

# Washington Wine Report

2009 WINES OF THE YEAR

December 2009

Others have weighed in. As we close out the year, it's my turn to list my top wines of 2009. First let me say that any such list is, of course, subjective. Perhaps some year I will make a bracket system and compare these wines directly against each other, but until then...

1. To be considered for the list, **a review for a wine needed to be published on my blog in 2009.** There were a number of wines I sampled toward the end of this year, such as those from Walla Walla, Chelan, Woodinville, and South Seattle that I have not posted to the blog yet unfortunately. These wines will be considered for next year's list.
2. **I evaluated based on rating, my overall excitement about the wine, and price.** In terms of rating, all wines below received either a double or single star in my [rating system](#). In terms of excitement, I focused on wines that stood out in the weeks and months after I sampled them.
3. **I excluded wines that were considered for [last year's list](#),** even if they were published this year (such as wines from 2008 Walla Walla Holiday Barrel Tasting which were published in January).
4. Although there were many wines I sampled this year, there were many (many) more that I did not. This is one of the things I find the most humbling and exciting about Washington wine. For this reason, **there are, as always, some significant omissions.**

What follows is therefore a list of Washington wines I sampled and posted on in 2009 that I was the most excited about. Nothing more. Nothing less. As with last year, I included only one wine from each winery. Without further ado...

## 1. Forgeron Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Champoux Vineyard 2004 \$46

Of the many wines I tasted this year, none wowed me more than this gem from Marie-Eve Gilla at Forgeron. As I described in my original post, this was a wine that literally brought all conversation to a stop. From one of Washington's finest vineyards and one of its finest winemakers.

Almost completely opaque. Violets, tobacco, funk, and earth emerge on the nose. Packs a gigantic punch on the taste. A complete whopper. Almost completely overwhelms all senses and then comes back and sails. [Reviewed July 16, 2009](#)

## 2. Quilceda Creek Cabernet Sauvignon Palengat Vineyard 2006 \$83

While the Columbia Valley wine is its equal or better, the Palengat Cabernet is the one that impressed me the most from this vintage. This is Quilceda's first release from this recently acquired vineyard located near Champoux Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills (the vineyard was planted in the early part of the decade; fruit from this vineyard was previously used by other wineries). This wine stands tall with the other offerings in Quilceda's portfolio.

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More ruddy in color than the Galitizine and Columbia Valley wines. When first opened, the nose is tight but still exquisite with dark chocolate, rich black cherries, and light herbal notes. A knock-out on the taste. Beautifully refined tannins along with abundant cherry flavors. Brings a bit of heat toward the finish. After five to eight hours decanting, a to-die-for nose with fresh ground espresso which jumps from the glass along with dark spices, licorice, and light herbs. An intense, weighted taste that is packed with fruit and tannins and is beautifully balanced. Lingers endlessly. An exceptional first release from this vineyard. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Petit Verdot. Palengat Vineyard, Horse Heaven Hills AVA. Aged in 100% new French oak for 22 months. Bottled August 2008; released October 2009. 15.2% alcohol. 1,025 cases produced. [Reviewed October 26, 2009](#)

### 3. Betz Family Winery La Serenne Syrah 2007 \$55

While the 2007 La Serenne Syrah from Betz Family Winery is probably the least immediately accessible of their new releases, it also brings the most long-term potential. The fruit from Dick Boushey's vineyard has never been better. This is a dark, brooding, intense wine that needs significant time in the cellar to fully blossom.

A dark, intense color. Hallmark Boushey Vineyard Syrah nose with smoke, bacon fat, and floral notes. Rich on the palate with black fruit. Hangs endlessly on the palate. An earth-shaking wine that provides both power and refinement. [Reviewed September 14, 2009](#)

### 4. Leonetti Merlot Walla Walla Valley 2007 \$70

In the sequel to Sideways, Miles is waterboarded with this wine. He comes away a believer. Read the original post for a cautionary tale about using decanters with rounded bottoms.

Abundant sweet oak aromas along with pain grillé, violets, orange peel, and smoke. A thick chewy taste yet surprisingly soft tannins. A full mid-palate and a pleasing finish round it out. Give 3-5 years and do not spill on porch when opening. 93% Merlot; 7% Petit Verdot. Seven Hills, Loess, Mill Creek Upland, and Pepper Bridge vineyards. 2,389 cases produced. [Reviewed April 11, 2009](#)

### 5. Corliss Estates Red Wine Columbia Valley 2004 \$65

This is Corliss Estates' second released vintage, and none of their wines disappoint. This Bordeaux-style blend, while already five years old, will only improve with patience and time in the cellar.

A nose that pulls you into the glass with fresh ground coffee, spice, dust, and dark cherries. A big, thick, voluptuous mouthfeel. Each sip takes multiple swallows to finish. Initially tight and drying on the palate with silky smooth fruit hanging above the tannins. As the wine opens up, mocha shows through and the fruit comes to the front. An exceptional wine that is a perfect combination of fruit and barrel. 45% Cabernet, 34% Cab Franc, 10% Malbec, 9% Petit Verdot, 2% Merlot. 15.2% alcohol. 480 cases produced. [Reviewed September 29, 2009](#)

### 6. Gramercy Cellars John Lewis Reserve Syrah 2006 \$65

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This is a wine that I literally lay awake thinking about for several weeks after I tried it. Was I thinking about this wine because I couldn't fall asleep, or could I not fall asleep because I was thinking about this wine? It's not clear. The bad news? This wine is long sold out at the winery. The good news? The 2007 vintage will be released later this year and is even better.

A light, refined nose with smoked meats, blackberry seed, and floral notes. An outrageous mouthfeel that is silky smooth. Forgotten Hills and Les Collines vineyards. 100% Syrah. 97 cases produced. [Reviewed March 31, 2009](#)

## 7. DeLille Cellars Harrison Hill 2006 \$70

While many in Washington have gone big, this wine is notable for its elegant expression of a Bordeaux-style blend. The fruit comes from one of Washington's oldest vineyards.

A very engaging, layered nose with rhubarb, currant, and red licorice with a light earth and herbal component beneath them. A very elegant wine that is beautifully textured with refined fruit and spices. Exceptionally well balanced. Hangs on and on. 65% Cabernet; 25% Merlot; 9% Cab Franc; 1% Petit Verdot. 99% Harrison Hill Vineyard (1% Petit Verdot from Ciel du Cheval). [Reviewed February 7, 2009](#)

## 8. Cayuse Cailloux Vineyard Walla Walla Valley 2007 \$50

The grapes for this wine come from Cayuse's oldest plantings in the "rocks" region of the Walla Walla Valley AVA. It shows on this exceptional offering.

A downright stinky nose with manure, burnt embers, and purple fruit. A well fleshed out, meaty palate dominated by olive flavors in its rich, expansive middle. Drinks like a well-cooked steak. 14.2% alcohol. [Reviewed December 28, 2009](#)

## 9. Abeja Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Columbia Valley 2005 \$75

Winemaker John Abbott creates some of Washington's most compelling Cabernets. But he doesn't stop there, making a Syrah, Chardonnay, and a Merlot that are also standouts. In select years – thus far only 2002 and 2005 – Abeja releases a reserve Cabernet blended from their best barrels.

A power-packed nose with abundant campfire aromas along with spice, cigar box, and pencil shavings. Rich on the palate with soft fruit. An impressively long finish caps off this excellent effort. 100% Cabernet. 14.9% alcohol. [Reviewed September 3, 2009](#)

## 10. 21 Grams 2006 \$125

This Bordeaux-style blend is a collaboration of two of Washington's finest wineries, Waters and Gramercy. One hundred cases are made annually with each vintage bearing a unique label made by artist Makoto Fujimura.

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Light chocolate interwoven with cherry, spices, and pencil lead on an elegant nose where everything hangs in balance and always seems to step back and elude you. A gorgeous wine with refined tannins that glide across the palate with chocolate hints mixing in occasionally. An exceptional wine. 92% Cabernet; 6% Merlot; 2% Cab Franc. 100 cases produced. [Reviewed in 2008 Walla Walla Spring Release Report](#)

### 11. Andrew Will Sorella Horse Heaven Hills 2006 \$75

2009 marks the twentieth year since Andrew Will Winery was founded by Chris Camarda. The Sorella is the winery's flagship wine with fruit from Champoux Vineyard.

Dark purple color. Vanilla, light pencil shavings, and soft oak interweave with dark fruit aromas. Perfectly structured and beautifully balanced. Drinking extremely well for its age although additional bottle time or decanting will only make it better. 71% Cabernet; 17% Merlot; 8% Cab Franc; 4% Petit Verdot. 14.7% alcohol. 1326 cases produced. Sampled at 63 degrees. [Reviewed April 10, 2009](#)

### 12. Kerloo Cellars Les Collines Vineyard Syrah 2007 \$32

Few new wineries excited me as much in 2009 as Ryan Crane's Kerloo Cellars. This is one of two inaugural releases from this winery. The second is a Walla Walla Valley Syrah that goes head to head with this wine. Having tasted a number of wines in the barrel, there is much to look forward to from this winery.

An exuberant nose perfumed with violets, lavender, and fresh berry fruit with a layer of light game underneath. On the palate, a deft display of vibrant fruit with a velvet mouthfeel. A zing of acidity draws together this exceptional wine. Les Collines Vineyard Blocks 30 & 50. 14.4% alcohol. 70 cases produced. [Reviewed September 11, 2009](#)

### 13. Trust Cellars Columbia Valley Riesling 2008 \$16

Riesling excels in Washington, and this offering from winemaker Steve Brooks shows the state at its best.

A beautiful nose with sugared grapefruit and pineapple. Spectacular citrus tastes blend with other fruit flavors. Exceptionally well balanced with mineral and a light sweetness on the taste. 100% Riesling. 38% CS Farms (Wahluke Slope); 30% Pheasant (Yakima); 30% Evergreen (Wahluke Slope); 2% Ancient Lakes. 12% alcohol. 224 cases produced. Sampled at 54 degrees. [Reviewed July 14, 2009](#)

### 14. Beresan Stone River Walla Walla Valley 2005 \$35

Beresan is a Walla Walla Valley winery nestled up against Pepper Bridge Vineyard. Fruit for the 2005 Stone River comes from Cobblestone Estate Vineyards and Pepper Bridge Vineyard. This is a thrilling wine that displays a unique aromatic and flavor profile from others in the state.

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Holy smoke Batman! Smoky syrah nose jumps out of the glass (make sure you have your wine away). A rich, luscious mouth feel. Opens and expands with a long finish. After decanting, a fascinating nose shows through will full-on pomegranate juice, lychee, and berry. This is complimented by Panda bear licorice laced with milk chocolate when the wine is not swirled. An excellent, complex wine. 35% Cabernet; 25% Syrah; 25% Merlot; 15% Cab Franc. Waliser (41%), Yellow Jacket (49%), and Pepper Bridge (10%) vineyards. 14.1 % alcohol. 420 cases produced. [Reviewed February 5, 2009](#)

## 15. Rotie Cellars Southern Blend 2007 \$35

This is another wine I have spent a lot of time thinking about in 2009. The 2007 Southern Blend is a wine that becomes more and more impressive with each sip. This is one of the inaugural releases from Sean Boyd's Rotie Cellars, a winery on the way up.

A drop dead gorgeous nose with earth and mineral aromas surrounded by violets and a heaping of raspberries. Beautiful acid balance with a focus on the fruit and the land. The oak is there but is far out of the way. A long finish caps it off. 55% Grenache; 35% Syrah; 10% Mourvedre. 14.2% alcohol. 400 cases produced. [Reviewed September 11, 2009](#)

## 16. Spring Valley Vineyards Uriah Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$50

Spring Valley Vineyards is situated in a unique spot in the Walla Walla Valley, far north from most of the AVAs' vineyards. The winery consistently produces exceptional wines that possess the ever elusive *terroir*.

Rich mocha aromas mingle with cranberry, black cherry, rosehips, and light earth. A rich, thick, multiple swallow wine. 54% Merlot; 33% Cab Franc; 7% Petit Verdot; 6% Malbec. 14.9% alcohol. 5,000 cases produced. [Reviewed July 21, 2009](#)

## 17. Owen Roe Syrah Lady Rosa Yakima Valley 2007 \$42

While Owen Roe is located in Oregon, many of the wines they produce use grapes from Washington such as this Syrah from the Yakima Valley.

Almost black in color. An excellent wine, although a bit atypical of the varietal. Lots of oak aromas including butterscotch and cedar. A plush, rich wine with an ultra-long finish. Red Willow and Outlook vineyards. 14.5% alcohol. 360 cases produced. [Reviewed April 28, 2009](#)

## 18. Buty Sémillon, Sauvignon, Muscadelle Columbia Valley 2008 \$24

For Buty winemaker Caleb Foster, this is the seventeenth vintage he has made this Bordeaux-style blend in Washington. It shows on this gorgeous wine.

Straw colored. A beautiful nose marked by lemon zest, touches of honey, mineral, and yeast. Floral notes emerge as the wine opens up. Fresh, tart, and lemon-loaded on the palate. 69% Sémillon, 26% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Muscadelle. Rosebud Ranches, Spring Creek, and Lonesome River Ranch vineyards. 13.8% alcohol. 1,050 cases produced. [Reviewed September 15, 2009](#)

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### 19. K Vintners The Boy Walla Walla Valley 2007 \$45

Fruit for this wine comes from Cayuse's Armada Vineyard. It seems like it might be time for a tasting alongside Cayuse's God Only Knows Grenache which hails from the same vineyard.

A beautiful, earthy funkiness. Plush and full with loads of fruit. Glides along the palate to an extended finish. 90% Grenache, 10% Syrah. 340 cases produced. [Reviewed July 22, 2009](#)

### 20. Walla Walla Vintners Cabernet Sauvignon Vineyard Select Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$48

Walla Walla Vintners favors an opulent style that is rich with chocolate and cherry aromas and flavors. In exceptional years, the winery makes a vineyard select wine. This was clearly such a year.

An outrageously enjoyable, complex, evolving nose with earth, chocolate, anise, spice, and light herbal aromas along with a touch of mint. A big but soft, undulating wine with a lot of hang time. 94% Cabernet Sauvignon (Pepper Bridge, Seven Hills, Toker and Windrow vineyards). 6% Petit Verdot (Frazier Bluff). 14.3% alcohol. [Reviewed December 2, 2009](#)

### 21. Pepper Bridge Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$50

Pepper Bridge is situated in a picturesque location south of downtown Walla Walla. Winemaker Jean-Francois Pellet crafts some of the state's most compelling Cabernets.

A big, powerful wine with a complex nose marked by vanilla, anise, and syrup aromas. Gripping on the palate with a sprinkle of cinnamon. Drinking exceptionally well considering its age. 87% Cabernet; 8% Merlot; 2% Malbec; 2% Cab Franc; 1% Petit Verdot. [Reviewed April 12, 2009](#)

### 22. Cadence Winery Taptiel Vineyard Red Mountain 2006 \$44

While others accrue the accolades, winemaker Ben Smith quietly makes wines that are equally as good and that will outlive them all.

Light in color, this is a very well put together, smooth wine with mineral and floral notes along with rose hips. 53% Cabernet; 32% Merlot; 15% Cab Franc. 14.4% alcohol. [Reviewed January 6, 2009](#)

### 23. Mark Ryan Winery Dead Horse Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2007 \$45

With 2007 one of Washington's finest vintages and the fruit for this wine coming from one of the state's best vineyards, how could acclaimed winemaker Mark Ryan McNeilly go wrong? He could not and does not on this excellent, age-worthy wine which perfectly displays the bold, rich style he favors.

A complex, fragrant nose with rosehips, abundant dried flowers, and a light herbal element. Tighter than a drum on a taste packed with tannins and intensity. A big, dry, powerful wine with lots of fruit that persists through a long finish. The alcohol gets in the way a bit at times but overall this wine

delivers. Give 2 years or decant extensively. 67% Cabernet, 13% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Franc, 7% Petit Verdot. 100% New French Oak (Saury, Sylvan, Taransaud, Quintessence). 14.7% alcohol. 651 cases produced. Sampled at 66 degrees. [Reviewed October 20, 2009](#)

## 24. Reynvaan Family Vineyards The Contender 2007 \$55

The Contender is one of the inaugural releases from Reynvaan Family Vineyards. This Syrah, which is co-fermented with Marsanne, is nothing short of exceptional. The fruit is from the initial plantings of the family's first vineyard, In the Rocks, in the southern section of the Walla Walla AVA. Vignerons Christophe Baron of Cayuse Vineyards serves as consultant.

Nose is a bit restrained initially with campfire, reductive aromas, and game. As it opens up, it explodes with purple fruit, mineral aromas, manure, earth, and flowers pushing their way up through it all. Thick and intense on a palate rich with fruit and lots of soil and bacon flavors. Beautifully balanced with depth and layers of complexity. Finish hangs. Syrah co-fermented with Marsanne. 13.99% alcohol. [Reviewed December 22, 2009](#)

## 25. Bunnell Family Cellar Boushey–McPherson Vineyard Syrah 2006 \$42

Winemaker Ron Bunnell learned the trade at Chateau Ste. Michelle, Beringer Vineyards, and Kendall–Jackson before turning his attention to his own small, family-run winery. This Rhone varietal focused operation produces consistently impressive results.

An exceptional nose with intense game aromas and smoke. A rich taste that is beautifully constructed. [Reviewed May 6, 2009](#)

## 26. Dusted Valley Vintners Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$45

Dusted Valley Vintners is one of a number of eastern Washington wineries that opened tasting rooms in the Woodinville area in 2009. While this Reserve Cabernet was worth the five hour trip for west-siders, now you truly have no excuse.

A bit of earthy funkiness, graphite, baking chocolate and spice on the nose. A big, dense, chewy wine that is round and opulent on the palate. Lots of cherry flavors. Impressive length on the finish. Best of the flight. [Reviewed September 25, 2009](#)

## 27. Pomum Cellars Shya Red Wine Yakima Valley 2005 \$38

Back in May then blogger/now Washington wine retailer Paul Zitarelli and I drew swords – each looking for a wine that was both extremely impressive and that the other had not tasted. While this battle continues (think “House of Flying Daggers” where seasons pass by as the two are locked in combat), this was a strong opening move by Mr. Zitarelli. In addition to this excellent Bordeaux–style blend, Pomum Cellars, located in Woodinville, is also one of a small number of Washington wineries to show success with Tempranillo.

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A fascinating nose. Almost herbal. Almost spice. A light dusting of high spice and an intriguing black olive component show through at times. Rich, dark cherry aromas come to the fore late. A drop dead gorgeous taste that is rich and opulent. Mouth coating with a zing of acidity. Beautifully balanced with cranberry emerging on the finish. 59% Cabernet; 27% Merlot; 10% Cab Franc; 3% Malbec; 1% Petit Verdot. 14.7% alcohol. 300 cases produced. [Reviewed May 13, 2009](#)

## 28. Amavi Cellars Syrah Walla Walla Valley 2007 \$28

Few make better wines at more compelling price points than Walla Walla's Amavi Cellars. The 2007 Syrah is a beautiful expression of this varietal from perhaps Washington's finest vintage.

An alluring nose with wild blueberries, game, violets, and threads of chocolate. On the taste, a soft entry that ramps up, hangs, and slowly ramps down. A beautifully constructed palate with rich, intense fruit along with earth, roasted meat, and flowers. 100% Syrah (42% Les Collines, 41% Seven Hills, 17% Pepper Bridge vineyards). 14.1% alcohol. 1,736 cases produced. [Reviewed October 6, 2009](#)

## 29. Gorman Winery Evil Twin Red Mountain 2007 \$55

Chris Gorman makes bold, expressive, small lot wines that display no shortage of fruit, tannins, French oak, and alcohol. Look for Gorman's Collaboration Series V from Grand Reve in the future.

More closed on the nose than the other wines sampled with light floral and herbal notes. Dense and extracted on the palate. Dry and smooth with a big lick of tannins at the end. This is a red meat wine. 60% Syrah, 40% Cabernet. 15.5% alcohol. 225 cases produced. [Reviewed September 18, 2009](#)

## 30. Olsen Estates Chardonnay Yakima Valley 2007 \$25

What's this you say? A Chardonnay on my list of top wines of 2009? No one could be more surprised than I am, yet here it is. This wine is a tribute to the varietal and proof that even long-time enemies can sometimes make up and be friends.

Pale golden color. A very clean aroma profile with mineral, Golden Delicious apples, and light spices. A beautiful, smooth palate that glides along. It is very clean but still has weight. Intricately complex on both the nose and taste. 100% Chardonnay. Aged in 74% new French oak. 100% barrel-aged for sixteen months. 14.5% alcohol. 600 cases produced. [Reviewed December 4, 2009](#)

## 31. Walter Dacon Winery C'est Syrah Magnifique 2006 \$42

Walter Dacon Winery is located in Shelton, Washington. Winemaker Lloyd Anderson, who previously worked with Doug McCrea at McCrea Cellars, devotes himself to Rhone and Mediterranean-style wines.

An engaging nose with light smoke, white pepper, floral, and meat aromas. Perfectly balanced. An elegant wine with an extended finish. One of the top wines of the event. 32% Boushey, 32% Elephant

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Mountain, 28% Ranch at the End of the Road, and 8% Destiny Ridge vineyards. 14.8% alcohol. 294 cases produced. [Reviewed April 9, 2009](#)

### 32. Va Piano Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia & Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$38

Va Piano's motto is "He who goes slowly, goes safely and goes far." This Walla Walla winery not only boasts one of the most picturesque settings in the valley, it also produces some of its most enjoyable, understated wines.

A fruit-filled wine loaded with dried currants, sweet spices, tobacco, and anise along with a whiff of white pepper. Dry and tart on the taste. 14.1% alcohol. 392 cases produced. [Reviewed August 5, 2009](#)

### 33. Ardenvoir Sémillon Sauvignon Blanc 2008 \$22

Ardenvoir is a second label for Walla Walla's Chateau Rollat that focuses on white wines and roses.

An alluring nose with lemon, yeast, wheat, and spice. Crisp and fresh on the palate. 92% Sémillon, 8% Sauvignon Blanc. [Reviewed November 19, 2009](#)

### 34. Long Shadows Pirouette Columbia Valley 2006 \$55

Long Shadows Pirouette is a conundrum for me. I consistently enjoy this wine – a Bordeaux-style blend with a bit of Syrah – from winemakers Philippe Melka and Agustin Huneeus. That said, I often wonder whether the unique expression of Washington gets lost somewhere in the blend.

Again, lots of anise, mocha powder, and spice along with a fair amount of caramel. Quite similar on the nose to the 2005. A rich, fruity, syrupy wine with well integrated tannins and a lot of texture. Throwing a good deal of sediment. 54% Cabernet; 20% Merlot; 15% Petit Verdot; 6% Cab Franc; 5% Syrah. 14.6% alcohol. 1,733 cases produced. [Reviewed July 23, 2009](#)

### 35. Lantz Cellars Syrah Rattlesnake Hills 2006 \$28

Lantz Cellars is another new Washington winery celebrating its inaugural releases in 2009. This wine from winemaker Kevin Lantz came in first as the People's Choice at [Seattle Uncorked's Annual Syrah Event](#).

An understated nose with light game, spice, and lots of red and blue fruit. Raspberries and cream on the palate. Beautifully constructed. 97% Syrah; 3% Viognier. Verhey Vineyards, Rattlesnake Hills AVA. 14.4% alcohol. 116 cases produced. [Reviewed August 7, 2009](#)

### 36. Adams Bench Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon "V" 2006 \$42

Adams Bench is located in Woodinville in a pastoral setting far away from the area's office parks. Chris Camarda of Andrew Will Winery is winery's long-time consultant.

A rich, opulent, textured wine with coffee grounds, syrup, anise, and a perfumed aspect to the nose. Very well put together. Give 1–2 years or decant prior to serving. 75% Cabernet; 23% Merlot; 2% Cab Franc. Sampled at 70 degrees. [Reviewed February 18, 2009](#)

### 37. Col Solare Red Wine Columbia Valley 2006 \$75

Col Solare is the flagship winery for Ste. Michelle Estates. The winery recently built a new facility high on Red Mountain. This is the first release produced at the new facility.

On the nose a layer of dust over Chukar cherries laced with chocolate. Thick and rich on the palate with silky tannins and abundant tart cherry flavors. An excellent mix of power and elegance. 72% Cabernet; 19% Merlot; 4% Cabernet Franc; 3% Petit Verdot; 2% Syrah. 14.5% alcohol. Red Mountain (27%); Columbia Valley (35%); Wahluke Slope (19%); and Horse Heaven Hills (14%) AVAs. [Reviewed August 27, 2009](#)

### 38. Balboa Winery Sayulita 2006 \$40

Tom Glase serves as owner and winemaker for Balboa Winery. The winery is situated on the corner of Pepper Bridge Vineyard next to Beresan (Glase also serves as winemaker at this winery). Balboa uses neutral oak for its wines to put the focus on the fruit and the vineyards. This wine is named after a favorite surfing spot.

Lots of pretty fruit including dark cherry. Carries beautifully across the palate with abundant earth aromas and tastes. 100% LeFore Vineyard. 168 cases produced. [Reviewed in 2008 Walla Walla Spring Release Report](#)

### 39. Nefarious Cellars Riesling Stone's Throw Vineyard 2007 \$18

Nefarious Cellars is located in the recently approved Lake Chelan AVA. Heather Neff makes the white wines and husband Dean makes the reds. Fruit for this Riesling comes from one of the winery's estate vineyards.

Almost completely clear in color. A pretty nose marked by sugared grapefruit, melon, and honey. A very clean, well put together taste with lots of mineral. A pleasing off-dry wine. Stone's Throw Estate Vineyard. [Reviewed April 29, 2009](#)

### 40. Waters Syrah Forgotten Hills Vineyard Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$40

Waters Winery makes a number of vineyard-designated Syrahs. None are more compelling than this offering from Forgotten Hills Vineyard, located in the middle of the Walla Walla Valley AVA.

Abundant smoked meat aromas mix with green pepper and game on a very lively nose that also has touches of chocolate. Bright and tart on the palate. 100% Syrah. 13.8% alcohol. 336 cases produced. [Reviewed in 2009 Walla Walla Spring Release Report](#)

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#### 41. Reininger Carménère Seven Hills Vineyard Walla Walla Valley 2006 \$45

Reininger created its first Carmenère in the 2002 vintage. Since that time it has gone on to become a winery favorite.

Fairly dark in color. Bell pepper aromas dominate on both the nose and taste. Ramps up quickly on the palate and then backs off a bit. Well done. 100% Carménère. 454 cases produced. [Reviewed in 2009 Walla Walla Spring Release Report](#)

#### 42. Syncline Wine Cellars Cuvee Elena Columbia Valley 2007 \$35

Syncline Wine Cellars is located in the Columbia Gorge. This Southern Rhone-style blend shows winemaker James Mantone at his best. Mantone will also be making wines as part of Grand Reve's Collaboration Series.

Fairly closed on the nose when first opened with wild blueberries and currant. As it opens up, still restrained but the blueberry becomes more expressive. Beautifully polished on the palate with abundant smooth fruit, herbal streaks, and barely a trace of oak. An elegant wine that needs time to open up. 70% Grenache, 17% Mourvedre, 9% Carignan, 2% Cinsault, 2% Syrah. Northridge, Coyote Canyon, and McKinley Springs vineyards. 14.3% alcohol. 275 cases produced. [Reviewed December 10, 2009](#)

#### 43. Guardian Cellars Chalk Line Columbia Valley 2006 \$25

While Guardian Cellars' winemaker calls this a "kitchen sink" wine, it does not resemble my kitchen sink in any way.

Marionberry, brambleberry, and a little spice mixed with chocolate. Full and rich on the palate. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Malbec, 17% Syrah, 11% Merlot. 14.7% alcohol. [Reviewed February 25, 2009](#)

#### 44. Long Shadows Sequel Syrah 2006 \$55

Long Shadows is a venture by former Ste. Michelle Estates CEO Allen Shoup who pairs some of the world's top winemakers with Washington fruit. Here winemaker John Duval, whose previous efforts include Penfolds' Grange, sees what he can coax out of the state's Syrah with impressive results.

Rich with coffee grounds and black licorice on an alluring nose. Fairly tight on the taste at present. Give 6-12 months. 96% Syrah, 4% Cabernet Sauvignon. 14.7% alcohol. 2,012 cases produced. [Reviewed July 23, 2009](#)

#### 45. Soos Creek Red Wine Artist Series #5 2005 \$28

David Larsen is one of a number of winemakers who had his start in the Boeing Wine Club. After spending twenty-eight years in the finance department at Boeing, Larsen retired in 2004 to spend more time on winemaking and other endeavors.

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An engaging nose with spicy plum, tobacco, and black licorice. A pleasing, round taste with lots of fig and soft tannins. 49% Cabernet; 42% Cab Franc; 9% Merlot. 14.1% alcohol. [Reviewed February 9, 2009](#)

#### 46. Tranche Cellars Rousanne Viognier Columbia Valley 2007 \$30

Tranche Cellars is a second winery from Michael Corliss, Lauri Darneille, and Kendall Mix. The first winery, Corliss Estates, had its inaugural release last year. The third, Red Mountain Vineyards, will have its first release in 2010.

Pale gold with a slight greenish tint. Aromas redolent with freshly cut apples, mineral, spice notes, and occasional exotic fruit. Round and textured on the palate with generous amounts of oak – although by no means excessive – and white peach. The finish hangs, lingers, and shows lots of movement. 66% Rousanne, 33% Viognier. 13.7% alcohol. [Reviewed on May 22, 2009](#)

#### 47. Glencorrie Cuvee Marquis Columbia Valley 2006 \$45

Glencorrie is another new winery marking its first release. The winery is located on the way in to Walla Walla. Charlie Hoppes of Fidelitas currently serves as winemaker.

Light cocoa powder, pepper, black cherry, and very, very light herbal qualities. Opens up, expands, and lingers. A finish that holds on and evolves with fruit, spice, and light herbal notes. An elegant, beautifully done wine. 70% Cabernet (Weinbau, Stillwater Creek, Gamache vineyards); 20% Merlot (Stillwater Creek); 10% Malbec (Goose Ridge Vineyard). 14.7% alcohol. 192 cases produced. [Reviewed June 19, 2009](#)

#### 48. Domaine Pouillon Gewurztraminer Columbia Gorge 2008 \$17

Domaine Pouillon is located in the Columbia Gorge in Lyle, Washington. The winery is named after owners Alexis and Juliet Pouillon.

An incredibly complex, aromatic nose with fresh pineapple, lemon rind, honey, and mineral. Numerous sweet as well as acidic notes. A beautiful, but surprisingly understated palate that is like drinking a bouquet of flowers with the occasional orange peel mixed in. There is a bit of residual sugar, but not much. The palate evolves swiftly after opening, becoming considerably more acidic and developing an almost spritzy feel before settling back down. An exceptionally long finish. 13.8% alcohol. [Reviewed December 15, 2009](#)

#### 49. Novelty Hill Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2005 \$25

Novelty Hill is located in Woodinville. Mike Januik serves as winemaker.

Oak aromas predominate – including toffee, cedar, and white pepper – on a nose marked by little fruit. Round and generous and palate coating. Well balanced with soft tannins. Anise and tart fruit mark the finish. 14.1% alcohol. 4,108 cases produced. [Reviewed February 14, 2009](#)

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## 50. Barnard Griffin Riesling Columbia Valley 2008 \$8

I first tried this wine alongside several other Rieslings as part of my monthly Five Under Fifteen series. Washington makes many outstanding Rieslings, but few can compete with this wine on quality and price.

Aromas explode from the glass with butterscotch (which fades as the wine opens up), Honey Dew melon, and white grapefruit. This is a textured, layered wine with a great deal of complexity on the palate. Fruit flavors – predominantly white grapefruit – step forward and back, undulating on and on. Settles in to an extended finish. Caroway & Arête vineyards (Columbia Valley). 1.2% RS, .82g/100ml TA, 11.7% alcohol. 3,870 cases produced. [Reviewed August 31, 2009](#)



*Washington Wine Report ([www.wawinereport.com](http://www.wawinereport.com)) is an independent blog focused on bringing Washington wine to you and bringing you to Washington wine. Our goal is to help you select Washington wines at a variety of price levels; keep you up-to-date about the state's wineries, vineyards, and individuals; help you plan trips to wine country; and connect you to the larger wine community.*

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