Steins, Vines & Grinds: A Exhibit about Three Beloved Beverages that Set Washington Apart

Washington loves to drink! Our three favorite adult beverages—beer, wine, and coffee—are practically synonymous with Washington and have become part of our cultural fabric. Yakima became the first city in the nation to open a brew pub post-Prohibition. Washington ranks second only to California in the nation’s grape production, producing 14.8 million cases of wine annually. Six out of the top 10 cities in the United States with the highest density of coffee shops are in Washington.

Steins, Vines & Grinds documents the long history of beer, wine, and coffee in the region, from early Hudson’s Bay Company imports through modern-day innovative processes. Even predating statehood, beer, wine, and coffee quickly became important commodities. All three beverages could be found inside the walls of Forts Vancouver and Nisqually. Whether roasting their own green coffee beans from Hawaii, sipping on homemade wine, or imbibing a bottled India pale ale from London, early Northwest settlers took the first steps in the creation of a cultural phenomenon.

From these humble beginnings, an intriguing arc of production began. As a territory and a young state, Washington survived (and thrived in many cases) on beer, wine, and coffee grown, produced and/or processed in the region. Local brewers generally made their beer in town, then delivered it by horse cart. Coffee roasteries either roasted green coffee beans at home or in the local marketplace. Immigrants from many points of origin grew wine grapes on small family farms. Each industry eventually achieved large-scale production: beer with Olympia Brewing Company, wine with Chateau Ste. Michelle, and coffee with Starbucks. These large companies announced to the rest of the country Washington’s affinity with the beverage industry.

While many big companies remain, craft beverages are experiencing a major resurgence. Microbreweries, wineries, and roasteries represent an ever-increasing portion of the beverage market, indicating a return to the smaller-scale production of bygone times, with an emphasis on quality over quantity.

Puget Sound is home to a number of urban wineries that source their grapes from multiple vineyards across the state to develop unique blends. Brewers are experimenting with new hop varieties and working with new grains thanks to small-batch malting systems. Washington coffee roasters are working directly with coffee growers from around the globe to make use of their distinctive microclimates in developing the best beans they can produce. Washington continues to be at the forefront of these industries.

Visitors to Steins, Vines & Grinds will see a giant-size inflatable Rainier Beer bottle and a bottle of Rainier, unopened, discovered in a sunken ship; a grape press used by Croatian wine makers in Gig Harbor; coffee and beer mugs and wine bottles and glasses ranging back in time; and a melange of beverage memorabilia and marketing materials that includes posters, neon signs, beer trays, and a bobblehead brewmaster.

Why do Washingtonians love their beer, wine, and coffee? It’s in our shared history and the efforts of a long line of brewers, vintners, and roastmasters whose devotion and determination have made Washington a state known and revered for its contributions to the beverage industry.
EXPLORE IT! CALENDAR

HISTORY MUSEUM EXHIBITS

Steins, Vines & Grinds: Washington’s Story of Beer, Wine & Coffee

JANUARY 21 THROUGH APRIL 23
Steins, Vines & Grinds explores the history of three libations that are wildly popular in the Evergreen State. Discover how the passion of beverage industry leaders connected with the unique climate and geography of our state to place Washington at the forefront of the industry. Glimpse a rare “Wild Rainier,” compare coffee grinders over the decades, and ogle a Reed’s IPA bottle excavated from Fort Vancouver. The exhibit is sponsored in part by Chateau Ste. Michelle.

Filled with Grace
FEbruary 4 THROUGH MAY 21
February 19, 2017, marks the 75th anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order 9066, which led to the incarceration of West Coast Japanese Americans. Filled with Grace investigates the prewar history of the Japanese American community in the South Sound and local resistance to discrimination prior to World War II.

A Revolution You Can Dance To: Indie Music in the Northwest
THROUGH APRIL 23, 2017
This exhibit examines how the music, art, and politics of Pacific Northwest bands creating and performing music in the 1980s and 1990s influenced the entire country.

The Great Hall of Washington History
ONGOING
The History Museum’s largest exhibit is a walk through time. This year-round space showcases some of our earliest history with Clovis points and artifacts from Native American civilization and culture, and explains our progression through statehood and beyond, including industrialization, the World War II and post-war eras, women’s suffrage, and more.

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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