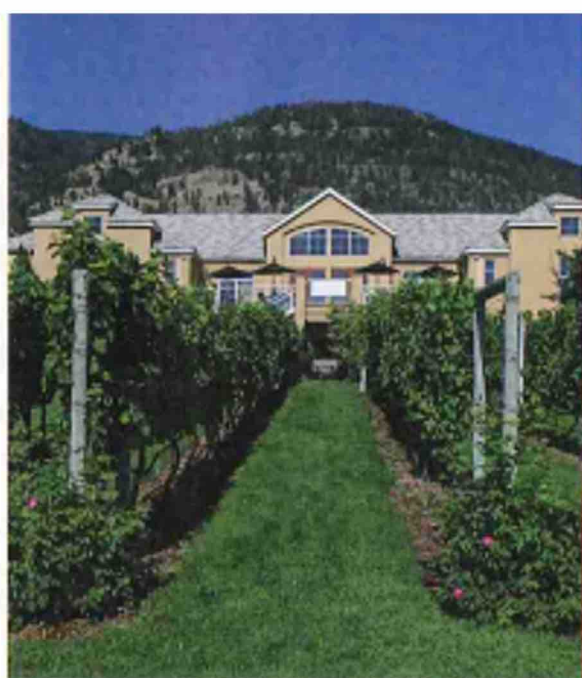
WOMEN AND WINE HAVE BEEN INEXTRICABLY linked since the beginning of time. Legend has it that a young Persian princess was the first person to consume wine. After being rejected by the king, the woman made a failed attempt to commit suicide. Her choice of poison: a goblet with remnants of rotting table grapes. But instead of death, she experienced a pleasant state of intoxication. Since then, wine has established itself as the drink of choice, with both religious and cultural significance.

Nestled in the south-central interior of British Columbia lies the Okanagan Valley, a nearly 200 kilometre-long stretch of fertile ground, extending north from Osoyoos on the Canada-United States border past Kelowna to Enderby. Dotted with apple, peach and plum orchards, a thick coat of vineyards and ribbons of sand-bordered lakes, this land takes advantage of a long hot season – surprisingly, it is both warmer and more arid than Napa Valley and receives two extra hours of sunlight per day during the peak summer season. With 172 licensed wineries, the Okanagan boasts a unique microclimate that creates equally unique wines and has become another Canadian destination for wine lovers.

Behind many of the bottles produced in the valley are women, who tend to the vineyard, oversee production in the cantina and manage the business. There are two distinct regions in the area currently turning out beautiful wines worthy of great acclaim: Osoyoos and Kelowna.

Osoyoos

Home to Canada's only desert, Osoyoos is the most southern town in the province, lying in the belly of the Okanagan. Dubbed the "wine capital of Canada," it capitalizes on one of the longest growing seasons in the country. This emerging area is bottling everything from Cabernet Sauvignon to Riesling and is devoid of any hint of pretention – you're likely to find winemakers who refer to themselves as farmers here.



THE AWARD-WINNING TRAILBLAZER

SANDRA OLDFIELD

CEO AND PRESIDENT, TINHORN CREEK VINEYARDS



In 1995, Sandra Oldfield, a laid-back California girl with a master's degree in winemaking, moved up to Osoyoos for love and quickly fell for the land, too. She married her beloved, Kenn Oldfield, and together they co-own Tinhorn Creek Vineyards (with Bob and Barb Shaunessy), one of the first commercial wineries in the area on 50 acres of covetable terroir (they also own Diamondback Vineyard, with 100 acres). Overlooking the Okanagan Valley from Golden Mile Bench, the property also houses Miradoro, one of the best restaurants in the area, and has an outdoor amphitheatre with a popular summer concert series that draws well-known Canadian musicians, like Blue Rodeo and Spirit of the West.

After 20 years as winemaker-in-chief, Oldfield stepped away from the vineyard and into the role of CEO. "I never called these *my* wines anyway; they were always *our* wines," she says. "There are a lot of people who have a hand in making them." In her new role – one that comes with the newly minted distinction of being awarded one of Canada's Most Powerful Women for 2016 – she handles everything from sales and marketing to harvest and crop decisions to government regulations. Her chosen home continues to guide her sustainable philosophy. Tinhorn is the first carbon-neutral winery in Canada, with a multi-tiered water-conservation program that is certified salmon safe.

THE SISTER ACT
CATHERINE AND NATHALIE COULOMBE
OWNERS, VINAMITÉ CELLARS

Montreal-born sisters Catherine and Nathalie Coulombe traded in big-city life (an employee at Google and an Emily Carr graduate, respectively) to join their parents, Ray and Wendy, in Oliver (a stone's throw north of Osoyoos). Their parents had closed the door on their successful ad agency and settled there in a house that just happened to have more than five acres of vineyard. Catherine spent several summers helping out in the vineyard and learning the wine industry before moving to Oliver, where she now acts as assistant winemaker. Nathalie pulls double time working both as a fine artist and as an owner at vinAmité Cellars, where she helps handle everything from production to events.

THE GRAPE WHISPERER
AMBER PRATT
WINEMAKER, C.C. JENTSCH CELLARS

Well into her pregnancy, winemaker Amber Pratt could still be found checking in on the end of the harvest, testing wine varieties and tinkering in the cellar. She was commissioned by the Jentsch family to turn their homegrown grapes into a viable business and their decision proved fruitful when she started turning out award-winning reds and whites. In 2015, during a blind tasting of a dozen Syrahs, Pratt and Jentsch took home top prize.

IF YOU GO
STAY HERE

Watermark Beach Resort Hotel Situated on Osoyoos Lake, this all-season beachfront resort boasts panoramic views of the surrounding mountains, an award-winning restaurant with a signature farm-to-vine menu and, of course, an extensive wine list that features local favourites. For active guests looking to keep busy, there's a wellness centre, SUP yoga and bike tours around the lake and into town. watermarkresort.com

Spirit Ridge at Nk'Mip Resort Surrounded by desert vistas, this 4.5-star resort houses an on-site winery, a full-service spa and a nine-hole golf course nestled in the rolling hills. spiritridge.ca

PLAY HERE

Festival of the Grape Attracting thousands of visitors each year, this annual event lets you sample more than 50 local wines, from rosés to Rieslings, and don your best Lucille Ball outfit for the grape-stomping competition.

Half-Corked Marathon This 18-kilometre springtime race is more about scoring the best Cab Franc than clocking your personal best. The route weaves through scenic vineyards, making pit stops at tasting stations after every kilometre.

Golf or Ski Pack your clubs for a round at Fairview Mountain, Sonora Dunes or Nk'Mip Canyon Desert Golf. Or take a 45-minute drive to Mount Baldy Ski Resort for a day on the slopes.

GETTING HERE

Fly into or start from Vancouver/Calgary to Penticton, BC. Both Air Canada and Westjet offer flights from both cities. Then, within an hour by car you could be sampling your first glass of Osoyoos wine.

Kelowna

The deep-seated wine roots in Kelowna can be traced back to French missionary Father Charles Pandosy, whose mission planted the area's first vineyard in the early 1860s. While Osoyoos is up and coming, Kelowna is its more established big sister.

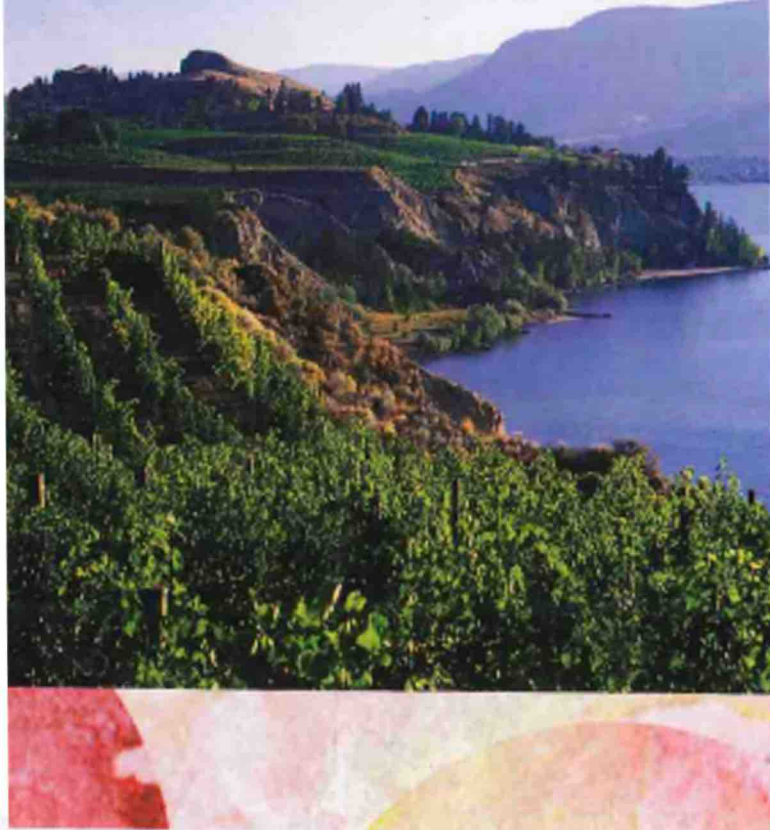
THE LOCAL SCIENTIST
SANDY LEIER

WINEMAKER, WAYNE GRETZKY ESTATES



Established in 1932, Calona Vineyards was the area's first winery and is now owned by Wayne Gretzky Okanagan. Armed with a chemistry degree and a familiarity with the land, Sandy Leier found that making wine comes naturally to her. "I love the diversity of this role—whether it's working on the

wines, planning for upcoming changes or looking at the evolving wine styles around the globe," says Leier. But she's not alone: "There are more female winemakers and owners in the valley than ever before, and they are coming from around the world to make wine here," says Leier.



THE FRENCH TRADITIONALIST NIKKI CALLAWAY

SENIOR WINEMAKER, QUAILS' GATE

When Nikki Callaway decided to pursue a profession in wine, she packed a bag and boarded a plane to France to immerse herself in the country's traditional winemaking methods. She made her way through Beaujolais, Dijon, Côtes du Rhône and Montpellier and then settled in Bordeaux for five years.

Her experience in France paid off, and she has been making wine in the Okanagan since her return in 2009. "There are actually quite a few women in the Okanagan wine industry," says Callaway. "Many have been involved since the beginning of the Canadian industry, and they continue to be leaders in the growth and development of the valley."



THE PIONEER ANN SPERLING

OWNER AND WINEMAKER AT
SPERLING VINEYARDS

Ann Sperling grew up playing and working on the family's vineyard. Today, her family farm is on the same site where



her great-grandmother, Rosa Casorso, planted vines in the 1870s. After arriving from Piedmont, Rosa was inspired by the abundant local produce and turned the grapes into wine similar to that of her homeland. With vineyards in the Okanagan and Niagara, she has overseen 32 Canadian harvests and eight in Argentina, where she owns a small vineyard of ancient Malbec vines. "Throughout history, women have always played important roles in the wine industry, managing estates, running vineyards and developing wine styles, regions and education," says Sperling. Along with producing high-quality wines, Sperling is converting the vineyard into an organic and biodynamic property (with organic certification achieved for the 2017 harvest). "As a multi-generational farm, we want to make great wine and sustain our soil for generations to come," says Sperling.

IF YOU GO STAY HERE

Delta Grand Okanagan Resort Situated in the heart of downtown Kelowna, this resort makes walking to dinner and shopping a breeze. Though it's loaded with the typical amenities (think pools, fitness room, sauna, shops and restaurants), what you'll long remember are the show-stopping views. The resort sits on the lake and offers mountain vistas of blue and grey that will take your breath away. Make sure to book a lakeside room.

PLAY HERE

Wine tours From crisp young Chardonnays to old-vine Pinot Noirs, there's a varietal or blend for every bias. Where to start? Tourism Kelowna has created several trails, including Lake Country's Scenic Sip Trail, Westside Wine Trail, Lakeshore Wine Route and Kelowna FabFive. Some will take you into the barrel room, some will let you explore the vineyards and others offer lunch opportunities. Start planning your oenophile experience here.

Bike or Ski Burn a few calories with a bike ride along the Kettle Valley Steam Railway, where you can travel over the old train trestles of Myra Canyon. Sign up for guided tours designed for various fitness levels at Monashee Adventure Tours. For skiing, check out Big White Ski Resort (bigwhite.com), a short drive from Kelowna.

GETTING HERE

Both WestJet and Air Canada offer direct flights to Kelowna International Airport from many Canadian airports. From there, it's a short cab ride into the heart of the city. ✈

**hawksworth
communications**

OLIVER OSOYOOS WINERY ASSOCIATION
BEST HEALTH, NOVEMBER 1, 2017