



“Crush” is an industry term used to describe the process in the fall when harvested wine grapes go through many **time-sensitive** and **labor-intensive** steps to become fine Oregon wine. Crush typically lasts two months or more if a winery processes multiple varietals, with grapes coming in from throughout the state.

This is the most critical time in the winemaking process. It is like the playoffs for a sports team or the final days of a political campaign.

Here are some of the **time-sensitive** and **labor-intensive** steps of crush:

- Careful hand sorting of grapes brought in from the vineyard, a necessary step before machinery separates grapes from their stems;
- Before fermentation, white wine grapes are pressed so that juice separates from the pulp and stems. For red wine the grapes are left intact to acquire flavor, color, and additional tannins from the skins;
- Moving juice to fermentation tanks;
- “Punching down” fermentation tanks, at least twice daily, to allow CO<sub>2</sub> to reach the juice under a cap that forms at the top of tank from the berries, seeds and leftover stems; and
- After around 10-20 days, transferring wine to barrels or tanks for the aging process. Red wine is pressed before transferring to barrel.

On average, Oregon wineries hire about 4-6 employees to help during crush. Employees are paid a median wage of \$17.50/hour (\$15-\$20) based on experience and time and a half for more than 40 hours worked per week. Employees often work the maximum of 13 hours/day during crush. Workers come from all over the world to work at Oregon wineries. It is a training ground for emerging winemakers and wine-industry workers.

If experienced winemaking staff is not able to manage through this labor-intensive, time-sensitive process, wine grapes could be ruined, with a significant financial loss to wineries.

There are more than 700 wineries operating in Oregon. The majority are family owned and based in rural communities. More than 75 percent produce fewer than 5,000 cases of wine per year, making them very small businesses.

These wineries have a large, combined impact on Oregon’s economy and tourism, contributing \$3.35 billion in overall economic impact and \$208 million in tourism impact per year. The industry employs more than 17,000 with related wages of \$527 million. Oregon’s wineries continually strive to make the best wine available, while staying cost competitive in the world market.

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