

Washington Wine Report

SOUTH SEATTLE ARTISAN WINERIES

Winter 2010

9 wineries visited, 45 wines reviewed

South Seattle is home to nine wineries that have banded themselves together under the moniker '[South Seattle Artisan Wineries](#)'. The wineries are generally grouped into two areas. The first, near Boeing Field, includes [Cadence](#), [OS](#), and [Nota Bene](#). The second, near the Mariner's baseball stadium, includes [Elsom](#), [Falling Rain](#), [Sodovino](#),

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and [Stomani](#). Between these two areas are two wineries, [Fall Line](#) and [Laurelhurst Cellars](#).

Both the physical location and wineries themselves are largely short on charm. These are production facilities located in the nether land between highways 99 and I-5. Surrounding the wineries is an industrial dead zone interspersed with office parks and warehouses. The jumble of highways and train tracks makes finding some of the wineries a bit of a challenge the first time around. With many of the facilities in office parks, one feels very, very far from the vineyards upon arrival. Even the city can seem far off at times.

However, these wineries are labors of love, with most of the winemakers working other full-time jobs. What the wineries lack in terms of charm they try to make up for with quality wine and largely succeed. To the south, Cadence, one of the early wineries to locate in the area, is one of Washington's top wineries, producing consistently exceptional wines known for their balance and structure. Cadence's focus on graceful balance is juxtaposed by nearby OS Winery, known for their big, brawny reds. To the north, friends and former classmates from WSU operate out of a common building that includes Sodovino, Stomani, Falling Rain, and Elsom. The building is located a block off the elevated expressway (two words: earthquake insurance).



The South Seattle Artisan Wineries open infrequently, usually on the second Saturday of the month during certain times of the year as well as for releases. The wineries are also open by appointment. See a list of planned openings [here](#).

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Double and Single Star Wines

Wines listed in alphabetical order by winery

Cadence Red Wine Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2007 \$45

Rating: ★★ (Exceptional) An attractive nose with lots of earth, floral notes, chocolate, and black fruit. Tight and tannic on the taste with a lot of currant flavors. Give this layered, exceptional wine three to five years. 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Cabernet Franc, 13% Merlot, 13% Petit Verdot. 14.4% alcohol. 495 cases produced.

Cadence Red Wine Taptiel Vineyard Red Mountain 2007 \$45

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark and purple. An extremely fragrant, beautiful nose with earth, currant, and black licorice. A bit more masculine in style than the Ciel wine with a lot of structure. Lingers for a long finish. Give three to five years. 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot. 14.4% alcohol. 440 cases produced.

Cadence Bel Canto Red Wine Cara Mia Vineyard 2007 \$55

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark to the point of being opaque. A beautiful, expressive nose with chocolate, licorice, earth, dark fruit, spice, and light herbal notes. Elegantly structured on the palate. Less fruit intensity than the Ciel and Taptiel offerings but still delivers with excellent focus and structure. Give two to three years. 62% Cabernet Franc, 31% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot. 14.4% alcohol. 570 cases produced.

Falling Rain Cloudburst Red Wine Columbia Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Black licorice, cola, chocolate, and blackberry mark the nose. Impressively balanced on the palate with chocolate and black fruit flavors. Hits all of the right notes and hangs on for the finish. 30% Syrah (Lewis Vineyard), 30% Merlot (Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 30% Cabernet Sauvignon (Lewis Vineyard, Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 10% Malbec (Gilbert Vineyard). Aged in French and American oak.

Falling Rain Mischief Red Wine Columbia Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Ground black licorice aromas pair with black fruit on an enjoyable nose. Rich with chocolate and fruit on the palate with a lingering finish. 45% Merlot (Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 42% Cabernet Sauvignon (Lewis Vineyard, Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 13% Malbec (Gilbert Vineyard). Aged in French and American oak. Aged in French and American oak.

Falling Rain Mischief Red Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A bit closed up at the moment with pencil lead, black fruit and chocolate. Big and brawny with fruit and tannins on the taste. Needs time in the bottle as it comes off as a bit dry and tight right now but this will be an impressive wine. Give 1–2 years. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot.

Fall Line Winery Artz Red Blend Red Mountain 2007 \$28

Rating: ★ (Excellent) An engaging nose with smoke, mineral, and currant. Tight, tart, and intensely focused with fruit on the palate. A pleasing balance of acid and tannins, although the latter are a bit drying at times. Give three years. 39% Cabernet Franc, 36% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. 490 cases produced.

Fall Line Winery Red Wine Artz Vineyard RM 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A lovely nose with cherry, earth, and floral aromatics. Excellent balance of tannins, alcohol, and acidity with focused fruit. Give two to three years.

Laurelhurst Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain 2006 \$38

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A prototypic Red Mountain nose with earth, flowers, slate, and cherry along with pencil lead accents. A delicious palate with lots of fruit, chocolate, and a good tannic structure. Chocolate gets a little sweet at times. 52 cases produced.

Laurelhurst Cellars Cabernet Franc Boushey Vineyard 2006 \$36

Rating: ★ (Excellent) An outrageous, Boushey-only nose with earthy funk, flowers, milk chocolate, and purple fruit. A fun, engaging wine that dips slightly in the mid-palate but then comes back on for a strong finish. Fruit seems to want a bit more structure at times on an otherwise very enjoyable wine. 28 cases produced.

:Nota Bene Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2006 \$35

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A fascinating nose with a touch of smoke, an intriguing bramble berry aroma, and black licorice. Alcohol shows through on the nose at times. Taste is well balanced and easy drinking. Remains one of the better priced Ciel's out there although the Ciel characteristics seem to get a bit lost at times. 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec. 15.1% alcohol.

OS Winery Riesling Champoux Vineyard HHH 2008 \$15

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Pale in color with a slight greenish tinge. A complex nose with acidic aromas along with mineral, spiced green apples, and light floral notes. Off-dry in style, the palate is exceptionally smooth and well balanced. 2% Residual Sugar. 9% alcohol. 325 cases produced.

OS Winery BSH 2005 \$30

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A cloudy wine that is throwing a lot of sediment. A fascinating nose with mint, cherry cordial, red vines, and dry chocolate. Packs a punch on the palate with a BSH of red fruit, high-toned coffee notes, and an under-layer of tannins.

OS Winery Syrah Dineen Vineyard Yakima Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark and intense. An explosive nose with blueberries, smoked meat, chocolate, and flowers. Gorgeously textured with fruit and smoked meat. 92 cases produced. 14.8% alcohol.

Wineries listed in order visited.

Cadence Winery



[Cadence Winery](#) is the work of winemaker Ben Smith and his wife Gaye McNutt. Before turning his attention to winemaking full-time at the beginning of this decade, Smith spent fourteen years as a mechanical engineer at Boeing working on airplane designs. While at Boeing, Smith began exploring his interest in winemaking via the Boeing Wine Club. Smith made his first wine in a five gallon carboy, entered it into a competition, and won! The rest, as they say, is history.

Cadence made its first vintage in 1998. The name Cadence has multiple meanings for the couple, from their love of music, cycling, and triathlons, to seeking “balance, harmony, and precision” in their wines. Fittingly, Cadence moves very much to its own rhythm. Unlike many New World wines which are big on fruit and charm early in life only to fade quickly within a few years, Cadence’s wines require time to fully reveal their charms, becoming more and more impressive with each passing year in the cellar. This is against the grain of the “drink now” approach of many winemakers – and wine buyers – but those with patience are generously

rewarded.

Cadence’s wines display much more of an Old World touch than many – perhaps any – winery in Washington. While there is focused fruit, the emphasis is very much on the expression of the *terroir* and the creation of highly structured wines. The result, while atypical for Washington, is some of the most dynamic, age-worthy wines being produced in the state. Cadence’s wines are also unique in that Cabernet Franc is always featured in the blends – a callout to France’s Cheval Blanc.

Cadence currently produces four vineyard-designated red blends from the Red Mountain AVA, one from Ciel du Cheval, one from Taptiel, and two from the winery’s estate vineyard, Cara Mia. Smith has been working with fruit from Ciel du Cheval, one of the finest vineyards in Washington, since 1999. Few show a finer touch with the vineyard’s fruit. In an acknowledgement of his success with this vineyard, Smith was the first winemaker to work with Paul McBride and Ryan Johnson on the [Grand Reve project](#). This project pairs top Washington winemakers with Ciel du Cheval fruit (Grand Reve will be using fruit from its estate vineyard in the coming years). Smith’s Collaboration Series I wines recently received 95 point scores from *Wine Advocate* for the 2005 and 2006 vintages.

In addition to his red blends from Ciel du Cheval and Taptiel, Smith creates two reserve wines from Cara Mia Vineyard, Cadence’s estate vineyard. The 2007 vintage marks the fourth leaf for this vineyard. While the second vintage from Cara Mia improves upon the first, it will take some time before these vines can match the intensity and structure of the older vines of Ciel and Taptiel. But it will be fun watching them get there.

Of note, the 2007 vintage marks a label change for the winery. In the 2006 vintage Cadence began using an image of an embossed barrel on their reserve wines from Cara Mia Vineyard. This year the Ciel du Cheval and Taptiel wines will feature a similar, albeit differentiated, label.

Cadence produces 2,100 cases annually.

Note: Wines double decanted two hours prior to tasting. All wines sampled at 60 degrees.

Cadence Red Wine Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2007 \$45

Rating: ★★ (Exceptional) An attractive nose with lots of earth, floral notes, chocolate, and black fruit. Tight and tannic on the taste with a lot of currant flavors. Give this layered, exceptional wine three to five years. 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Cabernet Franc, 13% Merlot, 13% Petit Verdot. 14.4% alcohol. 495 cases produced.

Cadence Red Wine Taptiel Vineyard Red Mountain 2007 \$45

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark and purply. An extremely fragrant, beautiful nose with earth, currant, and black licorice. A bit more masculine in style than the Ciel wine with a lot of structure. Lingers for a long finish. Give three to five years. 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot. 14.4% alcohol. 440 cases produced.

Cadence Camerata Red Wine Cara Mia Vineyard RM 2007 \$55

Rating: +/★ (Good/Excellent) Extremely dark purple. Intensely aromatic with pepper and black licorice. Lighter on the palate in terms of the fruit than the other wines sampled. A good scaffolding but needs some time to come into its own. 14.4% alcohol. 496 cases produced.

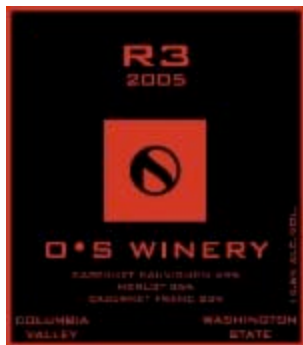
Cadence Bel Canto Red Wine Cara Mia Vineyard 2007 \$55

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark to the point of being opaque. A beautiful, expressive nose with chocolate, licorice, earth, dark fruit, spice, and light herbal notes. Elegantly structured on the palate. Less fruit intensity than the Ciel and Taptiel offerings but still delivers with excellent focus and structure. Give two to three years. 62% Cabernet Franc, 31% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot. 14.4% alcohol. 570 cases produced.

Cadence Red Wine Taptiel Vineyard 2001 \$NA

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Nose really pops on this wine with lots and lots of aged fruit and ground black licorice. Gorgeously textured with a number of different layers on the palate. Drinking beautifully with a long life ahead of it. 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 15% Petit Verdot.

OS Winery



[OS Winery](#) – formerly Owen and Sullivan Winery – was founded by Bill Owen and Rob Sullivan in 1997. OS creates big, rich, slap you in your face style wines with opulent amounts of fruit. Like many big wines, it is a style that makes some people swoon and others cringe at their audacity. The fruit comes from exceptional sources including Champoux, Sheridan, and Dineen vineyards. The wines have colorful names –such as BSH for Brick Sh*t House – and austere black and red labels.

Like many wineries, OS has been feeling the effects of the economy and has reduced their wine prices across the board. This provides an excellent opportunity for people seeking high quality wine at reasonable values.

Note: All wines sampled at 62 degrees.

OS Winery Riesling Champoux Vineyard HHH 2008 \$15

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Pale in color with a slight greenish tinge. A complex nose with acidic aromas along with mineral, spiced green apples, and light floral notes. Off-dry in style, the palate is exceptionally smooth and well balanced. 2% Residual Sugar. 9% alcohol. 325 cases produced.

OS Winery Ulysses Red Wine Sheridan Vineyard YV 2005 \$32

Rating: + (Good) An extremely funky, peppery nose with lots of black fruit. A big wine with a lot of cherry flavors and other fruit. A bit green at times. Very even but wants a bit more scaffolding to hang the fruit on. 45% Merlot, 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Cabernet Franc.

OS Winery R3 Columbia Valley 2005 \$30

Rating: + (Good) A very funky nose with peppercorn, rich cherry, and spices. Smooth on the palate but falls a bit short on the last third and on the finish. Still, a lot of wine for the money. 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc. 14.6% alcohol. 654 cases produced.

OS Winery BSH 2005 \$30

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A cloudy wine that is throwing a lot of sediment. A fascinating nose with mint, cherry cordial, red vines, and dry chocolate. Packs a punch on the palate with a BSH of red fruit, high-toned coffee notes, and an under-layer of tannins.

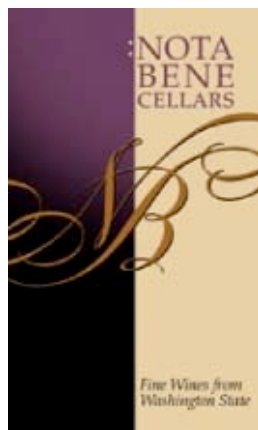
OS Winery Syrah Dineen Vineyard Yakima Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Dark and intense. An explosive nose with blueberries, smoked meat, chocolate, and flowers. Gorgeously textured with fruit and smoked meat. 92 cases produced. 14.8% alcohol.

OS Winery Petit Verdot Meek Vineyard Barrel Sample 2008 \$NA

Rating: + (Good) A lot of chocolate along with green aromas. Nicely put together on the palate although doesn't seem to come off completely at the moment. Needs time but it has it.

:Nota Bene Cellars



:[Nota Bene Cellars](#) is the work of Tim Narby and Carol Bryant. :Nota Bene's wines show a consistent style – lighter in body and color and straddling somewhere between the Old World and the New.

What I am always struck by each time I try :Nota Bene wines is how each wine seems to teeter between being good and excellent (Note: This is not a bad thing, but rather something I find interesting). Usually when rating wine, I try as best I can to avoid giving too many “slash” ratings. Rather, I score down. Here, I have intentionally left the slash ratings in to illustrate my point, indicating the direction the wines were leaning by the first score shown (Again, I am doing this to illustrate a point and do not use this of notation normally).

:Nota Bene Cellars Abbinare Columbia Valley 2006 \$28

Rating: [+ / ★](#) (Good/Excellent) A bit of campfire along with some brett but not an overwhelming amount. A dip in the mid-palate on what is otherwise a very impressive effort. A very pleasant, easy drinking wine. 61% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, 3% Malbec.

:Nota Bene Cellars Miscela Columbia Valley 2006 \$29

Rating: [+ / ★](#) (Good/Excellent) A fair amount of smokiness along with some light candied notes. Alcohol pokes through at times. Again, smooth and easy drinking. 42% Cabernet Franc, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon (28% Champoux, 4% Conner Lee), 17% Malbec, 9% Merlot. 15.1% alcohol.

:Nota Bene Conner Lee Columbia Valley 2006 \$32

Rating: [★ / +](#) (Excellent/Good) Berry, anise, and floral aromas dominate along with a touch of funkiness from the Cabernet Franc. Smooth and even on the palate with silky tannins. About half way through barrel influences intrude. 65% Merlot, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Cabernet Franc. 14.5% alcohol.

:Nota Bene Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2006 \$35

Rating: [★](#) (Excellent) A fascinating nose with a touch of smoke, an intriguing bramble berry aroma, and black licorice. Alcohol shows through on the nose at times. Taste is well balanced and easy drinking. Remains one of the better priced Ciel's out there although the Ciel characteristics seem to get a bit lost at times. 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec. 15.1% alcohol.

:Nota Bene Syrah Columbia Valley 2006 \$30

Rating: [+ / ★](#) (Good/Excellent) Strong, fresh blueberries and blackberries along with a tinge of oak spices. Tart and tangy on the palate with threads of chocolate. 88% Syrah, 12% Grenache. 14.8% alcohol.

:Nota Bene Syrah Ciel du Cheval Red Mountain 2006 \$35

Rating: [+ / ★](#) (Good/Excellent) A touch of brett, berry, black licorice, and mineral. Seems a bit disjointed at times. Finish comes up short. 97% Syrah, 3% Grenache (Stone Tree Vineyard). 50 cases produced.

Fall Line Winery



[Fall Line Winery](#) was bonded in 2004. The winery is owned by Tim Sorenson and his wife Nancy Rivenburgh. Sorenson, who serves as winemaker, began studying winemaking in 2000, taking an introductory enology course at UC–Davis. From there he began what he refers to as a two year ‘vinternship’ with Cadence’s winemaker Ben Smith.

Fall Line gets its name from Tim and Nancy’s love of skiing. The name is intended to evoke both the beauty and grace of a skier descending a fall line as well as the “balance, grace, and depth” that Fall Line seeks in their wines. Fall Line focuses on red blends that feature Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon. The winery also produces a single varietal bottling of Cabernet.

What impressed me most tasting through Fall Line’s lineup was both the exceptional fruit and the value these wines present. In terms of fruit, Sorenson uses top vineyards, including Boushey Vineyard (Yakima Valley), Artz (Red Mountain), and Red Willow (Yakima Valley). The Artz Vineyard offerings in particular are standouts. In terms of value, each of the wines is under \$30 and walks the balance between approachability and ageability. While able to be enjoyed now, these wines will all benefit from some time in the cellar.

This is the first year that Fall Line has produced the Exhibition Red Wine. This wine currently contains fruit from Aldercreek Vineyard which the winery is phasing out as a fruit source. While the vineyard sources will change, Sorenson looks to continue producing this wine in the future.

Fall Line produces 2,100 cases annually.

Note: All wines sampled at 63 degrees.

Fall Line Winery Exhibition Red Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$22

Rating: + (Good) Nose is marked by black licorice and blackberry aromas. Dry and puckering on the palate with a lot of licorice and fruit along with a strong tannic backbone. Loses a bit of its rhythm about two thirds of the way through. Aldercreek, Artz, Boushey vineyards. 302 cases produced. **Recommended.**

Fall Line Winery Artz Red Blend Red Mountain 2007 \$28

Rating: ★ (Excellent) An engaging nose with smoke, mineral, and currant. Tight, tart, and intensely focused with fruit on the palate. A pleasing balance of acid and tannins, although the latter are a bit drying at times. Give three years. 39% Cabernet Franc, 36% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. 490 cases produced.

Fall Line Winery Cabernet Sauvignon Yakima Valley 2007 \$28

Rating: +/★ (Good/Excellent) A lot of Boushey perfume with earth, funk, violets, and pure licorice notes. Very nicely put together on the palate with puckering tannins. Loses a bit of its rhythm in the middle but comes back together. Give two to three years. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. 50% Boushey Vineyard, 50% Artz Vineyard. 366 cases produced.

Fall Line Winery Red Wine Aldercreek HHH 2007 \$20

Rating: **+** (Good) Licorice, spice, and pencil shavings mark the nose. Tart, tight, and tannic on the palate. Mid-palate dips down a bit on an otherwise very enjoyable wine. 46% Merlot, 44% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Fall Line Winery Red Wine Artz Vineyard RM 2006 \$25

Rating: **★** (Excellent) A lovely nose with cherry, earth, and floral aromatics. Excellent balance of tannins, alcohol, and acidity with focused fruit. Give two to three years.

Fall Line Winery Cabernet Sauvignon CV 2007 \$28

Rating: **+** (Good) A lot of earthy, funky aromas along with pepper and black licorice. Mid-palate loses a bit of its focus. A lot of tannic structure.

Elsom Cellars



[Elsom Cellars](#)' goal is to provide "Exclusively bottled wines that offer distinctive flavors, borne of a singular desire – to create the quintessential gesture of hospitality – served at our table or yours."

After years of home winemaking, Jody Elsom decided to start a commercial winery. Elsom, who studied enology and viticulture at Washington State University, says "I was looking for a career change that would provide a balance between art and science, hard work and celebration...The winery offers such a balance."

Elsom made its first commercial release in 2006, a limited production of Cabernet Sauvignon and a Red Wine composed of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. The winery has continued to focus on these varietals using fruit from Lewis, Two Blondes, Artz, Doc (Wahluke Slope), and Alder Ridge vineyards. Elsom says "Our focus is on creating wines we enjoy – big bold Cabernet and earthy Malbec with a bit of peppery spice."

Though currently located in South Seattle, the winery will be opening a Woodinville location near Januik/Novelty Hill in the first quarter of 2010. This facility will serve as Elsom's production facility (fruit from the 2009 harvest was pressed here). The winery plans to keep the South Seattle tasting room, called 'The Vineyard Table,' open for winemaker dinners, artist events, and other occasions.

With the move to its new Woodinville facility, Elsom increased production to 1,200 cases for the 2009 vintage.

Note: All wines sampled at 62 degrees.

Elsom Cellars Red Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$28

Rating: **+** (Good) Fairly quiet on the nose with dusty chocolate, blackberry, and spice. An engaging palate with loads of black fruit and a healthy bit of grip. A bit dry at times. Needs time to open up. Give 1–2 years. 50% Malbec, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Syrah.

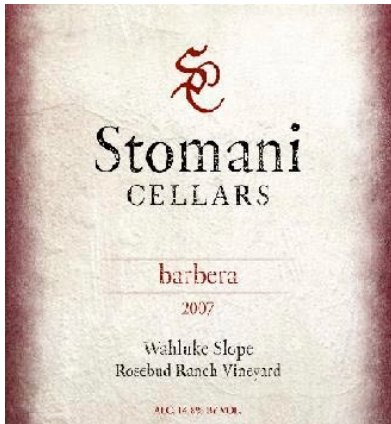
Elsom Cellars Malbec Columbia Valley 2007 \$32

Rating: **+** (Good) Brilliant and purply in color. An attractive, peppery nose rich with blackberry and cedar aromas. Quite dry and puckering on the palate with bright acidity. Comes off a bit green at times but an impressive wine overall. 91.7% Malbec (Gilbert Vineyard), 8.3% Merlot (Wahluke Slope Vineyard).

Elsom Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Lewis Vyd 2007 \$36

Rating: **+** (Good) Lewis Vineyard aromas jump from the glass with cola, black licorice, black cherry, and ground spices. Again, fairly dry on the palate with lighter and more lithe fruit than the other wines sampled. A bit front loaded on the palate with drying tannins. Time may settle this wine a bit. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Syrah. Lewis Vineyard.

Stomani Cellars



[Stomani Cellars](#) focuses on “Italian style artisan wines.” The winery is family venture for the Stothers and Manoni families, and Stomani’s name is a combination of these two surnames. Alex Manoni serves as Stomani’s winemaker. Manoni seeks to make wines that are food friendly and a bit higher in acid compared to some in the state. Stomani focuses on Italian grape varietals, particularly Pinot Grigio, Sangiovese, Barbera, Dolcetto, and Aglianico. Manoni says “The blends we produce focus on something for each of the three areas of the palate, front, mid and back using Sangiovese as the backbone for the blend.”

Stomani Cellars currently produces 1,000 cases annually.

Stomani Cellars Pinot Gris Yakima Valley 2008 \$15

Rating: • (Decent) Clear in color. Nose marked by an aged cheese aroma along with melon, sweet, honeyed fruit, and mineral aromas. The nose is appealing once the odd cheese aroma comes off. A pleasing, straight-forward wine that doesn’t show a lot of movement on the palate. Wants a bit more acidity to lift up the fruit. 100% stainless steel. Sampled at 55 degrees.

Stomani Cellars Dolcetto Yakima Valley 2006 \$20

Rating: • (Decent) Cloudy and showing a bit of age. Bright red and blue fruit on a fresh, fruity nose that also shows an under-layer of ground cranberries. Crisp, tart, and acidic on the palate. A fun but overall somewhat unremarkable wine. Sampled at 60 degrees.

Stomani Cellars Sangiovese Wahluke Slope 2007 \$25

Rating: + (Good) Fairly dark in color. Initially a touch of mint on the nose that is replaced by earth, chocolate, and red fruit. Wood flavors get in the way on the palate overwhelming what otherwise seems to be very good fruit. The oak may settle down with additional time in the bottle. Sampled at 62 degrees.

Stomani Cellars Insieme 2007 \$25

Rating: + (Good) Nose marked by prune, cherry, and plum aromas along with black licorice and milk chocolate. An impressive palate with a lot of fruit across the mid-palate and a good amount of grip along with cherry and vanilla flavors. An impressive taste but the nose is a bit wanting. 50% Merlot, 35% Sangiovese, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged in French and American oak. Sampled at 62 degrees.

Stomani Cellars Terromoto Red Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$25

Rating: • (Decent) Dark and purple. A lot of earth aromas along with spice, black cherry, chocolate, and ground black pepper. The nose seems a bit overloaded with pepper and spice. Tart, puckering, and very drying on the palate. Needs food to offset it. 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Syrah, 22% Sangiovese, and 3% Petit Verdot. Aged in French and American oak. Sampled at 62 degrees.

Sodovino



While [Sodovino](#)'s name may puzzle those from outside Seattle, it will be immediately understandable for those from the area. SoDo is the name of the district south of downtown Seattle where the winery is located. In deciding on the name, winemaker Jim Musielewicz says "We are located in Sodo and we make wine, but more than that we were looking for something fun and quirky."

Like many, Musielewicz and his wife started as home beer makers before turning their attention to wine. Musielewicz says "We naturally evolved into wine and then things just got carried away...Our basement and garage were quickly full of various varietals and vintages."

While the Musielewiczs first started making wine in 2000, it wasn't until 2006 that they made their first commercial vintage. Since their initial release - 150 cases - Sodovino has slowly grown in size, producing 550 cases for the 2008 vintage. The winery aims to focus on Rhone varietals using grapes from Lewis, Rosebud, Alder Ridge, Doc's, and Clifton vineyards.

Note: All reds sampled at 63 degrees.

Sodovino Sylvia James Viognier Rosebud Ranch 2007 \$11

Rating: + (Good) Very light in color. Nose comes off as faint initially with creek aromas, floral notes, and white peaches. Surprisingly weighted with fruit on the palate with just a touch of residual sugar. Fermented in stainless steel. Sampled at 55 degrees.

Sodovino Red Wine 2006 \$19

Rating: + (Good) An intriguing nose with pencil lead, diesel, black fruit, chocolate, and anise. An enjoyable wine on the palate with a pleasing balance of fruit, acid, and tannins. 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Malbec, 6% Syrah. Aged in French and American oak. *Recommended.*

Sodovino Red Wine 2007 \$19

Rating: • (Decent) A lot of pepper on the nose along with black fruit and anise. Dry chocolate flavors and cherry dominate the palate. An enjoyable palate that is offset by a nose that shows a bit too much pepper. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Mourvedre, and 23% Syrah.

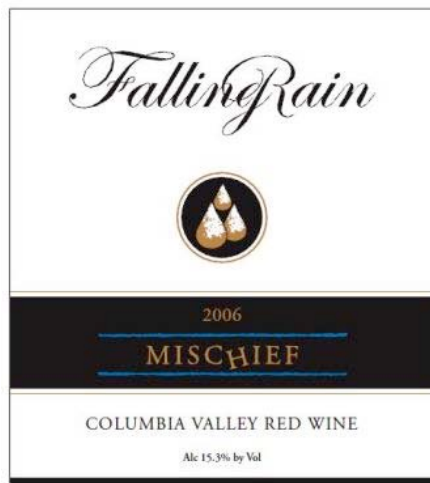
Sodovino So Syrah 2007 \$19

Rating: •/+ (Decent/Good) A vibrant nose with black fruit, chocolate, and a whiff of pepper. Needs a bit more uplift on the middle on what is otherwise an enjoyable wine. 86% Syrah, 14% Mourvedre. Aged in French and American oak.

Sodovino Syrah Lewis Vineyard 2007 \$25

Rating: + (Good) A stinky, gamey nose that is loaded with berry fruit. Well put together on the taste with chocolate and berries. 100% Lewis Vineyard Syrah. Aged in French and American oak.

Falling Rain Cellars



[Falling Rain](#) produces three proprietary blends, each of which is unique and compelling. The first is a Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc called Irise. The 2007 vintage of this wine was barrel fermented and underwent full malolactic fermentation. The first of the two red blends, Cloudburst, is an intriguing blend of Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet, and Malbec. The second, Mischief, is a Bordeaux-style blend. Judith Papesh serves as winemaker.

Note: All reds sampled at 63 degrees.

Falling Rain Irise White Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$22

Rating: + (Good) Pale straw colored. An appealing nose that is almost champagne-like in style with yeast and lemon aromas. Rich and creamy on the palate without being thick. A pleasant balance of fruit and dryness. This is quite an intriguing wine unusual in style for Washington. 55% Semillon, 45% Sauvignon Blanc. Sampled at 55 degrees.

Falling Rain Cloudburst Red Wine Columbia Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Black licorice, cola, chocolate, and blackberry mark the nose. Impressively balanced on the palate with chocolate and black fruit flavors. Hits all of the right notes and hangs on for the finish. 30% Syrah (Lewis Vineyard), 30% Merlot (Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 30% Cabernet Sauvignon (Lewis Vineyard, Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 10% Malbec (Gilbert Vineyard). Aged in French and American oak.

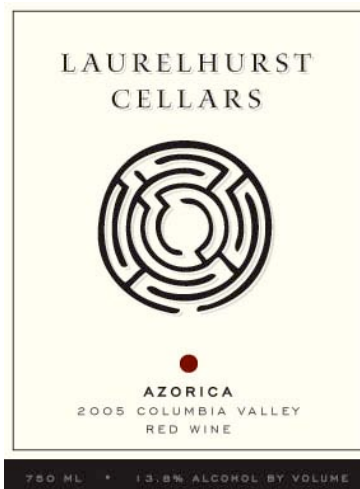
Falling Rain Mischief Red Wine Columbia Valley 2006 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) Ground black licorice aromas pair with black fruit on an enjoyable nose. Rich with chocolate and fruit on the palate with a lingering finish. 45% Merlot (Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 42% Cabernet Sauvignon (Lewis Vineyard, Wahluke Slope Vineyard), 13% Malbec (Gilbert Vineyard). Aged in French and American oak.

Falling Rain Mischief Red Wine Columbia Valley 2007 \$25

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A bit closed up at the moment with pencil lead, black fruit and chocolate. Big and brawny with fruit and tannins on the taste. Needs time in the bottle as it comes off as a bit dry and tight right now but this will be an impressive wine. Give 1–2 years. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot. Aged in French and American oak.

Laurelhurst Cellars



[Laurelhurst Cellars](#) is a partnership among Gabe Warner, Greg Smallwood, and Dave Halbgewachs. Smallwood says “We wanted to produce wine for ourselves originally. The process was infectious and we decided to get our license...and start producing wine.”

Laurelhurst Cellars’ first commercial vintage was 2005. Before moving to its current South Seattle location, winemaker Gabe Warner made wine in the basement of his Laurelhurst home. In a nod to their beginnings, the winery has stuck with the Laurelhurst branding. A laurel hedge maze adorns the label and two of the wines are named after botanical terms, the Laurus Nobilis and Azorica.

Laurelhurst Cellars focuses on producing red wines that showcase the vineyards they work with. These include exceptional vineyard sources, such as Kiona, Boushey, and Klipsun. Although the winery intends to keep red wines the focus, whites will be added in the future.

The winery started out making 400 cases annually but is slowly moving up to 900. Laurelhurst Cellars enjoys both the benefits and the banes of being a small production winery. In terms of benefits, barrels get individual attention and everything is tightly controlled. In terms of banes, experimentation with different techniques, styles, and barrels, is necessarily slow as each barrel is significant.

The wines from Laurelhurst Cellars are all intriguing, small production wines. Each shows good tannic structure and fruit expression as well as the hallmarks of the vineyards they come from. The wines display characteristic chocolate flavors. The taste occasionally comes off as a bit sweet but overall works on these wines.

Note: All wines sampled at 60 degrees.

Laurelhurst Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain 2006 \$38

Rating: ★ (Excellent) A prototypic Red Mountain nose with earth, flowers, slate, and cherry along with pencil lead accents. A delicious palate with lots of fruit, chocolate, and a good tannic structure. Chocolate gets a little sweet at times. Klipsun and Kiona vineyards. 52 cases produced.

Laurelhurst Cellars Syrah Red Mountain 2006 \$38

Rating: NR (Not Rated) Dark and intense in color. The nose is showing a lot of strange biscuit aromas along with iodine, chocolate and purple fruit. Rich with chocolate flavors on a fairly soft palate. This wine is in a strange spot right now as mentioned by people at the winery (for this reason, I have not rated the wine at this time). Perhaps it will settle down and flesh out with additional time. Ranch at the End of the Road, Songbird, and Kiona vineyards. 120 cases produced.

Laurelhurst Cellars Cabernet Franc Boushey Vineyard 2006 \$36

Rating: ★ (Excellent) An outrageous, Boushey-only nose with earthy funk, flowers, milk chocolate, and purple fruit. A fun, engaging wine that dips slightly in the mid-palate but then comes back on for a strong finish. Fruit seems to want a bit more structure at times on an otherwise very enjoyable wine. 28 cases produced. 28 cases produced.

Laurelhurst Cellars Laurus Nobilis Red Wine 2006 \$28

Rating: +/★ (Good/Excellent) Brick colored. Nose marked by red fruit, chocolate, mineral, and floral notes. A dry and pleasing palate that is chock full of fruit and chocolate. An enjoyable wine that is exceptionally well priced. 61% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. Boushey, Klipsun, and Kiona vineyards. 160 cases produced.

Laurelhurst Cellars Azorica 2005 \$28

Rating: + (Good) A big nose with tons of chocolate and floral notes along with earth and licorice. Big and chocolatey on the palate with a lot of structure. Give 1–2 years. 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 16% Syrah. Boushey, Patch of Blue, and Kiona vineyards. 100 cases produced.

Winery Information

Winery	Contact Information	Red Wines	White Wines	Tasting Fee
Cadence Winery	206.381.9507 info@cadencewinery.com	Yes	No	\$5, refundable
Elsom Cellars	206.349.3244 jody@elsomcellars.com	Yes	No	\$5, refundable
Fall Line Winery	206.768.9463 mail@falllinewinery.com	Yes	No	\$5, refundable
Falling Rain Cellars	206.390.2567	Yes	Yes	\$5, refundable
Laurelhurst Cellars	wine@laurelhurstcellars.com	Yes	No	\$5, refundable
:Nota Bene Cellars	206.459.2785	Yes	No	\$5, refundable
OS Winery	206.243.3427 mail@oswinery.com	Yes	Yes	\$5, refundable
Sodovino	206.794.0966 info@sodovino.com	Yes	Yes	\$5, refundable
Stomani Cellars	206.340.6137 info@stomanicellars.com	Yes	Yes	\$5, refundable

Note: Sodovino, Stomani Cellars, and Falling Rain Cellars operate out of a common tasting room. One \$5 refundable tasting fee is charged for all three wineries.

Wine Rating System

- ★★ **An exceptional wine.** Buy it now and either tell all your friends about it or keep it very, very secret, depending on your personality and availability.
 - ★ **An excellent wine.** Convince a friend to buy some and share it with you.
 - + **A good wine.** Worth drinking. If it represents a particular value, I will list it as ***Recommended***.
 - **A decent wine.** Drink it if you must.
 - **A flawed wine.** Refuse this wine if served.
- NR Not Rated.** Given to wines too young to be properly evaluated.

Read more about the Rating System [here](#).



Washington Wine Report (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. Email Sean P. Sullivan at wawinereport@gmail.com with questions or comments.