Your Completely Independent Guide to Fine Wines

Wine Rating System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-96</td>
<td>As good as it gets. These wines reach the peak of my personal scale of quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-90</td>
<td>Outstanding. These wines are outstanding for their type and are worth the extra effort to seek out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>Very Good to Good. These offer real character and can be age worthy. The majority of my cellar and what I drink on a daily basis falls into this category.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-80</td>
<td>Good to Decent. While still good, these wines lack character or fail to show a significant number of positive traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-50</td>
<td>Quaffable to Undrinkable. Wines rated less than 80 points are not recommended. They will range from passable to flawed and undrinkable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I score wines on the above scale, and the bottle price, winery/wine reputation, and vintage have no bearing on the score. While a well-written note should not need a score, its inclusion allows a clear, easy to understand delineation of preferences. This allows a more concise note that can focus on the positive aspects of each wine as opposed to always having to explain why a wine rated 88 points isn’t as good as one rated outstanding with 95 points. A precise score also forces the reviewer to make a hard decision – and I will agonize over small differences in score. Having said that, and while I believe a reviewer should be as precise as possible (i.e. the old saying “aim small, miss small”), readers should interpret broadly and take any rating system with a grain of salt. The only difference between a wine I rate 89 points and one I rate 90 points (or one rated 100 points and one rated 97 points for that matter) is that I liked one a little more than the other. That’s all a score tells you and a score represents the reviewer’s opinion.

While I use score ranges in the case of barrel samples, I will also use a range if I am unsure of a wine or if the tasting conditions do not allow enough time or focus on the wine. Wines are scored on their overall quality. The note should indicate my best guess at when the wine will be at maturity; however, drinking young, structured wines can provide just as much pleasure as drinking fully mature, completely integrated bottles. If you prefer the latter and don’t like young, tannic wines or wines with primary fruit, don’t open a newly released Châteauneuf-du-Pape and expect the same level of enjoyment that I get from it. While scores give you a clear idea of what I think of the wine, please realize that there are times when a less complex, easier drinking wine is actually the best wine for a given situation. I cringe every time I hear someone state that their cellar consists of only 90+ point wines (I’ll ignore the source of the point rating) because I truly believe that person is missing out on a huge swath of interesting wines that deliver immense pleasure. Soft and easy are not always bad things and there are times when it doesn't get better than taking big gulps of a fresh, newly released Côtes-du-Rhône with a roast chicken or quaffing a delicious Rosé after work or with dinner. The style of the wine (described by the note) is every bit as important as the score. To me, any wine rated 85 points or higher is a wine I like, believe can be enjoyed, and has noteworthy qualities. In the case of barrel tastings, I use a range for the score. While I think it is possible to evaluate barrel samples (especially final blends), these notes should always be taken with a grain of salt. Scoring is a subjective portion of wine evaluation and as such, is simply my personal preference for a wine at a given point in time. Nothing more, nothing less. Any score or note in isolation is close to worthless and it is only after reading multiple notes and tasting multiple bottles that a reader can start to understand where the note taker is coming from.

At the end of the day, the only opinion that matters is yours and my goal is to help you find a wine, either via a note or score (or both), that you will enjoy.
Latest Releases from Washington State

This report focuses on the 2015s from Washington State, which is another terrific vintage for the region. Washington has been on an undeniable roll since 2012, and these newly released 2015s, and upcoming 2016s, aren’t going to break the trend.

The 2015 Vintage

The 2015 Vintage was early and hot, and it’s one of the hottest growing seasons on record. To put it in perspective, the average Growing Degree Days (GDD) for the Columbia Valley is 2,628. In 2015, the Columbia Valley accumulated 3,157 GDDs, with Red Mountain (one of the hottest AVAs) seeing north of 3,900.

However, Washington can handle heat and vintages are characterized more by when/how the heat is accumulated over the growing season. In the case of 2015, the season got off to an incredibly early start before being consistently hot going into the summer. Multiple heat spikes in June and July caused vines to shut down, and growers had to battle the balance between sugars and phenolic ripeness going into harvest. A cooler, more normal end to the season allowed the phenolics to catch up, but harvest and vinification decisions were critical in getting ripe tannins in the wines.

The wines have beautiful purity of fruit yet are slightly firmer and more classically styled compared to the more broad and voluptuous 2012s and 2014s. I think the phenolics lag what was achieved in 2014 (and 2012) and the wines have slightly less density and mid-palate depth, with an equal amount of tannin. Nevertheless, the top wines shine for their purity of fruit, balance, and length.

I gave the nod to the Rhône varieties last year when I tasted these wines from barrel, but from bottle, the Bordeaux blends showed beautifully as well. It’s a strong vintage for both Rhône and Bordeaux varieties. I compared the vintage to a hypothetical mix of 2013 and 2014 last year, and that comparison holds today.

In short, **2015 is another terrific vintage for Washington State** that has yielded ripe, yet also pure and focused wines that will benefit from short-term cellaring.

The 2014 Vintage

Before 2015, 2014 was the latest “hottest vintage to date” and came in even above what the region saw in 2013, which was another record breaker. However, where 2013 and 2015 saw more heat spikes, the heat in 2014 was even and consistent, and growers and winemakers were able to handle the heat beautifully.

The vintage kicked off with an extremely dry winter and spring with flowering occurring under ideal conditions resulting in an even, large crop (which helped with the heat during the summer). Summer was consistently hot and even, with no notable weather events, the heat was regular and short, with most grape varieties ripening at the same time.

Looking at the wines, these are ripe, plush, sexy wines that still hold onto a terrific sense of purity and freshness. While they’re not as concentrated or opulent as the 2012s, they have what should be treasured by the true wine lovers (and drinkers) – upfront charm, beautiful drinkability, and impeccable balance.


The 2013 Vintage

Like 2015, as well as 2005 and 2003, the 2013 vintage was a scorch that broke heat records (at the time). The season started off roughly a week ahead of average with a large, even crop load. This was followed by scorching temperatures in July through September, with harvest wrapping up for most by late September and early October. Berry sizes were tiny, the grape skins were thick, and these are concentrated, focused, classic wines that remind me of the 2015s. The majority of these have shed their baby fat and a touch of their tannin, and are drinking nicely today, but should be long-lived.

The 2012 Vintage

The greatest vintage in the past decade (it’s on par with 2007 and 2002), 2012 was a sensational vintage for Washington State that featured a long, even, consistent growing season followed by an Indian Summer allowing harvest to stretch into late October. I commented on release that a number of estates had made their best wines to date, and that still holds true today. The wines are still youthful, yet their beautiful purity and depth of fruit have them drinking well. The 2007s and 2002s are still going strong today for the top wines and I expect the same evolution for the 2012s.

The 2011 Vintage

Breaking the trend, the 2011 Vintage was the coolest vintage since 1993. With bud break 2-3 weeks behind average and a cool, moderate summer, growers left the grapes on the vine as long as possible (this was helped by a beautiful Indian Summer), but there were plenty of unripe grapes left on the vine when all was said and done. Nevertheless, there were some beautiful wines made, partially from Syrah which thrived in the cooler temperatures. Quality is less consistent, but the top wines are still youthful today.

For additional comparisons, here are the Growing Degree Days (GDD) for the Horse Heaven Hills AVA, which is a cooler region, from 2012 through 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GDD</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2891 heat units</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2605 heat units</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2699 heat units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3129 heat units</td>
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The Regions

If you want to truly understand Washington Wine, you need to understand the different growing regions. I describe the main American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) below, as well as do my best to list where the wines come from in the reviews in this report.

Columbia Valley AVA

Starting just east of the Cascade Mountain Range and covering most of Central and Southern Washington, the Columbia Valley AVA is the largest AVA in the state and can be thought of as a catch-all. This is one AVA that tells you very little about the wine and is often used when winemakers blend grapes from multiple smaller AVAs.

Yakima Valley AVA

Located in the Columbia Valley AVA, as well as the first Washington State AVA created, the Yakima Valley AVA is the third largest AVA in the state. In the western portion of the Columbia Valley, this cooler region warms substantially as you move east, away from the Cascade Mountains. Notable vineyards here include Mike Sauer’s Red Willow Vineyard, Scott Greer's Sheridan Vineyard, and Andrew Will's Two Blonds Vineyard. The wines from this AVA tend to hold onto their acidity and have complex, cool climate characters.

Rattlesnake Hills AVA

The Rattlesnake Hills AVA is located on the northeastern edge of the Yakima Valley and covers a range of mostly south facing, east to west running slopes that lie between 850 feet to upwards of 3,000 feet above sea-level at its highest point. This is a warmer region that’s not too dissimilar from Red Mountain (it’s slightly cooler), with Cote Bonneville’s DuBrul Vineyard being the most noteworthy.

Snipes Mountain AVA

A tiny, relatively new AVA that was created in 2009, Snipes Mountain AVA covers a unique, seven-mile stretch of rocky, basalt, and gravely soils located between 750 and 1,310 feet above sea level. The most notable vineyards include Harrison Hill Vineyard (which is used by Delille Cellars for their Harrison Hill Bordeaux blend) and Todd Newhouse’s Upland Vineyard.

JebDunnuck.com
Red Mountain AVA
Located just outside the town of Benton City, Red Mountain AVA covers roughly 4,000 acres all located on a south, southwest facing hillside that runs from roughly 500 feet at its base to upwards of 1,500 feet above sea level at its highest point. This is a hot, windswept region that produces some of the most tannic, concentrated, and mineral-laced wines in the State. Some of the top wines in the State come from this appellation and notable vineyards include Ciel du Cheval (which often produces the most elegant wines of the AVA), Klipsun, Kiona, Force Majeure, Upchurch, Galitzine, and Tapteil, to name just a few.

Wahluke Slope AVA
Including 8,490 acres of vineyards, the Wahluke Slope AVA lies to the north of the Rattlesnake Hills AVA and is a hot, south-facing slope of primarily sandy, gravelly soils. This is one of the warmest AVAs in the state, yet the sandy soils result in a distinct, exotic, gamey style of wine. The most notable producer here is Charles Smith, with notable vineyards including Clifton, Pheasant, Sundance, and Weinbau.

Horse Heaven Hills AVA
A cooler AVA located in the southern portion of the Columbia Valley AVA, on the northern edge of the Columbia River, the Horse Heaven Hills AVA covers a whopping 570,000 acres, with over 11,000 acres under vine. This AVA produces a massive amount of grapes (Columbia Crest and Chateau Ste. Michelle pull heavily from this region) but has some true superstar vineyards, including Champoux, Phinny Hill, Palengat, and The Benches. This region benefits from its proximity to the Columbia River, as well as strong winds due to the Columbia Gorge.

Walla Walla Valley AVA
One of the most well-known AVAs in the State, the Walla Walla Valley AVA is centered around the town of Walla Walla (it stretches into Oregon) and consists of a number of unique terroirs and mesoclimates. The most notable region, and one that received its own sub-appellation just recently, The Rocks (the official name is “The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater”) region is located in the southern part of the Walla Walla Valley, around the town of Milton-Freewater, in Oregon. It covers a unique alluvial fan of rocky, pebbly soils not too dissimilar from what can be found in France’s Châteauneuf du Pape region. This incredible terroir produces an exotic, perfumed and textured style of wine that’s one of the most unique – and identifiable – in the world. Top vineyards include Christophe Baron’s Cayuse Vineyards (Armada, En Cerise, etc.), Reynvaan’s The Rocks, SJR, and a handful of others. Looking outside the Rocks region, the soil is primarily Loess and differences in terroirs are driven by location (the further east towards the Blue Mountains, the more rainfall) and elevation. Top vineyards in the Walla Walla Valley include Pepper Bridge, Les Collines, Seven Hills, AMaurice, and Leonetti’s Loess Vineyard.

This Report
All the wines for this report were tasted between February 2018 and March 2018, in larger appellation tastings, domaine visits, and tastings at my office in Colorado.

As always, thanks for reading and Happy Hunting!

– Jeb Dunnuck
Abeja is located on the eastern side of the Walla Walla AVA and the wines are made by Daniel Wampfler. It’s a great estate and the wines always have a classic, balanced style that ages well.

Abeja makes one of the best Chardonnay in the State and their 2016 Chardonnay is rock solid. Apple blossom, citrus, brioche, and hints of white flowers all emerge from this medium-bodied, balanced beauty that gains a touch of toasty, nutty notes on the finish. It’s a beautiful, classic wine as well as a reference point example for the region.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon is terrific. A blend of 94% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% each of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, aged 18 months in French oak, it offers loads of blackcurrants, cassis, and spicy oak aromatics, full body, sweet, soft tannin, and a luscious, silky texture. With terrific purity of fruit and an already approachable style, drink it over the coming decade or more.

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Heath Hill Vineyard offers more tobacco, damp earth, and chocolate, with a similar level of ripe, sexy fruit. Full-bodied, opulent, yet also light on the palate, with nicely integrated acidity, it’s another gorgeous wine from this estate as well as one of the finest wines I’ve tasted from winemaker Daniel Wampfler.

Incorporating 4% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot and 1% Cabernet Franc, the 2015 Merlot from Abeja is another terrific wine. Black cherries, currants, candle wax, graphite and white chocolate notes all give way to a ripe, medium-bodied, supple, beautifully textured Merlot that has solid mid-palate depth and sweet tannin. It has the classic profile that’s the norm here, terrific purity of fruit, and a good finish. Drink it over the coming 8-10 years. Abeja.net

**ALUVE**

This is a relatively new estate (the first vintage was 2012) and they pull mostly from sites in Walla Walla.

Citrus blossom, honeyed stone fruits, and a hint of leafy herbs all emerge from the 2016 Chardonnay Estate. Medium-bodied, with bright acidity and a clean finish. It’s solid stuff and will drink nicely for 2-3 years.

Coming from the Walla Walla Valley and aged 22 months in 50% new French oak, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate is a blend of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot aged for 22 months in 50% new French oak barrels. Its inky purple color is followed by a ripe, unctuous, opulent wine that’s loaded with notions of ripe black fruits, chocolate, espresso, and earth. With full-bodied richness, a seamless texture, and loads of sweet fruit, drink it over the coming 8-10 years, and I suspect it will keep even longer.

There’s a single barrel of the 2015 Petit Verdot Estate, which spent 22 months in neutral oak before bottling. Inky purple-colored with lively notes of plums, blueberries, violets, and green herbs, it’s medium to full-bodied, has plenty of tannins, a soft mid-palate, and solid length. This is a tough variety to do on its own, but this is certainly a solid, big, steakhouse wine that offers plenty to like. www.aluveli.com

**AMAURICE**

Winemaker Anna Schafer continues to produce classic, impeccable wines from her estate vineyard in Walla Walla, as well as from other top sites in Washington State. Her 2015s all show the purity and focus that’s the hallmark of the vintage, yet certainly don’t lack for fruit either. They’re well worth your time and money.

From a site in the Wahluke Slope, the 2015 Malbec Gamache Vineyard spent 23 months in 40% new French oak. Its deep purple/ruby color is followed by a dark fruit, mineral, chocolate, and forest floor-scented red that has medium to full-bodied richness, fine, polished tannin, and a great finish. Like all of Anna’s wines, it’s impeccably made, has terrific purity of fruit, and a great future.

The 2015 Malbec Amparo is 100% Malbec that spent 23 months in 40% new French oak. Even inker in color and glass staining purple, with more blueberries, violets, incense, and floral aromas and flavors, this beauty hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a cashmere-like texture, impeccable balance and stunning purity of fruit. This big, rich, yet still light and graceful Malbec is one of the finest I’ve tasted from Washington State.

The 2015 Night Owl checks in as a blend of 32% Merlot, 30% Petit Verdot, 26% Cabernet Franc and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon, all aged 23 months in 40% new French oak. It has a Saint Emilion-like style in its ripe red and black fruits, cedar pencil, dried earth, and spicy aromas and flavors. With medium to full-bodied richness, no hard edges, and ripe, present tannin, it’s a beautiful wine from this team. It’s going to keep for a decade or more.

The 2015 Artist Morris from Anna is part of the Artist Series and has a label that was painted by Carl Morris in 1960. Made from 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, and the balance Cabernet Franc, its deep ruby/purple color gives way to a beautiful, rich 2015 that offers lots of red and black currants, dried earth, graphite, and toasty oak aromas and flavors. Nicely structured, it needs 2-3 years of bottle age and will drink nicely for a decade or more.

The medium ruby/purple-colored 2016 Grenache Boushey Vineyard comes all from the Boushey Vineyard and was aged 11 months in concrete. Black cherries, currants, dried pepper, and forest floor notes all flow to a silky, pure, beautifully balanced Grenache that has fine tannin and a great finish. It has the class to keep for 8-10 years.

Blueberries, graphite, tobacco, and hints of bay leaf all emerge from the 2016 Syrah Boushey Vineyard. Medium to full-bodied, it has beautiful purity, fine, fine tannin, and a great finish. A terrific expression of this great site in the Yakima Valley, this cuvée comes entirely from the Boushey Vineyard. It was fermented with 50% whole clusters and brought up all in used French oak.

The 2016 Syrah Fred comes all from the estate vineyard on the eastern side of Walla Walla and was brought up all in neutral oak. Like the Syrah Boushey Vineyard, it was fermented with 50% stems. Inky purple-colored with classic dark fruits (hints of blue fruits), earth, pepper, and game, this beauty is medium to full-bodied, has impeccable balance, and terrific purity of fruit. With building tannin and nicely integrated acidity, it’s going to keep for 10-12 years. amaurice.com

**AMAVI CELLARS**

As always, these latest releases from Amavi Cellars are terrific wines, as well as good values.

A blend of 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Cabernet Franc, 4% Malbec, and the rest Merlot, aged 16 months in mostly French oak (4% was American barrels), the 2015 Amavi Cellars offers attractive notes of blackcurrants, leafy herbs, lead pencil, and earth. It’s a ripe, medium to full-bodied, nicely textured, classy Cabernet Sauvignon to drink over the coming 7-10 years.

Aged 16 months in mostly neutral barrels (30% new), the 2015 Les Collines Syrah is a big, ripe, sexy effort that comes from a terrific vineyard in the Walla Walla Valley. Offering lots of black and blue fruits, charcoal, pepper, and

**ABEJA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Vintage</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>CHARDONNAY</td>
<td>WASHINGTON STATE</td>
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<td>WALLA WALLA VALLEY</td>
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*Note: The scores are rated by Jeb Dunnuck.*
chocolaty aromas and flavors, it's well-made and will keep for 6-8 years.

The base appellation release is the 2015 Walla Walla Valley Syrah, which incorporates 13% Grenache. It was too brought up mostly in neutral oak. It's more upfront and open knit compared to the Les Collines and offers lots of plum, spice, and peppery herb aromatics, medium to full-bodied richness, and no hard edges. It's ideal for drinking over the coming 4-5 years. www.amavicellars.com

**ANDREW WILL**

| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | CIEL DU CHEVAL VINEYARD | HORSE HEAVEN MOUNTAIN | NA | RED | 93+
|-------------|------|-------------------------|----------------------|----|-----|------
| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | CHAMPoux                | HORSE HEAVEN HILLS   | NA | RED | 94+
| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | TWO BLONDES            | YAKIMA VALLEY        | NA | RED | 94
| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | MAYS' DISCOVERY VINEYARD | HORSE HEAVEN HILLS | NA | RED | 94+
| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | Sorella                 | COLUMBIA VALLEY       | NA | RED | 97
| ANDREW WILL | 2014 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESPLOSO | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 92
| ANDREW WILL | 2015 | CHAMPoux                | HORSE HEAVEN HILLS   | NA | RED | 96
| ANDREW WILL | 2015 | TWO BLONDES VINEYARD   | YAKIMA VALLEY        | NA | RED | 95
| ANDREW WILL | 2015 | SORELLA CHAMPoux VINEYARD | COLOMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 96+
| ANDREW WILL | 2015 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESPLOSO | COLOMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 94
| ANDREW WILL | 2016 | Merlot                  | COLOMBIA VALLEY      | $35 | RED | 90
| ANDREW WILL | 2016 | Cabernet Franc          | COLOMBIA VALLEY      | $35 | RED | 90
| ANDREW WILL | 2016 | Cabernet Sauvignon      | COLOMBIA VALLEY      | $35 | RED | 92

I was able to taste both the 2014s and 2015s from Vashon Island-based Andrew Will, which is run by Chris Camarda. As always, Chris releases two appellation blends (Esploso and Sorella) and a bevy of single vineyard blends from some of the top sites in Washington State (Champoux, Ciel du Cheval, Mays' Discovery, and Two Blondes). Readers looking for classic, age-worthy Bordeaux blends from the United States can't go wrong here and these wines continue to fly too far under the radar. Give these a try!

The 2014 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard is a rare blend for this estate, only Merlot (61%) and Cabernet Franc (39%). Offering lots of graphite, black cherries, roasted herbs and chocolate, this beauty is full-bodied, textured, and rich on the palate, with beautiful concentration, ripe tannin, and a great finish. It can be drunk today or cellared for 10-15 years.

A little more fresh and lively than the Ciel du Cheval, the 2014 Champoux has sensational purity in its lifted bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, violets, and spring flowers. There's a touch of graphite that develops with time in the glass, and the wine has fine, polished tannin and an elegant, silky texture. It doesn't have the heft of the Ciel du Cheval but shines for its purity and elegance.

Another beautiful wine is the 2014 Two Blondes. It's a streaming, sexy bouquet that offers cassis, graphite, licorice, and hints of leafy herbs. Big, ripe and opulent, with a great texture (it's actually more elegant than the Ciel du Cheval), it will drink beautifully for two decades.

The deep, inky-colored 2014 Mays' Discovery Vineyard is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Violets, cassis, crushed rocks, dark chocolate, and licorice all emerge from this tight, backward, fresh and focused beauty. It's one of the few 2014s from Chris that required short-term cellaring.

The deep inky colored 2014 Sorella checks in as a blend of 74% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Franc, and the balance Petit Verdot and Malbec. Cassis, smoked earth, graphite, and chocolate all emerge from this full-bodied, concentrated, gorgously rich and layered beauty that has sweet tannin, beautiful purity, and a great finish. This is a sensational wine.

Offering plenty of cassis, chocolate, spice-box and licorice aromatics, with hints of roasted herbs, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Esploso is a full-bodied, supple, beautifully pure Cabernet Sauvignon that has plenty of tannins and a great finish. It's another terrific wine from this estate that can be drunk today or cellared for a decade.

The 2015 Champoux is a beauty. Concentrated, rich, full-bodied and layered, it offers a rocking nose of black currants, graphite, lead pencil, iodine, and salty minerality. Ripe, rounded, and opulent, yet with good freshness and purity, it needs 3-4 years of bottle age and will keep for two decades.

Also deeply colored, the inky colored 2015 Two Blondes Vineyard is another truly gorgeous wine from this estate. Creme de cassis, blueberries, violets, crushed rocks and chocolate all give way to a full-bodied, concentrated, rich, that still holds onto a classic, structured style. It's the finest version of this cuvee I've tasted.

The flagship 2015 Sorella Champoux Vineyard is another include Cabernet Sauvignon dominated blend that's up with the crème de la crème of the vintage. Cassis, black raspberries, roasted spice, candle wax and graphite notes all emerge from this tight, concentrated, fresh beauty that really needs 4-5 years of bottle age. A wine that gains depth with time in the glass, it has fine tannin, beautiful balance, and a classic, elegant style.

Made by Will Camarda, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Esploso (100% Cabernet Sauvignon, which is a change from last year) comes all from Champoux Vineyard aged in 50% new French oak. A ripe, sexy bouquet of black currants, spice-box, dried flowers, incense and graphite notes all emerge from this beautiful, elegant, si ky style that’s just a joy to drink. It’s another great vintage of this cuvee.

The 2016 Merlot is deep ruby-purple-colored and offers a terrific bouquet of ripe plums, black cherries, spice, and hints of vanilla. Beautifully balanced, medium-bodied, silky, and polished on the palate, it's a terrific wine.

Deep purple/violet colored, the 2016 Cabernet Franc is also beautiful. Black raspberries, violets, spring flowers, and some toasted spice notes all flow to a fresh, elegant, silky style. It has beautiful purity, fine tannin, and a good finish.

Blueberry, violets, blood orange, and candied orange peel all emerge from the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon. It's beautifully pure, fresh, and elegant, yet also has terrific concentration and depth. It's just another balanced, beautiful wine from this estate. www.andrewwill.com

**ARDOR CELLARS**

| ARDOR CELLARS | 2015 | SYRAH STONEY VINEYARD | WALLA WALLA VALLEY | $50 | RED | 93
|---------------|------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|------
| ARDOR CELLARS | 2015 | SYRAH LAWRENCE VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY     | $50 | RED | 92
| ARDOR CELLARS | 2015 | SYRAH ART DEN HOED VINEYARD | YAKIMA VALLEY | $50 | RED | 91
| ARDOR CELLARS | 2015 | SYRAH RED HEAVEN VINEYARD | RED MOUNTAIN       | $50 | RED | 91
| ARDOR CELLARS | 2015 | SYRAH QUATERNARIUM RESERVE | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $70 | RED | 93

I found all these 2015 from Ardor Cellars, which are made by the talented Aryn Morell, to be outstanding.

From a site in the rocks region of Walla Walla, the 2015 Syrah Stoney Vineyard is 100% Syrah, fermented with 50% stems, that spent 16 months in neutral 500-liter French oak barrels. Classic Rocks notes of black currants, tobacco, bacon fat, and gamey olive all flow to a full-bodied, rich, expansive beauty that has loads to love. Readers looking to see what the Rock’s terroir is all about should give this a whirl.

From sites in the Colombia Valley, the 2015 Syrah Lawrence Vineyard spent 16 months in neutral 500-liter French oak barrels. Plums, blueberries, peppercy herbs, and some vanilla oak notes all emerge from this rich, supple Syrah that has medium to full-bodied richness, good acidity and plenty of length. It has terrific purity and it's straight up delicious, with a charming, gulpable style.

The 2015 Syrah Art Den Hoed Vineyard (16 months in neutral barrels) offers a more lifted, perfumed style, with lots of plum, violets, licorice, and vanilla aromas and flavors. It's another ripe, round, delicious wine.

From a site on Red Mountain, the 2015 Syrah Red Heaven Vineyard (100% Syrah fermented with 10% stems and aged in neutral barrels) offers the classic savory, mineral, dried earth style that’s the hallmark of this estate. Blackcurrants, scorched earth, charcoal, and spice all give way to a ripe, nicely concentrated, supple red that has a great texture. It’s going to benefit from a year in bottle and keep through 2025.

The top cuvée of the estate, the 2015 Syrah Quaternium Reserve saw a touch of stems (21%) as well as 20 months in neutral oak. It offers loads of tobacco and cured olive notes. Full-bodied, rich, a rounded, sexy texture, and terrific core and ripe, darker fruits. It’s already access ble but is going to drink nicely for 8-10 years. www.ardorcellars.com
Ashan Cellars is Chris Gorman’s label focused exclusively on Chardonnay. His 2015s, which I tasted last year, were slightly more successful than these 2016s, yet these are still solid, enjoyable wines.

The least expensive Chardonnay is the 2016 Chardonnay Barrel Fermented, which comes from a mix of the single vineyards. It offers attractive stone fruits, buttered citrus, and a touch of leafy herbs in a medium-bodied, supple, simple style. It’s enjoyable, and certainly more drinkable than some of these single vineyards.

The 2016 Chardonnay Cielo Vineyard comes from the cooler Columbia Gorge region of eastern Washington and was brought up all in barrel. It has a vanilla, juicy style as well as notes of caramelized peach, citrus blossom, and white flowers. Medium-bodied, clean and balanced on the palate, with some background oak, it’s an enjoyable, solid effort.

The 2016 Chardonnay Boushey Vineyard is from a site in the Yakima Valley and was also brought up all in barrel. Its deeper gold color is followed by honeyed, ripe, exotic wine that has an almost dessert style in its medium to full-bodied, rich, thick texture. It lacks a briny and zip, but it could certainly function as an aperitif or dessert wine.

The 2016 Chardonnay Conner Lee Vineyard is another richer styled effort. Buttered apple, peach, and mulled citrus notes all give way to a medium to full-bodied, textured, balanced effort that offers plenty of charm. Nevertheless, none of these Chardonnays are as good as the 2015s last year. AshanCellars.com

AVENNIA

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Vineyard</th>
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<tr>
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I continue to consider Chris Peterson’s Avennia estate to be one of the best in Washington State and he’s been making world-class wines for a number of years now. He releases two white wines: A Sauvignon Blanc called Oliane and a Rhone blend of Roussanne and Marsanne called La Perle. The reds are broken up into a Rhône/Bordeaux groups, with the Rhônes including a Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre blend called Justine, and two single-vineyard Syrahs, the Le Corbeau from Mays’ Discovery Vineyard in Horse Heaven Hills and the Arnaud from Dick Boushey’s Boushey Vineyard on the western side of the Yakima Valley. The Bordeaux releases are built around the appellation blends and include the entry-level Gravura, Valery (Merlot dominated), and Sestina (Cabernet Sauvignon dominated). In addition, Peterson also makes a pure Cabernet Franc from Champoux Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills and a pure Cabernet Sauvignon from very old vines in the Red Willow Vineyard. As I hope these reviews show, these are brilliant wines readers need to seek out.

Chris’ 2016 Oliane is a steeply, mineral-scented effort that has plenty of citrus peel and mineral aromatics, medium-bodied richness, and nicely integrated acidity. Made from 100% Sauvignon Blanc brought up in a mix of neutral oak, concrete, and new French oak, drink it over the coming 2-3 years. A blend of 55% Roussanne and 45% Marsanne, from Sagemoor and Boushey vineyards, the 2017 La Perle Rhone White offers solid lemon curd, pineapple, and citrus notes in a richer, yet still fresh, lively style. There are only about 100 cases made, but it’s a beautiful, classy white.

The 2016 Cabernet Franc Champoux Vineyard was brought up in 25% second fill barrels, with the balance in neutral oak. It has an almost Loire-like slant in its ripe black fruits, chocolate, and herbal/tobacco aromas and flavors. These give way to a medium to full-bodied, elegant, concentrated Cabernet Franc that has a singular character. There are only 100 cases but it’s well worth seeking out.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Willow is an incredible wine that’s up with some of the greatest Cabernet Sauvignon made in Washington State. Made from 100% Cabernet aged in new French oak, it offers a seamless, layered, full-bodied style to go with awesome notes of creme de cassis, graphite, crushed rocks, and hints of tobacco. Possessing remarkable purity of fruit, building tannin, and a rich yet elegant profile, it needs 3-4 years of bottle age and will shine for two decades! Hats off to winemaker Chris Peterson. There are only 100 cases produced.

The 2015 Valery (70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc brought up in 30% new French oak) offers a deep, herbal, black-fruited, coffee bean and mineral-driven style. Medium to full-bodied, nicely concentrated, and fresh on the palate, with fine tannin, give this elegant, classic, slightly old-school effort a year or two of bottle age and enjoy over the following decade.

The entry-level Bordeaux blend is the 2015 Gravura, made from 47% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 7% Cabernet Franc, aged 20 months in 70% new French oak. It’s the most open-knit, sexy, and voluptuous of the 2015s and has tons of ripe red and black fruits, chocolate, earth, and assorted spicy aromas and flavors. Rich, medium to full-bodied, and beautifully textured, drink it over the coming decade.

The flagship 2015 Sestina checks in as 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc brought up in 60% new French oak. Gorgeous notes of blackcurrants, black cherries, graphite, wet river rock, and leafy herbs all emerge from this beautifully balanced, fresh, classic wine that’s still tight and backward. It’s not a blockbuster but has building richness and tannin, as well as a great finish. Give bottles 2-3 years and enjoy over the
following 10-15.

From one of my favorite sites in Yakima Valley, the 2015 Syrah Arnaut Boushey Vineyard (100% Syrah aged 16 months in 15% new French oak) is inky purple-colored with a gorgeous bouquet of ripe black raspberries, plums, white pepper, spice, and scorched earth. It’s deep, full-bodied, and beautifully concentrated, with fine tannin, and has a great finish, all making for a brilliant Washington State Syrah. It’s going to keep for 10-15 years.

The entry-level Rhône blend is the 2015 Justine, 55% Grenache, 32% Mourvèdre and the rest Syrah brought up in neutral French oak puncheons and barrels. It displays black cherries, black olives, blueberries, spice box, and dried, peppery herbs notes all flow to a pure, medium to full-bodied, elegant red that has nicely integrated acidity and a great finish. It’s ideal for drinking over the coming 4-7 years.

First made in 2014 with the idea of producing a terroir-driven Syrah, the 2015 Syrah Le Corbeau Discovery Vineyard comes from a contiguous parcel in the Discovery Vineyard and was brought up in a mix of mostly neutral puncheons and barrels. It’s another deep, rich 2015 that offers lots of black fruits, crushed violet petals, and charred meat-k-i aromas and flavors. With medium to full-bodied richness, a rounded, supple texture, and a great finish, it’s certainly going to be an outstanding Syrah and should keep for a decade.

The 2015 Cabernet Franc Champoux Vineyard is another terrific wine from one of the top vineyards in the Horse Heaven Hills. Terrific notes of blackcurrants, black cherries, leafy herbs, iodine, and spring flowers all emerge from this singular, ripe, beautifully polished and elegant Cabernet Franc. With plenty of compah, ripe, present tannin, and a great finish, it’s going to drink nicely for 10-15 years.

A blend of 56% Grenache, 31% Mourvèdre, 13% Syrah brought up all in older oak, the 2016 Justine offers a great core of black fruits as well as lots of peppery herbs, earth, and classic meatiness. It looks to be a great vintage for this cuvée.

All from the Horse heaven hills and first made in 2014, the tiny production 2016 Syrah Le Coreau Discovery Vineyard offers a deep, purple/plum color as well as a smoking bouquet of currants, lavender, tapenade, and classic cool-climate Syrah gaminess. Rich, full-bodied, beautifully polished, elegant and seamless, it’s a smoking Syrah.

Also deeply colored, the 2016 Syrah Arnaut Boushey Vineyard is a sensual, meaty, savory, complex beauty. Full-bodied, with sweet tannin, no hard edges and beautiful purity, it has fine, fine tannin, a bloody, salty character, and a great finish. It’s rocking stuff.

A blend of 70% Merlot (from Boushey Vineyard and 1986 plantings) and 30% Cabernet Franc (Champoux Vineyard from 1997 plantings), the 2016 Valery offers a dark, plummy, meaty, damp earth, and bay leaf scented bouquet. This gives way to a medium to full-bodied, Pomerol look-alike that has that beautiful purity, fine tannin, and a great finish.

The 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Destina checks in as 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Merlot, and 6% Cabernet Franc that will spend 20 months in 60% new French oak. This is the first year this cuvée be labeled as a Cabernet Sauvignon. Blackcurrants, tobacco leaf, iodine, and hints of olive all give way to a rich, meaty, full-bodied, concentrated, yet elegant wine that’s going to age for 20+ years.

The 2016 Cabernet Franc Champoux Vineyard is also terrific. Plums, blueberries, flowers, damp earth, and cedar notes all emerge from this deeply colored, beautiful, plum, luxuriously textured beauty that has fine tannin and a great finish.

The 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Willow Vineyard is 100% Red Willow Cabernet Sauvignon that will spend roughly 20 months in close to 100% new French oak. Blackcurrants, smoked herbs, chocolate, and graphite notes all give way to a full-bodied, plump, rich, concentrated effort that’s going to be better with short-term cellaring and keep for two decades.

In addition to the current releases, I was also able to taste a small retrospective of Chris’s Arnaut Syrah from the Boushey Vineyard in the Yakima Valley. Starting out, the 2010 Arnaut Syrah Boushey Vineyard sports a deep purple color as well as classic, cool-climate notes of leafy herbs, white pepper, cedarwood, and assorted dark fruits. It’s full-bodied, has beautiful freshness and purity, as well as length.

From a cooler, challenging vintage, the 2011 Arnaut Syrah Boushey Vineyard is a rock star Syrah that does everything right. Not harvested until November 2, it offers up classic Syrah notes of blackcurrants, currants, white pepper, and charred meats. It’s more elegant and seamless than the 2010, yet still has fantastic concentration, medium to full-bodied richness, and a great finish.

The 2012 Arnaut Syrah Boushey Vineyard is a blockbuster and has more richness and depth than the 2011, as well as more finesse than the 2010. Offering full-bodied aromas and flavors of crème de cassis, violets, tobacco leaf and ground pepper, this beauty has remarkable purity of fruit, an expansive, opulent texture, sweet tannin, and a brilliant finish. It’s drinking great today but certainly has another decade or more of longevity.

The 2013 Arnaut Syrah Boushey Vineyard has lots of bloody, meaty notes as well as ripe dark fruits, wild herbs, and peppery aromas and flavors. Complex, full-bodied, and layered, with terrific purity (which is a hallmark of all of Chris’s wines), it’s another terrific Syrah to enjoy over the coming decade.

The 2014 Syrah Arnaut Boushey Vineyard is cut from the same clone as the 2012 and has a ripe, full-bodied, sexy profile. Black fruits, scorched earth, violets, and spice all give way to a beautifully layered, seamless Syrah that shows more and more structure with time in the glass. I suspect this might shut down with 2-3 years of bottle age, so try a bottle now or hide them in the cellar for 4-6 years. www.avennia.com

B. LEIGHTON

| B. LEIGHTON | 2015 | GRATITUDE OLSN BROTHER’S VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 93 |
| B. LEIGHTON | 2015 | SYRAH OLSN BROTHER’S VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 93 |
| B. LEIGHTON | 2015 | PETIT VERDOT OLSN BROTHER’S VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 96 |

Brennon Leighton, who’s one of the driving forces behind the sensational quality of the Charles Smith wines, has created a brilliant syrah. From one of my favorite sites in Yakima Valley, the 2015 Syrah Arnaut Boushey Vineyard is a rock star Syrah that does everything right. Not harvested until November 2, it offers up classic Syrah notes of blackcurrants, currants, white pepper, and charred meats. It’s more elegant and seamless than the 2010, yet still has fantastic concentration, medium to full-bodied richness, and a great finish.

Drinking great today but certainly has another decade or more of longevity.

Deep purple-colored, the 2015 Petit Verdot Olsen Brother’s Vineyard is 100% varietal that spent 20 months in 40% new French oak. It’s a beautiful wine loaded with notions of blueberries, leafy herbs, hints of wet stone, and graphite. It’s full-bodied, gorgeously pure, and v brant, with a focused, balanced style. It’s as elegant, pure, and seamless as this variety gets. Hats off to winemaker Brenna Leighton, bleightonwines.com

BETZ FAMILY WINERY

| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2014 | CLOS DE BETZ | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 95 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2014 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON PERE DE FAMILLE | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 97 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2014 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON HEART OF THE HILL | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 97+ |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | CUVEE FRANGIN | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 90 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | BESOLEIL | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 91-93 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | SYRAH LA SERENNE | YAKIMA VALLEY | NA | RED | 94 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | SYRAH LA COTE ROUSSE | RED MOUNTAIN | NA | RED | 96 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | SYRAH LA COTE PATRIARCHE | YAKIMA VALLEY | NA | RED | 95 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | CLOS DE BETZ | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 93+ |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON PERE DE FAMILLE | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 97 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2015 | CABERNET SAUVIGNON HEART OF THE HILL | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 98+ |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2016 | POSSIBILITY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 91 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2016 | BESOLEIL | COLUMBIA VALLEY | NA | RED | 92 |
| BETZ FAMILY WINERY | 2016 | SYRAH LA SERENNE | YAKIMA VALLEY | NA | RED | 96 |

JebDunnuck.com Latest Releases from Washington State Page 7
 Owned by the Griessl family since 2011, Betz Family Winery still has Washington State’s inbred ble ambassador of Bob Betz firmly involved in the winery, with the wines made by the talented Louis Skinner since 2013. This is an under-referenced estate for the Washington State and the winemaker goes from strength to strength. Today, they are at the top of the hierarchy in just about every vintage. In addition, while it would be easy to sit back and maintain the status quo at an established estate like this, they continue to push for improvements in quality at every level, purchasing an optical sorting machine in 2015, creating a new winemaker, doing another bottling, grape, and lead pencil notes all emerge from this full-bodied, rich, opulent, powerful Cabernet Sauvignon that’s going to keep for 2-3 decades, Bravo.

What was previously called Cuvée Frangin, the 2016 Possibility checks in as a blend of 40% each of Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, with the balance Merlot and Cinsault. It’s a ripe, upfront, juicy, delicious effort that has a classic purple color, great notes of plums, blueberries, violets, and spice, medium to full-bodied richness, and a clean finish. It’s incredibly high quality and a great introduction to the wines of this estate.

Including the highest percentage of Merlot ever, the 2015 Clos de Betz checks in at 71% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the balance Petit Verdot. It offers a beautiful bouquet of cassis, licorice, violets, and earthy, herbal notes as well as a medium to full-bodied, incredibly elegant style on the palate. It’s light and closed, yet has remarkable purity and depth. Give bottles 2-3 years of bottle age.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Père de Famille is a cellar selection of top barrels from throughout the Columbia Valley. It’s deeper colored than the Clos de Betz and has sensational notes of creme de cassis, licorice, graphite, and assorted hedione, and gives up terrific notes of kirsch, herbes de Provence, licorice and spice. From Red Mountain (where they love working with the grower, who is proactive and responsive), the medium ruby/purple-colored 2016 Besoleil is 55% Grenache, 23% Mourvèdre, 11% Syrah and the rest Cinsault, all aged in a mix of neutral barrels. It offers beautiful notes of red plums, blueberries, white and black pepper, and herbs de Provence. It’s a silky, elegant style, and integrated acidity. It’s another beautiful vintage of this wine that will keep for a decade.

The 2015 Besoleil is not yet bottled and they’ve pushed the bottling date back so this cuvée will now see 16-18 months in barrel. It’s a southern Rhône look-alike and gives up terrific notes of kirsch, herbs de Provence, licorice and spice in a medium to full-bodied, elegant, textured package. Coming from the Boushey Vineyard in the Yakima Valley, the 2015 Syrah La Serenne is full-bodied, fresh and elegant, with classic cooler climate Syrah notes of peppery herbs, darker berry fruits, lavender, spring flowers, and smoked earth. It has terrific complexity and glides over the palate, making for a sensational Syrah from Washington State. Drink it anytime over the coming decade.

As usual, the 2015 Syrah La Côte Rousse offers a more masculine, structured, mineral-driven style. This cuvée comes all from the warmer Red Mountain AVA and is a power-packed 2015 loaded with notions of black, black fruits, smoke, leather, and a bit of smoke. It’s a big, rich, inky effort, yet I like all the wines from this estate has awesome purity of fruit and is impeccably balanced.

The 2014 Syrah La Côte Patriarche is a small step back from the sensational 2014, yet is still an incredible wine. Coming from some of the oldest Syrah vines in the state, planted in the Red Willow Vineyard in the Yakima Valley, it offers beautiful blue fruits, spring flowers, licorice, and savoy herb-like aromas and flavors. It’s fresh, elegant, and silky, with fabulous purity of fruit and a medium to full-bodied richness and depth. It’s a beautiful Syrah to enjoy over the coming 10-15 years.

Moving to the Bordeaux blends, the 2015 Clos de Betz is 75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Petit Verdot. This medium to full-bodied, nicely textured, elegant 2015 gives up lots of plum, chocolate, leafy herbs, and wet rock-like aromas and flavors. It’s going to drink nicely on release.

The 2015 Syrah La Côte Rousse from Boushey Vineyard, 9% Petit Verdot, and 4% Merlot that’s mostly from Red Mountain aged 20 months in 70% new French oak. This inky colored effort is packed and stacked, with deep blackberry and currant fruits intermixed with lots of graphite, crushed rock, and minerals as well as smoky, violet aromas and flavors. This full-bodied beauty has gorgeous purity and elegance. It needs 2-4 years of bottle age and will keep for two decades.

Made from 100% Kiona Heart of the Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon aged 20 months in new French oak, the inky colored 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Heart of the Hill is a spectacular wine that’s up with the crème de la crème of the vintage. Coming all from Boushey Vineyard, the 2016 Syrah La Serenne saw plenty of whole clusters as well as 11 months in French oak, 40% new. It’s deep inky colored with a bouquet of blueberries, spring flowers, gunpowder, and smoked earth. It has terrific complexity and glides over the palate, making for a very impressive Syrah from Washington State. Drink it anytime over the coming decade.
coming 3-4 years. Showing plenty of Rocks character, the 2016 Syrah Ankeroller Block Stoney Vineyard sports a medium ruby color to go with classic notes of sour cherries, peat moss, exotic spice, and peppered meat. Medium-bodied, silk, beautifully balanced, and with plenty of length, it's a total charmer to drink over the coming 4-6 years.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Discovery Vineyard comes from a cooler site in the Horse Heaven Hills and offers a firmer, tight style in its dark plum and blackberry fruits, cedarwood, violets, and scorched earth aromas and flavors. With medium-bodied richness, nicely integrated acidity, and a good finish, it's a solid Cabernet that should benefit from a year or so in bottle and drink nicely through 2025.

BORNE OF FIRE

BORNE OF FIRE 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY $20 RED 90

A blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Malbec, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon is a terrific value that offers loads of up-front cassis and cherry fruits, plenty of leafy herbs and graphite notes, medium-bodied richness, and a soft, supple, seamless style. It's a terrific value that has solid Cabernet character. Drink it over the coming 4-5 years.

BRIAN CARTER CELLARS

BRIAN CARTER CELLARS 2016 ORIANA YAKIMA VALLEY $25 WHITE 90

The light gold colored 2016 Oriana from the talented Brian Carter checks in as a blend of 53% Viognier, 34% Roussanne, and 12% Riesling that spent 6 months in a mix of neutral oak and tanks. You clearly see the quality of a winemaker with whites, and Brian always passes with flying colors. White peach, pineapple, white flowers, and honey blossom notes all emerge from this medium-bodied, pure, elegant white that has plenty of fruit and texture as well as purity. Drink it over the coming year or two.

The 2013 Le Coursier checks in as a blend of 54% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Cabernet Franc, 6% Malbec, and 4% Petit Verdot all aged 22 months in French and European oak, 40% new. Deep purple/violet tinged with a seamless, silky style in its blueberry, black cherry, violet, and incense aromas and flavors, it has full-bodied richness, sweet tannin, and a silky, pure, layered style.

A new wine from this estate, the 2013 ACE is 55% Cabernet Sauvignon and 45% Syrah aged just under two years in 30% new French oak. It offers a deep purple/violet color to go with impressive amounts of blackberry and black cherry fruits, spice box, and hints of oak. It's another seamless, pure, elegant, beautifully textured and hedonistic wine.

The 2013 Tuttorosso is the Tuscan styled red from 66% Sangiovese, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 16% Syrah, all brought up in 20% new French oak with the balance in used barrels. Black cherries, cedar wood, dried herbs, and savoy' sweet notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, silky, elegant wine that has loads of sweet fruit, yet stays pretty, pure, and elegant on the palate. Blackberries, dark chocolate, and peppery herb notes all emerge from the 2014 Syrah ONE, 100% Syrah that spent 22 months in 20% new French barrels. Medium to full-bodied, ripe, concentrated and sexy on the palate, with bright acidity, it should drink nicely for 8-10 years.

Carter's Spanish rendition is the 2014 Corrida, a blend of 66% Tempranillo, 18% Graciano, 10% Garnacha, and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon that spent the usual 22 months in a mix of French, American, and Russian oak. Black cherries, currants, toasted bread, spice, and dried fruit notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, silky, pure and polished beauty that has fine tannin and a great texture. It's another well made, impressive wine from the estate that's going to keep for a decade or more. www.briancartercellars.com

BUTY

BUTY 2016 SEMILLON, SAUVIGNON & MUSCADELLE COLUMBIA VALLEY $25 WHITE 88

Winemaker Chris Dowsett continues to make a solid set of wines for Buty. Looking first at the whites and a blend of 62% Semillon, 25% Sauvignon Blanc and the rest Muscadelle, the 2016 Semillon, Sauvignon & Muscadelle is medium gold-colored and reveals notes of sautéed stone fruits, dried herbs, and a hint of buttered lemon. Medium-bodied, rounded, and nicely textured, it should be versatile on the dinner table and is a character-filled dry white.

Buty's 2016 Chardonnay Conner Lee Vineyard is excellent, with a lively citrus, mint, wet stone and leafy herb style as well as bright acidity on the palate. It's a fresh, clean, balanced Chardonnay I suspect will keep nicely for 2-3 years, maybe longer.

The deep ruby/purple-colored 2014 Columbia Rediviva Phinny Hill Vineyard (80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Syrah aged for 19 months in 37% new French oak barrels) offers a very fresh, lively bouquet of black raspberries, white pepper, cedar oak, and incense. Perfumed, lively, and nuanced, it has plenty of heft and richness on the palate, nicely integrated acidity, and fine tannin, all making for a beautiful Washington State blend that will keep for a decade or more.

A blend of 63% Merlot and 37% Cabernet Franc aged 15 months in one-third new French oak, the 2015 Merlot & Cabernet Franc Conner Lee Vineyard is a beauty! Black cherries, currants, tobacco, and damp earth characteristics all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, beautifully balanced red. With solid depth of fruit, a clean, elegant style, and fine tannin, it's going to cruise in the cellar for 10-12 years, www.butywinery.com

CADENCE

CADENCE 2015 CODA RED MOUNTAIN $28 RED 90

Ben Smith's Cadence wines fly too far under the radar and these are classic, singular, age-worthy wines from Washington State. They deserve more attention in the market.

Cadence's entry-level cuvée is the 2015 Codex, which is 46% Cabernet Franc, 28% Merlot, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon and the balance Petit Verdot, aged in 45% new French oak. Always a good value, the 2015 offers deep, rich aromas and flavors of blackcurrants, black cherries, graphite, dried earth, and hints of chocolate. With medium to full-bodied, richness, a mouthfilling, balanced texture, and a great finish, it's a beautiful wine that can be drunk anytime over the coming 7-8 years (and probably longer).

A blend of 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Cabernet Franc and the balance Merlot from a vineyard on Red Mountain (all the fruit for the Cadence wines comes from Red Mountain), the 2015 Tapteil offers a pretty, fresh, silky personality to go with plenty of black and blue fruits, violets, and leafy herbs. It's clean, impeccably balanced, and already drinking nicely. It's going to keep for a decade or more.

Violets, Asian spice, incense, and red and black plum notes all emerge from the 2015 Ciel du Cheval, which is incredibly floral and perfumed aromatically. With a medium to full-bodied, silky, elegant style on the palate, fine tannin, and good acidity, it's another impressive wine from Cadence that's going to keep for 10-15 years. This cuvée checks in as 33% each of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, with the balance an even split of Merlot and Petit Verdot. It spent 18 months in 40% new French oak.

Starting off the reserve cuvées, the 2015 Bel Canto is 56% Merlot and 44% Cabernet Franc. It's a rich, layered, beautifully concentrated effort that has classic Red Mountain character in its savory currants and black cherry fruits,
dried violets, graphite, and mineral-laced aromas and flavors. With full-bodied richness, a layered, multi-dimensional texture and a great finish, it has enough tannin to warrant 3-4 years of bottle age, and I suspect it will cruise in the cellar for at least 10-15 years.

The 2015 Camerata (80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot brought up in 50% new French oak) offers more classic Cabernet Sauvignon notes of blackcurrants, tobacco leaf, cedar, and earth. It’s another rich, beautifully concentrated, deep wine that has building tannin, notable freshness, and a great finish. As with the Bel Canto, it’s going to benefit from short-term cellaring and keep for 15+ years. cadencewinery.com

CAIRDEAS WINERY

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2016 NELLIE MAE LAWRENCE VINEYARD
COLUMBIA VALLEY $24 WHITE 90

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2014 CINSUALT
YAKIMA VALLEY $34 RED 91

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2014 COUINoise
YAKIMA VALLEY $36 RED 90

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2014 CAISLEN AN PAPA MEEK VINEYARD
YAKIMA VALLEY $45 RED 91

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2014 TRI
YAKIMA VALLEY $39 RED 93

CAIRDEAS WINERY 2014 CONSONANCE
YAKIMA VALLEY $42 RED 90

The 2016 Nellie Mae Lawrence Vineyard is made from 60% Vognier and 40% Roussanne that was brought up all in stainless steel tanks. Its lighter gold color is followed by a steely, crisp, refreshing white that offers enjoyable notes of leafy herbs, green citrus, and tangerine peel. Exotic, dry and nicely balanced, it’s going to be versatile and keep for a year or so. 250 cases.

A terrific expression of this variety, the 2014 Cinsualt (which includes 8% Couinoise, 7% Grenache, and small amounts of Syrah and Mourièvre) offers lots of beautiful cherry and strawberry fruits intermixed with notes of spice box, dried flowers, and Provençal herbs. It’s pretty, medium-bodied, silky, and polished, with tons of charm. This cuvée saw plenty of stems in the fermentation and 24 months in 30% new barrels. It’s easily one of the finest expressions of this variety coming out of the New World.

Another outstanding example of a variety you don’t see on its own very often, the 2014 Couinoise offers more cherry notes, as well as lots of dried herbs, earth, and savory, leathery notes. Showing more black fruits with time in the glass, it’s medium-bodied, elegant and pretty, with integrated acidity and a beautiful, elegant style that just begs to be drunk. This includes 10% Alicante Bouschet and 5% Cinsualt, and was brought up neutral barrels.

CANVASBACK

CANVASBACK 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RED MOUNTAIN
RED MOUNTAIN $40 RED 89

CANVASBACK 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON GRAND PASSAGE
RED MOUNTAIN $80 RED 95

The Canvasback releases are made by Brian Rudin and come all from the Red Mountain AVA. He’s made one of the finest wines in the vintage with his 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Grand Passage. The soft, rounded, sexy 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain (81% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 3% Petit Verdot, 3% Malbec, and the rest Cabernet Franc) is a consumer-friendly, full-bodied, rounded, nicely made Cabernet that has plenty of mid-palate depth as well as sweet tannin. I’d happily drink bottles over the coming 7-8 years.

Another beautiful wine, the 2014 Caislen an Papa Mek Vineyard checks in as 44% Grenache, 22% Mourièvre, and the rest Syrah, Cinsualt and Couinose, brought up in neutral barrels. It offers terrific black cherry and blackberry fruits as well as lots of spice, peppery herbs, and oaky notes. This medium-bodied, silky, elegant, impeccably made blend has tons of charm and is well worth checking out.

Deep ruby colored, the 2014 Tri is a killer blend of 64% Syrah, 24% Mourièvre, and 12% Grenache brought up in 30% new French oak puncheons. Black cherries, blackberries, peppery herbs, and hints of spice all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, supple, downright sexy blend that has no hard edges, sweet tannin, and a great finish. Count me impressed.

The 2014 Consonance checks in as a blend of 48% Petit Sirah, 24% Syrah, 21% Couinose, and 7% Mourièvre that was completely destemmed and aged just under two years in French oak. Its deep purple color is followed by lots of darker berry fruits, graphite, and scorched earth aromas and flavors. It’s a big, rich, concentrated wine, yet like everything here, the tannin quality is impressive, as well as the purity of fruit. It should keep for at least 7-8 years. cairdeaswinery.com

CASASMITHE

CASASMITHE 2017 VINO SANGIOVESE ROSÉ
WASHINGTON $12 ROSÉ 90

CASASMITHE 2016 VINO CABERNET / SANGIOVESE
WASHINGTON STATE NA RED 90

CASASMITHE 2016 SANGIOVESE CINGHIALE ROSEBUD
WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 92

CASASMITHE 2016 PRIMITIVO PORCOSPINO NORTHRIDGE VINEYARD
WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 92

CASASMITHE 2016 BARBERA CERVO NORTHRIDGE VINEYARD
WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 90

CASASMITHE 2016 BARBERA JACK’S VINEYARD
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 92

This is the Italian varietal focused label from Charles Smith.

The medium gold/salmon colored 2017 VINO Sangiovese Rosé offers a brant, strawberry and cherry-scented bouquet as well as a rounded, supple, nicely textured style. With both racy acidity and a fleshy, textured, salty style on the palate, it’s a versatile rosé to drink over the coming 6-12 months.

A blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Sangiovese, the 2016 Vino Cabernet / Sangiovese offers a deep ruby/plum color as well spicy, peppery, perfumed notes of black cherries, blueberries incense, and exotic spices. Possessing much more intensity of flavor than you could want for the price tag, with medium to full-bodied richness and excellent purity, it’s a no-brainer, high quality red to drink over the coming 3-4 years. It’s a smoking value.

Deep ruby/purple-colored with a lovely nose of ripe cherries, crushed flowers, incense, and dry earth, the 2016 Sangiovese Cinghiale Rosebud is medium-bodied, seamless, silky and incredibly polished on the palate, with fine tannin and a creamy, layered texture that defies its 20 dollar price tag.

CAYUSE

CAYUSE 2016 VIOGNIER CAILOUX VINEYARD
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA WHITE 94

CAYUSE 2015 ROSÉ
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA ROSÉ 89

CAYUSE 2015 GOD ONLY KNOWS
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94

CAYUSE 2015 THE LOVERS
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94

CAYUSE 2015 SYRAH ARMADA VINEYARD
WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 96

Another vibrant, deep ruby colored wine is the 2016 Primitivo Porcospino Northridge Vineyard, which comes from the Northridge Vineyard on the Wahluke Slope. Black cherries, incense, brambly spice, and violet characteristics all emerge from this medium-bodied, creamy textured, seamless, gorgeously pure beauty that offers incredible pleasure and character.

Deep ruby/purple-colored, the 2016 Barbera Cervo Northridge Vineyard is another knockout value. Blackberry, smoked meat, herbs, and earth nuances all give way to a full-bodied, concentrated, beautifully textured, silky effort that’s already hard to resist.

From a site just off Sunnyside road (not far from Cayuse), the 2016 Barbera Jack’s Vineyard is another saturated ruby/plum-colored effort that offers plenty of Rocks style in its blackcurrants, olive, dried game, and pepper. Medium to full-bodied, elegant and seamless on the palate, with nicely integrated acidity and a fresh, focused, lively style, drink it over the coming 4-6 years. winesofsubstance.com
The unfortunate news at Cayuse this year was issues with the corks on their 2015 releases. For whatever reason, paraffin wax, which is used to coat the outside of corks, ended up being pushed into the bottle during bottling leaving particles as well as an oily residue in the wines. The only 2015s to be released were the Armada Syrah, God Only Knows, and The Lovers. This is heartbreaking, and I still remember tasting these fabulous wines from barrel. Hat’s off to Christophe Baron and his team at Cayuse for discovering the problem, not releasing faulty wines, and refunding consumers’ money. The 2015s that were bottled showed beautifully, and certainly, the 2016s are also terrific wines.

The 2016 Viognier Cailloux Vineyard from Baron reminds me of one of the single vineyard Condrieus from winemaker Andre Perret in France’s Northern Rhone Valley. Killer notes of caramlized citrus, orange blossom, and salty minerality all flow to a ripe, medium to full-bodied, concentrated beauty that has good acidity, plenty of richness, yet a light, balanced character. Drink it over the coming 2-4 years.

Always incredibly light in color, the 2015 Rose is no exception and has tings of orange/salmon as well as racy notes of apple, citrus, and salty, mineral, seaside-like nuances. Exotic, medium-bodied, and lively on the palate, it’s a quality rose to drink over the coming 6-12 months.

Coming from the Armada Vineyard and a field blend of primarily Grenache, the 2015 God Only Knows is a singular beauty that could come from nowhere else. Its light ruby color is followed by a complex, nuanced bouquet of ripe cherries, sous bois, herbes de Provence, and charcoal/cold fireplace-like nuances. It blossoms with time in the glass, is medium-bodied, has integrated acidity, and fine tannin, and it just glides over the palate and is a joy to drink. It’s going to be better with 2-3 years of bottle age and keep for a decade.

Made from 85% Cabernet Sauvignon and 15% Syrah, the 2015 The Lovers was aged in roughly 40-50% new French oak 600-liter barrels. It gives up a terrific, classic bouquet of ripe black fruits, tobacco leaf, cold fireplace/ash, and spice as well as medium to full-bodied richness on the palate. It has light tannin, a seamless texture, and opens up beautifully with time in the glass. It can be drunk today or cellared for 10-15 years.

The only Syrah bottled in 2015 due to issues with corks, the 2015 Syrah Armada Vineyard is a classic expression of this vineyard and gives up a rocking bouquet of ripe black cherries, smoked plums, and scorched earth. It’s medium to full-bodied, silky and polished on the palate, with sweet tannin, impeccable balance, and great finish. Drink it anytime over the coming 10-15 years.

Always in the running for the best Grenache made in the United States, the 2016 Grenache is another terrific example of this cuvee. Sporting a medium ruby color and complex notes of herbes de Provence, forest floor, decaying flowers, and assorted red and black fruits, it hits the palate with medium to full-bodied richness, light, silky tannin, and a great finish. Again, it’s the balance and seamlessness that sets this apart.

The Merlot-dominated cuvée is the 2016 Flying Pig, another deep purple/ruby colored Bordeaux blend that’s up-front, expressive, and showing beautifully. Plums, chocolate, charcoal, fireplace, and tobacco leaf notes all flow to a full-bodied, seamless, silky Merlot that has fine tannin and terrific purity of fruit. Like all of these 2016s from Christophe, it’s beautifully balanced and has a forward, charming style that just looks to be drunk. If you’re looking for a light, fresh, and great finish, it’s one of the fresher, juicer Syrah’s in the lineup, yet packs plenty of fruit, and has a remarkable salinity on the finish.

Moving to the Syrahs and always the largest production release, the 2016 Syrah Cailloux Vineyard includes a small amount of co-fermented Viognier and is raised all in puncheons. Cold campfire/ash, plums, dried violets, and pepper all flow to a rich, full-bodied, inced by opulent Syrah that has a stacked, thick mid-palate, bright acidity, and a great finish. It’s another killer vintage for this vineyard and it’s going to be one of the Syrahs of the vintage.

The 2016 Syrah En Cerise Vineyard is another perfumed, complex Syrah. Black cherries, licorice, earth, charcoal, and roasted herb characteristics all flow to a rich, medium to full-bodied, concentrated 2016 that has bright yet integrated acidity, fine tannin, and a big finish. It’s one of the fresher, juicer Syrah’s in the lineup, yet packs plenty of fruit, and has a remarkable salinity on the finish.

The 2016 Syrah En Chamberlin Vineyard offers more tertiary notes of smoked plums, iron, shiitake mushrooms, forest floor, and peppy herbes. It’s concentrated, full-bodied, and balanced, with a big mid-palate, yet it glides across the palate with an almost Burgundian silkiness. This is a classic En Chamberlin that has all the Rocks funkiness and complexity, yet a beautiful elegance on the palate.

This is a great vintage for this cuvée and the 2016 Syrah Bionic Frog is going to be up there with the finest vintages from the terror. Créme de cassis, tobacco leaf, lead pencil, crushed rocks, and hints of scot to a perfectly balanced, full-bodied, powerful yet seamless Syrah that has integrated acidity, a graceful, weightless texture, and finish. This lengthy, opulent, beautifully complete Syrah will benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age and knock your socks off over the following 10-15 years.

From a higher density planting just beside the estate, the 2016 Syrah Armada Vineyard is unquestionably the most unevolved, backward, and tight of the Syrahs. Blackcurrants, plums, lavender, and ash all emerge from this full-bodied, powerful, classic, almost old-school Syrah that has high acidity, beautiful fruit, and a big finish. It’s going to require 2-3 years of bottle age and evolve I a great Côtes Rôties.

Only released in magnum, the 2016 Syrah Wallah Wallah Special #10 is always a mysterious blend of multiple vineyards. It has beautiful complexity in its ripe black cherry and cassis fruits, iodine, tobacco, asparagus, and earthy/peat moss-like aromas and flavors. This gives way to a full-bodied, concentrated Syrah that has bright acidity, loads of fruit, and a focused, juicy style that’s going to benefit from short-term cellaring.

Arguably the finest cuvée made at the estate, and unquestionably the finest Tempranillo made outside of Spain, the 2016 Impulso is another sensational 2016 from this team. Deeply colored with a huge nose of black cherry, cassis, lavender, lead pencil, and ash, its all about the fruit here. It’s one of the fresher, juicer Syrah’s in the lineup, yet packs plenty of fruit, and has a remarkable salinity on the finish.

CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE

CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 GOD ONLY KNOWS WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 92-95
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 FLYING PIG WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 93-95
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 THE LOVERS WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94-96
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 CAMASPELO WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 WIDOWMAKER EN CHAMBERLIN VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94-96
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH CAILOUX VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 97-99
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH EN CERISE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94-97
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH EN CHAMBERLIN VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH BIONIC FROG WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 97-100
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH ARMADA VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 96-99
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 SYRAH WALLAH WALLAH SPECIAL #10 WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97+
CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2016 IMPULSIVO WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 98-100

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Winemaker Bob Bertheau continues to more than over-deliver at Chateau Ste. Michelle and these latest releases are packed with quality and value. The 2015 Cold Creek Chardonnay offers plenty of ripe Chardonnay fruit, yet stays fresh, lively and crisp on the palate. Peach, buttered citrus and some floral notes all give way to a medium-bodied, balanced, clean Chardonnay that offers considerable value at the $22 price point.
Saturated purple in color, the 2014 Artist Series Red Wine boasts terrific notes of black currants, spice box, white flowers, and hints of chocolate. Deep, rich, medium to full-bodied and concentrated, with sweet tannin, it’s a beautiful wine from this estate that offers tons of charm and character. This cuvée is a blend of 72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 5% Malbec, and the balance Cabernet Franc that spent 24 months in 52% new French oak. A more limited production cuvée is the 2014 Impetus Red Wine, which is made from 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Syrah, and the rest Malbec aged all in new oak. Crème de cassis, crushed rock, spring flowers, and a touch of graphite all emerge from this pure, full-bodied effort that’s still holding things relatively close to its vest. Full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, deep, layered, and with ripe tannin, give bottles 2-4 years in the cellar and it will keep for 15-20 years.

Always a terrific value, the 2015 Canoe Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon from the Horse Heaven Hills is a beauty, and readers looking for a quality Cabernet Sauvignon for drinking over the coming 7-8 years that won’t break the bank should check this out. Currants, leafy herbs, tobacco, and spice characteristics all give way to a medium to full-bodied, pure, impeccably balanced effort that offers rock-solid bang for the buck. www.ste-michelle.com

CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE & DR. LOOSEN

The 2016 Eroica Riesling is another winner, and year in, year out, it’s one of the finest expressions of this variety in the United States. It offers a clean, crisp bouquet of white peach, lychee, and candied orange. This gives way to a medium-bodied, supple, beautifully pure, seamless Riesling that has remarkable purity and balance. It’s terrific today, yet I suspect will age gracefully. www.ste-michelle.com

CO DINN CELLARS

The 2015 Chardonnay French Creek Vineyard is impressive. Orchard fruits, melon, honeysuckle and some white flower notes all emerge from more richly styled, buttery, yet fresh and pure Chardonnay. It’s well worth drinking. Coming from the Snipes Mountain AVA and brought up in 25% new French oak, the slightly deeper gold-colored 2015 Chardonnay Roskamp Vineyard offers more brioche, honeysuckle, toasted nut, and stone fruit characteristics. It’s impressive on the palate, with clean, pure fruit, good freshness, and a terrific finish. It’s another thoroughly satisfying Chardonnay from this estate.

Made from 100% Syrah from the Snipes Mountain AVA, the 2014 Syrah Roskamp Vineyard Block Two is deep purple colored and offers terrific notes of plums, blueberries, cedary spice, and charcoal. Rich, medium to full-bodied, nicely concentrated, and with integrated acidity, it’s a seriously charming, balanced Syrah that has tons to love. Spice, leafy herbs, menthol, plums, and blackcurrant notes all emerge from the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Painted Hills Vineyard, which is 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Petit Verdot, and the rest Malbec that spent 20 months in 50% new oak. It’s medium to full-bodied, has solid mid-palate density, and nicely integrated acidity. It’s drinking nicely today yet will keep for a decade.

The 2015 Red Blend Elephant Mountain Vineyard checks in as a blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Petit Verdot, 15% Merlot, and the rest Malbec that saw 22 months in new oak. It’s a lifted, concentrated, perfumed red offering lots of black and blue fruits, violets, incense, and spice. With medium to full-bodied richness, plenty of tannins, and a good finish, it’s an outstanding effort that should benefit from a year or two in bottle and keep for a decade.

The supple, rounded, sweetly fruited 2015 GSM Red Blend Lonesome Spring Ranch Vineyard (44% Syrah, 36% Grenache, and 20% Mourvèdre, brought up in all neutral oak) offers lots of candied cherry and black raspberry fruit, notes of spice, violets, and white pepper, good freshness, and a clean, balanced, enjoyable style. It’s going to drink nicely for 5-7 years. www.codinncellars.com

COL SOLARE

All from their Red Mountain estate vineyards, the 2014 Component Collection Cabernet Sauvignon is one of the new Component Collection releases and is all Clone 6 and Clone 10 Cabernet aged in new French oak. Saturated purple-colored with a beautiful purity in its crème de cassis, violets, white chocolate, and graphite aromatics, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a lively, clean texture, integrated acidity and a great finish. I love the purity here, which builds with time in the glass. I’d give bottles another year or two and plan on drinking over the following 10-15. www.colsolare.com

COLUMBIA WINERY

Chamomile, lemon curd, and vanilla notes all emerge from the 2016 Chardonnay. It’s a charming, enjoyable, commercial styled effort to drink over the coming year. Spice, cedary, leafy herbs and black fruits emerge from the 2015 Merlot, a delicious, forward charmer to drink over the coming 3-5 years.

More graphite, violets, and incense notes emerge from the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, another charming, juicy, straight-up delicious wine that’s made in huge quantities. It’s balanced and ideal for mid-week drinking. This cuvée is 86% Cabernet, 8% Malbec, 5% Syrah, 3% Merlot, 2% Cab Franc, and 2% Petit Verdot, aged in French and American oak.

A much more limited production cuvée is the 2015 Cabernet Franc, which is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Syrah, aged 16 months in a mix of French and American oak. Deep ruby/purple-colored with attractive black cherries, leafy underbrush, earth, and tobacco, it’s medium to full-bodied, silky and pure on the palate, with a polished, elegant style. It’s drinking nicely today yet should easily keep for 7-8 years.

Notes of plums, blackberries, scorched earth and pepper all emerge from the 2015 Columbia Winery Vision, which is a blend of 69% Syrah, 21% Grenache, and 10% Mourvèdre, brought up in a mix of French, American, and Hungarian oak barrels, 42% being new. With medium to full-bodied richness, loads of fruit, and nicely integrated acidity, it’s another terrific Syrah from this vintage.

A non-vintage blend of 40% Merlot, 39% Syrah, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Cabernet Franc, and 6% Malbec, the NV Columbia Winery Red Blend offers a juicy berry-fruited, spicy bouquet as well medium-bodied depth and richness on the palate. It’s forward, ready to go, and undeniably gulpable. www.columbiawinery.com

CONVERGENCE ZONE CELLARS

www.convergencezonecellars.com
CONVERGENCE ZONE CELLARS 2014 STORM FRONT COLUMBIA VALLEY COLUMBIA VALLEY $28 RED 87

CONVERGENCE ZONE CELLARS 2015 FLY ROD CELLARS TRICO YAKIMA VALLEY $28 RED 90

The 2015 Pinot Gris Drizzle offers a semi-dry, apple-y, juicy, moderately charming profile best drunk up.

Better, the 2015 Chenin Blanc Sunbreak has attractive peach and pineapple aromas and flavors in its medium-bodied, straightforward style. As with the Pinot Gris, it’s 100% varietal brought up all in stainless steel.

Coming from a terrific terroir on Red Mountain, the 2013 Mistral is a blend of 82% Grenache, 15% Syrah, and 3% Mourvèdre brought up in 17% new American oak. It offers a savory, spicy, forward style to go with lots of plum and cherry fruits, dried earth, and herbes de Provence. Drink it over the coming 3-4 years.

Deep ruby/purple-colored, the 2014 Storm Front Columbia Valley is a medium-bodied, supple, charming, slightly Old World feel, good acidity, and the coming 3-4 years.

CORLISS

CORLISS 2014 SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY COLUMBIA VALLEY $75 RED 94

CORLISS 2014 RED WINE COLUMBIA VALLEY $75 RED 95

CORLISS 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY COLUMBIA VALLEY $95 RED 96

The 2014 Syrah Columbia Valley from Corliss is a blend of Syrah that was co-fermented with a tiny amount of Viognier. Deep, inky-colored with a huge nose of blackcurrants, charcoal, chocolate, and graphite, this puppy hits the palate with a full-bodied, unctuous, powerful style that stays nicely balanced and pure. It’s a big, rich, modern styled effort that has tons to love. Drink it anytime in the coming decade.

The 2014 Red Wine checks in as a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot that spent 28 months in new and used French oak. Sporting the normal inky color (these Corliss releases are always inky colored) and classic notes of blackcurrants, chocolate, mulled spices, and espresso, it hits the palate with a full-bodied, elegant, beautifully balanced style. Layered, pure, with nicely integrated acidity and ripe yet present tannin, it’s very much in the style of this estate and will keep for 15+ years.

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 28 months in French oak, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley is slightly more expensive than the Red Wine blend but certainly delivers. It too is saturated in color and offers awesome notes of crème de cassis, graphite, wet stone, and chocolate. With perfectly integrated oak, a rich, full-bodied mouthfeel, and high yet ripe, tannin, it’s a blockbuster Cabernet Sauvignon that’s going to benefit from 3-4 years of bottle age and keep for two decades. www.corliss.wine

CÔTE BONNEVILLE

CÔTE BONNEVILLE 2015 CHARDONNAY DUBRUL VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $50 WHITE 93

CÔTE BONNEVILLE 2013 CABERNET SAUVIGNON DUBRUL VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $120 RED 96

CÔTE BONNEVILLE 2014 CARRIAGE HOUSE DUBRUL VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $50 RED 91

CÔTE BONNEVILLE 2015 SYRAH DUBRUL VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $65 RED 93

Winemaker Kerry Shiels makes a rich, age-worthy style of Chardonnay and her 2015 Chardonnay DuBrul Vineyard is no exception. Medium gold-colored with notes of baked apples, brioche, caramelized citrus, and spice, it’s rich, full-bodied and concentrated, with plenty of texture that’s balanced by solid acidity. It’s capable of lasting for a decade or more.

The top wine of the estate and a blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon and 42% Merlot aged two years in 76% new French oak, the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon DuBrul Vineyard comes from the estate vineyard located on the northern edge of the Yakima Valley. Deep purple-colored with a beautiful nose of blackcurrants, blueberries, candied violets, and sandalwood, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, an elegant texture, and rockingly polished tannin. It’s a seriously beautiful wine!

Leavey herbs, dried earth, cassis, and black cherry notes all emerge from the 2014 Carriage House DuBrul Vineyard, which is 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Merlot, and 13% Cabernet Franc aged in 55% new French oak. Possessing medium to full-bodied richness, a light, elegant texture, and fine tannin, it’s already terrific, yet I suspect will cruise on its balance.

I always love the Syrah from Shiels and the 2015 Syrah DuBrul Vineyard is no exception. Black cherries, black raspberries, toasty oak, and spicy herb notes give way to a medium to full-bodied, seamless, elegant Syrah that still packs a lot of fruit. www.cotebonneville.com

DAMSEL CELLARS

DAMSEL CELLARS 2013 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY COLUMBIA VALLEY $38 RED 92

DAMSEL CELLARS 2014 SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY WAHLIUK SLOPE $28 RED 89

DAMSEL CELLARS 2015 COLUMBIA VALLEY RED BLEND COLUMBIA VALLEY $18 RED 88

DAMSEL CELLARS 2015 BOUSHEY VINEYARD THE FATES YAKIMA VALLEY $36 RED 91

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 22 months in 65% new French oak, the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley has a beautiful, Bordeaux-like bouquet of blackcurrants, plums, tobacco, and cedar. Deep, full-bodied, and incredibly polished, it has fine tannin and a great finish. It’s going to drink nicely for a decade or more.

Peppery herbs, blackcurrants, blackberries, chocolate, and some gravely minerality all emerge from the 2014 Syrah Columbia Valley. With a medium-bodied, supple, charming, slightly Old World feel, high acidity, and fine tannin, it’s another high-quality wine from this estate.

The ripe, seductive, forward 2015 Columbia Valley Red Blend (75% Merlot, 10% Cab Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Syrah) offers loads of upfront blue and red fruits, spice, and hints of dried herbs/cedar in a medium to full-bodied, easy drinking style.

A blend of 38% Grenache, 38% Mourvèdre, and 24% Syrah, the 2015 Boushey Vineyard The Fates offers loads of Old World notes of pepper, cured meats, tobacco, and lavender. With a Rocks-Ike style in its broad, expansive texture, no hard edges, and a great finish, it’s a beautiful red blend I’d happily drink over the coming 5-7 years. www.damselcellars.com

DELILLE CELLARS

DELILLE CELLARS 2016 CHALEUR BLANC COLUMBIA VALLEY NA RED 92

DELILLE CELLARS 2016 ROUSSANNE RED MOUNTAIN $37 WHITE 91

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 METIER COLUMBIA VALLEY $46 RED 91-93

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 SIGNATURE SYRAH YAKIMA VALLEY $44 RED 91

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 SYRAH GRAND CIEL VINEYARD RED MOUNTAIN $68 RED 93+

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 DOYENNE RED MOUNTAIN $39 RED 91

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 D2 COLUMBIA VALLEY $45 RED 91

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 MERLOT YAKIMA VALLEY $49 RED 90

DELILLE CELLARS 2015 MALBEC RED WILLOW VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $49 RED 94
Owner/Winemaker Chris Upchurch compared the 2015s from Washington State to the 2009s from Bordeaux, and given the sweltering heat in 2015, I understand the comparison. However, the 2015s come across as more focused and classic in style, in part, I suspect to the vines shutting down throughout the summer, and I think the terroirs actually lag the 2012s, 2014s, and 2016s. These wines are concentrated, have notable purity, and building tannin. They’re going to benefit from short-term cellaring. As usual, I tasted the barrel samples during my visit at the estate and the bottled wines at my office in Colorado.

Looking first at the whites, the 2016 Chaleur Blanc is 85% Semillon and 15% Sauvignon Blanc, and this cuvée is unquestionably one of the top Bordeaux white blends coming out of the United States. Pineapple, tart peach, honeysuckle, and white flower characteristics all emerge from the glass. It has beautiful purity and sweetness of fruit, good acidity, and a clean, dry finish. Drink it anytime over the coming 4-5 years (or longer if you’re so inclined).

The vibrant gold colored 2016 Roussanne (100% Roussanne aged 85% in stainless steel and 15% in neutral barrels) is another beauty, offering notes of crisp apple, white flowers, and salty minerality in a medium-bodied, pure, dry, beautifully balanced wine. It’s going to shine on the dinner table.

Checking in as a blend of 38% each of Grenache and Mourvèdre, with balance mostly Syrah (there’s tiny amount of Cinsault), the 2016 Chaleur Estate offers a ruby, semi-opaque color as well as Southern Rhône-like notes of blackberries, peppery herbs, licorice, and earth. It’s medium-bodied, rounded, and textured with loads of charm. Drink it anytime over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2015 Signature Syrah (which includes 2%) comes from Ciel du Cheval, Grand Ciel, and Boushey Vineyards and was completely destemmed and aged in 20% new French oak. It’s another Rhône look al ke and offers classic notes of blackberries, black olives, bacon fat, and peppery herbs. It’s medium-bodied, fresh, nicely concentrated, and balanced, with present, yet ripe, tannin. It will keep for a decade.

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The flagship Syrah is the 2015 Syrah Grand Ciel Vineyard and it’s all from a single vineyard on Red Mountain, was completely destemmed and aged in 30% new French oak. Similarly colored to the Signature Syrah, it offers more black cherry, tobacco smoke, and mineral characteristics to go with a big, rich, concentrated style on the palate. Beautifully balanced, with both tannin and acidity, it needs 2-3 years of bottle age and will shine over the following decade.

Made from 60% Syrah and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Doyenne (100% Red Mountain) offers fabulous purity and depth of fruit as well as a rich, balanced, layered and medium to full-bodied style on the palate. With loads of blackberry, bay leaf, underbrush, and hints of tobacco, it has good acidity and freshness, plenty of fruit, and I suspect will keep for a decade.

The largest production Bordeaux blend from this estate is their D2 release, which is a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. It offers a Pomerol-like bouquet of black cherries, leafy herbs, graphite, and lead pencil, and is medium to full-bodied, seamless, and elegant. Readers wanting a taste of the style – and quality – from Delille should absolutely check this wine out. Drink bottles over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2015 Merlot is outstanding, with a concentrated, rich style and classic notes of black cherries, dark chocolate, scorched earth, and tobacco. It’s deep, medium to full-bodied, has beautiful fruit, and a great finish. It’s certainly approachable today but will be even better with a year in bottle and keep for a decade.

The 2015 Malbec Red Willow Vineyard is one of the finest Malbec coming from the state. Offering up a huge nose of blueberries, blackberries, crushed flowers, tobacco leaf, and Asian spices, this beauty is full-bodied, has a seductive, ripe, layered texture, sweet tannin, and a great finish. It’s a rockin' good wine to enjoy over the coming 5-7 years.

A one-time offering meant for the wine club, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Lot 3 is 100% Cabernet from the Klipsun Vineyard on Red Mountain. It offers a fabulous perfume of black raspberries, blackberries, toasty oak, incense, and flowers, with more sweet spice developing with time in the glass, it’s a ripe, sexy Cabernet that has a great mid-palate, a rounded, seductive texture, and sweet tannin. It’s already drinkable but will keep for 10-12 years.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Four Flags comes from the top four vineyards in any vintage and in 2015 is 30% Grand Ciel, 30% Upchurch, 25% Ciel du Cheval, and the rest from Klipsun. It’s a rich, powerful wine that offers exotic black cherries, crushed violets, incense, and Asian spice aromatics. Rich, full-bodied, supple, and impressively concentrated, it shows the ripe yet focused/elegant style of the vintage.

While I always think of the Harrison Hill release as the Margaux in the lineup, the Chaleur is much more Pauillac/Saint Julien in style. The 2015 Chaleur Estate checks in as 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, and 10% Cabernet Franc. It’s a full-bodied, deep, concentrated effort that offers terrific cassis and black cherry fruits, graphite, scorched earth, licorice, and crushed rock-like minerality. Like all the 2015s from Delille, it has an elegant, pure, focused style and is beautifully balanced.

Conversely, a blend of 72% Malbec and 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2016 Syrah Grand Ciel Vineyard is one of the finest Malbec coming from the state. Offering up a huge nose of blueberries, blackberries, crushed flowers, tobacco leaf, and Asian spices, this beauty is full-bodied, has a seductive, ripe, layered texture, sweet tannin, and a great finish. It’s a rockin' good wine to enjoy over the coming 5-7 years.
medium to full-bodied, concentrated Ma bac that packs serious amounts of fruit and character. All Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2016 Four Flags offers lots of ripe red and black fruits, spice, lead pencil and cedar notes, full-bodied richness, beautiful purity and a layered, rich, balanced style. This cuvée gains weight in bottle and is, year in, year out, one of the best Bordeaux blends from this estate.

The flagship 2016 Chaleur Estate is a great example of this cuvée and shows the quality of the vintage. Black currants, plum, spice, and sandalwood notes all emerge from this beautiful, full-bodied, ripe, sexy Cabernet Sauvignon that has a deep, concentrated mid-palate and sweet tannin. A blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc and the rest Petit Verdot, it’s going to benefit from short-term cellaring and keep for two decades.

The 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Klipsun Vineyard is also spectacular and might end up being the top Cabernet in the lineup. Blackcurrants, graphite, violet, and damp earth aromas and flavors all emerge from this full-bodied, pure, mineral-laced 2016 that has the forward, sexy style of the vintage as well as plenty of underlying structure and depth.

Deep purple-colored, the 100% Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Cabernet Grand Ciel Vineyard saw an extended maceration and is aged all in new barrels. Black raspberries, cassis, toasted spice, and espresso roast notes all emerge from this ripe, full-bodied, decadent 2016 that certainly packs a punch. It has tons of fruit, building structure, and terrific purity, as well as classic Red Mountain character.

I love the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Harrison Hill, another Margaux like effort offering lovely currants and cassis fruits, lots of spring flowers, cedar and sandalwood aromas and flavors. There are some bell pepper notes, but it’s complex, has sweet tannin, and a beautiful finish. It’s Old World, has an herbal edge, but will be rock solid. www.dellecellars.com

DELMAS

DELMAS 2015 SYRAH SJR VINEYARD

Made from 91% Syrah and 9% Viognier, aged in 60% new wood, the 2015 Syrah SJR Vineyard is sensational stuff that delivers everything you could want from a Rock Syrah. Blackcurrants, tobacco, tapenade, and loads of peppery, meaty goodness all give way to a ripe, hedonistic, expansive beauty that has sweet tannin and an awesome texture. It will shine for a decade or more. www.delmaswines.com

DEN HOED

DEN HOED 2016 CHRISTINA

The 2016 Christina comes all from the Kenny Hill estate vineyard in Walla Walla and spent 7 months in once-used French oak. It sports a vibrant gold color as well as a spicy, toasty, dried herbs and classic citrus and lemon-scented bouquet. Fresh, vibrant and lively on the palate, with terrific purity of fruit and well-integrated acidity, drink this high-quality Chardonnay anytime over the coming 6-7 years.

The 2014 Marie’s View is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon that spent two years in equal parts new and once-used barrels. It offers an ultra-ripe, perfumed bouquet of violet, plum, blackberry, and spice, and comes across as full-bodied, sweet, and a touch evolved on the palate. It’s a big, sweet, fruit bomb but should be much more at this price point. Tasted twice. The 2014 Andreas is noticeably better than the Marie’s View, with less obvious sweetness. It shows excellent purity. Currants, cassis, vanilla bean and chocolate notes all emerge from this rich, full-bodied effort that has ripe tannin and rock-solid balance. It should drink nicely for a decade. denhoedwines.com

DESCENDANT CELLARS

DESCENDANT CELLARS 2013 GRENACHE COLUMBIA VALLEY

The light ruby-colored 2013 Grenache Columbia Valley (there’s 8% Syrah in the blend) offers Pinot Noir-like notes of cherries and dried herbs. It’s medium-bodied, supple, straightforward, and enjoyable, and best drunk up. The 2013 Belle GSM is made from 58% Grenache, 26% Syrah, and 16% Mourvèdre brought up in neutral oak. Its slight deeper ruby color is followed by similar black cherry and red currant fruits and it has a solid, spicy, savory style on the palate. With medium-bodied richness, savory tannin, and a lovely texture, it’s a charming, certainly enjoyable effort to drink over the coming 4-6 years.

DESCENDANT CELLARS 2014 SYRAH LES COLLINES VINEYARD

The 2014 Syrah Les Collines Vineyard comes from a terrific terroir located just southeast of the town of Walla Walla. Black cherries, violet, earthy minerality, graphite and hints of plums all emerge from this medium-bodied, ripe, fruit-forward, charming effort. It has plenty to I ke and should keep for 4-6 years.

DESCENDANT CELLARS 2014 MOURVèDRE YAKIMA VALLEY

The 2014 Mourvèdre Yakima Valley is an enjoyable, classic expression of this variety. Black cherries, blueberries, and strawberry notes, as well as plenty of peppery spice and herbs, give way to a medium-bodied, juicy, enjoyable Mourvèdre to drink over the coming 4-5 years. www.descendantcellars.com

DOUBLEBACK

DOUBLEBACK 2016 CHARDONNAY

There are under 100 cases of the 2015 Estate Reserve, 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in 95% new French oak. Similarly inky colored with killer notes of blackcurrants, espresso roast, chocolate, gravelly minerality and hints of leafy herbs, this beauty hits the palate with a full-bodied, powerful, layered style that’s already hard to resist. Possessing brilliant purity of fruit, building tannin, and a big finish, it’s a power-packed beauty from this team that’s going to have 20-25 years of overall longevity.

The inky colored 2016 Stolen Horse Syrah (93% Syrah and 7% Viognier) offers a slightly reserved, backward feel, yet certainly has gorgeous fruit. Black raspberries, cassis, and hints of graphite flow to a full-bodied, rich, sexy Syrah that has bright acidity and fine, integrated tannin. It should come together with 2-3 years of bottle age and keep for over a decade. This cuvée was brought up in 33% new French oak, 40% in concrete tanks, and the rest in neutral oak. www.doubleback.com

DOWSETT FAMILY WINERY

DOWSETT FAMILY WINERY 2016 GEWURZTRAMINER

The 2016 Gewurztraminer from Chis Dowsett (who also makes the wines for Buty) offers a crazy perfume of exotic, tropical fruits, chamomile, and green citrus. Medium-bodied, clean, and balanced on the palate, it’s always a singular wine, but this vintage has a good amount of texture and it should be versatile with something like a cheese course. www.dowsettwines.com
from a single vineyard in the Columbia Valley. It was brought up in new French oak puncheons. Similarly purple/ruby colored with a killer nose of blackcurrants, blackberries, forest floor, peppery herbs, and earth, this beauty is full-bodied, concentrated, and impeccably balanced. I’m not sure it’s worth twice the price of the Columbia Valley effort, but it’s certainly a gorgeous wine.

DUNHAM CELLARS 2014 SYRAH LEWIS VINEYARD
COLUMBIA VALLEY $75 RED 94

DUNHAM CELLARS 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON XX
COLUMBIA VALLEY $45 RED 92

DUNHAM CELLARS 2015 TRUTINA
COLUMBIA VALLEY $29 RED 93

Walla Walla based Dunham Cellars has turned out a bevy of terrific wines. This report focuses mostly on the 2014s as I was only able to taste one of their 2015s. Nevertheless, both vintages are rock-solid and these are impressive wines that shine for their purity and balance, as well as depth of fruit.

The medium amber-colored 2016 Late Harvest Riesling (100% Riesling) offers a ripe, honeyed, caramelized style in its buttered orange peel, apricot, and honey aromas and flavors. Thick, unctuous and decadent, it has moderate acidity, lots of sweetness, and a big finish. It needs a touch more acidity to play with the big boys but is a ripe, pure, impressive dessert wine to enjoy over the coming 4-6 years.

The medium gold colored 2016 Chardonnay Shirley Mays gives up lots of buttered citrus and leafy green herb notes in its medium-bodied, clean, balanced style. It has solid texture as well as integrated acidity.

The deep purple/black colored 2014 Syrah Columbia Valley is a ripe, concentrated, modern-styled beauty that has fabulous purity in its black raspberry and cassis fruit, licorice, classy oak, and graphite. Deep, rich, pure and layered on the palate, with fine tannin, it’s a seriously sexy Syrah that will keep for a decade.

A big step up in price, the 2014 Syrah Lewis Vineyard is 100% Syrah all from a single vineyard in the Columbia Valley. It was brought up in new French oak puncheons. Similarly purple/ruby colored with a killer nose of blackcurrants, blackberries, forest floor, peppery herbs, and earth, this beauty is full-bodied, concentrated, and impeccably balanced. I’m not sure it’s worth twice the price of the Columbia Valley effort, but it’s certainly a gorgeous wine.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon XX checks in as 100% Cabernet and was brought up in a mix of new French and American oak barrels. Its deep purple color is followed by a beautiful bouquet of crème de cassis, baking spice, vanilla bean and white chocolate. Medium to full-bodied, elegant, and silky on the palate, with impressive purity and integrated acidity, drink it anytime over the coming 10-15 years.

The 2015 Trutina from Dunham is a blend of 54% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, 10% Maucé, and the rest Cabernet Franc. It’s another beautiful wine from this estate that over-delivers. Gorgeous crème de cassis, black raspberry, vanilla bean, and Asian spice notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, seamless, elegant beauty that has real class. While it’s not a blockbuster, it just glides across the palate, has notable purity of fruit, and a great finish, all making it a terrific value, even at the roughly $30 price point.

www.dunhamcellars.com

DUNHAM CELLARS 2016 LATE HARVEST RIESLING
COLUMBIA VALLEY $38 WHITE 90

DUNHAM CELLARS 2016 CHARDONNAY SHIRLEY MAYS
COLUMBIA VALLEY $25 WHITE 89

DUNHAM CELLARS 2014 SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY
COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 93

DUNHAM CELLARS 2014 SYRAH LEWIS VINEYARD
COLUMBIA VALLEY $75 RED 94

DUNHAM CELLARS 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON XX
COLUMBIA VALLEY $45 RED 92

Walla Walla’s 2015 Optu Red Mountain offers a ripe, honeyed, caramelized style in its buttered orange peel, apricot, and honey aromas and flavors. Thick, unctuous and decadent, it has moderate acidity, lots of sweetness, and a big finish. It needs a touch more acidity to play with the big boys but is a ripe, pure, impressive dessert wine to enjoy over the coming 4-6 years.

FIDELITAS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON ESTATE
RED MOUNTAIN $75 RED 94

FIDELITAS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON QUINTESSENCE
RED MOUNTAIN $65 RED 94

FIDELITAS 2015 OPTU RED MOUNTAIN
RED MOUNTAIN $55 RED 93

DUNHAM CELLARS 2015 TRUTINA
COLUMBIA VALLEY $29 RED 93

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FIDELITAS 2015 OPTU RED MOUNTAIN
RED MOUNTAIN $55 RED 93

DUNHAM CELLARS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON QUINTESSENCE
RED MOUNTAIN $65 RED 94

DUNHAM CELLARS 2015 TRUTINA
COLUMBIA VALLEY $29 RED 93

DUNHAM CELLARS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON QUINTESSENCE
RED MOUNTAIN $65 RED 94
JebDunnuck.com

FIDELITAS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RED MOUNTAIN RED MOUNTAIN $50 RED 92
FIDELITAS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON CIEL DU CHEVAL RED MOUNTAIN $70 RED 94
FIDELITAS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON BLACKWOOD CANYON RED MOUNTAIN $65 RED 94

The classic 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain (100% Cabernet aged 22 months in 80% new French oak) offers pure, elegant notes of crème de cassis, crushed flowers, and violets, with a medium to full-bodied, silky, nuanced style on the palate. Less powerful and tannic than some of the other cuvées here, it still has beautiful purity and well-integrated acidity, and is a beautiful wine that’s going to drink well for 10-15 years.

One other 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from this estate, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Blackwood Canyon (22 months in 71% new French oak) offers a plumper, more sweetly fruitied, sexy style. Blackcurrants, blueberries, scorched earth and Asian spice notes all give way to a full-bodied, plum, rounded, yet still structured effort that has considerable depth and richness, all while not being heavy. It too will keep for 10-15 years. While I found all these 2015s to be outstanding wines, they’re certainly more similar than different. fidelitaswines.com

FIELDING HILLS WINERY

FIELDING HILLS WINERY 2014 SYRAH RIVERBEND VINEYARD ESTATE WAHLUKE SLOPE $42 RED 91
FIELDING HILLS WINERY 2014 RIVERBEND VINEYARD ESTATE TRIBUTE WAHLUKE SLOPE $38 RED 90
FIELDING HILLS WINERY 2014 MERLOT RIVERBEND VINEYARD ESTATE WAHLUKE SLOPE $38 RED 89
FIELDING HILLS WINERY 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RIVERBEND VINEYARD ESTATE WAHLUKE SLOPE $46 RED 91

The 2014 Syrah Riverbend Vineyard Estate checks in as a blend of 96% Syrah, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 2% Merlot aged 19 months in a mix of 70% new French and American oak. Ruby/purple-colored with lots of meaty black fruits, chocolate, and toasty oak, it’s medium to full-bodied, nicely concentrated, rich and beautifully textured, with impressive fruit. There are enough tannin and acidity here to keep it drinking nicely for 7-8 years.

The 2014 Riverbend Vineyard Estate Tribute checks in as a blend of 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Syrah, 26% Merlot, and 13% Cabernet Franc, brought up in a mix of American and French oak. With a deep purple/ruby color and notes of black cherries, black raspberries, cedarwood, spice, and vanilla bean, it’s medium to full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, and luxuriously textured. It’s a sweetly fruited, ripe, charming effort to drink over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Riverbend Vineyard Estate (90% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 4% Syrah) is made from the same clone, yielding loads of black cherry and currant fruits, a rich, mouthfilling, full-bodied texture, sweet tannin, and plenty of spicy oak. Drink it over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Riverbend Vineyard Estate (86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Syrah, 4% Merlot, and 2% Cabernet Franc) offers more purity, freshness, and focus, as well as loads of black fruits, toasty oak, charcoal, and espresso aromas and flavors. Classy, balanced, and elegant, with both tannin and acidity, it’s going to drink nicely for 10-15 years. www.fieldinghills.com

FIGGINS

FIGGINS 2017 RIESLING WALLA WALLA VALLEY $30 WHITE 86-89
FIGGINS 2015 RED WINE WALLA WALLA VALLEY $85 RED 96

Not yet bottled, the 2017 Riesling from Figgins is a juicy apple and mineral (maybe even a hint of petrol) scented effort that has that classic racy acidity this cuvée always shows, yet offers solid offsetting sweetness on the palate. It’s always a unique, singular wine.

Made from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot aged 21 months in 69% new French oak, the 2015 Red Wine from Figgins is a beauty that’s all from their estate vineyard located on the eastern, cooler side of the Walla Walla Valley. Deep, rich, full-bodied, and incredibly opulent, with loads of blackcurrants, smoked herbs, graphite, and chocolate aromas and flavors, it stays beautifully balanced and elegant on the palate, with sweet tannin. It’s a killer Washington State red that’s going to drink nicely for 10-15 years. www.figginss.com

FORCE MAJEURE

FORCE MAJEURE 2016 VIognier RED MOUNTAIN NA WHITE 92
FORCE MAJEURE 2017 VIognier RED MOUNTAIN NA WHITE 90-92
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 PARABELLUM RHONE BLEND RED MOUNTAIN $45 RED 92-93
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 PARABELLUM ALLUVIO RED MOUNTAIN $55 RED 94
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 PARVATA GSM RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 94
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 SYRAH RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 95
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 EPINETTE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 94
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RED MOUNTAIN ESTATE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 96
FORCE MAJEURE 2015 TEMPRANILLO RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 98+
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 PARABELLUM COULEE RED MOUNTAIN $45 RED 92-94
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 PARABELLUM ALLUVIO RED MOUNTAIN $55 RED 92-94
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 PARVATA RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 94-96
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 SYRAH RED MOUNTAIN ESTATE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 96-99
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 EPINETTE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 94-96
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RED MOUNTAIN ESTATE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 97-99
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 TEMPRANILLO RED MOUNTAIN ESTATE RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 95-97
FORCE MAJEURE 2016 SYRAH SJR VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 97-100
FORCE MAJEURE 2013 COLLABORATION SERIES VI RED MOUNTAIN NA RED 92

Now focusing almost exclusively on their Red Mountain estate vineyards, Force Majeure is making some of the most compelling wines in Washington State, as well as in the United States. Winemaker Todd Alexander (previously at Bryant Family in Napa Valley) came on board in
The top Chardonnay is the 2015 ANVIL Chardonnay French Creek Vineyard that packs plenty of oomph, yet has good acidity. Pineapple, peach, tangerine all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, rich, powerful Viognier. Despite being brought up in 50% oak, it’s all about pure, clean fruit.

The entry-level Bordeaux blend is the 2015 Tempranillo Mountain Estate which is a holy shit wine. Blackcurrants, olive tapenade, dried lavender, and pepper notes all literally soar from this deep ruby/purple color as well as gorgeous notes of blackcurrants, black raspberries, peppery spice, and flowers. With full-bodied richness, silky, fine tannin, and a great texture, it’s a seriously beautiful blend that will shine right out of the gate. The purity and polished to the tannin are gorgeous.

The 2016 Syrah Red Mountain Estate comes from the estate vineyard on Red Mountain. Its deep purple color is followed by an extraordinary bouquet of cassis, white flowers, spice, game, and pepper. Possessing sensational purity of fruit, ultra-fine tannin, no hard edges and an elegant, ethereal style, it’s not for those looking for huge aromas and flavors yet is world-class nonetheless.

The 2016 Epinette is the Merlot-dominated cuvée from the estate and is all from Red Mountain. Deep plum/black colored with a Saint Emilion-like bouquet of blackcurrants, smoke, chocolate, and espresso, this full-bodied, beautifully rich, layered, powerful, yet elegant Merlot is packed with potential.

Made from 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Sahra St. Concentrated, layered effort loaded with deep, rich aromas and flavors of blackberries, currants, cured meats, and a hint of chocolate. It’s full-bodied, deep, concentrated, layered, and is a sensational wine.

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Estate is a beautiful effort. Sporting a deep ruby/purple color and terrific notes of black cherries, dried earth, herbs, and graphite, this beauty is full-bodied, rich, structured and tannic, with sensational purity of fruit. Give it 3-4 years of cellaring and drink over the following decade.

Made from 100% destemmed Syrah brought up in 50% new French oak, the 2016 Syrah SJR Vineyard is a holy shit wine. Blackcurrants, olive tapenade, dried lavender, and pepper notes all literally soar from this smoking good, ultra-fine, pure, seamless, silky Syrah that just hits all the sweet spots.

I was able to taste one of the last Collaboration Series releases, which is aging beautifully. Made by James Montone (of Syncline), the 2013 Collaboration Series VI checks in as a blend of 60% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache and 10% Syrah, all of which is from the terrific Ciel du Cheval vineyard on Red Mountain, with the fruit farmed by Ryan Johnson. Made from 100% destemmed Syrah brought up in 50% new French oak, the 2016 Syrah SJR Vineyard is a holy shit wine. Blackcurrants, olive tapenade, dried lavender, and pepper notes all literally soar from this smoking good, ultra-fine, pure, seamless, silky Syrah that just hits all the sweet spots.

I continue to love the wines from Marie-Eve Gilla and she makes a rich, powerful, yet also elegant style of wine from various sites in Washington State. Forgeron always makes a quality white and the 2015 Facon Blanc is no exception. Buttered toasted oak, white flowers, rich, and complex, this elegant profile that carries incredible fruit and richness, yet no sense of weight. With beautiful purity of fruit, a balanced, layered style, building tannin, and a great finish, it needs 3-4 years of bottle age and will cruise for two decades in the cellars.

Another rich, mouthfilling effort and offers lots of darker, plummy fruits, blackberry fruits, hints of peppery and spice, full-bodied richness, ultra-fine tannin and a good finish. It’s ripe and sexy, yet also elegant, and will drink nicely right out of the gate.

Made from mostly Cabernet Franc, the 2016 Parabellum Alluvio offers more dark fruits as well as classic Cabernet Franc notes of violets, dried herbs, damp earth and inky black with a touch of oak to integrate, yet should keep for 7-8 years. www.forgeroncellars.com
The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Lawerence Estate offers more tobacco, leafy herbs, and licorice, with similar cassis and floral aromas and flavors. It's medium to full-bodied, silky, and pure, with fine tannin, all making for a beautiful Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon that's going to keep for a decade. This cuvée is 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Malbec that spent 21 months in 71% new French and American oak.

A blend of 72% Syrah, 27% Grenache, 1% that spent 9 months in 29% new French oak, the 2015 Vaoucle Lawerence Estate sports an inky color to go with beautiful Syrah notes of plums, cured meats, olive tapenade, and peppered meats. With medium to full-bodied richness, excellent purity, a big mid-palate, and a great finish, it's a terrific wine. Slightly more expensive, the 2015 Reverence Lawerence Estate is 49% Syrah, 38% Grenache, and 13% Viognier brought up in new and used 500-liter French oak barrels. It too is inky colored and yields beautiful notes of blueberries, bay leaf, leafy herbs, and pepper. Silky, pure, full-bodied, and elegant on the palate, it's another killer Syrah from this estate that will keep for a decade. www.gardvintners.com

GARD VINTNERS

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Region</th>
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These latest Gard Vintners releases are made by Aryn Morell. The 2014 Syrah Grand Klasse (100% Syrah brought up in 75% new French oak) is a firm, focused, yet concentrated effort that has lots of black fruits, smoked oak, and dark chocolate aromas and flavors. With good density, integrated acidity and a focused style, give it a year or so to see if it fleshes out on the palate.

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 22 months in 80% new French oak, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Lawerence Estate Grand Klasse has a pretty, lively perfume of ripe black cherries and black raspberries, cedarwood, and leafy herbs. It's medium to full-bodied, has nicely integrated acidity, fine tannin, and a balanced, elegant style that's going to allow it to drink nicely for 7-8 years.

The 2015 The Don Lawerence Estate is a value-priced blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Syrah, 3% Grenache, and 1% each of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, all aged 20 months in 30% new French and American oak. It offers a sweetly fruited, compelling style as well as plenty of spice, incense, and cassis-like fruits. With rock solid balance and a good finish, it has plenty of character and is worth the money.
The team of Greg Harrington and Brandon Moss continue to keep Gramercy Cellars near the top of the hierarchy in Washington State. While they started out with a focus on Syrah, today they produce a brilliant lineup of both Rhône and Bordeaux blends. The 2016s, which were tasted from barrel, were surprisingly fresh and lively, and I suspect harvested on the earlier side. It will be interesting to see how these come together in bottle. The 2015s are a step up and are some of the finest I’ve tasted from this team.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon from Gramercy checks in as a blend of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot that spent 21 months in 40% new French oak. It offers a fresh, lively style in its cassis, blackcurrants, spice, and tobacco/pepper flavors and aromas. With medium to full body, beautiful balance, undeniable elegance, and everything in the right place, it’s going to drink nicely for 15-20 years.

The flagship Cabernet Sauvignon (there’s 1% Petit Verdot) is the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve, which spent 21 months in 60% new French oak. With a deep purple/ruby color and classic notes of cassis, leafy herbs, lead pencil shavings, and spring flowers, it hits the palate with a fresh, medium to full-bodied profile that carries ripe tannin and integrated acidity. As with all these latest releases from Greg and Brandon, it leans toward the more fresh, elegant end of the spectrum. Give bottles 2-3 years and enjoy over the following 15+.

Lighter ruby colored with terrific notes of kirsch, black cherries, dried herbs, and earth, the 2015 Grenache The Third Man is sweetly fruited, charming, and balanced, with loads of charm. A blend of 75% Grenache, 15% Syrah, and 5% each of Mourvèdre and Carignan (which is a variety you don’t find in Washington very often), drink it over the coming 4-6 years.

Made from 100% Mourvèdre raised mostly in concrete, the 2015 Mourvèdre L’Idiot du Village sports a deep purple color as well as meaty, bloody notes of blackberries, black cherries, iodine, cured meats, and peppery spice. This beauty is medium to full-bodied, silky and elegant on the palate, and has the depth and balance to keep for at least 7-8 years.

From a site in Walla Walla and aged in 10% new puncheons, the ruby/plum-colored 2015 Syrah Forgotten Hills offers beautiful notes of plums, black cherries, and cedary, cured meats. With classic Syrah garrigue minerality, medium to full-bodied richness, and bright acidity, it’s going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age and keep through 2027.

Coming from sites in the Columbia Valley, the 2015 Syrah Columbia Valley spent 19 months in 10% new French oak. It’s a terrific Syrah that has classic ripe dark fruits, tapenade, peppery herbs, and meaty aromas and flavors. Rich, medium to full-bodied, beautifully balanced and long, it’s a smoking value that will appeal to both old and new world Syrah lovers.

The 2015 Syrah The Deuce comes all from Walla Walla and spent 19 months in mostly neutral oak. It’s a great introduction for readers looking to understand high-quality Syrah from Washington, as well as the wines from this terrific estate.

Plums, raspberries, flowers, spice, and more earthy notes all flow to a pure, elegant Syrah that has integrated acidity, fine tannin, and a balanced, pure, elegant style that’s going to evolve nicely for at least 7-8 years.

Always one of my favorite releases from this estate, the 2015 Syrah Lagniappe is 100% Syrah (mostly from the Red Willow Vineyard in Yakima, with 5% from the Forgotten Hills Vineyard just south of Walla Walla). Deep ruby/plum-colored and loaded with Côte Rôtie-like (Côte Blonde?) notes of black raspberries, crushed flowers, tapenade, and crushed flowers, this beauty is medium to full-bodied, seamless, and silky on the palate, with incredible finesse and elegance. It’s going to benefit from 3-4 years of bottle age and knock your socks off over the following decade or more. It’s unquestionably one of the wines of the vintage.

Another tour de force, the 2015 Syrah John Lewis offers more lavender, violets, and mineral character, along with some red and blue fruits. The ripe, meaty, rich, full-bodied effort has building tannin, awesome purity, and integrated acidity, and it’s certainly one of the finest Syrahs in the vintage. It’s more tannic than the Lagniappe Cuvée and is going to benefit from short-term cellaring, with two decades of overall longevity. Bravo! This vintage comes from a single block in the Les Collines Vineyard, in Walla Walla, isn’t destemmed, and spends 19 months in 7% new French oak puncheons.

Coming from a site just south of the town of Walla Walla that saw plenty of stems and is still aging in mostly neutral oak, the 2016 Syrah Forgotten Hills is another very juicy, lively wine that has high yet integrated acidity. Blackcurrants, black cherries, underbrush, green herbs, and a touch of wet stone all emerge from this juicy, medium-bodied, fresh and elegant wine.

Lavender, violets, black pepper, and game notes all emerge from the 2016 Syrah Les Collines, a Côte Rôtie look-alike. Medium-bodied, fresh, and lively, it love its balance as well as its depth of fruit. It should benefit from short-term cellaring and keep for a decade.

Deep ruby/plum-colored, with lots of smoke, tobacco, peppery herbs, and earthy aromas and flavors, the 2016 Syrah Walla Walla is medium to full-bodied, juicy and lively, with bright acidity. Like all these 2016s from Greg, I’m sure it was harvested on the earlier side.

Coming all from the Red Willow Vineyard (the 2015 has a splash from the Forgotten Hills Vineyard), the 2016 Syrah Lagniappe is juicy and lively, with loads of blue fruits, sappy herbs, violets, and hints of blood orange all emerging from the glass. With bright yet integrated acidity, polished, elegant tannin, and a juicy style, it’s going to benefit from 2-4 years of bottle age and keep for a decade.

The flagship is the 2016 Syrah John Lewis, which comes from a mix of vineyards in 2016 including Forgotten Hills, Red Willow, Les Collines, and SJR. Blackberries, peppery herbs, game, and lots of mineral character all emerge from the glass, and it shows the fresher, elegant style of the estate in its integrated acidity and fine tannin. It’s another wine that will benefit from 3-4 years of bottle age.

HARD ROW TO HOE VINEYARDS

This estate makes a bevy of beautiful wines from the Lake Chelan AVA, which is located in the northern part of the State. Their 2016 Cabernet Franc, in particular, is well worth seeking out.

From the Lake Chelan AVA and 100% Cabernet Franc, the 2016 Cabernet Franc Lake Chelan is deep ruby/purple-colored and offers killer notes of black raspberries, violets, leafy herbs and lead pencil. Pure, silky and pure, with a beautiful grace and elegance, it benefits from time in the glass and should be even better in 2-3 years. It’s going to keep for a decade or more. It’s poss by the finest wine I’ve tasted from this appellation.

Another inky barrel sample, the 2016 Syrah Lake Chelan offers a big, ripe bouquet of plums, currants, smoked herbs, chocolate, and spice. Deep, full-bodied, and thrillingly textured, it’s another hedonistic effort from this estate that has great purity and freshness. This 2016 is 100% Syrah that will see 18 months in 50% new French oak.
Medium ruby-colored with classic Pinot Noir notes of mulled cherries, spice, and underbrush, the 2016 Pinot Noir Lake Chelan is medium-bodied, seamless and elegant on the palate, with a fine, finesse-driven style. It has true Pinot Noir typicity, is nicely balanced, and has loads to love. You don’t find many noteworthy Pinot Noirs from Washington, but this is one of them. Deep purple-colored, the 2016 Barbera (100% Barbera brought up all in neutral oak) offers tons of juicy berry fruits, charcoal, and hints of dark chocolate in its ripe, yet pure, elegant style. It’s a total gem of a wine to drink over the coming 3-5 years.

A blend of 86% Tempranillo and 12% Syrah, the 2016 Tempranillo Lake Chelan is another quality wine from this vineyard. Blackcurrants, dried cherries, cedary spice, and savory herbs all emerge from this medium-bodied, silky, polished red that has fine tannin and a clean, lengthy finish. This cuvée spent 12 months in once and twice-used French oak, and it should keep for at least 4-6 years.

A blend of 86% Primitivo and 14% Petite Sirah, the 2016 Primitivo Wahluke Slope is a sweety fruity, ripe, polished effort. With some obvious sweetness, loads of charming fruit, spice, and berry fruits, drink this charming, medium to full-bodied effort over the coming couple of years. www.hardrow.com

HEDGES FAMILY ESTATE

HEDGES FAMILY ESTATE 2014 SYRAH DESCENDANTS LIÉGEOIS DUPONT RED MOUNTAIN $28 RED 90
HEDGES FAMILY ESTATE 2015 CMS CABERNET SAUVIGNON MERLOT SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY $14 RED 88
HEDGES FAMILY ESTATE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RED MOUNTAIN ESTATE RED MOUNTAIN $40 RED 90
HEDGES FAMILY ESTATE 2015 LA HAUTE CUVÉE RED MOUNTAIN $60 RED 91

This is another fine lineup from winemaker Sarah Hedges, who has been at this family estate full-time since 2006, becoming the head winemaker in 2015 when her uncle retired. These classic, old-world styled efforts come all from the estate vineyard on Red Mountain and hidden gems worth the money.

The 2014 Syrah Descendants Liégeois Dupont checks in at 100% Syrah that was fully destemmed and aged 11 months in 40% new American oak. Blackberries, plums, cedary herbs, damp earth, and graphite notes all emerge from the glass. Ripe, concentrated, and lively on the palate, with a light feel in its tannin and texture, it’s another impressive Syrah from winemaker Sarah Hedges. It has plenty of fruit, yet an Old-World character that I love.

The 2014 Red Mountain Estate Red Wine is another outstanding wine. Coming from 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot and the balance Syrah, it has a perfumed, plum, violet, and cedar driven bouquet to go with a medium to full-bodied, concentrated chewy style on the palate. With good acidity, plenty of character, and a good finish, it’s going to drink nicely for 8-10 years.

The entry-level release is the 2015 CMS Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Syrah. It’s 65% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Syrah brought up in a mix of French and American oak. A great value, it offers medium-bodied notes of tobacco, olives, clams, herbs, and earthy dark fruits. It has an herbal edge that won’t be for everyone, yet I like it.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Estate offers more spice and incense, with loads of plum, blackberry and currant fruits front and center. Made from 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, and the rest Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Souzao, this medium to full-bodied effort has an old-school, rustic style, yet loads of character as well as good purity of fruit, ripe tannin, and a clean finish. I suspect it will keep for 8-10 years, probably longer.

The top cuvée is the 2015 La Haute Cuvée, which is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 40% new American oak barrels. Sweet spice, vanilla, plums, incense, and loads of cedar all flow to a medium to full-bodied, rich, textured red that has enough tannin to warrant a year or two in the cellar. It’s another unique, character-filled wine from an estate that’s on the upswing. www.hedgesfamilylestate.com

HOLOCENE

HOLOCENE 2016 PINOT NOIR MEMORIALIS OREGON NA RED 91-93
HOLOCENE 2016 PINOT NOIR APOCRYPHA OREGON NA RED 92-95
HOLOCENE 2017 PINOT NOIR MEMORIALIS OREGON $60 RED 93-95
HOLOCENE 2017 PINOT NOIR APOCRYPHA OREGON $60 RED 93-95

While falling outside the purview of this report, I’m always able to taste these Oregon releases from winemaker Todd Alexander at my tasting at Force Majeure. These are rich, yet classic Oregon Pinot Noirs that have singular characters. I’m thrilled to be able to include the wines here.

Leading off the barrel samples, the 2016 Pinot Noir Memorialis is a ripe, rounded Pinot Noir that has beautiful notes of exotic flowers, violets, black raspberries and sweet cherries. It’s a seamless beauty that will certainly end up being an outstanding wine. Even better, the 2016 Pinot Noir Apocrypha is sensational looking Oregon Pinot Noir that does everything right. Spice, kirsch, dried flowers, and forest floor characteristics all flow to a deep, rich, beautifully concentrated 2016 that has sweet tannin, no hard edges, and a great finish. Still aging in 40% new French oak, it’s going to drink nicely right out of the gate.

Sweet raspberry, dried flowers, sappy herbs, and hints of strawberries all emerge from the 2017 Pinot Noir Memorialis, which is fresh and lively on the palate, with a light, tactile, grippy sensation. With beautiful purity, integrated acidity and a great finish, it has a touch of Chambolle-Musigny character and will keep for a decade or more.

More blue fruits and black cherry notes, as well as lots of violets and sappy herbs, emerge from the 2017 Pinot Noir Apocrpyha, a bigger, slightly richer wine than the Memorialis cuvée. With vibrant acidity, fine tannin, and a great finish, it’s another beautiful wine from Todd that will evolve beautifully. holocene wines.com

HORS CATEGORIE

HORS CATEGORIE 2015 SYRAH WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 97+
HORS CATEGORIE 2016 SYRAH WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97+

From Christophe Baron and the team at Cayuse, the 2015 Syrah is only the second vintage from this steep, rocky vineyard located south of the town of Milton-Freewater, in the Horse Heaven Hills AVA. Despite coming from a different terroir than the Rocks region, it certainly has some classic gaminess that’s common from that region. Blackcurrants, bloody meats, ground pepper, lavender, and exotic spices all emerge from the glass, and it needs lots of air time to show at its best. Deep, full-bodied, and seamless, with sweet tannin, it’s a singular Syrah that needs 4-5 years of bottle age and will knock your socks off over the following 10-15 years.

Tasted out of barrel, the 2016 Syrah reminds me of the Côte Rôtie Côte Brune release from Jean-Paul Jamet. Deep ruby/purple-colored and loaded with dark fruits, scorched earth, decayed flowers, chocolate, and pepper, it hits the palate with a powerful, full-bodied style that carries, nicely nitrated acidity, building tannin, a rock-solid mid-palate, and a great finish. While the aromatics aren’t far off what’s produced from Christophe’s Cayuse Syrah, a belt more savory and mineral-driven, the structure and tannins have a different feel and are more present. Short-term cellaring will be your friend and this beauty will easily keep for 10-15+ years. horscategoeri ewines.com

HORSEPOWER

HORSEPOWER 2015 GRENACHE SUR ECHALAS VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94
HORSEPOWER 2015 SYRAH SUR ECHALAS VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 93+
HORSEPOWER 2015 SYRAH THE TRIBE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95+
HORSEPOWER 2016 GRENACHE SUR ECHALAS VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97
HORSEPOWER 2016 SYRAH SUR ECHALAS VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 96-98
HORSEPOWER 2016 SYRAH THE TRIBE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 95-97
HORSEPOWER 2016 SYRAH HIGH CONTRAST VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 96-99

The Horsepower wines are made at Cayuse yet from their own set of vineyards which are farmed exclusively by horses. The wines share plenty of similarities with the Cayuse releases, yet have slightly more backward profiles that demand bottle age to show at their best.
The 2015 Grenache Sur Echalas Vineyard is a classic expression of both the terroir and the variety. Black cherries, strawberries, ground pepper, and forest floor notes all flow to a medium to full-bodied, si ky Grenache that has incredible character and depth. Drink it over the coming decade.

The 2015 Syrah Sur Echalas Vineyard is a savoy, terryian effort that’s reminiscent of red wine filtered through a rocky riverbed. Earth, chalky minerality, wood smoke, and sous bois notes, as well as both red and black fruits, give way to a medium to full-bodied, seamless Syrah that has light tannin, no hard edges, and a singular, transparent character. It’s going to gain weight with 2-3 years in bottle and drink well for a decade.

Cut from the same cloth, the 2015 Syrah The Tribe Vineyard offers slightly more depth and length. Blackcurrants, ground pepper, smoked earth, and a beef broth-like meatiness all emerge from this full-bodied, deep, layered Syrah that offers more purity and floral nuances with time in the glass. Like the Sur Echalas Vineyard release, it has silky tannin, integrated acidity, and a great finish. Give it 2-3 years of bottle age and it’s going to drink nicely for a decade. If drinking anytime soon, don’t be afraid to give all these Horsepower releases plenty of airtime.

Moving to the barrel samples, the 2016 Grenache Sur Echalas Vineyard is deep ruby/plum-colored and offers an incredibly spicy bouquet of black fruit and a great finish. Give it 2-3 years of bottle age and it’s going to drink nicely for a decade. If drinking anytime soon, don’t be afraid to give all these Horsepower releases plenty of airtime.

The 2016 Syrah The Tribe Vineyard is slightly more straightforward and focused than the Sur Echalas Vineyard, revealing a deep purple color, lots of cassis and plum fruits, full-bodied richness, and classic meaty, violet, and peppery aromas and flavors. It’s slightly less exotic than the Sur Echalas release, yet it is still a beautiful, concentrated, age-worthy wine. It too needs short-term cellaring and I would touch a bottle until at least 3-4 years after release.

A new cuvée from the High Contrast Vineyard, which covers three acres of Syrah vines and a tiny amount of Viognier, the 2016 Syrah High Contrast Vineyard offers a classic Rocks perfume of smoked earth, underbrush, ground pepper, currants, and charcoal. This full-bodied, bloody, meaty, salty Syrah is a singular expression of this majestic grape and could come from nowhere else. Give it 2-3 years if you can and it will keep for another 10-15.

| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 MERLOT READERS | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $25 | RED 88 |
| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 CABERNET FRANC SUSPENSE CONNER LEE VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $60 | RED 93 |
| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 CONFLICT CONNER LEE VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $60 | RED 92 |
| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON PROTAGONIST CONNER LEE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALLEY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $60 | RED 93 |
| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 CHAPTER #8 CONNER LEE VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $100 | RED 94 |
| J. BOOKWALTER 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON VOLUME #5 DIONYSUS VINEYARD | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $75 | RED 90+ |

Black fruits, hints of olive, and damp earth emerge from the 2015 Merlot Readers, a charming, mouthfilling, well-made Merlot to drink over the coming 4-5 years. This solid value is 90% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 30% new French oak. The 2015 Cabernet Franc Suspense Conner Lee Vineyard checks in as a blend of 83% Cabernet Franc aged 20 months in 30% new French oak. It offers tons of ripe black fruits, tobacco, herbs, and chocolate in a full-bodied, si ky, seamless, pure style. There’s an herbal edge that might not appeal to everyone, yet there’s nothing green about this beauty, which is impeccably balanced. I love it.

The 2015 Conflict Conner Lee Vineyard (47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot and the rest Malbec) offers a more high-toned style to go with notes of blue fruits, violets, spice, and cedar. It’s full-bodied, silky and elegant on the palate, with fine tannin and well-integrated acidity, and I suspect it will age gracefully.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Protagonist Conner Lee Vineyard is similar to the Conflict, yet offers slightly more earth, lavender, and tobacco, with terrific black and blue fruits. Full-bodied, elegant and silky, with fine, polished tannin, it’s another impeccably made red that’s going to keep for 10-
12+ years. This cuvée is 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Syrah, 2% Cabernet Franc and the balance Malbec, aged in 50% new French oak.

The flagship 2015 Chapter #8 Conner Lee Vineyard is a blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon with the rest Malbec, Syrah, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. It and comes in a larger, metallic bottle that's not going to be loved by your shipper, or your cellar racks. Deep inky-colored with terrific notes of crème de cassis and blueberry fruits intermixed with notes of spicy oak, licorice and graphite, it’s full-bodied, nicely concentrated, has terrific purity of fruit, and sweet yet present tannin. It’s going to be better with 2-3 years of bottle age and drink beautifully for 10-15 years. The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Volume #5 Dionysus Vineyard checks in as 100% varietal that spent 22 months in 60% new French oak. It offers lots of oak as well as notes of black fruits, scorched earth, toasted spice, and graphite. This is the only place where the oak seems heavy-handed, but the wine has a big mid-palate, ripe tannin, and a good finish, so give bottles a year or three. www.bookwallerwines.com

JB NEUFELD

JB NEUFELD 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON OLD GOAT YAKIMA VALLEY $55 RED 90
JB NEUFELD 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON YAKIMA VALLEY $35 RED 89

Made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 31 months in new French oak, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Old Goat sports an inky purple color to go with lots of plums, Asian spice, dried cherry, and cedar aromas and flavors. Full-bodied, rich, and sweetlyfruited on the palate, with a touch of dry tannin (which is made even more apparent by elevated volatile acidity), drink this big, rich effort over the coming decade or so.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Yakima Valley from Neufeld checks in as a blend of 87% Cabernet Sauvignon and 13% Cabernet Franc, all aged 22 months in just over 60% new French oak. It’s another inky colored 2015 that offers perfumed notes of incense, Asian spice, graphite, and licorice, with a core of plum and blueberry fruit. Rich, medium to full-bodied, perfumed and lifted, it has some charm to be sure. www.jbneufeld.com

JM CELLARS

JM CELLARS 2015 TRE FANCIULLI RED MOUNTAIN RED BLEND RED MOUNTAIN RED 92
JM CELLARS 2015 CARMENÈRE MARGARET’S VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY $55 RED 90
JM CELLARS 2015 BRAMBLE BUMP RED COLUMBIA VALLEY $25 RED 89
JM CELLARS 2015 SYRAH BOUSHEY VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY $55 RED 94
JM CELLARS 2015 SYRAH RED MOUNTAIN RED MOUNTAIN $49 RED 92

I always love the wines from John Bigelow, who has a beautiful winery located near Woodinville, just northeast of Seattle. The wines are always impeccably made and shine for their purity of fruit and balance. The 2014 Tre Fanciulli Red Mountain Red Blend from JM Cellars checks in as a mix of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot and the rest Syrah, aged just under two years in 80% new French oak. It has a pure, classy style in its creme de cassis, spice, and floral aromatics. These carry to a rich, medium to full-bodied, balanced red that has good acidity and the classic purity and balance that’s always present in the wines from this estate. It’s going to drink nicely for a decade or more. The 2015 Carmenère Margaret’s Vineyard is 100% varietal that spent 18 months in 50% new oak. Inky colored and perfumed with terrific notes of blackberry fruit, scorched earth and peppy herb aromas and flavors, it’s medium to full-bodied, nicely balanced, and has a distinct gravelly, earthy minerality. There are not many stand-alone examples of this variety out there, but this is a good one.

The 2015 Bramble Bump Red checks in as a mix of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Malbec, and the rest Merlot and Petit Verdot, from multiple vineyards, aged 22 months in 60% new French oak. Black fruits, tobacco, leafy herbs, and earth characteristics all emerge from this plump, rounded, delicious and well-made red. It has character, plenty of fruit, and a good finish, and will keep for 6-8 years.

K VINTNERS

K VINTNERS 2015 VIognier POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA NA WHITE 94
K VINTNERS 2016 VIognier ART DEN HOED VINEYARD YAKIMA VALY. NA WHITE 91
K VINTNERS 2015 GRENACHE THE BOY POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 CHARLOTTE RHÔNE BLEND ROCK GARDEN VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH MILBRANDT COLUMBIA VLY. NA RED 93
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH THE DEAL WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH MOTOR CITY KITTY OLD FIELD BOUSHEY VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY NA RED 94
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH RIVER ROCK WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH PHIL LANE WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 96
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH THE BEAUTIFUL POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 97
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 98
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH KLEIN VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 98
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH THE HIDDEN WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 100
K VINTNERS 2015 SYRAH CATTLE KING UPLAND VINEYARD SNIPES MOUNTAIN NA RED 100
K VINTNERS 2015 CABERNET / SYRAH ROMA RIVER ROCK VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 93
K VINTNERS 2015 CABERNET / SYRAH OVIDE JACK’S VINEYARD WALLA WALLA NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 CABERNET / SYRAH KING COAL STONERIDGE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALY. NA RED 98
K VINTNERS 2015 CABERNET / SYRAH THE CREATOR POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 95
K VINTNERS 2015 MALBEC BRONCHO STONERIDGE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALY. NA RED 93
K VINTNERS 2015 SANGIOVESE GUIDO JACK’S VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VLY. NA RED 92
K VINTNERS 2015 TEMPRANILLO EL JEFÉ STONERIDGE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALY. NA RED 95

One of the highlight tastings I do in Washington State is unquestionably with Charles Smith and Brennon Leighton, who together produce a sensational lineup of Rhône and Bordeaux blends, as well as a seriously good Tempranillo and Sangiovese. The majority of the Cabernet Sauvignon dominated cuvées have been moved from the K Vintners label to the Wine of Substance label, which are also reviewed in this report. All the Rhône blends are not destemmed, see native ferments, and are aged mostly in used French oak. These are the real deal and are brilliant wines.

The 2015 Viognier Powerline Vineyard goes all through malo and is brought up in 10% new puncheons. Still light gold-colored with a sensational bouquet of buttered peach, apricot, honeysuckle, toasted brioche, and crème, this full-bodied, rich, opulent, seriously decadent Viognier stays fresh and lively on the palate. It’s a blockbuster, rich, opulent effort that I’d drink over the coming year or two. I’d love

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to see what this taste I ke in 2 years.

Pale yellow in color, the 2016 Viognier Art Den Hoed Vineyard is brought up in concrete and doesn’t go through malolactic fermentation before spending just 4 months in barrel. The ideal is freshness and purity with this cuvée. Buttered citrus, honeysuckle, pineapple, and a kiss of saltiness all emerge from this rich, ripe, textured Viognier that has wonderful purity.

The 2015 Grenache The Boy Powerline Vineyard comes from the estate vineyard located on the eastern side of Walla Walla. Its medium ruby/plum-colored is followed by a gorgeous bouquet of kirsch liqueur, garrique, olive brine, and crushed rock. Deep, rich, inky-purple in the glass. It offers the first vintage of from the Powerline vineyard, and it’s only the second time it’s been 100% Grenache. Not destemmed and aged all in neutral barrels, it’s a naked, pure, incredible expression of Grenache that could come from nowhere else.

The 2015 Charlotte Rhône Blend Rock Garden Vineyard checks in as a co-fermented blend of 43% Grenache, 24% Mourvèdre, 20% Syrah, and 13% Roussanne vinified in concrete aged in neutral puncheons and demi-muids. Its saturated ruby/plum color is followed by a rocking bouquet of smoked meats, dried herbs, spice-box and blackcurrant fruit. It’s medium to full-bodied, smooth, and syrky on the palate, yet has savory tannin that’s going to keep it drinking beautifully for a decade.

From the Northridge and Clifton Hills Vineyard (both on the Wahluke Slope) brought up in 30% new puncheons, the 2015 Syrah Milbrandt offers a complex, nuanced style in its lavender, green olive, blackcurrants, and smoked herbs aromas and flavors. It’s medium to full-bodied, has plenty of tannins, and will misis this singular Syrah.

All from the Sundance Vineyard on the Wahluke Slope, the 2015 Syrah The Deal (100% Syrah, not destemmed and aged in 30% new puncheons) offers smoking notes of red and black fruits, black olive, smoked earth and a huge plushness. Full-bodied, silky and seamless, with a rock, mineral, backward style.

The 2015 Syrah Motor City Kitty Old Field Boushey Vineyard comes all from this site (planted by Brennon and Dick Boushey in 2007) in 2015 and will come from this site going forward. The site is 8 acres consisting of Phelps, 383, 174 clone that’s planted in the center of the vineyard. It’s medium ruby colored effort is more floral, with awesome black raspberry and cherry fruits. Medium-bodied, supple, elegant and charming, drink it over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2015 Syrah River Rock is another rock star Syrah from this estate and it’s just about overflowing with Rocks character. Currants, smoked herbs, olive brine and some peaty notes all give way to a ripe, concentrated, seamless beauty that has loads of charm and character. With fine tannin and a layered style, it will keep for 10-15 years.

From a tiny 1-acre vineyard (that’s about 70 cases) on the eastern side of Walla Walla, the 2015 Syrah Phil Lane boasts a gorgeous bouquet of smoked herbs, campfire, tapenade, and assorted black, black fruits. Reminding me of La Landonne from Guigal aromatically, it’s full-bodied, seamless, si ky, and flat-out gorgeous on the palate. With fine tannin, no hard edges and a great finish, don’t miss this singular Syrah.

Co-fermented with 4% Viognier, the 2015 Syrah The Beautiful Powerline Vineyard was fermented with plenty of stems and brought up mostly in neutral oak. Candied violets, game, blackcurrants, and incense notes all emerge from this beautiful, seamless beauty. It has a rich, full-bodied profile on the palate as well as a great mid-palate, fine tannin, and nicely integrated acidity. This is another singular, layered, silky beauty from this team. Keep in mind, this comes from very young vines, so I suspect the best is yet to come here, which is saying something at this quality level.

Made from 100% Syrah, the 2015 Syrah Powerline Vineyard is much more backwared colored, with a medium-laced, with sensational notes of blackcurrants, cassis, crushed rock, and tapenade. A true powerhouse on the palate, with terrific concentration, building tannin, and a great, great finish, it’s a singular, incredible wine that does everything right. Give bottles 2-3 years and enjoy over the following decade.

Almost always one of my favorite releases at this address, the 2015 Syrah Klein Vineyard is up with the crème de la crème in the vintage. Plums, candied cherries, violets, lavender, chocolate, and tons of dusty, earthy minerality all emerge from this exotic, singular, full-bodied, effort that has building tannin and a vibrant, rich, textured style. With incredible purity, notable structure, and a lifted, perfumed style, it’s flat-out gorgeous.

One of the inker, blacker colors in the line up, the 2015 Syrah The Hidden is a profound Syrah and as good as it gets. Blackcurrants, smoked meats, graphite, and tapenade notes all emerge from this seriously badass, deep, rich, balanced beauty. Concentrated, thick, and huge, yet with no weight on the palate, building tannin, and incred ble elegance, it needs to be tasted to be believed. It’s unquestionably one of the great Syrah from this team.

Another off the charts effort is the 2015 Syrah Catlins King Upland Vineyard, which is also saturated purple/black in color. Possessing a more backward, yet insanely pure bouquet of crème de cassis, black fruits, smoked earth, graphite, and violets, it’s beautifully concentrated, has no hard edges, thrilling purity, and gorgeous, balanced, multi-dimensional style. It needs short-term cellaring but is a monumental wine from Washington.

A co-fermented blend of 75/25 Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah from a site in the Rocks region of Walla Walla, the 2015 Cabernet / Syrah Roma River Rock Vineyard offers lots of space and dried tobacco notes as well as sweet currant and cherry fruits. Medium-bodied, supple, elegant and charming, drink it over the coming 7-8 years.

The 2015 Cabernet / Syrah Odive Jack’s Vineyard is named after Charles’ father and comes from a site next to River Rock, both in the Rocks region of the Walla Walla Valley. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, its deep purple color is followed by a terrific bouquet of blackcurrants, tapenade, dried earth and dried herbs. It’s rich, full-bodied, and concentrated, with beautiful depth.

One of winemaker Brenna’s favorite wines, the 2015 Cabernet / Syrah King Coal Stoneder Vineyards is 75% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Syrah from a site on the Royal Slope and was co-fermented and aged in 60% new French oak. Lead pencil, graphite, currants, and tobacco notes all emerge from this pure, seamless, silky beauty that has serious power and depth as well as purity and focus. It’s a beautiful, terrific, awesome wine that will keep for 15+ years.

A blend of 80/20 Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, the 2015 Cabernet / Syrah The Creator Powerline Vineyard offers a perfumed, singular bouquet of blackcurrants, ripe black cherries, tobacco, peat, and olive tapenade. This ripe, sexy, opulent effort has sweet tannin, a layered, rounded, sexy style, and a great finish. It’s a pure, sexy red to drink over the coming decade.

Deep ruby-colored, with an opaque core, the 2015 Tempranillo El Jefe Stone Rock Vineyards is 100% varietal. Charles and Brenna commented that they do a lot of cluster shaping with Tempranillo to get everything evenly ripe at the same time. Destemmed and aged in 40% new barrique, it reveals a terrific bouquet of black cherries, toasted spice, dried Provençal herbs, and hints of graphite. Medium to full-bodied, pure, elegant and layered on the palate, with fine yet certainly present tannin, it will cruise for a decade.

KOBAYASHI

KOBAYASHI 2015 CABERNET FRANC RED WILLOW VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY NA RED 94

KOBAYASHI 2016 CABERNET FRANC RED WILLOW VINEYARD YAKIMA VALLEY NA RED 93-95

The second vintage for the young, yet talented and motivated Travis Allen, the 2015 Cabernet Franc Red Willow Vineyard (there’s 10% cofermented Cabernet Sauvignon) was fermented in puncheons and aged 12 months in used barrels. I loved this wine last year and it didn’t disappoint this go around either. Beautiful red and black currants, incense, spice, and dried flower notes all flow to a medium to full-bodied, silky, elegant 2015 that has fine tannin, no hard edges, and loads of character. I’d drink bottles over the

Winemaker Ryan Crane, who founded this estate in 2007, doesn’t get the recognition he deserves for these Kerloo Cellars releases. Year in, year out, they show singular, balanced characters and are impeccably made. His latest 2015 Syrah Reserve is the finest wine I’ve tasted from the estate.

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The 2016 Chardonnay Cellio Vineyard is a racy, v brant, borderline tart effort that has enjoyable notes of buttered citrus, tart apple, and brioche. It’s a medium-bodied, well-made effort to drink over the coming 2-3 years.

Brought up in a mix of new and neutral barrels and all Cabernet from the Columbia Valley, the 2015 Columbia Valley offers a classic, darker fruited, olive and tobacco-scented bouquet to go with a full-bodied, rich, nicely structured style on the palate. It has plenty of oak and is going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottles age, but is a rich, impressive Cabernet Sauvignon.

Made from 100% Grenache brought up all in neutral French oak, the 2015 Grenache offers terrific notes of kirsch and blackberry fruits, decaying flowers, spice, and damp earth. This medium-bodied, supple, elegant beauty expands on the palate, has fine tannin, and is a flavorful, rich, character filled Grenache that delivers the goods. 92 cases.

The value-priced 2015 Majestic checks in as a blend of 69% Grenache, 26% Mourvèdre and the rest Syrah, brought up all in neutral oak. It offers a savoy style in its black raspberry and cherry fruits, dried herbs, chocolate and spicy aromas and flavors. Drink this medium-bodied, charming, nicely textured blend over the coming 4-5 years.

The 2015 Syrah Reserve is another rocking effort from winemaker Ryan Crane. Made from 100% Syrah aged in neutral barrels, this inky purple-colored effort has killer notes of blueberries, black raspberries, toasted spice, violets, and sappy spring flowers. It’s pure, full-bodied, balanced, and long, with a floral, violets, Côte Rôtie-like style. Drink it over the coming decade. 115 cases. www.kerloccellars.com

| LAUREN ASHTON CELLARS | 2014 SYRAH | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $35 | RED | 91 |
| L’ECOLE NO 41 | 2015 SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $25 | RED | 91 |
| L’ECOLE NO 41 | 2015 MERLOT COLUMBIA VALLEY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $35 | RED | 91 |
| L’ECOLE NO 41 | 2015 CABERNET FRANC COLUMBIA VALLEY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $40 | RED | 91 |
| L’ECOLE NO 41 | 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY | COLUMBIA VALLEY | $40 | RED | 91 |

The Lauren Ashton Cellars releases are made by Kit A Singh. They’re always well made and are more than worth seeking out.

The 2014 Syrah from winemaker Kit Singh is 100% Syrah, destemmed, and aged 36 months in neutral oak. Plums, blackberries, cedar spice, and hints of lead pencil emerge from this medium to full-bodied effort. With fine tannin, a supple, pure, polished texture, and a great finish, it’s another terrific wine from this estate.

The 2014 Cabernet Franc (100% varietal) offers a ruby/plum color as well as impressive notes of black cherries, plums, dusty earth and savoury herbs/tobacco. With medium to full-bodied richness, a solid mid-palate, and present, ripe tannin, it’s going to drink nicely for 10-15 years.

The 2014 Estate Syrah checks in as a blend of 83% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rest Petit Verdot and Malbec that spent 36 months in neutral barrels. It too is inky colored and offers gorgeous notes of blackberries and black raspberries, tobacco leaf, and spice. Rich, full-bodied, layered, and downright sexy, yet still elegant, it’s a rocking blend that will keep for 10-15 years.

The 100% varietal 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon spent 30 months in a mix of new and used barrels. It too is inky colored and offers gorgeous notes of black raspberry and crème de cassis fruit intermixed with notions of violets, cedar, and spice. Rich, full-bodied, opulent and sweetly fruited, drink this hedonistic Cabernet Sauvignon anytime over the coming 10-15 years. www.laurenashtoncellars.com

L’ECOLE NO 41

L’ECOLE NO 41 2016 ESTATE LUMINESCE SEMILLON SAUV BLANC SEVEN HILLS VYD. WALLA WALLA VLY. $22 WHITE 90
L’ECOLE NO 41 2016 SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2016 CABERNET FRANC COLUMBIA VALLEY $40 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2016 CHARDONNAY COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2016 MERLOT COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 91
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L’ECOLE NO 41 2015 MERLOT COLUMBIA VALLEY $25 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY $30 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2015 CABERNET FRANC ESTATE SEVEN HILLS VINEYARD $37 RED 91
L’ECOLE NO 41 2015 CHRONICLE SYRAH COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 91

Winemakers Marty Clubb and Mike Sharon are behind this impeccably run estate, which is one of the few in Washington that sees good distribution in the United States. Their entry-level wines are always impeccably made and great values, and their top tier releases can compete with the best of Washington State.

The 2016 Estate Luminesce Semillon Sauvignon Blanc Seven Hills Vineyard from L’Ecole is 50% Semillon and 44% Sauvignon. Its pale gold color is followed by terrific notes of white peach, buttered citrus, and honeysuckle. These carry to a medium-bodied, rich, textured white that has nicely integrated acidity and a clean finish. It’s rock solid and is going to be versatile on the dinner table. I’m seeing more and more high-quality Bordeaux Blanc blends from Washington State, and this is one of them. It’s also a great value.

The 2016 Semillon (there’s 14% Sauvignon Blanc) is another fine white. Candied limes, citrus blossom, and a hint of honeysuckle emerge from this medium-bodied, balanced, textured white that has loads of fruit, yet finishes cleanly. It too is a good value.

The 2016 Chenin Blanc Old Vines is another value that offers a unique, yet versatile style. Dried herbs, hints of minerality, white cherries, and white peach notes all give way to a balanced, classy, layered white that has enough texture and depth to stand up to spicy food.

The base Merlot from this great estate is the 2015 Merlot Columbia Valley, which spent 18 months in 25% new French oak. Black cherries, passion fruits, violets, and leafy herbs all emerge from this medium-bodied, balanced, deliciously gulpable Merlot that’s ideal for drinking over the coming 4-5 years.

The 2015 Merlot Estate (80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Cabernet Franc) is a more complete wine, offering outstanding notes of blackcurrants, tobacco leaf, and spice, medium to full-bodied richness, and a layered, balanced, expansive texture. Brought up in 30% new French oak, drink this silky, charming, balanced effort over the coming 5-6 years.

The 2015 Frenchtown Red Wine Columbia Valley is the estate’s red blend and is made from 45% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Syrah, and the rest Grenache, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, and Mourvèdre. Black cherries, graphite, damp herbs, and some earthy notes all emerge from this
The 2015 Apogee Pepper Bridge Vineyard has the most Cabernet Sauvignon of the three top releases and is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 10% Malbec, and 5% Cab Franc. Aged 22 months in 40% new oak, it offers loads of blackcurrants, scorched earth, chocolate, and graphite aromatics, full-bodied richness, a silky, layered texture, and beautiful purity of fruit. It’s a big, rich, yet impeccably balanced red.

The 2015 Estate Ferguson Vineyard checks in as a blend of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 7% Cab Franc, and 7% Malbec that spent 22 months in 50% new oak. It’s the smallest production release of the top cuvées and comes from a single vineyard in the Walla Walla Valley. Currants, smoke, graphite, toastly oak and a kiss of tobacco leaf all define this ripe, opulent, gorgeously pure and layered red. With a big mid-palate, sweet tannin, and a great finish, it’s a beautiful wine from this estate that can be drunk today or cellaring for 10-15 years.

Slightly more expensive and made from 100% Syrah, the 2015 Syrah Estate Seven Hills Vineyard is deep purple-colored and boasts ripe black cherries, blueberries, peppery herbs, graphite, and crushed rocks. It’s rich, full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, and has both tannin and acidity. Drink it over the coming 7-8 years as well.

### Latest Releases from Washington State

#### LEONETTI CELLAR

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This was another terrific lineup from winemaker Chris Figgins, who never seems to miss a step. Both of his Cabernet Sauvignon releases are brilliant wines that check-in near the top of the vintage, but readers also shouldn’t miss his straight Merlot and Sangiovese.

A new wine from Chris Figgins (I think), the 2013 Aglianico Serra Pedace Vineyard is 100% Aglianico that spent a whopping 44 months in a mix of amphora, new French oak, and neutral barrels. Deep purple/black colored with lots of black fruits, scorched earth, and graphite. Its full-bodied richness, a rich, powerful feel, and bright acidity. It’s certainly an interesting wine that has loads of tannin and acidity, and I suspect it will be best with 3-5 years of bottle age.

The classic 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon checks in as a blend of 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Petit Verdot, and 3% Cabernet Franc that spent 22 months in new, once-used and neutral oak. Its purple/blue color is followed by fabulous notes of crème de cassis, lead pencil, tobacco, and graphite. Deep, rich, and opulent, with a sexy, full-bodied, incredibly pure style, it’s already impossible to resist but is going to keep for two decades.

The 2015 Reserve is a borderline perfect wine. Made from 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Malbec, and 8% Merlot, its vibrant purple color is followed by a gorgeous nose of crème de cassis, graphite, scorched earth, liquid-violets, and black currants. Full-bodied, deep, voluptuously textured and layered, with sweet tannin, this incredible beauty stays pure and elegant on the palate, with perfect balance. It’s going to drink nicely for two decades as well.

Chris’s 2015 Sangiovese (there’s 13% Aglianico) spent 22 months in new and once-used barrels. Red currants, ripe cherries, dried earth, spice and a hint of nuttiness all emerge from this rich, full-bodied, incredibly seamless, silky, and polished, with fine tannin emerging with time in the glass. It’s one of the great vintages for this cuvée. Give bottles 2-3 years of bottle age and enjoy over the following decade or more.

A terrific value in Washington State Syrah, the 2015 Merlot (there’s 5% Cabernet Franc) is no exception. Deep purple-colored and loaded with notions of black cherries, plums, leafy herbs, and graphite, it offers medium to full-bodied richness, bright yet integrated acidity and a great finish. It’s a fresh and lively Merlot that I suspect will keep for 10-15 years. www.leonetticellar.com

### LONG SHADOWS VINTNERS

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Another estate that’s been on a roll lately is Alan Shoup’s Long Shadow Vintners, with the wines made/managed by the incredibly talented Gilles Nicault. The 2015 Poet’s Leap Riesling from winemaker Gilles Nicault sports a light gold color to go with lots of lychee nut, crushed rocks, lime, and hints of petrol. It’s clean, off-dry, beautifully balanced, and has a great finish. It’s good today, but this cuvée can age nicely for over a decade.

The 2016 Dance Chardonnay from Gilles is also solid. Buttery pineapple, white flowers, honeysuckle, and a touch of spicy oak all give way to a rounded, medium-bodied, balanced, and well-made Chardonnay. Drink it over the coming year or three.

Looking at the 2014 Chester Kidder Red Wine, it’s a blend of 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Syrah, and 6% Petit Verdot that spent 30 months in 85% new French oak. This inky purple-colored beauty offers a rocking bouquet of blackcurrants, scorched earth, and dark chocolate, full-bodied richness, a stacked mid-palate, and ripe, polished tannin. It’s a big, rich, age-worthy red that styles impeccably balanced and lively, with notable purity. Count me in as a fan.

The 2014 Shoup Red Wine (70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot, and the rest Petit Verdot and Malbec) spent 22 months in 80% new French oak. Reminding me of a great vintage from Chateau Palmer with its sexy black and blue fruits, scorched earth, and spring flower aromas and flavors, this beauty is opulent and hedonistic on the palate, with a broad, expansive, silky texture. Possessing fine tannin, no hard edges, and a great finish, it’s going to keep for 15-20 years, although it’s far from unapproachable today.

The 2015 Pedestal Merlot from Long Shadows is a blend of 75% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Petit Verdot aged 22 months in 85% new French oak barrels. Crème de cassis, wood smoke, scorched earth, and graphite characteristics all emerge from this rich, full-bodied, voluptuous beauty that has more mid-palate depth and richness than any other Merlot made in the state. With ample tannin, it will benefit from a year or three and keep for 15. It’s a gorgeous wine.

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**The 2015 Piroette Red Wine** is a Cabernet Sauvignon dominated cuvée that includes 21% Merlot, 11% Petit Verdot and 3% Malbec. It spent 22 months in 75% new French oak. Blackcurrants, dark chocolate, crushed rock, and graphite notions all dominate this rich, opulent, beautifully concentrated, layered red. It has enough tannin to warrant short-term cellaring and is going to keep for 10-15+ years.

The **2015 Feather Cabernet Sauvignon** is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon that was brought up in 90% new French oak barrels. Its inky purple color is followed by a seamless, pure, impeccably balanced Cabernet that has loads of currants, scorched earth, graphite, and espresso aromas and flavors. Deep, rich, gorgeously pure and polished, with building tannin, it’s a heavenly Cabernet Sauvignon that has everything you could want. It’s the finest vintage to date of this cuvée and is capable of lasting for 20-25 years.

**MARK RYAN WINERY**

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<th><strong>MARK RYAN WINERY</strong></th>
<th><strong>2016 VIOGNIER</strong></th>
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Another estate that Washington readers need to have on their short list is Mark McNielly’s Mark Ryan Winery. The wines are made by super talented Mike Macmorran and are sourced from throughout Washington State. The wines are always impeccably made and shine for their purity and finesse just as much as richness and power.

This estate always turns out a solid Viognier and the 2016 Viognier is no exception. Citrus blossom, tangerine, and pineapple notes all emerge from the glass. This beauty is medium-bodied, nicely textured and balanced.

The 2015 Olsen Vineyard Crush that emerges all from the Olsen Vineyard in the Yakima Valley and was brought up in 29% new French oak, with 14% brought up in concrete tanks. Medium gold in color with a rounded, rich style in its orchard fruits, brioche, toast, and crushed rock aromas and flavors, it’s medium-bodied, supple, and layered, with a ready to go style. I’d drink bottles over the coming year or three.

Moving to the reds, with lots of blue and red fruits, spice box, dried herbs, and a kiss of graphite, the 2015 Merlot Little Sister is full-bodied, silky, and polished, with a great finish. It’s one of the best examples of Merlot (there’s 3% Cabernet Franc) coming out of Washington. It’s certainly approachable today but is going to continue to impress for 10-12+ years.

The 2015 The Dissident Red checks in as a blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Franc, and the balance Petit Verdot. Black cherries, blueberries, iodine, liquid violets, and hints of leafy herbs all emerge from the glass. Full-bodied, inky color, very, very pure, and silky on the palate, it’s another blockbuster wine from the team of Mike Macmorran and Mark McNielly. At 38 dollars, it’s also a smoking value.

The 2015 Long Haul is a Merlot-dominated cuvée that includes 8% Cabernet Franc, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 2% Petit Verdot, all aged 21 months in French Oak. It offers a vibrant purple/ruby color as well as classic black cherry, graphite, wet stone, and violet aromas and flavors. It’s just another elegant, yet rich, powerful wine from Mke that’s beautifully balanced. Drink it over the coming decade.

The 2015 Dead Horse is a Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated cuvée (there’s 84% Merlot 5% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot) sourced all from Red Mountain Vineyards and spent 21 months in 84% new French oak. Sweet crème de cassis, black raspberry jam, crushed violets, and graphite characteristics flow to a full-bodied, voluptuous, sexy red that has awesome purity of fruit, fine, sweet tannin, and a great finish. It’s gorgeous stuff.

Showing better from bottle than barrel, the terrific 2015 Old Vines comes from older vines in the Columbia Valley and is 98% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Petit Verdot. Crème de cassis, grape, tobacco leaf, and damp earth notes all give way to a smooth, polished, silky red that has incredibly polished tannin, a sweet, seamless texture, and a great finish. It’s another hedonistic, beautifully pure red that should evolve nicely.

All from Red Mountain (Osbilisco, Klipsun, and Olsen Vineyards), the 2015 Lonely Heart is the flagship cuvée and is the same blend as the Old Vine release, 98% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Petit Verdot. It offers a similar black/blue fruit profile as well as a mouth-filling richness, fine, polished tannin and earth aromas and flavors. While similar to the other Cabernet Sauvignons from Mike, the acidity is slightly more noticeable, and the tannins are more focused and present. This full-bodied, thrilling pure beauty will round into form with 2-3 years of bottle age and is going to keep for two decades.

The inky colored 2015 Water Witch checks in as 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, aged in 71% new French oak, all from Red Mountain. Dark fruits, smoked herbs, graphite, and hints of chocolate all emerge from this supple, full-bodied, elegant, beautifully pure effort. It shows the classic minerality and tannin of Red Mountain with time in the glass yet is far from unapproachable today.

The 2015 Lucia Rose is a unique wine made from 100% Petit Verdot brought up in 56% new French oak. Blueberries, violets, mint, and leafy herb notes all emerge from the glass and this beauty is ripe, voluptuous and layered on the palate, with tons of sweet fruit. It has big bones, yet packs in a serious amount of fruit as well. It’s a gorgeous expression of Petit Verdot that’s going to keep for 15+ years.

The 2015 Olivia Grace from this terrific estate is all Syrah that spent 18 months in 56% new French oak. Its deep, inky color gives way to a juicy, jammy, primordial Syrah that boasts terrific notes of blueberries, blackberries, creamy oak, and crushed flowers. It’s full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, and inky pure, it just needs another year in bottle to really come together. Nonetheless, it’s an awesome Syrah.

The 2015 Wild Eyed Syrah checks in as 100% Red Mountain Syrah that was brought up in 44% new 500liter French oak. Like all of Mke’s wines, this beauty has a vibrant purple color as well as beautiful notes of black raspberries, blackberry jam, and crushed flowers, with more gamey, meaty, olive notions developing with time in the glass. Rich, full-bodied, textured and layered, with beautiful purity, it’s another Rockstar wine from this team. www.markryanwinery.com

**MATTHEWS**

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These Matthews releases are made by Aryn Morell, who has a hand in a number of top wines in this report.

The 2015 Merlot is a blend of 78% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 2% Cabernet Sauvignon that was brought up in 69% new French oak. Crème de cassis, violets, a touch of vanilla bean, and incense all give way to a rich, voluptuous, beautifully textured, ripe Merlot that has sweet tannin and a silky, elegant texture. It’s ready to go yet should keep for at least a decade.

The 2015 Claret checks in as a 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, incorporating 7% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Sequel Syrah wasn’t destemmed and spent 18 months in 65% new French oak. Its inky purple color is followed by a huge nose of blackberry liqueur, espresso roast, scorched earth, and dark chocolate. This is followed by a full-bodied, beautiful Syrah that has remarkable freshness and purity, fine tannin, and a great, great finish. It’s always a pedal-to-the-metal effort, yet the 2015 stays beautifully fresh and lively on the palate. This is certainly one of the finest vintages to date.

Crème de cassis, ripe black cherries, licorice, and toasty oak all emerge from the 2015 Sagari Red Wine, which is a blend of 62% Sangiovese, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Syrah. With an inky color, full-bodied richness, fine, polished tannin and a great finish, it’s another terrific wine from this estate that’s going to evolve beautifully for 10-15 years. www.longshadows.com

JebDunnuck.com Latest Releases from Washington State
21% Cabernet Franc and the rest Ma bec and Petit Verdot which spent 20 months in 51% new French oak. Cassis, blueberries, leafy herbs, and liquid flower notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, lively, fresh, elegant blend that shines for its purity and sheer drinkability.

The 2015 Reserve Claret checks in as 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot and the balance Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot that saw more new oak, spending 22 months in 80% new barrels. Similarly inky colored, with beautiful blue fruits, violets, cedar and incense aromatics, this beauty hits the palate with full-bodied richness, fine, polished tannin, and nicely integrated acidity. It’s balanced, has beautiful purity, and a great finish.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon offers a similar sweetly fruited, polished style. Crème de cassis, vanilla bean, sweet spice, and cedar notes all dominate the bouquet. On the palate, it’s full-bodied and silky, with good overall balance and nicely integrated acidity. Possessing sweet tannin and solid length, drink it over the coming decade or more. www.matthewswinery.com

MATTHEWS / TENOR

MTR PRODUCTIONS

MORELL-PEÑA

MULLAN ROAD CELLARS

NO GIRLS

Made by Elizabeth Boucier of Cayuse (the wines are made at Cayuse), these latest releases under her No Girls label are unquestionably some of the best to date. While the wines always lean towards the more fresh, elegant side of the spectrum, they’ve gained depth and richness over the past handful of years. Today, they’re certainly on par with anything coming out of the region.

Starting with the 2015 Grenache La Paciencia from bottle, this brilliant wine tastes like a Chambolle-Musigny mixed with a Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Rayas! Strawberries, raspberry liqueur, green olive, and floral notes all flow to a medium-bodied, ethereally textured, beautiful Grenache that has plenty of intensity, yet just dances on the palate with no weight or heaviness. Enjoy this elixir over the coming 7-8 years. The blend is 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Merlot, and 17% Cabernet Franc, aged 18 months in 34% new French and American oak barrels. www.mullanroadcellars.com

NO GIRLS

MTR PRODUCTIONS

MORELL-PEÑA

MULLAN ROAD CELLARS

NO GIRLS

2015 Tempranillo La Paciencia offers ample cedarwood, bloody meat, blackcurrants, and violets aromatics in a rich, full-bodied, beautifully layered package. It carries the most weight and depth of the cuvées from Boucier, as well as tannin, yet it’s already impossible to resist. Drink this beauty anytime over the coming 10-15 years.

A pretty, perfumed, complex Grenache, the 2016 Grenache La Paciencia reveals a medium ruby color as well as juicy notes of mulberries, peppery herbs, dried earth, and savoury spices. It’s medium-bodied, has nicely integrated acidity, building tannin, and a clean finish. Give bottles a year or three.

The 2016 Syrah La Paciencia Vineyard is a beauty and has a much more feminine, juicy, fresh style compared to the Cayuse and Horsepower releases. Blackberries, rose petals, spring flowers, and obvious minerality flow to a medium to full-bodied Syrah that has bright acidity, a layered, textured profile, and a clean finish. I love its freshness and purity, and it packs plenty of fruit, tannin, and texture while still just dancing on the palate. Drink this Côtes-Blondelet beauty anytime over the coming 10-15 years.

Last of the barrel samples, the 2016 Tempranillo La Paciencia offers a terrific bouquet of sweet cherries, cedary spice, chocolate, and violets. This perfectly balanced, medium to full-bodied Tempranillo has a great mid-palate, present yet sweet tannin, and no hard edges. It’s going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age and shine for a decade or more. nogiriswine.com
The 2016 Syrah Ex Umbris, which is 100% varietal that spent 16 months in mostly neutral barrels, is a ripe, red and black fruit blend that has plenty of leafy herb and cedar aromatics, medium to full-bodied richness, and a polished, elegant, textured style. It’s a good value at $21 at the retail price.

NOTA BENE CELLARS

A blend of 98% Syrah and 2% Viognier, aged 22 months in barrel, the 2014 Syrah is a ripe, chewy, fruit forward effort that gives up lots of smoky black fruits, medium body, and a clean finish. Drink it over the coming 3-4 years. Based largely on Grenache, the 2014 Una Notte Red Blend includes 14% each of Syrah and Mourvèdre, with the Grenache brought up in all in stainless steel and the Syrah and Mourvèdre in barrel. Medium ruby/purple-colored with lots of currants, cherries, tapenade, and lavender aromas and flavors, it’s medium-bodied, supple, and nicely textured on the palate. Drink it over the coming 3-5 years.

The 2014 Miscela Red Blend offers more black raspberries, spring flowers, spice, and vanilla oak aromatics, medium to full-bodied richness, and a polished, elegant, textured style. It’s a good value at $25 at the retail price.

OWEN ROE

The 2016 Chardonnay DuBrul Vineyard comes from a great site on the northern edge of the Yakima Valley and was aged 9 months in 23% new French oak. It offers ripe orchard fruits, spice, and honeysuckle aromas and flavors, vibrant acidity, medium-bodied richness, and a clean, classy style ideal for drinking over the coming 4-5 years. It’s another impressive Chardonnay from the 2016 vintage. The inky colored 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon DuBrul Vineyard from Owen Roe is 100% varietal and spent 22 months in 53% new French oak. Graphite, caramelized red and black fruits, toasted bread, dried herbs, and sweet spice notes all emerge from this sweetly fruited, supple, rounded, sexy red that has a big texture and a good finish. Up-front and ready to go, it should nevertheless keep for 10-15 years.

The 2015 Yakima Valley Red Wine from Owen Roe is made from 36% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Malbec aged 20 months in 43% new French oak. It’s a ripe, red and black fruit blend that has plenty of leafy herb and cedar aromatics, medium to full-bodied richness, and nicely integrated acidity, and a fresh, clean finish. Drink it over the coming 7-8 years. The 2015 Syrah Chapel Block checks in as 100% Syrah that spent 10 months in 47% new French oak. It’s an incredibly classy, elegant wine that offers lots of black raspberry and blueberry fruit intermixed with notions of crushed flowers, salty minerality, lavender and hints of tapenade. With medium to full-bodied richness, beautiful purity, ultra-fine tannin, and a great finish, it’s not a blockbuster but has incredible class, balance, and purity, and is a remarkable wine. The 2014 Una Notte Red Blend offers more black raspberries, spicy oak and hints of crushed flowers, the 2014 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Blend is also terrific. Medium to full-bodied, concentrated, and layered on the palate, with terrific purity, it’s another fresh, focused, impeccably made wine from this estate that’s going to evolve nicely. This cuvée is a blend of 39% Cabernet Franc, 32% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 29% Merlot, aged 22 months in barrel.

The 2014 Arianes Vineyard checks in as a blend of 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 20% Petit Verdot, and 10% Cabernet Franc that’s all from a site on the Wahluke Slope. It’s the most broad and expansive in the lineup, with a charming, open style in its blackcurrants, kirsch, spice box, and dried flower aromas and flavors. It’s straight-up delicious, has no hard edges, and a clean finish, all making for a terrific Washington State red to drink over the coming 7-8 years. notabene cellars.com

PASSING TIME

A blend of 82% Merlot and 18% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 50% new French oak. Plums, ripe black cherry, charcoal, and toasty oak notions all flow to a rich, full-bodied, impressively concentrated Merlot that has a great mid-palate (which isn’t always a given with Merlot) and a big finish. It’s another terrific vintage for this estate. The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley (100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in 44% new French oak) has a terrific bouquet of blue fruits, tobacco leaf, damp earth, and spring flowers. It’s a classic Cabernet Sauvignon from Walla Walla that has excellent purity of fruit, a medium to full-bodied, rounded texture, and medium to full- bodied, rounded, medium-bodied, supple, and nicely textured on the palate. Drink it over the coming 3-5 years.

The 2014 Premier Merlot Columbia Valley, a blend of 76% Merlot and 24% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 38% new oak. Creme de cassis, black raspberries, vanilla-laced oak, and mulled cherry notes all give way to plum, medium to full-bodied, rounded, undeniably delicious Merlot that will keep for 8-10 years.

The flagship Merlot is the 2014 Premier Merlot Columbia Valley, a blend of 82% Merlot and 18% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 50% new French oak. Plums, ripe black cherry, charcoal, and toasty oak notions all flow to a rich, full-bodied, impressively concentrated Merlot that has a great mid-palate (which isn’t always a given with Merlot) and a big finish. It’s another terrific vintage for this estate. The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley (100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in 44% new French oak) has a terrific bouquet of blue fruits, tobacco leaf, damp earth, and spring flowers. It’s a classic Cabernet Sauvignon from Walla Walla that has excellent purity of fruit, a medium to full-bodied, rounded texture, and medium to full-bodied, rounded, medium-bodied, supple, and nicely textured on the palate. Drink it over the coming 3-5 years.

The 2014 Merlot Columbia Valley is a plump, forward, sexy blend of 76% Merlot and 24% Cabernet Sauvignon brought up in 38% new oak. Creme de cassis, black raspberries, vanilla-laced oak, and mulled cherry notes all give way to plum, medium to full-bodied, rounded, medium-bodied, supple, and nicely textured on the palate. Drink it over the coming 3-5 years.
A collaboration between Football Stars Dan Marino and Damon Huard, with the wines made by Chris Peterson (of Avennia), Passing Time releases four Cabernet Sauvignon dominated cuvées, each from a specific Washington State appellation. All four are brilliant wines that check-in near the top of the vintage.

The base 2015 Columbia Valley Red Cuvée is a blend of 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot, and 8% Cabernet Franc. It offers gorgeous notes of crème de cassis, blackberry, dried earth, spice, and chocolate, with beautifully integrated oak. Rich, full-bodied, pure and elegant, it’s one hell of an entry level cuvée.

From a site in the Walla Walla Valley, the 100% Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon WW spent 20 months in 60% new French oak. It offers terrific complexity in its blackcurrant, tobacco, damp earth, and chocolate spice aromas and flavors. Deep, broad, and expansive, it’s a si ky, pure, terrific complexity in its blackcurrant, tobacco, damp earth, and chocolatey finish. It’s an awesome wine.

Pepper Bridge Winery 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley offers a rocking nose of pure black fruits as well as loads of graphite, liquid flowers, and liquid rock. Deep, inky, rich, and full-bodied, with beautiful depth of fruit, as well as plenty of tannins, it shines for its purity, balance, and length, but is going to benefit from short-term cellaring.

Including slightly more Cabernet Sauvignon than last year, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Horse Heaven Hills is 89% Cabernet Sauvignon from Champoux Vineyard, 7% Merlot from Kiplsun, and the rest Cabernet Franc from Champou. The most rich, decadent, and opulent, with killer notes of black currants, black raspberries, crème de cassis, tobacco leaf, sandalwood, and spring flowers, it’s a big, rich, decadent beauty that builds tannin, beautiful sweetness of fruit, and a great finish. I expect this to fill out in bottle and it’s going to keep for two to three decades. Bravo.

A blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 12% Petit Verdot, and the rest Cabernet Franc, the 2016 Columbia Valley Red Wine is another beauty, and it certainly stands up nicely to the regional appellation wines. Blackcurrants, graphite, tobacco leaf, and a kiss of tapenade give way to a full-bodied, concentrated, ripe, beautifully, layered effort.

Winemaker Chris Stone continues to grow his Pearl and Stone Wine Company label and today releases four separate cuvées.

A blend of 45% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Mailbox Peak offers a lifted, perfumed bouquet of black cherries, plum, incense, violets, and graphite. With some detracting volatile acidity, it’s nevertheless ripe and sexy on the palate, with a juicy, lip-smacking style. It’d drink bottles over the coming 5-6 years.

Made from 100% Cabernet Franc, the 2015 Cabernet Franc Reserve sports an inky color as well as a great nose of ripe black currants, leafy herbs, tobacco, and spring flowers. Showing more blue fruits with time in the glass, this ripe, full-bodied puppy has nicely integrated acidity, loads of ripe fruit, and building tannin. It’s going to benefit from a year or two and drink nicely for a decade.

There are 150 cases of the 2015 Wandering which is made from 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Cabernet Franc, and 27% Merlot. It’s a ripe, hedonistic, heady beauty loaded with notions of red and black fruits, mulling spices, vanilla bean, and incense. Deep, full-bodied and expansive, with sweet tannin, drink it anytime over the coming 4-6 years.

A Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated blend that includes 12% Cabernet Franc and 3% Merlot, the 2015 Resolution Peaks is another inky colored effort offering exotic notes of plums, black raspberries, violets, and candied orange peel. Ripe, rounded, expansive and downnright sexy, drink it over the coming 4-6 years. 200 cases. www.pearlandstonewine.com

Winemaker Chris Stone continues to grow his Pearl and Stone Wine Company label and today releases four separate cuvées.

A Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated cuvée that includes 12% Cabernet Franc and 3% Merlot, the 2015 Syrah Proper Estate is another inky colored effort offering exotic notes of plums, black raspberries, violets, and candied orange peel. Ripe, rounded, expansive and downnright sexy, drink it over the coming 4-6 years. 200 cases. www.pearlandstonewine.com

I continue to love the wine from Robin Pollard, who previously spent six years as the executive director of the Washington State Wine Commission. Deciding to make the transition from promoting wine to making it, she planted a 10-acre vineyard in the Rattlesnake Hills AVA in 2014 to a mix of Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. This 2016 is the finest wine I’ve tasted from her and I expect the best is yet to come. In addition, she’s also an incredible coffee blender (https://pollardcoffee.com).

Brought up in 20% new French oak, the 2016 Cabernet Franc from winemaker Robin Pollard offers terrific notes of black raspberries and black currants intermixed with lots of spice, dried flowers, and even some background meatiness. Medium to full-bodied, silky and polished, with fine tannin, it’s beautifully balanced and well worth checking out.

Made by Sean Boyd and from 100% Syrah (from the estate vineyard in the Rocks region of Walla Walla) brought up in 16% new French oak, the 2015 Syrah Proper Estate is another inky colored Syrah from this vintage that has a terrific bouquet of blackcurrant, olive tapenade, lavender, and pepper. It’s rich, full-bodied, opulent, and sexy on the palate, with a sweet, expansive texture, no hard edges, and a rocking finish. Count me in as a fan. It’s going to keep for 7-8 years. www.properwines.com
The 2014 Baby Bear Syrah is 100% Syrah that spent 32 months in 60% new French oak. It has plenty of creamy oak as well as rich, beautifully pure notes of crème de cassis, crushed flowers, spice, and vanilla bean. With a full-bodied, rich, beautifully concentrated style on the palate, it's certainly modern, yet just sings with its purity and elegance.

Aged 32 months in new barrels, the 2014 Pursued by Bear Cabernet Sauvignon has a lot of oak in its buttered popcorn, vanilla, and caramelized red and black fruit-driven aromatics yet shows a beautiful voluptuousness and seamless texture on the palate that gives me hope for where it is headed. Full-bodied, seductive, and concentrated, yet with its obviously oak always beating you on the head, give bottles 2-3 years, at which point it will be clear where this is going. www.pursuedbybearwine.com

**QINTA ESSENTIA WINERY**

**RESULT OF A CRUSH 2015 CHRISTMAS CUVÉE WALLA WALLA VALLEY $25 WHITE 90**

Sourced all from Walla Walla fruit, the 2016 White Blend (45% Grenache, 33% Marsanne, and 22% Viognier) sports a lighter gold color to go with lots of juicy citrus and tropical fruits, hints of butter, and spice, medium-bodied richness, and a clean, balanced style. It's a total charmer and well worth drinking.

Moving to the reds and made from 100% Syrah, the 2015 Christmas Cuvée tastes like a solid Côte Rôtie and offers lovely red and black raspberry fruits, pepper, crushed flowers, and hints of bacon fat. It's medium-bodied, supple, and silky on the palate, with a forward, delicious style. It's a great value to drink over the coming 2-3 years.

**RESULT OF A CRUSH 2015 RED BLEND WALLA WALLA VALLEY $30 RED 89**

Revelry Vintners’ 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon D11 spent 21 months in 56% new French oak. It has a classic Washington state Cabernet nose of plums, scorched earth, chocolate, and leafy herbs, medium to full-bodied richness, finely integrated acidity, and a good finish. It's a solid, outstanding wine to enjoy over the coming decade.

Also all Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain spent a whopping 34 months in French oak before being bottled. It offers a rounded, expressive bouquet of mulled currants, Asian spices, licorice, and hints of toasty oak, medium to full-bodied, richness, a ripe, sexy texture, and a good finish. It's certainly ready to go but I suspect it's incredibly stable after spending close to three years in oak. It's going to keep for 10-15 years.

Revelry’s 2015 Syrah checks in as 100% Grenache sourced all from the Horse Heaven Hills AVA. It offers a ripe, sweetly fruited, sexy style as well as notions of plums, blueberries, strawberries and herbs de Provence. It’s a charming, supple, elegant effort to drink over the coming 4-5 years.

The 2015 Range checks in as 67% Syrah and 33% Grenache that was brought up all in neutral oak. Coming from sites in the Columbia Valley, its deeper ruby color is followed by lots of black raspberries, spice, vanilla, and white pepper-like aromas and flavors. It’s a charming, forward, sweetly fruited effort geared for near-term drinking.

All from the Weinbau Vineyard on the Wahluke Slope, the 100% Syrah 2015 Syrah Block 19 spent 22 months in 35% new French oak. Cassis, black raspberries, vanilla bean, and hints of graphite all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, creamy, pure, polished red.

The 2015 Syrah Block 18 is another Weinbau Syrah that was brought up all in neutral oak. It’s similarly colored to the Block 19 but offers a more open, rounded, savoy style with notes of blackcurrants, black cherries, dried earth, flowers and ground pepper. It’s broad, expansive, and balanced, and is going to continue drink nicely for 7-8 years. revelryvintners.com
REYNAVA FAMILY VINEYARDS

REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2016 GRENACHE BLANC IN THE ROCKS WALLA WALLA VALLEY $60 WHITE 91
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2016 VIognier IN THE ROCKS WALLA WALLA VALLEY $60 WHITE 93
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2016 SYRAH STONESENSE WALLA WALLA VALLEY $100 RED 96
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2015 SYRAH THE CONTENDER WALLA WALLA VALLEY $85 RED 93
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2015 SYRAH IN THE ROCKS WALLA WALLA VALLEY $85 RED 91
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2015 SYRAH FOOTHILLS RESERVE WALLA WALLA VALLEY $75 RED 95
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2015 SYRAH IN THE HILLS WALLA WALLA VALLEY $75 RED 95
REYNAVA FAMILY VYDS. 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON THE CLASSIC WALLA WALLA VALLEY $75 RED

The 2015 Viognier In The Rocks is another rocking effort. Reminding me a bit of a top Condrieu, it boasts loads of ripe peach aromas, as well as terrific notes of buttered citrus, lemon curd, and white flowers. It's silky, sexy style on the palate is sweet, fruity and ready to go, yet should keep for a decade.

Brought up in equal parts French and American oak, the 2015 Syrah Double D Vineyard is inky colored and offers modern notes of plums, blueberries, spicy oak, and graphite. With lots of obvious oak, medium to full-bodied richness, terrific purity of fruit, and fine tannin, it's an impressive, borderline outstanding Syrah to drink over the coming 5-6 years.

Inky blue/purple-colored, the 2015 Malbec offers lots of ripe, cassis and blueberry fruits, notes of incense, spice, and cedar, full-bodied, richness, and a luscious, silky, sexy style on the palate. It's sweet, fruity and ready to go, yet should keep for a decade.

ROBERT KARL CELLARS

ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2014 INSPIRATION RESERVE RED WINE HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $45 RED 82
ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON GUNSELMAN BENCH VYD. HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $36 RED 80
ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2015 CABERNET FRANC HORSE HEAVEN HILLS HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $26 RED 82
ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2015 MALBEC HORSE HEAVEN HILLS HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $26 RED 79
ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2015 CLARET HORSE HEAVEN HILLS HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $22 RED 83
ROBERT KARL CELLARS 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON HORSE HEAVEN HILLS HORSE HEAVEN HILLS $32 RED 86

The best in the lineup is the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Horse Heaven Hills, which offers impressive amount of black and blue fruits, with subtle, integrated charred oak, violets, and vanilla nuances. Full-bodied, nicely balanced on the palate, and textured, it's about the only one worth drinking.

I have no idea what's going on with these latest releases from Joe Gunselman's Robert Karl Cellars, but these all showed obnoxious oak and charred aromas and flavors.

Checking in as a blend of 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, and the rest Petit Verdot aged 21 months in 80% new French oak, the 2014 Inspiration Reserve Red Wine sports a deep purple color to go with over-oaked black fruits, charcoal, and graphite aromas and flavors. The oak profile dominates and there's a charred, unappealing aspect that takes away from what would be a high-quality wine.

ROCKY POND WINERY

ROCKY POND WINERY 2015 MALBEC COLUMBIA VALLEY $42 RED 84
ROCKY POND WINERY 2015 LA DOMESTIQUE RESERVE COLUMBIA VALLEY $44 RED 87
ROCKY POND WINERY 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY $53 RED 90
ROCKY POND WINERY 2015 SYRAH DOUBLE D VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALLEY $39 RED 89
ROCKY POND WINERY 2016 STRATASTONE COLUMBIA VALLEY $35 RED 89

Inky blue/purple-colored, the 2015 Malbec offers lots of blueberries, menthol, passion fruit and incense notes in a rich, full-bodied, slightly cloying style. Drink up.

The 2015 La Domestique Reserve (75% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon) is also deeply colored. Black cherries, black raspberries, violets, Asian spices and leafy herb notes all emerge from this rounded, supple red that has an oaky, chunky bouquet but is surprisingly silky and polished on the palate. Drink it over the coming 5-7 years.

The most expensive release is the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, which is 100% Cabernet aged 13 months in new French oak. This deep ruby/purple-colored effort offers lots of ripe, cassis and blueberry fruits, notes of incense, spice, and cedar, full-bodied, richness, and a luscious,
The Merlot-dominated 2015 Merlot Seven Hills Vineyard is solid, with lots of blueberry fruits, notes of spice, graphite, and chocolate, medium to full-bodied richness, and sweet tannin. It’s deliciously gushy, nicely balanced, and is a rock-solid wine. The blend is 89% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Cabernet Franc, all brought up in 40% new French oak.

The tiny production 2015 Pentad checks in as 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Petit Verdot, and the rest Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Carménère. Like most 2015s, it sports a deep, inky, saturated color as well as a rocking bouquet of mulled blackcurrants, blackberries, tobacco leaf, crushed rocks, and leafy herbs. Rich, full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, and with a building sense of minerality, drink this pure, balanced, 2015 anytime over the coming 10-15 years. It’s the finest vintage of this cuvée I’ve tasted.

The 2015 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Wine is made from 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 13% Petit Verdot, and 10% Cabernet Franc that spent 22 months in 40% new French oak. It’s a tiny production cuvée from a great site in Red Mountain, and its inky purple color is followed by another super-ripe, rich, blue-fruited, spiced red that has plenty of fine tannins and a great finish. Drink it over the coming decade.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Seven Hills Vineyard (there’s 2% Petit Verdot in the blend) is another super-ripe, blueberry, spicy oak, chocolate and dried herb-scented effort. It’s ripe, rounded and sexy on the palate, but it tastes like all the other cuvées here.

From another great vintage for Washington State, the Bordeaux look-alike 2015 L’Orage offers medium gold color as well as a rich, ripe, pedal to the metal style in its buttered peach, ripe pineapple, and spicy, buttery aromas and flavors. It stays clean and balanced on the palate, with nicely integrated acidity and classic, dry finish. I suspect it’s best enjoyed over the coming year or three.

Always a good value, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon offers lots of Cabernet character in its blackcurrant, lead pencil, green tobacco, and spicy oak aromas and flavors. It’s medium to full-bodied, sweetly fruited, balanced, and already a joy to drink.

From another great vintage for Washington State, the Bordeaux look-alike 2016 Mystique is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc that’s all from the estate vineyard on the western edge of the Yakima Valley. Its deep ruby color is followed by a spicy, savory, herbal, yet textured and full-bodied red that has loads of red and black fruits, some spicy oak, and a clean, dry finish. It’s already impressive but resist yet should keep for 7-8 years.

The 2015 Syrah Singularity is another terrific vintage for this cuvée, one which always reminds me of a top Cote Rotie (or Hermitage?) with its savory, rich, meaty style. The 2015 sports a deep ruby/plum color to go with a big bouquet of blackcurrants, smoked meats, graphite, and hints of black olive tapenade. With medium to full-bodied richness, ripe, polished tannin, and a great finish, it checks in slightly behind the crazy good 2013 (and 2014), but blossoms with time in the glass and has a solid decade of prime drinking ahead of it.

The Cabernet Sauvignon dominated (there’s a small amount of Cabernet Franc) 2015 L’Oräge is another brilliant wine from this estate. Dried red currants, cedarwood, incense and lead pencil notes all flow to a ripe, sexy, medium to full-bodied Cabernet that has sweet tannin, impeccable balance, and a great finish. Drink this pleasure-bent beauty anytime over the coming decade.

Always from 100% Cabernet Franc, from a single block in the Sheridan Vineyard, the 2015 Cabernet Franc Boss Block offers a rich, savory style in its black and red currant fruits, dried underbrush, cedar pencil and graphite aromatics. This flow to a full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, ripe wine that has a beautiful core of sweet fruit, ripe, polished tannin, and a great finish. It needs 3-4 years of bottle age to develop more complexity but is a beautifully balanced wine well worth seeking out.

The Cabernet Sauvignon dominated 2015 Block 1 is another sensational effort from winemaker Scott Greer. Brought up in 100% new barrels and hitting 14.1% natural alcohol, it offers up a heavenly perfume of crème de cassis, spicy oak, graphite, and tobacco. This gives way to a ripe, concentrated, plush Cabernet that has sweet tannin, a big, opulent texture, good acidity, and a great finish. It’s approachable today with a decant, but will be better in 2-3 years and keep for 15-20 years.

In addition to his Washington State releases, Scott releases a terrific Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. The deep ruby/purple-laced 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley offers classic Cabernet notes of blackcurrants, cedarwood, lead pencil, and dried tobacco to go with a medium-bodied, silky, beautifully textured style on the palate that hides substantial tannin. Drink this savory, Bordeaux look-like anytime over the coming decade or more.

Made by Brennon Leighton and Charles Smith, Sixto focuses on cooler, higher elevation vineyards and old vines. They’re consistently some of the finest Chardonnays produced in the State.

A blend of multiple vineyards (this is the only blend in the Sixto lineup), the 2015 Chardonnay Uncovered is brought up in a mix of concrete and puncheons before spending 18 months in barrel. Buttered pineapple, white flowers, brioche, and some seriously ripe fruit emerge from the glass, and it’s medium to full-bodied, beautifully concentrated and textured, with a terrific depth of fruit. It’s impressive and showed even more freshness and purity with time in the glass.

The 2015 Chardonnay Frenchman Hills offers a similar rich, ripe, sexy style, with a touch more minerality as well as toasted nut notions. Deep, rich, concentrated, and opulent, yet always with a fresh style, it’s another ripe, toasty, rich Chardonnay to drink over the coming 2-3 years.

The 2015 Chardonnay Moxee comes from a western slope at 1,550 feet in elevation and limestone soils. This gorgeous effort has a terrific perfume of ripe, pure pineapple and buttered lemon fruit as well as medium to full-bodied richness, a distinct minerality, and a creamy, layered textured. I love its vibrancy, but make no mistake, this is another rich, creamy, classy Chardonnay from this team.

From the lowest elevation site and cha ky soils (1,300 feet), the 2015 Chardonnay Roza Hills offers more minerality as well as caramelized currents, brioche, and toasted bread. With terrific richness, integrated acidity, and a great finish, it will keep for 3-5 years.
While I wasn't able to taste the 2015s from winemaker Serge Laville, his 2014s from bottle showed nicely. This is a solid estate that always makes a classic, balanced, thoroughly enjoyable wine. The 2014 Uriah Red Wine (56% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Merlot and the rest Merlot. Deep ruby/purple-colored with lots of black and blue fruits, earth, and gravelly minerality, it has terrific depth of fruit, no hard edges, and solid overall freshness and purity.

The 2016 Conjurer Red Blend is a blend of 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Cabernet Franc, 22% Merlot, and the balance Petit Verdot. It has beautiful polish and elegance as well as lovely black and blue fruits, medium to full body, integrated acidity, and a clean, pure, seamless style. It’s a smoking value that will keep for 7-8 years.

An outstanding Grenache in the making, the 2016 Grenache Sorceress from Trey offers a pale ruby color as well beautiful kirsch and cherry fruits, medium-bodied richness, lots of spice and floral nuances, and a great finish. The 2016 Syrah Ziggy Stardust (100% Syrah) has a very lively, juicy style. Currants, mulberries, passion fruits, spring flowers, and green herb notes all emerge from this lively, pretty, elegant Syrah that has fine tannin and a clean finish.

Coming all from the Stoney Vineyard in the Walla Walla Valley and aging in 25% new French oak, the 2016 Syrah Psychoedellic is ruby/purple-colored and loaded with notions of currants, tapenade, lavender, and tobacco. It’s full-bodied, deep, beautifully concentrated, and layered, with an expansive, sexy style that’s hard to resist. It will keep for a decade.

The 2016 Syrah Funkadelic all comes from the Funk Vineyard in Walla Walla and will see 20 months in neutral barrels. Deeper colored than the Psychoedellic Syrah, it gives up loads of blackcurrants, tobacco, scorched earth, and chocolate. Deep, rich, multidimensional, and incredibly pure, it’s a sensational Syrah that’s probably the best I’ve tasted from this estate. Always a good value, the 2016 Syrah Levitation comes from a handful of vineyards in the Columbia Valley (Lewis, Collins, and Ziggy Stardust) and will see 16 months in 30% new French oak. Vibrant purple-colored with classic notes of black raspberries, cassis, toast, nutty oak, and lead pencil, it’s medium to full-bodied, has rocking purity of fruit, fine tannin, and notable purity and freshness. www.sofohcellars.com

The 2016 Marsanne is a rich, ripe white that gives up notes of caramalized stone fruits and buttered peach. Rich, nicely textured, and certainly opulent, it’s a full-bodied white that packs a punch.

Spice, cedar, incense, black raspberry, and creamy oak are just some of the nuances in the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Old Vine Upland Vineyard, which is 100% varietal aged in new French oak. Medium to full-bodied, elegant and seamless on the palate, with beautiful purity of fruit and good complexity, it should drink nicely for 10-12 years.

A blend of mostly Cabernet Sauvignon (there’s a big kick of Petit Verdot as well), this 2016 offers a similar spicy, oaky, complex style to go with a big, rich, full-bodied style on the palate. Blackcurrants, Asian spice, licorice, and plummy notes all emerge from this beauty, which has a lifted, sexy, ripe style.

The 2016 Conjurer Red Blend is a value-priced blend of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Cabernet Franc and the rest Merlot. Deep ruby/purple-colored with lots of black and blue fruits, earth, and gravelly minerality, it has terrific depth of fruit, no hard edges, and solid overall freshness and purity.

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The 2016 Marsanne is a rich, ripe white that gives up notes of caramalized stone fruits and buttered peach. Rich, nicely textured, and certainly opulent, it’s a full-bodied white that packs a punch.

Spice, cedar, incense, black raspberry, and creamy oak are just some of the nuances in the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Old Vine Upland Vineyard, which is 100% varietal aged in new French oak. Medium to full-bodied, elegant and seamless on the palate, with beautiful purity of fruit and good complexity, it should drink nicely for 10-12 years.

A blend of mostly Cabernet Sauvignon (there’s a big kick of Petit Verdot as well), this 2016 offers a similar spicy, oaky, complex style to go with a big, rich, full-bodied style on the palate. Blackcurrants, Asian spice, licorice, and plummy notes all emerge from this beauty, which has a lifted, sexy, ripe style.
Verdor, and 2% Malbec) offers a ruby/plum color to go with a spicy, herbal, savory bouquet of red plums, currants, savory spices, and chocolate. It's medium to full-bodied, rounded, and supple on the palate, with a charming, enjoyable style that will keep for 7-8 years.

A blend of 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot, and 3% Malbec, the 2014 Frederick Red Wine also offers an herbal edge yet has more purity and freshness. Blackcurrants, tobacco leaf, leafy herbs, and damp earthy notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, balanced, thoroughly enjoyable red that will continue drinking nicely for a decade or more. www.springvalleyvineyard.com

WINES OF SUBSTANCE

WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2016 SAUVIGNON BLANC SUNSET VINEYARD ANCIENT LAKES $20 WHITE 92
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 MERLOT NORTHRIDGE VINEYARD WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON STONERIDGE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALLEY NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON JACK'S VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON WAHLUKE SLOPE $17 RED 3

In an attempt to simplify the K Vintners lineup, Charles Smith created the Wines of Substance label in 2017 and moved all of the Bordeaux varieties under this umbrella. As with the K Vintners wines, these are terrific wines that more than deliver at their price point. All of the wines see small batch fermentations, native yeast, aging in barrel, and bottled unfined and unfiltered. The 2016 Sauvignon Blanc Sunset Vineyard is a racy, vibrant, serious Sauvignon Blanc that competes with the top wines out there. Buttered lemon, lime, and leafy green herbs all emerge from this salty, juicy, beautifully balanced effort that has real class.

Mulled spices, ripe black cherries, graphite, and hints of chocolate emerge from the 2015 Merlot Northridge Vineyard. It's medium to full-bodied, pure, elegant and layered, with a seamless texture that continues to gain depth and richness with time in the glass. Brought up in 40% new oak, it's an elegant, gorgeous wine.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Stoneridge Vineyard sports a medium ruby, mostly opaque color to go with classic graphite, dried earth, tobacco leaf and currant fruit. It's full-bodied, silky, pure and polished, with a hint of chocolate and oak on the finish. With a seamless texture, fine tannin and a great, great texture, drink it over the coming 10-15 years.

Coming from mostly 169 and 2 clones of Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Powerline Vineyard offers a deep ruby color as well as complex notes of ripe black cherries, currants, leafy herbs, and tapenade. It's rich, full-bodied, silky, and seamless, with fine, polished tannin and a great finish. Drink this complex, elegant, singular Cabernet over the coming decade or more.

The largest production cuvée, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon was vinified in tank before being pressed to barrel where it went through malo. Aged 13 months in barrels, its vibrant purple color is followed by a terrific bouquet of blueberries, cassis, scorched earth, and spice. Deep, rich, full-bodied, and beautifully balanced, this is the real deal, ladies and gentlemen, and it's a no-brainer purchase. Just pretend you paid three times the price.

WINES OF SUBSTANCE

WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2016 SAUVIGNON BLANC SUNSET VINEYARD ANCIENT LAKES $20 WHITE 92
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 MERLOT NORTHRIDGE VINEYARD WAHLUKE SLOPE NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON STONERIDGE VINEYARD COLUMBIA VALLEY NA RED 94
WINES OF SUBSTANCE 2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON POWERLINE VINEYARD WALLA WALLA VALLEY NA RED 94
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Kirsch, caramelized red and black currants, spice, and cedar pencil notes all emerge from the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Jack's Vineyard. An elegant, pretty, pure expression of the Rocks Terroir, as well as Cabernet Sauvignon, it's going to keep for a decade at least.

The largest production cuvée, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon was vinified in tank before being pressed to barrel where it went through malo. Aged 13 months in barrels, its vibrant purple color is followed by a terrific bouquet of blueberries, cassis, scorched earth, and spice. Deep, rich, full-bodied, and beautifully balanced, this is the real deal, ladies and gentlemen, and it's a no-brainer purchase. Just pretend you paid three times the price.

TAMARACK CELLARS

TAMARACK CELLARS 2012 CIEL DU CHEVAL VINEYARD RESERVE RED MOUNTAIN $50 RED 92
TAMARACK CELLARS 2014 SPICEBOX COLUMBIA VALLEY $30 RED 89
TAMARACK CELLARS 2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLUMBIA VALLEY $36 RED 90
TAMARACK CELLARS 2015 CABERNET FRANC COLUMBIA VALLEY $30 RED 90
TAMARACK CELLARS 2015 MERLOT COLUMBIA VALLEY $28 RED 86
TAMARACK CELLARS 2015 FIREHOUSE RED COLUMBIA VALLEY $18 RED 88

Winemaker Danny Gordon continues to release a solid lineup of both quality and value.

The 2012 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Reserve is a big, ripe, sexy blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Merlot. Chocolate, plum, mocha, and some oaky notes all emerge from this beauty, which has serious ripeness (a touch over-ripe), sweet tannin, and huge amounts of charm. Drink it over the coming decade.

A blend of 52% Grenache, 31% Mourvèdre, and 17% Counoise the 2014 Spicebox is a terrific little gem of a wine that gives up tons of pleasure. Black cherries, spice box, dried herbs, and cedary spice notes all emerge from this plum, medium-bodied, rounded effort that has sweet tannin and a clean finish to the coming decade.

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon is a deeply colored effort that has an upfront, voluptuous style in its blackcurrant and plum fruits, spice, and chocolate aromas and flavors. With medium to full-bodied richness, ripe tannin, and a ready to go style, it's another high-quality wine from this estate to drink over the coming 5-7 years.

A 100% varietal wine, the 2015 Cabernet Franc has a slightly brooding, backward style on the nose, yet picks up plenty of fruit and richness on the palate. With currants, spice-box and chocolate aromas and flavors, medium to full-bodied richness, sweet tannin, and an undeniably delicious style, it’s a charmer that’s going to dish out ample pleasure over the coming 4-6 years.

Graphite, cedarwood, black cherry, and hints of charred vanilla oak all emerge from the 2015 Merlot, which is ripe, sweetly fruited and balanced. Drink it over the coming 2-3 years.

The 2015 Firehouse Red is a plum, delicious red that sells for a song. Currants, chocolate, leafy herbs and a hint of vanilla all emerge from this medium-bodied, rounded, pleasure-bent beauty that's ideal for drinking over the coming 2-4 years. www.tamarackcellars.com

TEMPORAL VINTNERS

TEMPORAL VINTNERS 2015 TEMPRANILLO TEMPORAL WASHINGTON NA RED 87

While a far cry from the terrific 2014 (which I rated 93 points), the 2015 Tempranillo Temporal (100% Tempranillo) is still enjoyable and offers moderate depth and richness in its light cherry, dried herbs, cedar, and spice aromas and flavors. Nicely balanced, medium-bodied, and with a good, a bit short finish, it's best enjoyed over the coming 3-4 years.

TEMPORAL VINTNERS

TEMPORAL VINTNERS 2015 TEMPRANILLO TEMPORAL WASHINGTON NA RED 87

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TENET WINES

TENET WINES 2015 TENET GSM COLUMBIA VALLEY $70 RED 94
TENET WINES 2015 SYRAH THE PUNDIT COLUMBIA VALLEY $25 RED 91

Created in 2013, Tenet Wines is a collaboration between Chateau Ste. Michelle’s head winemaker Bob Bertholet and the Rhône Valley’s Michel Gassier and Philippe Cambie. There are three wines under this label: the flagship Tenet GSM blend and The Pundit Syrah, both from the Columbia Valley in Washington, and Fervent Syrah which comes from Michel Gassier’s Costières de Nîmes estate in the Southern Rhône.

Showing similar to last year, the 2015 Tenet GSM is a terrific blend of 40% Grenache, 38% Mourvèdre, and 22% Syrah that saw one-third stems
and 13 months in larger oak. Black raspberries, blackberries, tobacco, and licorice notes all emerge from this full-bodied, supple, gorgeously layered GSM blend that has sweet tannin and a great mid-palate.

Checking in as a blend of 69% Syrah, 5% Grenache, 4% Mourvèdre, and 2% Viognier (co-fermented with Syrah), the 2015 Syrah The Pundit spent 13 months in a mix of French and American oak. Its deep purple color is followed by terrific Syrah notes of blackberries, black olive tapenade, lavender, and pepper. It’s medium to full-bodied, plump, layered and rounded, with terrific fruit length and weight. Drink it over the coming 4-5 years. www.tenetwines.com

### TENOR WINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENOR WINES</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>CHARDONNAY</th>
<th>COLUMBIA VALLEY</th>
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<td>COLUMBIA VALLEY</td>
<td>$58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The 2015 Chardonnay from Tenor comes all from the Columbia Valley and was brought up in new French oak. Sautéed citrus, caramelized apple, and brioche notes flow to a medium-bodied, rich, toasty Chardonnay that has rock-solid mid-palate grip and elegance. It’s incredibly high quality and I suspect capable of lasting for a decade or more.

The 2016 Sauvignon Blanc from Tenor sports a vibrant pale gold color to go with notes of lime, citrus blossom, and subtle minerality. Very clean, pure, and elegant, with a hint of grassiness, it’s a beautiful white from this estate and I suspect the best I’ve tasted.

The 2015 Malbec (100% Malbec aged 20 months in new French oak) offers that classic inky, almost blue color that’s so common from the Malbecs in Washington. Notes of blueberries, pen ink, violets, and incense all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, layered, elegant red that has a seamless, silky texture. It’s a high-quality Grenache from Tenor and spent 18 months in 60% new French oak. Sautéed citrus, caramelized apple, and brioche notes all give way to a medium to full-bodied, pure, elegant white that offers serious bang for the buck.

### THE ROYAL BULL

**THE ROYAL BULL 2015 THE ROYAL BULL($#!+)**

Made by Aryn Morell and checking in as a blend of equal parts Tempranillo and Grenache, the aggressively priced 2015 The Royal Bull($#!+) was aged in 50% new French oak. It offers lots of vanilla oak intermixed with notions of black cherries, cedary spice, dried herbs, and earth. Rich, medium to full-bodied, and elegant on the palate, it stays light and elegant, with silky tannin and no hard edges. It should drink nicely for 10-12 years. www.theroya.com

### THE WALLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE WALLS</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>CABERNET SAUVIGNON CURIOSITAS</th>
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<td>THE RAMPARTS</td>
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<td>THE WALLS</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>THE WALLS</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>STANLEY GROOVY</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE WALLS</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>CONCRETE MAMA</td>
<td>WALLA WALLA VALLEY</td>
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<td>RED</td>
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<td>THE WALLS</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>CONCRETE MAMA</td>
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</table>

Black cherries, violets, spring flowers, and hints of blueberries emerge from the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Curiositas, which is medium-bodied, juicy, forward, and easygoing. This cuvée comes all from the Obelisco Vineyard on Red Mountain and spent 18 months in 60% new French oak. The 2015 The Ramparts from The Walls winery checks in as a mix of 52% Grenache, 32%Mourvèdre, 13% Counoise, and 3% Syrah brought up mostly in neutral oak. Kirsch, black cherries, dried flowers, and incense notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, layered, elegant red that has a seamless, silky texture. It’s a high-quality Grenache from Washington that will drink nicely for 4-6 years.

The 2015 Concrete Mama is a Syrah-dominated cuvée that includes 9% Grenache, aged 12 months in concrete tanks before being moved to 42% new oak barrels. Its deep ruby/plum color is followed by a rich, savory bouquet of currants, olip tapenade, pepper, and tobacco leaf. Rich, opulent and expansive on the palate, with a beautiful texture, it has loads of classic Rocks funk and will keep for 8-10 years.

Coming all from Red Mountain and an interesting blend of 55% Touriga Nacional, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13%Sauvignon, 9% Tinta Cao, and the rest Tempranillo, the 2015 Stanley Groovy sports a vibrant, inky color to go with interesting notes of plums, ripe cherries, leafy herbs, incense, and graphite. With surprising elegance, medium to full-bodied richness, and nicely integrated acidity, drink this impeccably balanced, high-quality red anytime over the coming 7-8 years.

Tasted as a barrel sample, the 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Curiositas is 100% varietal that’s all from the Obelisco Vineyard on Red Mountain. Deep purple-colored with lots of blueberries, leafy herbs, graphite, and hints of minerality, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a plump, rounded, supple style, no hard edges, and beautiful purity. It’s a step up over the 2015 and should drink nicely right out of the gate.

Checking in as a blend of 92% Grenache and 8% Syrah, the medium ruby/semi-opaque colored 2016 Concrete Mama is a ripely, sexy, exuberant Grenache that does everything right. Kirsch, dried spice, underbrush, and floral notes all emerge from this medium to full-bodied, supple, impressively textured beauty that has no hard edges. It’s going to drink nicely right out of the gate yet keep for 7-10 years.

Made from 100% Syrah, the 2014 Concrete Mama offers a rich, smoky, savory style in its blackcurrants, peanut, smoked herbs, chocolate, and tobacco leaf aromas and flavors. With medium to full-bodied richness, a supple, expansive texture, and decent mid-palate depth, it should drink nicely for 7-8 years. www.thewallsyr.com

### TRANCHE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANCHE</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>TRANCHE PAPE BLANC BLUE MOUNTAIN VINEYARD</th>
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<td>92</td>
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A blend of 29% Viognier, 22% Roussanne, 16% Grenache Blanc, 15% Marsanne, 10% Clairette Blanche, and 8% Picpoul Blanc, the 2015 Tranche Pape Blanc Blue Mountain Vineyard is a smoking white that will compete with any number of Châteauneuf du Pape Blancs! Ripe peach, pineapple, quince, brioche and toasted bread notes all give way to a Sauvignon, pure, elegant white that offers serious bang for the buck.
L ke everything at Tranche, the 2015 Chardonnay Celilo Vineyard is impeccably made. Clean stone fruits, apple blossom, white flowers and hints of spice all emerge from the glass, and it's medium to full-bodied, pure, elegant and seamless, with beautifully integrated acidity. This terrific white can be enjoyed today or cellar for 4-6 years.

The 2015 Cabernet Franc Blue Mountain Vineyard from Tranche comes from a site on the northern edge of Walla Walla and was aged 22 months in neutral French oak. It's a beautiful wine that has lots of Franc character in its dark cherry and currant fruits, damp earth, chocolate, and moderate herbal bouquet. This comes to a medium to full-bodied, balanced, lively red that has impeccable balance and a clean finish. It's going to drink nicely for over a decade.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Blue Mountain Vineyard was also brought up in neutral oak. It has classic characteristics of blackcurrants, tobacco leaf, chocolate, and earth. With full-bodied richness, a rounded, mouthfilling texture, and sweet tannin, it's another big, rich wine from Tranche that stays balanced, drinkable, and thoroughly enjoyable.

The 2015 Tranche Pape Columbia Valley checks in as a blend of 36% Grenache, 34% Mourvédre and the rest Syrah. It's a black-fruited, smoky, earthy style in its blackcurrant and currants fruits and is medium to full-bodied, rich, and mouthfilling. Showing more pepper and leafy herbs with time in the glass, it has solid depth of fruit and a silky texture and will keep for 7-8 years.

The 2015 Syrah Blue Mountain Vineyard was also fermented in concrete and stainless steel and was aged 22 months in neutral French oak. It offers terrific notes of black raspberries, crème de cassis, vanilla bean, and spice in a full-bodied, ultra-pure, seamless, creamy, modern style. Drink it over the coming 7-8 years. www.tranche.wine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TWO VINTNERS</th>
<th>2014 MERLOT</th>
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<td>TWO VINTNERS</td>
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<td>TWO VINTNERS</td>
<td>2015 SYRAH SOME DAYS ARE DIAMONDS</td>
<td>HORSE HEAVEN HILLS</td>
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<td>TWO VINTNERS</td>
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<td>TWO VINTNERS</td>
<td>2015 ZINFANDEL</td>
<td>WAHLUKE SLOPE</td>
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These Two Vintners wines, made by Morgan Lee, continue to knock it out of the park. These are ripe, opulent, sexy wines that deliver tons of fruit, yet stays balanced and light on the palate. Count me in as a fan. The 2014 Merlot, which includes 5% of each Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, sports a deep ruby/purple color as well as a great bouquet of plums, black cherries, tobacco, and graphite. This full-bodied, spicy, opulent, sexy beauty has no hard edges, a mouthfilling texture and a great finish. It's no lightweight (13.2% alcohol) but is beautifully balanced, supple, and just impossible to resist. Drink it over the coming 5-6 years.

The 2015 Sal from Two Vintners checks in as a blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc 5% Petit Verdot that's all from May's Discovery Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills. Aged 22 months in 90% new French oak, it has a decidedly spicy, perfumed, sexy personality and gives up loads of plum, mulled cherries, spice box, and incense aromas and flavors. As with all the releases here, it's a big, rich, opulent wine that still stays balanced and light on the palate, and is a joy to drink.

The Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated 2015 Legit is a slightly larger production cuvée (350 cases) that spent 22 months in 75% new French oak. This inky colored effort is another pedal-to-the-metal, pleasure-bent beauty boasting knockout notes of blueberries, spiced plums, licorice, and leafy herbs. Rich, full-bodied, super intense and layered, yet also balanced, drink it anytime over the coming 7-8 years.

Made from 100% Grenache brought up all in neutral oak, the 2015 Grenache Claire sports a translucent medium ruby color as well as terrific notes of black cherry and kirsch liqueur, ground pepper, and herbes de Provence. With a hint of olive tapenade, medium to full-bodied richness, and a silky, elegant texture, it's another rocking wine from this team. A variety you don't see stand on its own very often, the 2015 Cinsault Make Haste sports a medium ruby/plum color as well as attractive notes of black cherries, raspberries, dried flowers, and savory earth. This beauty has tons of character, medium-bodied richness, and a charming, sweetly fruited, unique style. Drink it over the coming couple of years.

The 2015 Syrah Columbia Valley (100% Syrah aged 18 months in neutral oak) sports to dead on with a ripe, healthy hedonistic bouquet of plums, ground pepper, and black olives. This rich, opulent, pleasure-bent beauty delivers the goods and is perfect for near-term drinking.

From the Stoney Vine Vineyard in Walla Walla, the 2015 Syrah Some Days Are Stones is a bigger, richer wine. Opaque purple-colored and loaded with notions of black pepper, charred meat, chocolate, and black olive, it's powerful, concentrated, and rich on the palate, without ever being heavy or over the top. It's another pleasure-bent beauty that offers serious flavor authority. Drink it over the coming 7-8 years.

Coming from the Discovery Vineyard in the cooler Horse Heaven Hills AVA, the 2015 Syrah Some Days Are Diamonds offers more purity and elegance, with notes of black raspberries, cassis, crushed flowers, violet. This full-bodied, elegant, seamless beauty has nicely integrated acidity, a pure, clean texture, and a great finish. It's going to drink nicely for 7-8 years as well.

The Syrah/Cab blend of the estate is the 2015 Lola, a 60/40 Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon blend that spent 18 months in neutral barrels. Sporting a vibrant purple color as well as rocking notes of crème de cassis, blackberries, graphite, and lead pencil, it hits the palate with full-bodied richness, a rich, elegant texture, and fine, polished tannin. It's a gorgeous wine.

Lastly, the 2015 Zinfandel is another big, rich, incredibly sexy, pleasure-bent effort from this team. Blueberries, blackberry liqueur, and crème de cassis notes all give way to a full-bodied, spicy, sweeley fruit Zinfandel that's just about over the top, but isn’t. Drink it over the coming 4-5 years. www.twovintners.com

<table>
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<tr>
<th>UPCHURCH</th>
<th>2016 COUNTERPART</th>
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Chris Upchurch releases his own wine under his Upchurch label which is sourced exclusively from his estate vineyard on Red Mountain.

Coming from the estate's 2 acres of Merlot (two-thirds Merlot and one-third Cabernet Sauvignon), the 2016 Counterpart has plenty of black cherry and currant fruits, medium to full-bodied richness, notes of graphite and lead pencil, and a clean, classy style. It's certainly going to be an outstanding wine.

The 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon is even better and is a smoking effort. Crème de cassis, graphite, liquid violets, and exotic spice notes all flow to a full-bodied, concentrated, fresh, focused style. With building tannin yet beautiful length, it's going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age and keep for over a decade.

Showing consistently from barrel, the 2015 Counterpart is a new cuvée from Upchurch that's made from 65% Merlot and 35% Cabernet Sauvignon that's all from the estate vineyard on Red Mountain. It has a classic bouquet of black cherries, plums, chocolate, sage, and spice. This flows to a medium to full-bodied, tight, structured red that benefits from plenty of air if drinking anytime soon. It won’t hit prime time for at least another 4-5 years, at which point it should drink nicely for 10-15.

The top cuvée is the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, which comes from a tiny parcel at the southern end of Red Mountain. It's a classic expression of this terroir and offers lots of red and black currant fruit, dried earth, graphite, and leafy herbs aromas and flavors. Like the Counterpart cuvée, it's tight and structured, with good acidity, and short-term cellaring is going to be your friend. If the two previous votes are any indication, this one is going to have 2-3 decades of overall longevity. upchurchvineyard.com
Checking in as a blend of 85% Grenache and 15% Mourvèdre that was only partially destemmed and brought up in neutral barrels, the medium ruby-colored 2016 Grenache The Gold Drop offers a perfumed nose of plums, ripe cherries, savory spice, and underbrush. With polished tannins, it has medium-bodied richness, plenty of texture, and a good finish, all making for an enjoyable, high-quality Grenache that will keep for 5-7 years.

### VA PIANO VINEYARDS

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<td>Wahtuke Slope</td>
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<td>$95</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Cabernet Sauvignon Dubrul Vineyard</td>
<td>Yakima Valley</td>
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This is another terrific lineup from winemaker Justin Wylie, who sources grapes from numerous Washington State AVAs.
The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosebud comes from the Wahtuke Slope and is 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% each of Merlot and Cabernet Franc, brought up in 60% new French oak. It reveals a saturated purple color as well as a backward yet impressive bouquet of crème de cassis, blueberries, crushed violets, grapefruit, and toasted spice. With full-bodied richness, a light, elegant texture, and beautiful purity, it’s a gorgeous, seamless Cabernet Sauvignon that’s going to benefit from short-term cellaring and will shine for 15+ years.

Even inkier colored, with 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon DuBrul Vineyard comes from a great site on the northern edge of the Yakima Valley. It offers a masculine, dark, meaty (almost bloody) bouquet of smoked currents and black cherries, tobacco leaf, truffle, and charcoal. This gives way to a concentrated, powerful, yet balanced Cabernet Sauvignon that has integrated acidity, fine tannin, and a great finish. It’s certainly an outstanding wine and is going to benefit from short-term cellaring and keep for 10-15 years.

The classic 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley (100% Cabernet Sauvignon) is beautiful, offering perfumed blue fruits, tobacco, graphite, and hints of flowers in its medium to full-bodied, silky style. I love its balance, it doesn’t hit you over the head with fruit, and is a joy to drink. This cuvée spent 22 months in 65% new French oak and there are 500 cases made.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain includes 9% Merlot and 1% Petit Verdot, and spent 22 months in 65% new French oak. Another inky colored wine, it offers classic Red Mountain minerality as well as terrific notes of toasted spice, currants, and scorched earth. Layered, medium to full-bodied, concentrated, and balanced, it’s going to cruise in the cellar for 15+ years.

### WALLA WALLA VINTNERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>$42</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Bello Rosso</td>
<td>Columbia Vly.</td>
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<td>$42</td>
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A blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, and 4% Petit Verdot that spent 27 months in barrel (63% new), the 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Cut Bank Estate gives up a terrific bouquet of ripe blackberries, plums, violets, spring flowers and chocolatey oak. Deep, rich, full-bodied and concentrated, with sweet tannin, it’s a hedonistic, layered, ripe beauty to enjoy over the coming decade or more.

The 2014 Syrah Estate (100% Syrah) from Walla Walla Vintners has a ripe, lifted, sexy personality. Plums, candied violets, lavender, and exotic spice notes all give way to a full-bodied, up-front, in-your-face beauty that has excellent purity and balance. There are 216 cases.

The 2014 Cabernet Franc Waliser Vineyard is sold and well worth checking out. Aged 19 months in 20% new French oak, it offers classic notes of red and black currants, dried herbs/earth, and spice in its medium to full-bodied, balanced, enjoyable style. It’s going to keep for 10-12 years.

Inky-colored (which is expected from this variety) the 2014 Petit Verdot (100% varietal) is a serious steakhouse red that gives up lots of black and blue fruits, violets, and graphite aromatics. This full-bodied, rich, yet fresh and focused effort has excellent purity, fine tannin, and a good finish. It’s surprisingly elegant for the variety and is going to keep for a decade.

Toasted spice, dried herbs, chocolate and savory black cherry fruit all emerge from the 2014 Bello Rosso, which is a Super Tuscan-styled blend of 50% Sangiovese and 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. This medium-bodied, ripe, textured effort is up-front and ready to go, and I suspect best enjoyed over the coming 3-4 years.

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley is a blend of 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petit Verdot that spent 19 months in 54% new French (and some American) oak. It’s an exotic, perfumed red offering notes of blueberries, peach pit, tobacco, and earth. With loads of fruit, full body, sweet tannin, and a forward, undeniably delicious style, drink this sexy little fruit bomb over the coming 7-8 years. www.vapianovineyards.com

### WOODWARD CANYON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Price</th>
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These wines are made by Kevin Mott and this is a classic Washington estate making seriously good Bordeaux blends.

The base 2015 Chardonnay offers classic notes of sautéed apple, brioche, white flowers, and spice. It’s fresh, clean, pure, and just impeccably made. It’s a great example of Washington State Chardonnay, of which there are far too few.

Woodward Canyon made a beautiful 2015 Chardonnay Celilo Vineyard which comes from the cooler, windy Columbia Gorge AVA and was brought up in 75% new French oak. Like all the wines here, it’s ink colored. Exhibiting a great bouquet of fresh blueberries, leafy herbs, violets, and wet stone, with subtle background oak, this beauty is full-bodied, wonderfully pure, layered, and textured. It’s one of the standouts in the lineup.

The gem in the lineup is the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Old Vines, undeniably the most classic and age-worthy in the lineup. Blackcurrants, charcoal, graphite, and chocolate notes, as well as ample minerality, all emerge from this full-bodied, rich, concentrated effort. It needs 2-4 years of bottle age but is a beautiful wine with a long life ahead of it. www.woodwardcanyon.com