

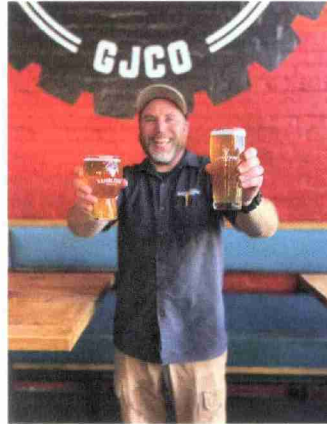
## GRAND JUNCTION SIP AND STAY

UNEXPECTED DELIGHTS AWAIT AROUND EVERY HOODOO IN COLORADO WINE COUNTRY.

**H**OLDING COURT IN THE HEART OF A VALLEY surrounded by dramatic natural beauty, Grand Junction – known as “GJ” to locals – revels in superlatives. Grand Mesa to the east is the *largest* flat-top mountain in the world. To the north, the Little Book Cliffs is the *longest* continuous cliff face on Earth and is home to one of the last remaining protected wild mustang herds in the country. And to the west you have Colorado National Monument, a Mother Nature *masterpiece* of red-rock spires and canyons, affectionately known as the “little Grand Canyon.”

Located where high-desert country meets mountains and canoodles with raging rivers (two, actually), Grand Junction is also home to arguably the *most picturesque* wine region in the U.S.: the Grand Valley AVA. One of two American Viticultural Areas in Colorado – the smaller West Elks AVA is located 30 miles southeast – Grand Valley also happens to be one of the world’s *highest-elevation* wine regions, at around 4,500 feet.

We describe the setting not to paint a pretty picture, though this region is indeed breathtaking, but to give context to Grand Junction’s food and drink offerings, which derive inspiration – and ingredients – from the environs. Besides the wine grown in nearby Palisade, you’ll find juniper that shows up in everything from cocktails to desserts, or locally grown peaches in a salad and just-harvested lavender in a cooling drink. Here, we break down all the ways to experience a true taste of the West.



### LOCAL WINES TO SIP IN THE GJ

Clustered in Palisade just a 12-mile drive – or bike ride – up the US-6 highway, Grand Valley wines can also be enjoyed in Grand Junction itself.

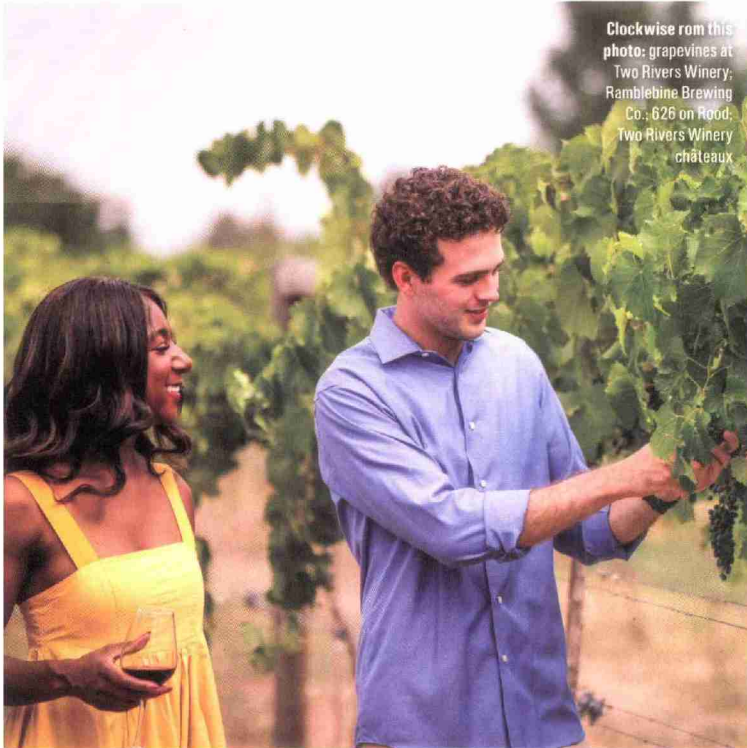
➔ **SYRAH FROM TWO RIVERS WINERY:** Rob Hammelman, wine-maker of Arizona’s Sand-Reckoner, made wine at Two Rivers before he moved south. The Grand Junction winery credits this berry-forward Syrah to Hammelman. [tworiverswinery.com](http://tworiverswinery.com)

➔ **ROSÉ FROM COLTERRIS:** A dry and delightful pink from the Cabernet grape, with a touch of raspberry and citrus. [colterris.com](http://colterris.com)

➔ **GRÜNER VELTLINER FROM THE STORM CELLAR:** The winery is not quite Grand Junction territory, but it’s near-ish; enjoy this bright, peppery white at downtown GJ restaurants. [stormcellarwine.com](http://stormcellarwine.com)

➔ **RIESLING FROM CARLSON VINEYARDS-HIGH DESERT WINE LAB:** Light on sweetness, laden with notes of grapefruit and lemon, this wine shows off a creative collaboration between Carlson and local resto Bin 707 Foodbar. [carlsonvineyards.com](http://carlsonvineyards.com)

➔ **PÉT-NAT FROM SAUVAGE SPECTRUM:** A fizzy, tasty addition to the Pét-Nat market, this wine comes from a Palisade vineyard where all grapes are hand-harvested. [sauvagespectrum.com](http://sauvagespectrum.com)



Clockwise from this photo: grapevines at Two Rivers Winery; Ramblevine Brewing Co.; 626 on Road; Two Rivers Winery châteaux

PHOTOS COURTESY: (LEFT) GRAND JUNCTION; (BOTTOM) RAMBLEVINE BREWING CO.; (TOP)

## MUST-TRY FARE

With a James Beard nomination tucked under its toque just this year (see: Niernberg, Josh below), GJ is a culinary force to be reckoned with.

➔ **ELK TARTARE AT BIN 707 FOODBAR:** At Bin 707, it's a tall order to label any one of chef Josh Niernberg's dishes the best, but the elk certainly warrants a taste – full of flavor and sided with a plum tapenade. [bin707.com](http://bin707.com)

➔ **CHEESE AND CHARCUTERIE AT 626 ON ROOD:** This share plate showcases the effort chef/owner Theo Otte puts into the details, whether it's pickling asparagus, whipping up onion chutney or hand-selecting Colorado meats and cheeses. [626onrood.com](http://626onrood.com)

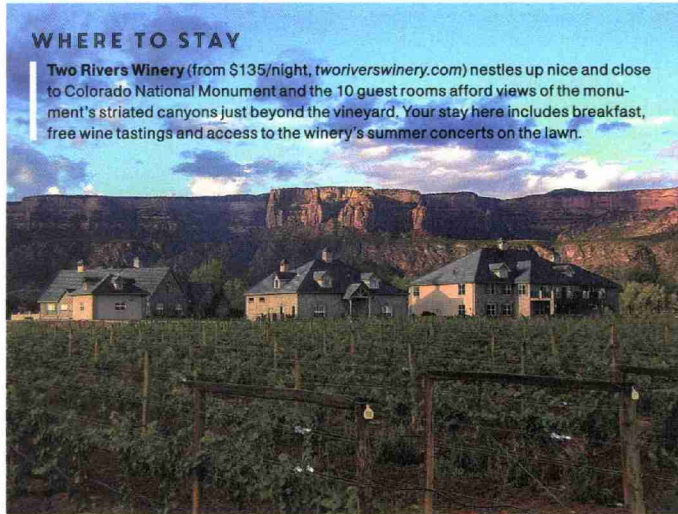
➔ **TOFFEE AT ENSTROM'S:** All kinds of sweets get swirled up at Enstrom's (701 Colorado Ave., 970-242-1655), but none better than the world-famous toffee. Visit in the morning to watch the chocolatiers at work. [enstrom.com](http://enstrom.com)

➔ **SANDWICH FROM THE HOG & THE HEN:** You can't go wrong with any of this market's hot and cold sammies. Order at the deli, then browse The Hog and The Hen's wares: shelves overflowing with candies, truffles, local wines, craft beers, cheeses, olives, honeys, pastas and more. [thehogandthehen.com](http://thehogandthehen.com)



## WHERE TO STAY

**Two Rivers Winery** (from \$135/night, [tworiverswinery.com](http://tworiverswinery.com)) nestles up nice and close to Colorado National Monument and the 10 guest rooms afford views of the monument's striated canyons just beyond the vineyard. Your stay here includes breakfast, free wine tastings and access to the winery's summer concerts on the lawn.



## 4 GJ FOOD FESTIVALS TO PLAN YOUR TRIP AROUND

### COLORADO LAVENDER FESTIVAL JUNE 24-26

Three days of self-guided tours of lavender farms, crafting workshops, cooking demos and wine tastings (\$5/person, [coloradolavender.org](http://coloradolavender.org))

### COLORADO MOUNTAIN WINE FEST SEPTEMBER 17

A great way to sample vino from Colorado's wine regions, including those in Grand Junction and Palisade (from \$15/person, [coloradowinefest.com](http://coloradowinefest.com))

### MARKET ON MAIN JUNE 23-SEPT. 8

Grand Junction's signature summer event showcases farm goodies from the Western Slope (free, every Thursday, [downtowngj.org/events/market-on-main](http://downtowngj.org/events/market-on-main))

### PALISADE PEACH FESTIVAL AUG. 12-13

Peach pie, peach preserves, peach salsas, just-picked peaches... you get the idea. [visitgrandjunction.com/palisade-peach-festival](http://visitgrandjunction.com/palisade-peach-festival)

## A DRIVE UNLIKE ANY OTHER

The 23-mile Rim Rock Drive at **Colorado National Monument** ([nps.gov/colm](http://nps.gov/colm)) winds past sweeping vistas of the park's sculpted natural wonders. Just beyond the red-rock mesas, big skies above and the Grand Junction valley below. Stop at scenic pullouts for photo ops and short hikes.

## BEER & BOOZE

**Ramblebine Brewing Co.** ([ramblebinebrewing.com](http://ramblebinebrewing.com)) earns points for its complex sours – the pineapple-tangerine combo of My Easy Friend or the blueberry-packed Demberries – as well as for their patio, a happy drinking place on a summer evening. For the chance to sample artisanal spirits in a yurt abutting lavender fields, it's **Highlands Craft Distillery** ([coloradohighlandsdistillery.com](http://coloradohighlandsdistillery.com)) all the way. The tasting room offers a menu of pleasing drink concoctions featuring its vodka, rye whiskey and gin. Try the Founder's Farewell (a buzzy whiskey cocktail) or the Redstone (vodka, lemon juice, maraschino syrup and a flaming sugar cube).

— Jessica Dunham