

Vineyard's dirt affects what's in your glass

By Dave McIntyre, Washington Post

"Let's go dig a hole!"

Ernest "Bubba" Beasley grabbed an auger and led the way along the vine rows. We were at Pollak Vineyards in Greenwood, Va., west of Charlottesville, on a sweltering summer day last July. Beasley, a geologist, and Lucie Morton, a viticulturist, wanted to show me their research on the relationship of vineyard soils to wine quality. And that meant a "dirt tasting."

Then Beasley led us about 50 feet up the row and repeated the process. Here, the soil was visibly different: clay on the top but a gravelly loam farther down, an assessment verified by matching the soil's colors to the chart.

To wine lovers, the vineyard's effect on a wine's quality seems self-evident. Yet "terroir" is many things, including sun exposure, microclimate, even the personality of the winemaker.

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