

May 23, 2011

Buds break
and tiny leaves
begin to unfurl
at Destiny
Ridge Vineyard
in
Washington's
Horse Heaven
Hills.

(Photo by Andy
Perdue, Wine
Press
Northwest)



Fresh Press is a weekly publication of Wine Press Northwest magazine. In each edition, we review recently released wines from Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and Idaho. Feel free to forward to your wine-loving friends and family. For more information on our tasting methods and review process, please go to the last page.

Spotlight: RiverAerie Cellars

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Often, forces beyond control lead into transitions earlier than planned, but Ron and Susan Bunnell's talent and vision have helped transform Prosser, Wash., into a Yakima Valley destination.

Ron worked his way through some of California's premier properties -- including Kendall-Jackson — before landing in Washington state as head red winemaker for Chateau Ste. Michelle in 1999.

Five years later, he was on his own and rapidly launched Bunnell Family Cellar with the 2004 vintage. The focus was on Rhône varieties, and the success of those wines comes in large part to the relationships he'd developed and maintained with growers such as the Andrews families in the Horse Heaven Hills, Dick Boushey in the Yakima Valley, the Milbrandt brothers and Tedd Wildman on the Wahluke Slope and Todd Newhouse on Snipes Mountain.

In 2007, the Bunnells launched a second label called RiverAerie Cellars. The line is named after their herb and lavender farm along the banks of the Yakima River, and prices range from \$14 to \$25. They also serve as testimony to Bunnell's winemaking skill and flexibility.

And somehow, Ron and Susan also found time to not only build their own restaurant in Prosser's Vintners Village, but also start a family.

Excellent. RiverAerie Cellars 2008 Barbera, Columbia Valley, \$16. The Bunnells were among the first wineries to own and operate an on-premise restaurant in Washington wine country, and this Italian red would be ideal to enjoy with an artisan pizzas at their Wine o'Clock bistro. Ripe black cherry, plum, raspberry, slate and cedar strip aromas fire your oven, and there's no

disappointment on the lush palate, where racy raspberry acidity overflows the tannin structure. (169 cases, 14.5% alc.)

Excellent. RiverAerie Cellars 2007 Fete, Columbia Valley, \$20. Bunnell produces two wines devoted to marrying Malbec and Petit Verdot, only this one includes a dose of Cabernet Sauvignon (29%). It's a pleasingly fruit-forward matrimony that opens with aromas of dusty oak, plum, blueberry, black cherry, hot chocolate, NECCO wafer and leather. Blueberry and Marionberry juiciness on the palate gathers in more plums, cherries and chocolate. The approachable and rich structure only begins to allow for the emergence of tannins on your second sip. (167 cases, 14.5% alc.)

Excellent. RiverAerie Cellars 2009 Gewürztraminer, Columbia Valley, \$16. Evergreen Vineyard in the proposed Ancient Lakes appellation near Quincy, Wash., has served as the backbone for Bunnell's white program. And for good reason. Remarkable aromatics include sweetened yellow grapefruit, lychee, Baby's Own soap, rosemary and thyme. The drink is remarkably tart for this variety, bringing in flavors of gooseberry and citrus pith, and there's a pinch of white pepper spiciness. (196 cases, 13.7% alc.)

Outstanding! RiverAerie Cellars 2008 Malbec, Columbia Valley, \$24. Bunnell's relationship with the Milbrandts really pays off here with this lot of their prized Northridge fruit. Combined with a crop from Tedd Wildman's StoneTree, it's a heckuva package from the Wahluke Slope. This nicely priced Malbec exudes minerality and blueberry throughout, beginning in the nose that includes violets, vanilla and Italian parsley. Long and juicy flavors of blueberry, smoked cherry and cola are ushered out by easy tannins. (376 cases, 14.2% alc.)

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RiverAerie Cellars continued

Excellent. RiverAerie Cellars 2008 Petit Bec, Columbia Valley, \$24. It's a clever name for a winning combination. The 50/50 blend of Petit Verdot from Snipes Mountain's Upland Vineyard and Malbec via Northridge Vineyard gives up aromas of blackberry, blueberry, allspice and a talus slope. Richness ensues in the drink of Marionberry, blueberry, blackberry and smoked meat with bittersweet chocolate. Enjoy with a lamb or osso bucco. According to the website, this wine has attained "library" status. (88 cases, 14.1% alc.)

Best Buy! Recommended. RiverAerie Cellars 2009 Pinot Gris, Columbia Valley, \$12. Granny Smith apple, lemon, lime, orange peel, starfruit and a flecks of minerality give this light-bodied Pinot Gris a variety of entry points for mild cheese and fruit plates. (63 cases, 13% alc.)

Best Buy! Outstanding! RiverAerie Cellars 2008 Snipes Creek Redd, Columbia Valley, \$14. No, neither the name nor the price are typos. And while anglers and fish biologists will appreciate the reference to a salmon nest, winesters should strike quickly to

reel in this blend of Primitivo (54%), Grenache (18%), Mourvedre (14%), Cinsault (9%) and Petite Sirah. It's an elegant and somewhat silky little wine featuring aromas of dusty cranberry, boysenberry, lime, cinnamon bark, cedar strips and milk chocolate. Dark raspberry best describes the flavor profile, but there's juicy and plump Rainier cherry and plum in the background, along with cherry skin tannin and lots of acidity. (129 cases, 14.5% alc.)

Outstanding! RiverAerie Cellars 2007 Syrah, Columbia Valley, \$22. Five years ago, Bunnell rocked a Wine Press Northwest peer-judging of Syrah with a pair of 2004s from his premier Bunnell Family Cellar lineup. This shows he doesn't skimp much with the debut vintage from this second label. There's a generous offering of oak in the aromas, which brings in hints of roasted coffee, fresh-baked brownies and Wheat Thins along plums and blueberries, smoked pork and sage. It's a drink of mixed berry pie that carries more acidity than is often found in Washington Syrah. Cocoa powder and tannin filter in the background. (159 cases, 14.1% alc.)

Wine ratings

All wines reviewed here are tasted blind after being submitted by producers. They are rated Outstanding, Excellent and Recommended by a tasting panel.

Outstanding: These wines have superior characteristics and should be highly sought after.

Excellent: Top-notch wines with particularly high qualities.

Recommended: Delicious, well-made wines with true varietal characteristics.

Best Buy: A wine that is \$15 or less.

Priced are suggested retail and should be used as guidelines. Prices are in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

For more details about our judging system, see the last page of this document.

The poster features a central graphic of a wine glass tilted to the left, with red wine being poured. The word "VINTAGE" is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the top, with "SPOKANE" in smaller green letters below it. To the right of "SPOKANE" is a cluster of purple grapes. Below the main title, it says "A FOOD & WINE AFFAIR" in white. The date "JUNE 5TH" is prominently displayed in white, with "THE LINCOLN CENTER" underneath. Below that, it says "\$60 PER TICKET" in pink. At the bottom, there are logos for sponsors: "SPONSORED BY" followed by "IDAHOWINE", "VINO", "VIBING", and "MUCKLEBROOK CASINO". To the right, it says "TICKETS AVAILABLE AT VINTAGESPOKANE.COM". In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for "HOSPICE OF SPOKANE" and a bottle of wine with a label that reads "SAMPLE AN ARRAY OF WASHINGTON & IDAHO WINES" and "DELICIOUS BITES FROM SPOKANE'S TOP RESTAURANTS".

New releases we've tasted

Cabernet Sauvignon

Outstanding! Daven Lore Winery 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Horse Heaven Hills, \$25. Gordon Taylor in Prosser, Wash., continues to turn our heads with his small-lot reds. Fruit from wind-buffed Alder Ridge Vineyard makes for aromas of blueberries, baked plums, smoked cherries, mocha and black olive. Its massive entry of cassis and cherry flavors is met by red raspberry in the midpalate as the acidity hangs in from start to the finish of black olive, chocolate cake and coffee. (68 cases, 14.4% alc.)

Pinot Noir

Recommended. Kathken Vineyard 2009 Signature Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$27. The Slussers gave up their California construction business for grape growing in the northern Willamette Valley's Eola-Amity Hills after visiting their daughter while she studied at the University of Oregon. Their Pinot Noir plantings are well into their second decade and allowed them to produce this a drink of dried strawberry, plum, pomegranate and bittersweet chocolate. There's a tasty hit of sour cherry in the finish. (85 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Merlot

Outstanding! Daven Lore Winery 2008 Merlot, Columbia Valley, \$25. Visitors to the farmers market in Prosser, Wash., where this boutique winery is a regular can thank the state Legislature for the new law that permits wineries to pour samples. Joan "Dr. Dirt" Davenport and Gordon Taylor will have no problem moving through this fascinating blend from Alder Ridge and Upland vineyards. There are aromas of hibiscus, cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit leather, Nestle Crunch, lime and tobacco leaf. Flavors are reminiscent of a Chukar Cherry covered in dark chocolate and feature enjoyable tartness with a nice grip of tannin. Suggested fare includes baked lasagna or veal with caramelized onions. (85 cases, 14.5% alc.)

Recommended. Kramer Vineyards 2008 Merlot, Walla Walla Valley, \$28. Strange as it is to see "Walla Walla Valley" on the label by a Willamette Valley winery, these grapes are from Milton-Freewater Ore. There's a steady delivery of sweet black currant jam, pleasing earthiness, lingering acidity, lazy tannin and a finish of milk chocolate. (97 cases, 14.2% alc.)

Syrah

Outstanding! Koenig Vineyards 2008 Three Vineyard Cuvée Syrah, Snake River Valley, \$20. No one has been making wine in Idaho longer or as well as Greg Koenig. He taps into nearby Bitner, Hells Canyon and Williamson vineyards for a delicious and spicy drink. Black cherry, cranberry and cedar aromas transform into sweet boysenberry and bold chocolate

flavors. There's a hit of sweetness on the entry that's whisked away nicely by earthy and leathery notes. (248 cases, 14.8% alc.)

Cabernet Franc

Recommended. Kitzke Cellars 2007 Cabernet Franc, Columbia Valley, \$27. This Richland, Wash., family is among the many to transition from orchards to vineyards, and their estate on Candy Mountain produced this example that steers well away from the herbaceousness this Bordeaux variety often shows. Rather, its profile includes hints of strawberry/rhubarb jam on toast, with blackberry, and cola. A pinch of nutmeg and allspice adds jazz to the smooth drink. This should not be overlooked this weekend as the Kitzkes first cast open the doors of their new tasting room near West Richland. (46 cases, 14.4% alc.)

Malbec

Excellent. McKinley Springs Winery 2008 Malbec, Horse Heaven Hills, \$25. Rob Andrews and his family have been farming grapes along Alderdale Road for more than 30 years, and they likely will be planting more of this rising star from Bordeaux. There's a continuous theme of blueberry jam, cassis and pluminess throughout this bottle that allows acidity to nicely overtake tannins. While a bit one-dimensional, it's a rather flattering snapshot. (168 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Carmine

Recommended. Kramer Vineyards 2008 Carmine Big Red, Yamhill-Carlton District, \$30. The parentage of this variety is Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignane and Merlot, and the Kramers always hang it longer than their other grapes -- well beyond their Pinot Noir. It's an exotic aromatic profile of cranberry, lingonberry, bergamot orange, white pepper, dried lavender and Tennessee red cedar. There's no shortage of food-friendly acidity inside as it cleans the palate akin to a cherry/pomegranate sorbet. Along the way are notes of Earl Grey tea, plums, rhubarb and a slice of Roma tomato. (50 cases, 13% alc.)

Grenache

Best Buy! Excellent. Waving Tree Winery 2009 Grenache, Columbia Valley, \$15. Not only does Terrance Atkins advocate Rhône varieties, but his log cabin tasting room also serves as an information kiosk for Maryhill State Park across the Columbia River from Biggs, Ore. There's a hint of stewed cherry behind the aromas of strawberry/rhubarb jam, black currant and tobacco. Those fruits are spooned generously onto the tongue, backed by tobacco, minerality, leather and drying tannin. (13.5% alc.)

New releases we've tasted

Sangiovese

Recommended. Desert Wind Winery 2008 Sacagawea Vineyard Sangiovese, Wahluke Slope, \$18. There's an enjoyable rustic approach to this expression of the famously food-friendly Italian variety, and 12 months in American oak barrels gives a sense of cloves and Reese's Pieces. Yet, there's plenty of raspberry freezer jam notes outside and inside the glass, backed by plums, some sour cherry tartness and Craisins in the finish. (371 cases, 14% alc.)

Tempranillo

Outstanding! Melrose Vineyard 2008 Tempranillo, Umpqua Valley, \$30. The Umpqua Valley has become the Northwest epicenter for this burly Spanish grape, and the Parkers produce one of the best. Black cherry, strawberry, violets and tarry aromas pick up flavors of raspberry and cranberry. Early acidity and a gradual construction of late-arriving tannins make this worthy of richly flavored meats and cellaring. (103 cases, 13.4% alc.)

Red blends

Excellent. Challenger Ridge Vineyard & Cellars 2008 CR Select, Washington, \$38. Robert Smasne, one of the busiest hired guns in Washington winemaking circles, consulted for this winery launched on Challenger Road near North Cascades National Park. This blend of Petite Sirah, Zinfandel and Tempranillo shows off aromas of strawberry jam, black cherry and cherry wood. It's tasty, smooth and takes you for a wild ride, starting with a load cherry and strawberry flavors. Cranberry acidity arrives on the midpalate in full force, trailed by tannins and a finish of plums and chocolate. Enjoy a char-broiled steak cooked over grape wood. (73 cases, 13.9% alc.)

Recommended. Challenger Ridge Vineyard & Cellars 2008 Mystic Red, Washington, \$18. Dusty pie cherries, pomegranate and raspberry tones pick up crushed leaf and bright acidity from the Cabernet Franc (26%) component in this blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (42%), Merlot (17%), Syrah (8%) and Malbec. The angular grip of its tannin profile should play out well with short ribs or chicken cacciatore. (500 cases, 13.8% alc.)

Outstanding! Columbia Crest 2008 Grand Estates Amitage, Columbia Valley, \$12. Juan Muñoz-Oca, recently promoted to head winemaker, has long been in charge of the red program for Ray Einberger. This new creation, which blends "ami" (love) with heritage, is Merlot-based (64%) and backed by Syrah (19%), Cabernet Franc (7%), Malbec (5%) and Cabernet Sauvignon. There's much to enjoy, starting with sweet aromas of black cherry, Nutella, alder smoke, sassafras

and bay rum. The palate is very fruit-forward and shows remarkable juiciness, hinting at blueberries, cherries and huckleberries with almost hidden tannin. Fire up the barbecue, and there's no need for a short pour. (50,000 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Outstanding! Corvus Cellars 2008 Syrah • Petite Sirah, Red Mountain, \$28. Steve Lessard developed this label and small vineyard on Red Mountain while making the wine for Whitman Cellars. The shuttering of that Walla Walla winery allows Lessard to channel his energies into this project with Randall Hopkins. There's nothing coy about this as it exudes aromas of baked brownies, cherries, dried strawberry, blueberry, huckleberry and cardamom. The Petite Sirah (29%) readily unveils itself with a sturdy tannin profile, but blueberry, blackberry, black currant and baker's chocolate flavors keep on coming. Hints of anise, black olive and cigar peek out in the finish. (170 cases, 14.2% alc.)

Excellent. EMVY Cellars 2005 Seven Hills Vineyard Devotion, Walla Walla Valley, \$40. The Spokane couple of Mark and Valerie Wilkerson continue to operate one of the tiniest commercial wineries in the Northwest. They make one wine each year, sometimes skipping vintages, but the vineyard sources and results show dedication. This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (58%) and Merlot exudes richness with tones of pomegranate and canned plums. Its time in barrel provides hints of a Mounds Bar and light caramel. Their wines are available at their downtown tasting room, several quality Spokane wine shops and private golf clubs. (150 cases, 14% alc.)

Excellent. Kathken Vineyards 2008 The Remedy, Oregon, \$17. Customers asked Ken and Kathy Slusser for a bolder wine than their estate near Salem could produce, so they reached into the Rogue Valley for Cabernet Sauvignon (35%), Merlot (35%) and Syrah (5%) to blend with their Pinot Noir (25%). It's a surprising offering that opens with lively lingonberry, plum, boysenberry, milk chocolate and French vanilla aromas. One might think there's some Barbera in this drink because of its heightened acidity as it features flavors of bright boysenberry, more lingonberry and president plums off the tree. The tannins will grow on you, as will its long pie cherry finish. (95 cases, 13.9% alc.)

Outstanding! Pura Vida Create Good 2007 Cuvée, Columbia Valley, \$45. This Seattle-based free-trade coffee operation also has been retailing small lots of wine starting with the 2004 vintage. It recently released both the 2007 and 2008 vintages, and this all-Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (50%), Merlot (25%), Cabernet Franc (13%), Malbec (6%) and Petit Verdot shows more elegance than power, which is rather

New releases we've tasted

remarkable considering Red Mountain vineyards Ciel du Cheval and Klipsun play roles. Restrained use of oak by investment banker/turned winemaker Jeff Hussey allows for aromas of red plums, raspberry, cranberry, cedar, leather and sagebrush. The same high-toned fruit asserts itself in the mouth, followed by a licorice and a broad array of smoky chocolate. If you purchase a bottle, the Create Good Foundation sends a water filter to a family in need overseas. (400 cases, 14.5% alc.)

Outstanding! Waving Tree Winery 2007 Columbus Landing, Columbia Valley, \$20. Terrance Atkins's estate blend of Syrah and Grenache near Goldendale, Wash., shows off aromas of poached plums, fig and blackberry that back into dense flavors of more the same. Mince meat spice and supportive tannins should make this fun to pair with lamb or pork roast, and its hedonistic bit of sweetness promotes a notion of drinking from a belly button. (13.5% alc.)

Chardonnay

Excellent. Cathedral Ridge Winery 2008 McDuffee Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, \$36. It's a short drive from The Dalles, Ore., vineyards to this Hood River, Ore., winery, and this site was first planted in 1983. There's a big showing of spicy oak in the aromas with hints of fresh-baked brioche, French vanilla, white peach, apple and fresh linen. The palate yields more fruit, particularly yellow grapefruit and a pleasing sheen of orange oil on the midpalate. Apple, citrus and a touch of heat dribble out in the finish. (135 cases, 14.6% alc.)

Excellent. Columbia Crest 2009 Grand Estates Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, \$12. The sheer scale of this production is jaw-dropping, but it should reel anyone who enjoys buttery Chards. Aromas highlight lemony oak, gooseberry, mint and sandpaper, while the real payoff starts with the pleasing entry to the palate of delicious butterscotch, banana and flavors. Lovely viscosity coats the mouth, followed by a lingering finish of lemon peel. Suggested fare includes firecracker prawns or Dungeness crab cakes. (250,000 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Excellent. Kramer Vineyards 2007 Barrel Select Chardonnay, Yamhill-Carlton District, \$20. On the landscape of oak-themed Chardonnay in the Northwest, this ranks among the best. The long list of aromas includes butterscotch, lemon meringue pie, fresh pineapple, ripe pear, papaya, orange peel and a hint of cinnamon. The drink is deliciously tart with lime, pineapple and Granny Smith apple flavors. Enjoy with a bowl of vichyssoise or alongside a salad featuring topped with fresh olive oil and feta. (150 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Recommended. Best Buy! Kramer Vineyards 2007 Djon Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, \$15. Harvest for this came 17 days prior to the lot targeted for the Barrel Select program. There's a generous nose of tropical fruit, jasmine, linen, pineapple, nectarine and butterscotch. The palate shows the surly aging with creamy caramel on the entry, which evolves into lemon curd, citrus and starfruit. Its acidity profile is reminiscent of a Sauvignon Blanc, which prompted us to think of serving it with oysters. (218 cases, 13.2% alc.)

Riesling

Outstanding! Brooks Wines 2008 Ara Riesling, Willamette Valley, \$25. Chris Williams' latest Riesling stands out for more than being cast into perhaps the tallest bottle from a Northwest winery. Once in the glass, it exudes aromas of honeydew melon, lemon oil, anise and river rock. The lively drink fills the mouth with succulent flavors of quince, kumquat, Granny Smith apple and a hard nectarine against a backdrop of minerality. It lists itself as "dry" on the International Riesling Foundation code, although it doesn't tip the sweetness scale at 1.1% residual sugar and seems built to age. It's no coincidence this wine recently was served at the White House and earned a double gold at the 2011 Oregon Wine Awards. (185 cases, 12.7% alc.)

Excellent. Gård Vintners 2008 Lawrence Vineyard Dry Riesling, Columbia Valley, \$18. The Lawrence family and winemaker Robert Smasne put their heads together for an unusual expression with this German variety by aging their Frenchman Hills fruit on the lees for eight months. It makes for a fascinating drink with aromas of baked peach pie, lemon, hazelnut and wet stone, while the flavors range from creaminess of lemon custard to golden delicious apple and peach. The finish is dry with more minerality. Available in Woodinville and their new tasting room in downtown Ellensburg. (252 cases, 13.6% alc.)

Pinot Gris

Recommended. Cathedral Ridge Winery 2009 Pinot Gris, Columbia Gorge, \$18. Bartlett pear, dried apple, honeydew melon, honeycomb, fresh potato peel, minerality and lingering lemon peel aromas and flavors give this refreshing and dry drink a variety of entry points for pairings with seafood and beyond. (13.6% alc.)

Sauvignon Blanc

Best Buy! Recommended. Gordon Brothers Family Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Columbia Valley, \$13. Reminiscent of some New Zealand imports, this drink of gooseberry, Granny Smith apple, minerality,

New releases we've tasted

grassiness and caraway seed screams for grilled scallops. (940 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Gewürztraminer

Outstanding! Westport Winery 2009 Capatin Gray's Gewürztraminer, Washington, \$25. Dana Roberts, the young winemaker for our Washington Winery to Watch, strikes again with a brilliant example of a sometimes finicky variety. Ruby red grapefruit dominates both the aromas and flavors, akin to squeezing the last drops of juice and pulp onto your breakfast spoon. Behind the scene are hints of cinnamon bark, lavender, lemon and Apple Jacks cereal. The acidity, while abundant, doesn't come across as contrived. (274 cases, 11% alc.)

Viognier

Best Buy! Excellent. Koenig Vineyards 2009 Williamson Vineyard Viognier, Snake River Valley, \$15. Only recently have outsiders hinted that Idaho's future may rest with Rhône varieties, not Riesling. Caldwell vintner Greg Koenig has been sold on that belief for years, and here marks his eighth vintage with this grape. The aromas stir up childhood memories of eating orange/vanilla ice cream with a wooden spoon in the school cafeteria, and there's enjoyable richness to the drink. Oak shows on the palate, yet it is balanced with Gala apple, peach and peach pit flavors. Serve with sautéed scallops or chicken in a garlic-butter sauce. (411 cases, 14% alc.)

Recommended. Martinez & Martinez 2009 Alder Ridge Vineyard Viognier, Horse Heaven Hills, \$16. This young winery in Prosser, Wash., dialed this into the off-dry class with lots of tropical Juicy Fruit and Jonagold apple aromas and flavors. It's almost a late-harvest with the sweetness and would be a good candidate for quaffing or offering as an introduction to new wine drinkers. (130 cases, 13.5% alc.)

Pinot Blanc

Excellent. Kramer Vineyards 2009 Pinot Blanc, Yamhill-Carlton District, \$18: Trudy and Keith Kramer first planted their vineyard in 1984, but this lesser Burgundy variety isn't among their vines. In fact, this is their first experience with it, and they've proven to be a quick study. Gala apple, apricot, white peach, banana, jasmine and fennel aromas turn into flavors that focus early with more white peach. What follow are hints of a creamy lemon tart, flecks of minerality, a piece of Jolly Rancher apple candy and refreshing lemon zest in the finish. In 2010, the Kramers tripled their order from Kelly's Vineyard. (73 cases, 13.9% alc.)

Müller-Thurgau

Excellent. Henry Estate 2009 Müller-Thurgau, Umpqua Valley, \$10. The Henry family has a long and consistent track record with Dr. Müller's cross of Riesling and Silvaner. Aromas include lemon sorbet, jasmine, wet stone, lychee nut and passion fruit. Tropical fruit takes control in the mouth, and spritely acidity makes it a fun wine as it closes with Honeycrisp apple and anise. The Henrys list this as "semi-sweet," but they've balanced the sugar (1.5%) nicely. (207 cases, 10% alc.)

Muscat

Excellent. Columbia Crest 2010 Grand Estates Moscato, Columbia Valley, \$12. Ste. Michelle winemaker Bob Bertheau launched a "Save the Muscat" campaign several years ago, and research shows sales in the U.S. for the variety have grown 40 percent in the past year. Juan Muñoz-Oca and Ste. Michelle's gigantic sister in Paterson, Wash., answer the call beautifully in this blend of Muscat Canelli (75%), Morio-Muskat (15%) and Black Muscat (10%). Notes of honeysuckle, honeydew melon, lychee, jasmine, lime and poppyseed muffin race throughout. There's a roundness to the body, while hints of grassiness and starfruit add complexity and balance the residual sugar (3.2%). (14,000 cases, 10.5% alc.)

Excellent. JoieFarm 2010 Muscat, Okanagan Valley, \$23 CDN. How geekish are Michael Dinn and Heidi Noble about this grape variety? They've devoted 40 percent of their 5-acre sustainably farmed estate to Moscato Giallo (Yellow Muscat), and Dinn crafted this in a dry style (.8% residual sugar). Aromatics include honeysuckle, lychee and jasmine, backed by citrus and green banana. Inside is a theme of tangy flavors of lime and Meyer lemon, filled in by jasmine and a pleasing slatiness for length. Few in North America know food-and-wine pairing better than this family, and they suggest serving it with pecorino cheese and prosciutto. (453 cases, 11.4% alc.)

Outstanding! LaStella Winery 2010 Moscato d'Osoyoos, Okanagan Valley, \$20 CDN. James Cambridge arrived at this high-end boutique B.C. winery near the U.S. border after two stints at Summerhill Pyramid Winery in Kelowna. He's shown almost a Midas touch with the white program, and it's almost impossible to spit this. Mouth-watering aromas lead with tangerine, lime, peach, pear and clover. Fresh-picked orchard fruit and honeysuckle flavors bring in a delightful amount of residual sugar, but there is enough lime and a bit of spritz along the way to hit all the right buttons. It's a fun brunch wine or delightful afternoon cocktail. (366 cases, 9.2% alc.)

Northwest wine regions

Multi-state appellations

Columbia Valley: This multi-state appellation is 11 million acres in size and takes up a third of Washington. Established in 1984.

Columbia Gorge: This multi-state appellation begins around the town of Lyle and heads west to Husum on the Washington side of the Columbia River. It was established in 2004.

Walla Walla Valley: This multi-state appellation is in the southeast corner of Washington and around Milton-Freewater, Ore. Established in 1984.

Snake River Valley: This is in southwestern Idaho and southeastern Oregon. It covers 8,263 square miles and was established in 2007.

Washington

Yakima Valley: The Northwest's oldest appellation (established in 1983) stretches past Wapato in the west to Benton City in the east and includes Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills and Snipes Mountain.

Red Mountain: Washington's smallest appellation is a ridge in the eastern Yakima Valley. It is 4,040 acres in size. Established in 2001.

Horse Heaven Hills: This large appellation — 570,000 acres — is south of the Yakima Valley and stretches to the Oregon border. It was established in 2005.

Wahluke Slope: Approved in early 2006, this huge landform north of the Yakima Valley is an 81,000-acre gravel bar created by the Ice Age Floods. It is one of the warmest regions in the entire Pacific Northwest. Established in 2006.

Rattlesnake Hills: This appellation is in the western Yakima Valley north of the towns of Zillah, Granger and Outlook. The appellation is 68,500 acres in size with about 1,300 acres of vineyards. It was established in 2006.

Puget Sound: This sprawling appellation is in Western Washington. It stretches from the Olympia area to the Canadian border north of Bellingham. It also sweeps through the San Juan Islands and to Port Angeles. Established in 1995.

Snipes Mountain: This is one of Washington's oldest wine-growing regions. At 4,145 acres in size, it is the state's second-smallest AVA. Grapes have been grown on Snipes Mountain and at the adjacent Harrison Hill (also part of the AVA) since 1914. This AVA is within the Yakima Valley appellation and was approved in 2009.

Lake Chelan: This area in north-central Washington is almost entirely within the Columbia Valley. It is a young area, with the oldest vines dating to 1998. About 250 acres are planted here. It was approved in 2009.

Oregon

Willamette Valley: Oregon's largest appellation stretches roughly from Portland to Eugene. Established in 1984.

Ribbon Ridge: This is the Northwest's smallest appellation at 3,350 acres. It is best known for its Pinot Noir and is within the Chehalem Mountains AVA. It was established in 2005.

Yamhill-Carlton: This is a horseshoe-shaped appellation that surrounds the towns of Yamhill and Carlton. It was established in 2005.

Chehalem Mountains: This is the largest within the Willamette Valley. This 62,100-acre appellation is northeast of the Dundee Hills. It was established in 2006.

Dundee Hills: Many of Oregon's pioneer wineries are in the Dundee Hills within Oregon's Yamhill County. The appellation is 6,490 acres in size. It was established in 2005.

Eola-Amity Hills: This important region stretches from the town of Amity in the north to the capital city of Salem in the southeast. It is 37,900 acres in size. It was established in 2006.

McMinnville: The hills south and west of the Yamhill County city of McMinnville are more than 40,000 acres in size. It was established in 2005.

Umpqua Valley: This Southern Oregon appellation surrounds the city of Roseburg north of the Rogue Valley. It can produce Pinot Noir as well as warm-climate grapes. It was established in 1984.

Rogue Valley: The Northwest's southern-most appellation surrounds the cities of Medford and Ashland, just north of the California border. It is known for its warm growing conditions. Established in 2001.

Applegate Valley: This small valley within the Rogue Valley is known for a multitude of microclimates that can result in wines of distinction and complexity. Established in 2004.

Southern Oregon: This AVA encompasses the Umpqua, Rogue and Applegate valleys and Red Hill Douglas County. It was established in 2005.

Red Hill Douglas County: This tiny appellation — just 5,500 acres — is within the Umpqua Valley. Fewer than 200 acres of wine grapes, primarily Pinot Noir, are grown here. Established in 2005.

British Columbia

Okanagan Valley: In the province's interior, this 100-mile valley stretches from the border in Osoyoos to Salmon Arm in the north. Most wineries are near Oliver, Penticton and Kelowna. It was established in 1990.

Similkameen Valley: This warm valley is west of the southern Okanagan Valley. It was established in 1990.

Vancouver Island: This marine-influenced appellation is in the southwest part of the province. Established in 1990.

Fraser Valley: This farming area is in the Lower Mainland, south of Vancouver. Established in 1990.

Gulf Islands: This appellation includes approximately 100 islands spread out between Vancouver Island and the southern mainland. Established in 2005.

About us

Wine Press Northwest is a quarterly consumer magazine that focuses on the wine regions of Washington, Oregon, British Columbia and Idaho.

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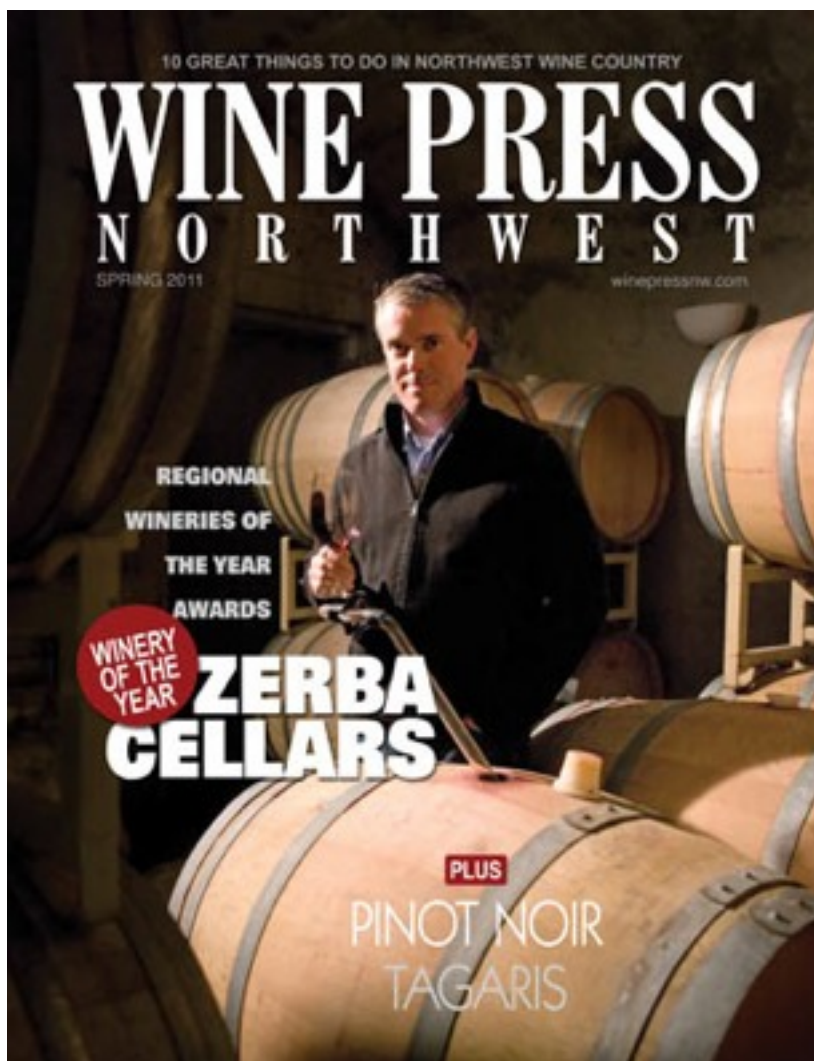
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Tasting methods

Recent Releases are evaluated under strict conditions to ensure objectivity. Northwest wineries submit wines to Wine Press Northwest for evaluation by Wine Press Northwest's tasting panel. After wines are received, they are stored for at least two weeks and a third party serves them "blind," meaning the tasting panelists do not know the producer. In addition, the panelists are served glasses of wine and are not able to view the bottles or their shapes prior to tasting. Wines are stored in temperature-controlled conditions, allowing them to be served at perfect cellar temperatures.

Price is not a consideration in these evaluations, nor is a winery's advertising activity with Wine Press Northwest, as the magazine's editorial/wine evaluation activities and advertising/marketing efforts are kept strictly separate.

The panel has a combination of technical and consumer palates. If at least three of the four panelists consider a wine technically sound and commercially acceptable, it is included here as "Recommended." The panel may also vote the wine as "Excellent" or "Outstanding," our top rating. Wines considered

unacceptable by the panel are rejected and not included. Reviews are grouped by variety or style and listed alphabetically by winery. Prices listed are in U.S. dollars unless otherwise indicated.

To ensure we maintain an international perspective, our tasting panelists judge thousands of wines annually at various competitions, including: Los Angeles International Wine and Spirits Competition, Riverside International Wine Competition, Dallas Morning News Wine Competition, Indy International Wine Competition, Virginia Governor's Cup, Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Grand Harvest Awards, San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, Pacific Rim International Wine Competition, Long Beach Grand Cru, Washington State Wine Competition, Seattle Wine Awards, Northwest Wine Summit, British Columbia Wine Awards, New York Wine and Grape Foundation Competition, Tri-Cities Wine Festival, Capital Food & Wine Fest and Idaho Wine Competition.