

Nov. 28, 2011

Black Hills Estate Winery is on the venerable Black Sage Bench in British Columbia's southern Okanagan Valley.

(Photo courtesy of Black Hills Estate Winery)



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: Black Hills Estate Winery

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One wine has made Black Hills Estate Winery in Oliver, British Columbia, famous throughout Canada.

There are other reasons, though, beyond the proprietary blend known as Nota Bene, to take note of the winemaking done by Graham Pierce.

And this year's releases by Pierce and viticulturalist Steve Carberry show a knack with Rhône varieties, white blends and the rare red Bordeaux grape Carménère.

When Black Hills Estate Winery began in 1999, founding winemaker Senka Tennant and her partners produced just one wine — a red blend called Nota Bene — from their vineyards on the Black Sage Bench between Oliver and Osoyoos. Washington state winemaker Rusty Figgins consulted with Tennant during those early years.

In 2007, Tennant and her group sold their iconic Quonset hut to a collective that grew to 265 investors, headlined by Canadian-born actor Jason Priestley of *90210* fame. He sits on the limited partnership's five-person board.

That same year, the new owners also brought in Pierce from Mount Boucherie Estate Winery near Kelowna. He worked alongside Tennant for the 2007 vintage, but everything from that point forward has been made by Pierce, who gave up his career as a chef to begin making wine. Inspiration emerged while he was the on-premise chef at Summerhill Pyramid Winery in Kelowna.

"I like to create wines that are food wines, not oak bombs or fruit bombs or tasting room wines or 'show wines,' as we like to call them," Pierce said. "I don't want wines that overpower the food."

A year ago, Black Hills began trickling out 10-year vertical boxes of Nota Bene, a series that started in 1999. While there's size and scale to this annual estate blend of Bordeaux varieties, the primary release of the 4,300-case production typically gets tapped out by online purchases in less than an hour. One year, it crashed the Black Hills website five times during that hour.

There indeed is a cult following. Three years ago, a barrel of 2007 Nota Bene went for \$19,000 at a fundraiser, a record for a Canadian-made wine. Having



Priestley as part of the group has helped beyond the publicity, Pierce said.

"He's got a really keen interest in wine, and he really knows his stuff," Pierce said. "Unfortunately, with his really busy schedule, he doesn't make it here too much."

That limited partnership, much of it based in Alberta, provides Pierce and Carberry with top-of-the-line equipment and a state-of-the-art facility that has won government awards for design. The winery is built for 10,000 cases, with the estate vineyards providing about 75 percent of the fruit.

The success of Carménère has prompted some alterations within the 27 acres, namely the grafting over of Chardonnay to this red variety that once was believed all but extinct after the phylloxera epidemic of the late 1800s in European vineyards. Thankfully, cuttings of the variety had made their way to Chile years before, but it had been confused as Merlot until DNA testing in the 1990s.

"We always tell 'The Lost Grape' story and the phylloxera story," Pierce said. "It's a really fun project for us and a fun wine because there's been no real benchmark for it in B.C."

At the same time, Pierce and Carberry are spinning out stunning wines with white Bordeaux varieties Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, which they blend into their proprietary Alibi. They also are excelling with Rhône varieties Syrah and Viognier.

Coincidentally, last week Tennant and her husband, Bob, rolled out their first wine from Terravista Vineyards, their new winery on the Naramata Bench.

# Spotlight: Black Hills Estate Winery

## **Outstanding! Black Hills Estate Winery 2009**

**Carménère, Okanagan Valley, \$50.** Many of those Cabernet Francophiles will fall in love with Black Hills' fifth vintage made from this little-known Bordeaux variety, and harvest of these grapes came Oct. 13 — the day of the historic cold blast that marked the end of the 2009 growing season. Amazingly leafy aromas of oregano and tobacco gather in western serviceberry, mountain blueberry, root beer, cracked pepper and bell pepper. The pour brings flavors of an almost creamy mouthful of sweet black cherry and cassis, backed by great acidity of white strawberry and president plums, and fine-grained tannin. Serve up a slab of meatloaf and, thanks in part to the remarkably low alcohol, you'll be in heaven. (125 cases, 12.2% alc.)

## **Outstanding! Black Hills Estate Winery 2009**

**Syrah, Okanagan Valley, \$42.** The tandem of winemaker Graham Pierce and viticulturalist Steve Carberry produced a home run with Black Hills' first swing of the bat with this Rhône variety. It's smoky, spicy and berry delicious from start to finish as aromas include boysenberry, raspberry, dried cherry, light cedar, dried parsley and hints of wild game. There's delicious transition from front to back with boysenberry and blueberry, joined by accents of hickory smoke and capped by an expressive finish of bittersweet chocolate, espresso and black olive. Impressive acidity, some minerality and a pleasing grip of tannin also give it a place alongside barbecued ribs. (1,200 cases, 14.1% alc.)

## **Excellent. Black Hills Estate Winery 2009 Nota**

**Bene, Okanagan Valley, \$60.** This marks the 10th anniversary of this Meritage style, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (46%), Merlot (38%) and Cabernet Franc that all comes off the estate on the Black Sage Bench. It translates from Latin into "take note," and there's an immediate sign of the Cab Franc leafiness, followed by cassis, boysenberry, smoky blueberry, fig, roasted beets and black olive aromas. On the palate, its enjoyable medium body and texture carries red currant, pomegranate, huckleberry and white chocolate tones with good balance from front to back.

Among the food pairing ideas would be London Broil, flank steak or meat dolmas. As usual, the winery reports that this highly popular blend is sold out, but it sometimes will trickle out a second release later in the year. (3,300 cases, 14.1% alc.)

## **Recommended. Black Hills Estate Winery 2009**

**Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, \$30.** While this was built with 100% barrel fermentation, and 50% of it new oak, there's not much in the aromas to indicate all that wood. Rather, it casts off notes of crisp apple and lots of lemon zest, trailed by wet stone and mint. The approach, however, is akin to a buttery and toasted crostini with basil, followed by Golden Delicious apple, lemon and grapefruit pith. The fact that this wine is sold out at the winery has Pierce second-guessing plans to discontinue its production. (400 cases, 13.9% alc.)

## **Outstanding! Black Hills Estate Winery 2010**

**Viognier, Okanagan Valley, \$30.** Unlike many of its ilk, this winery has taken an angle at this Rhône variety that shows finesse. Aromas lean toward lemons first, then orange and minerality. Between the lips, it's remarkably drinkable with pineapple, orange zest, lime and yellow grapefruit flavors, emboldened by more acidity than is unusual in the grape, especially with its late harvest of Oct. 29. Graham Pierce, a trained chef, suggested serving with grilled halibut or roasted chicken. (400 cases, 13.4% alc.)

## **Outstanding! Black Hills Estate Winery 2010 Alibi,**

**Okanagan Valley, \$25.** The slant toward Sauvignon Blanc (75%) blasts away with huge aromas of gooseberry, backed by fig, lime, lemongrass and mustard weed. There's delicious balance on the palate as gooseberry, dried apricot, lime and slatiness impart sophistication. The Semillon (25%) seems to loom in the finish of lemon and quince. Enjoy with sablefish, scallops or spot prawns. (1,500 cases, 13.5% 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.

## New releases we've tasted

### Cabernet Sauvignon

**Excellent. Kontos Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Walla Walla Valley, \$32.** The Kontos family took a blend of Pepper Bridge and Seven Hills vineyards and spun out a profound Cab that's sincere for virtually every step along the path. Classic aromas of black currant, dark plums, cherries and chocolate make for enticing complexity, joined by roasted coffee, cigar box, leather and slate. Delivery comes with tasty cherry and currant flavors that evolve into a marriage of chocolate, crushed parsley and mint. The enjoyable tannin structure comes across as espresso grounds, then a final cast reveals minerality. Enjoy with a well-marbled steak in a coffee spice rub. (210 cases, 14.3% alc.)

**Excellent. Sweet Valley Wines 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Walla Walla Valley, \$35.** At age 22, Josh McDaniels is a charter member of Walla Walla's Young Guns Wine Society, and he continues to rock and fire in this his second commercial vintage. His fruit sources are far from second-rate — Birch Creek, Golden Ridge, Les Collines, Minnick and Seven Hills Vineyards, and they allow for aromas of boysenberry, raspberry, black currant, plums on parchment paper, violet, mint and Earl Grey tea. The real payoff is on the refined palate which shows maturity with its pleasing texture that comes with flavors of sweet cassis, cherry and bittersweet chocolate. Accents of cigar box, black olive and tannins akin to espresso grounds emerge in the finish. (109 cases, 14.5% alc.)

### Pinot Noir

**Outstanding! Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Elton Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$45.** Planted in 1983, Elton Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills has been

considered one of the prized sources of Pinot Noir in the Willamette Valley. The vineyard is now 60 acres in size, with 42 acres dedicated to Pinot Noir. In 2007, Jim Bernau of Willamette Valley Vineyards leased the vineyard and now has greater access to its fruit. The result of the first three years resulted in this superior Pinot Noir, which opens with aromas of raspberries, Rainier cherries, pineapples, violets and strawberries. On the palate, this is a gentle and elegant wine with flavors of white strawberries, raspberries and cherries. It's tempting to drink this wine now, but as delicious as it is, it's likely to develop into something even greater. (496 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Estate Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$40.** Winemaker Forrest Klaffke used grapes from two estate vineyards for this delicious Pinot Noir: Tualatin near Forest Grove and Elton in the Eola-Amity Hills. Of Willamette Valley Vineyards' seven new Pinot Noirs we tasted, this was the biggest and boldest entry. It opens with rich aromas of cedar, strawberries, red currants, cola and baked apples with cinnamon. On the palate, it starts with an easy approach of raspberries, cranberries and chocolate, then is large and in charge on the finish with robust tannins. (3,045 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Outstanding! Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$28.** This is our 2011 Oregon Winery of the Year's most widely available Pinot Noir — and it's one of its best. Winemaker Forrest Klaffke pulls grapes from a wide variety of vineyards using no fewer than six different clones of Pinot Noir. About 70% of the wine is whole-berry fermented, which results in a wine that is gentler, fruitier and more approachable. That's undoubtedly

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## New releases we've tasted

the case here. It opens with classic aromas of raspberries, strawberries, pie cherries and mushrooms, with just a hint of orange blossoms. On the palate, this is an elegant wine from first sip, with flavors of vanilla, Rainier cherries, cranberries, Marionberries and chocolate. It's a versatile wine that should pair nicely with chicken marsala, filet mignon or braised short ribs. (18,000 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Signature Cuvée Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$50.** Winemaker Forrest Klaffke used grapes from three sources — WVV's Estate Vineyard near Turner, the estate Tualatin Vineyard near Forest Grove and Elton Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills — for this superb wine. It opens with aromas of cedar, spices cherry pie turnover and even a hint of citrus. We loved the fresh fruit flavors of black cherries, black currants, cranberries and cola. Everything — from oak to acid to tannin to fruit — is in perfect harmony. Pair with prime rib, venison or veal. (498 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Recommended. Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 South Block Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$45.**

Founder Jim Bernau began planting his estate vineyard south of Salem in 1983, and the vineyard now has 50 acres of vines. The South Block was certified organic in 2007, and this Pinot Noir was made with grapes exclusively from those vines. It's a big wine, but it is balanced across the board. It opens with aromas of blueberries, white mushrooms, dark cherries and spice. On the palate, it reveals flavors of boysenberries, Rainier cherries, cranberries, plums and chocolate. The tannins come on late, giving this wine a mighty farewell. This is a pretty young wine, and we expect this to continue to evolve in the bottle. (825 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Willamette Valley Vineyards 2009 Tualatin Estate Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, \$45.**

Willamette Valley Vineyards CEO Jim Bernau acquired this vineyard in 1997, something he describes as one of the winery's biggest opportunities. Tualatin, which is in the far northern reaches of the Willamette Valley, was planted in 1973. Since acquiring it, Bernau has expanded its size from 83 acres to 200. This wine is approachable from first whiff, with aromas of cherry cola, white raspberries, pie cherries and cedar. On the palate, it reveals flavors of plums, rose petals, cocoa, black olives and black tea. The tannins are a bit on the aggressive side, so we would recommend pairing this with thick steaks cooked on the rare side. (500 cases, 14.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Willamette Valley Vineyards 2010 Whole Cluster Fermented Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley,**

**\$20.** In the Pacific Northwest, this is about as close as we come to a Beaujolais Nouveau style of wine. Every year, this Oregon giant produces a youthful Pinot Noir — the first it releases from each vintage — that is made using a method called carbonic maceration. This means the juice is fermented primarily while it is still inside the grape, before the fruit is crushed. The resulting wine is lower in tannin and higher in fruit. That's certainly the case with this delicious wine, which shows off aromas of strawberry candy, cinnamon, apricots and black currants. On the palate, this reveals invigorating flavors of strawberries, cherries, cranberries and red raspberries. It's a great introduction to Pinot Noir — because of the flavors and the price. (19,100 cases, 12.5% alc.)

### Merlot

**Recommended. Chateau Ste. Michelle 2008**

**Merlot, Columbia Valley, \$16.** This bold Merlot carries a theme of dark chocolate and cherries with notes of blueberry, mint, graphite and a firm grip of tannin. (39,121 cases, 13.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Marcus Sophia Winery 2009 Beauté**

**Merlot, Horse Heaven Hills, \$28.** Before studying winemaking at Washington State University, Leala Cramer spent two decades as a personal chef, a résumé that includes actress Shirley McLaine. Cramer still works in the foothills of Mount Rainier, but now it's at a winery she named for her two children. This bottling of Alder Ridge Vineyard fruit spent just 15 months in new French oak, and its youthful exuberance shows with notes of boysenberry, blueberry, lingonberry and canned pie cherries. The finish shows more maturity with traits of mulberry, cherry skin tannin, bittersweet chocolate and coffee. (120 cases, 14.9% alc.)

**Outstanding! Sweet Valley Wines 2008 Merlot,**

**Walla Walla Valley, \$30.** This Walla Walla family named its winery as a tribute to the famously sweet local vegetable, and it tapped into some famous vineyards — Pepper Bridge, Seven Hills, Les Collines and Birch Creek — for this skillfully balanced Merlot. The fruity nose exudes aromas of plums, boysenberry, cranberry, burnt caramel and cedar frond. The 28 months in barrel don't mask the fruit flavors of fresh cranberry, blueberry and Marionberry or the trailing minerality. Instead, the oak tones deliver pleasant accents of clove, anise and Mexican mocha in the finish. (67 cases, 14.3% alc.)

### Malbec

**Recommended. Righteous Wines 2009 Malbec, Walla Walla Valley, \$24.** A trip last year to Argentina

## New releases we've tasted

gave Josh McDaniels perspective on working with this variety. This wine, made for his second label, is huge in the nose with boysenberry, plump blueberry, fresh-baked brownie, lemon basil and smoked thyme. The berry flavors keep dribbling out, bringing lots of acidity, dark chocolate, some late chalkiness and a finish of Mexican vanilla. (58 cases, 14.3% alc.)

### Syrah

**Recommended. Abacela 2007 Reserve Syrah, Umpqua Valley, \$45.** The estate South Face block paved the way for a lighter-styled Syrah that's geared toward a purple fruit profile of boysenberry and blueberry. There are thumbnails of cassis, smoked black pepper, horehound, thyme and black olive pit. (55 cases, 14.3% alc.)

### Zinfandel

**Excellent. Cathedral Ridge Winery 2009 Zinfandel, Columbia Valley, \$36.** Sonoma-based winemaker Michael Sebastiani gives Zin lovers a big dose of what so many expect. It's a rich fruit bomb right from the start with aromas of candied cherry, plump boysenberry, blackberry syrup, Black Forest cake, tomato vine and graphite. The drink is sweet and a bit syrupy, combining hints of strawberry freezer jam, black currant and milk chocolate. And yet there's decent tannin and bright acidity for balance. (221 cases, 15.6% alc.)

### Tempranillo

**Recommended. Abacela 2009 Tempranillo, Umpqua Valley, \$21.** This entry-level Tempranillo comes with a bright yellow screwcap and is the product of not only estate fruit but also from nearby Delfino and McCorquodale vineyards. There's a theme of red cherry, red currant and loganberry that mixes in bright acidity of cherry tomato, taut tannin and oaky notes of cardamom and butterscotch. It's an ideal wine for short ribs or a ribeye. (2,260 cases, 13.9% alc.)

### Chardonnay

**Outstanding! Best Buy! Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, \$13.** Washington's flagship winery is anything but a one-trick pony. Yes, it has gained fame in the past decade for world-class high-production Riesling, but winemakers Bob Bertheau and Wendy Stuckey have really stepped up the quality and quantity of their Chardonnay, too. This broad-production wine opens with pleasing aromas of butterscotch candy, lemons, sponge cake and minerality. On the palate, it's a stellar example of Chardonnay, with flavors of Golden Delicious apples and enough oak to please most. A

stream of minerality and acidity play throughout. (510,000 cases, 14% alc.)

**Outstanding! Chateau Ste. Michelle 2009 Indian Wells Chardonnay, Columbia Valley, \$18.** Not far from Highway 243, which skirts the Columbia River and the Wahluke Slope is Indian Wells, a favorite vineyard of Chateau Ste. Michelle winemaker Bob Bertheau. That said, the grapes for this and many other Indian Wells wines are not exclusively from this vineyard, so this is treated more like a "district" than a vineyard-designated wine. This superb Chardonnay opens with aromas of oak, butterscotch, lemon, orange peanut candy and minerals, followed by big flavors of cream, butterscotch, lemon, pineapple and a squeeze of lime. It's very balanced between fruit and acidity. (11,000 cases, 13.5% alc.)

### Riesling

**Recommended. Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Eroica Riesling, Columbia Valley, \$20.** The wine primarily responsible for raising the profile of American Riesling is now into its second decade of vintages. Through the first 12 years, famed German winemaker Ernst Loosen has gotten to know Washington vineyards better and has focused in on what he sees are his sweet spots of the Columbia Valley. Through the years, the faces have changed at CSM, with the addition of head winemaker Bob Bertheau (2003) and white winemaker Wendy Stuckey (2007). Thus it is always fascinating to watch the progression and evolution of Eroica. This version reveals aromas of allspice, clove, white peaches and apricots, followed by flavors that include lavender, lemons, limes and oranges. The acidity hangs on, expertly backing up the 1.6% residual sugar. (20,000 cases, 12.5% alc.)

### Gewürztraminer

**Outstanding! Best Buy! Chateau Ste. Michelle 2010 Gewürztraminer, Columbia Valley, \$9.** Hand it to the folks at Washington's oldest winery: Regardless of what the vintage brings, the wines are pretty consistent. Such is the case with this wine: In three straight vintages — three entirely different harvest experiences — the alcohol has stayed consistent at 12%. This comes as a result of carefully watching the grapes and picking them at optimal moments. In the case of the 2010, the grapes were able to hang longer because of the cool weather. The result is a superb Gewürztraminer with aromas of yellow grapefruits, apricots, lemons and peppermint. On the palate, it's nearly perfect, with flavors of grapefruits, tropical fruits, lychee, oranges and cloves. It's a bit off-dry at 2% residual sugar, perfect for this variety. (100,000 cases, 12% alc.)

## New releases we've tasted

### Mead

**Recommended. Best Buy! Sky River Meadery NV Dry Mead, Washington, \$15.** History indicates that wherever there have been bees, honey wine is likely to be made, and Denise Ingalls has been making mead since 1999 near the banks of Western Washington's Skykomish River. The aromas of her honey wines consistently hover with scents of honeysuckle, jasmine, apple bin, apricot and soft vanilla caramel. Flavors feature pear, apple butter, spun honey and more jasmine with a splash of lime to balance its buzzing of sugar (0.9%). Serve with a cheese-and-nut plate that includes dried fruit. (210 cases, 10.5% alc.)

**Excellent. Best Buy! Sky River Meadery NV Semi-Sweet Mead, Washington, \$15.** The water for these wines comes from Index, Wash., and the purity is one reason why these wines are certified kosher. Aromas of Sky River's most popular wine include dried fig, dates, citrus fruit, honeycomb and balsa wood. Flavors hint at poached pear and caramel-coated Golden Delicious apple. A squirt of lime creates a crispness that peels away some of the residual sugar (3%). (1,845 cases, 10.5% alc.)

**Recommended. Best Buy! Sky River Meadery NV Sweet Mead, Washington, \$15.** At 6% residual sugar, it carries the most sweetness of the straight meads. The nose is predictably similar to the semi-sweet with its dusty pear, jasmine, apple bin, minerality and spun honey, but there's a whiff of alder smoke and oyster shell. Flavors of Bosc pear and sweetened lemon/lime come with a hint of Karo Syrup. (1,230 cases, 10.5% alc.)

**Outstanding! Best Buy! Sky River Meadery NV Raspberry Honey Wine, Washington, \$15.** The base is that of its "Sweet Mead" with 6% residual sugar, but a pleasant sting of 10% raspberry juice adds fascinating brightness. There are notes of strawberry milk shake and rose petal before a late dose of acidity and some plum skin tannin in the finish. Check out the winery website for its recipe on using this as a spritzer base. (210 cases, 12% 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. The "District" was dropped in 2011.

**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.

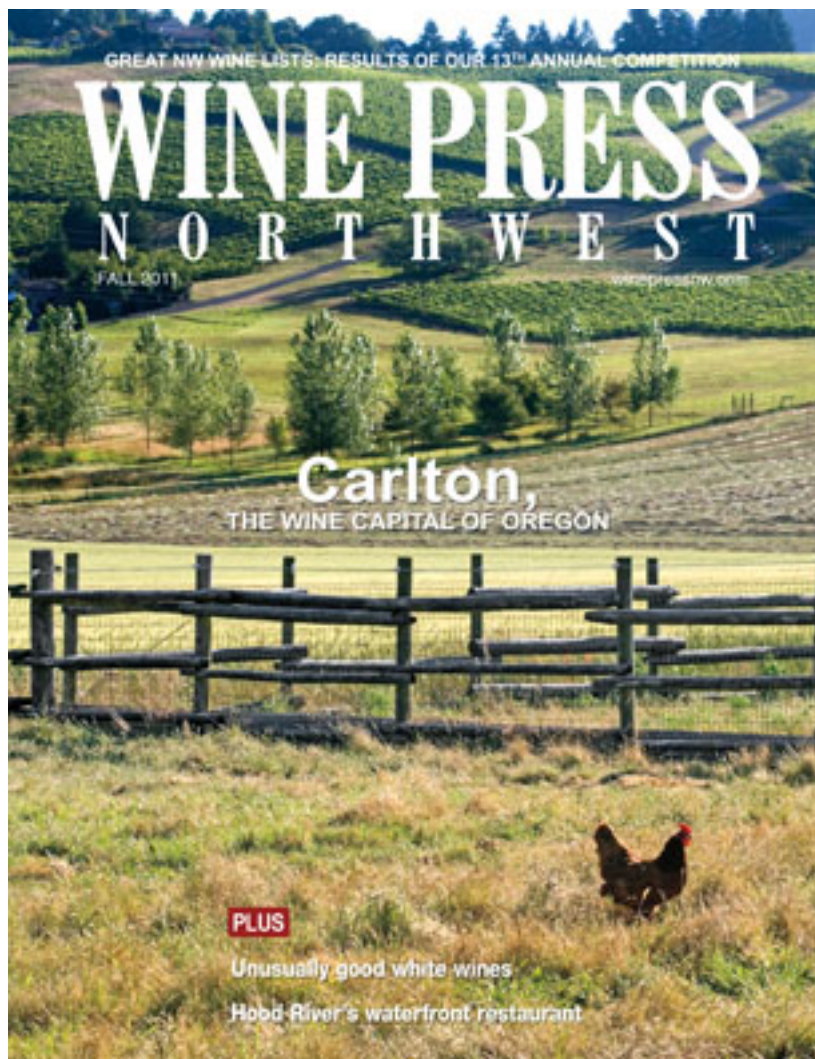
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## Tasting methods

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, North Central Washington Wine Awards and Idaho Wine Competition.