

# Prescott's Winemaking Heritage; More Than Just Whiskey on the Row

According to popular culture, beer and whiskey were the traditional drinks of the Old West. Grizzled cowboys would belly-up to the bar and ask for a shot of rye or a mug of brew. Old western flicks never included a wrangler's query of the barkeep for the best bottle of wine – perhaps something French – that would pair well with venison, beans and a biscuit.

Yet wine WAS popular on the western frontier. It was considered a demonstrated mark of quality and distinction at local establishments. "Wine, Liquor, and Cigars" were frequent newspaper advertisements featured in the local Weekly Arizona Miner.

"Imported Wines" were being offered as early as 1868 at the Arizona Brewery and Saloon on Gurlley Street. This was followed by Kearney's Sample Room, the Montezuma,

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Supplies the Public with  
**EXCELLENT LAGER BEER**  
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL  
**WINES, LIQUORS, & CIGARS**  
The Old Stand is Well Known  
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Montezuma St. - Prescott.  
THE BEST OF  
**WINES, LIQUORS AND CIGARS**  
DISPENSED AT THE BAR.  
Comfortable CLUB ROOMS attached. The old and the new are cordially invited to call and see.



the Oriental, and many others.

French wine (or wine with French labels) was popular. Wine drinkers typically ordered either a bottle of "claret" (generic for a French-style red table wine) or a

German-style white riesling. Distilled wine drinks – such as port, sherry and brandy – were popular in part because these traveled well. More discerning drinkers also enjoyed a glass of Angelica – a brandy-like beverage that originated in California during Spanish times.

By the late 1860s, California was a major producer of wine, which dominated much of the western trade. Early California wine was from zinfandel grapes, and business was controlled by a handful of "wine houses" with little concern for the specific source vineyard or individual winemaker.

Prescott pioneers of French, Italian, German or Swiss heritage often brought their traditions and recipes for making wine at home. Those skills proved useful in the early years when wine (and almost everything else) was scarce and expensive. By 1867, a group of German immigrants were making wine from local wild grapes (of the species *Vitis arizonica*), likely the first wine ever made in northern Arizona.



At Sharlot Hall Museum, the traditions of winemaking and the enjoyment of winetasting continues with the annual Sharlot's WineFest event, August 17. The evening fundraiser includes an extensive sampling of wines, both international and domestic, paired with hors d'oeuvres presented by such local restaurateurs as El Gato Azul, Barley Hound, Atmesfir, Murphy's, Goods from the Garden, Park Plaza Deli, Biga by Senses and Premier Catering.



Tickets to the evening event are available online at [www.sharlot.org/winefest](http://www.sharlot.org/winefest) or at the Museum located at 415 W. Gurlley Street, or call 928-445-3122.