

# Compass Wines

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## Cellar Notes January 2012

Welcome to a new year and a big 'Thank You!' to everybody for a great 2011! This is our annual, and more subjective than normal issue proclaiming our favorite Washington wines of 2011. With over 750 wineries in the state now, whittling the list down to 10 reds and 5 whites plus a 'wine of the year' is getting harder all the time. With all the buzz in the wine world about hanky-panky in the reviewing scheme of things, we do need to set some parameters here. Ground rules are simple; only one wine per winery will make the list, none of our own brands are included and the two 'hall of fame' wineries (Leonetti and Quilceda Creek) are grandfathered into the program without saying.

Now for the fine print. This is a totally biased and extremely prejudicial process, as is all artistic, olfactory and gustatory judging, but the following **ABSOLUTELY NEVER** took place! Being paid to visit wineries or taste specific wines, being provided with illegal drugs or scantily clad 'escorts' or partaking in acts with wineries that could be described as debaucherous, inappropriate or ammo for a reality show. The following **MAY** have taken place. Bumping into Mark McNeilly at the taco truck in Ellensburg (but I swear, we went Dutch, honest!), Chris Figgins may have paid for a Bud Light or two in Walla Walla, but I can't remember, Roger Cockerline did buy us breakfast at Tommy's once or twice, a distributor did possibly bring us a slice of pizza after leaving an event that we couldn't attend, a rep could possibly have stopped at the Donut House on the way here before tasting us on Rieslings, Michael Haig might have sent us some Halloween candy, but I will deny which was my favorite, and I may have used the restroom at Rulo, Walla Walla Vintners, Sheridan, Stevens, Chinook, Ste. Michelle and others. If you find that this may taint my judgment, then so be it. This whole industry is based entirely on opinions and sensory mumbo jumbo, so all of us are biased and opinionated by definition, so read into this what you may.

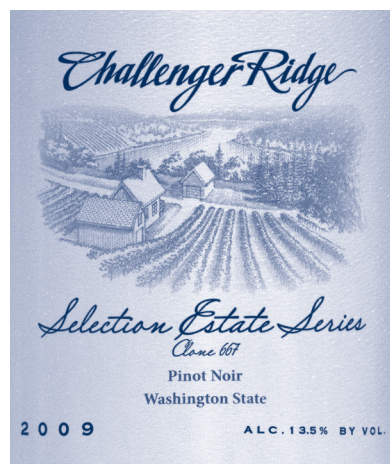
This list is our picks for the top wines that we felt made the most significant impact on our business over the course of the year. Some were big sellers, some were not. Some were 'groundbreaking' some were not. Some were expensive, some were cheap. But all of them had what we felt to be significance to the holistic nature of the industry and will probably each have a positive impact on how life is looked at on earth, or we may have just liked the way it tasted and enjoyed taking them home. Either way you look at it, these are the Washington wines that were talked about, ordered, purchased or frankly just enjoyed by the staff.

### Washington Wine of the Year

Challenger Ridge

Clone 667 Selection Estate Series

Pinot Noir 2009 \$38.99

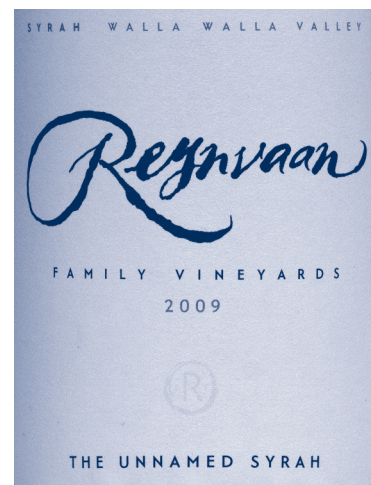


If one bottle caused us to take pause and reflect about the possibly momentous repercussions that may come as a result of a single wine, this was it. If this is what can be achieved from Western Washington Pinot Noir, then the whole industry may be looking at us in a new light very soon. Bravo!

### Washington Winery of the Year

Reynvaan Family Vineyard

A complete knockout of a lineup from front to back with every wine in the portfolio being good enough to be on our 'Top 10' list. When someone asks for a spectacular example of Washington Syrah, we tend to grab one of these, so that pretty much defines how fantastic these Syrahs are.



# Washington Top 10 Red Wines

## Top 10 Red Wines of the Year in alphabetical order

### Andrew Will Sorella 2008 \$94.99

Chris and Dave keep getting stronger and stronger from year to year and with the plush 2008 vintage, the Sorella is the king of their heap. Cocoa, black raspberry and that classic Champoux structure really struts here. The best wine they have ever made?

### Betz Beausoleil 2009 sold out

While most often Bob Betz is featured for his staggering Cabernets and supple Syrahs, this time it is his Grenache that steals the show. Hard to keep alive in this climate, Grenache really shines here in the hands of a master. Bravo to Bob and the family for this one!

### Figgins Estate Red Wine 2008 \$94.99

I almost feel guilty putting this on the list, but this really is a completely different wine, from a different vineyard and made in a different facility than Leonetti, so it meets all of our criteria. The press obviously thinks so as well with monster scores from everybody. An instant cult wine is born!

### Gorman Albatross 2008 \$81.99

Chris Gorman gets all sorts of kudos for his bad boy, Evil Twin, but this time his Cab gets the nod from us. Full throttle Washington Cabernet in all of its inky goodness. Power, massive structure, black fruits and espresso. This one would benefit from some alone time in the basement as well.

### Mark Ryan Lost Soul Syrah 2009 \$48.99

Mark's wines have always had power and structure, but with the new horse in the stable, game, funk and scorched earth have been added. Wild Eyed is the more famous of the two Syrahs that he makes, but it is tame by comparison to this animal. Call the Wild Eyed 'Jane' to the 'Tarzan' that resides here.

### Nota Bene Mourvedre 2008 \$28.99

Tim Narby has come out swinging with his new 2008 lineup and after the dust cleared, this uber limited production (25 cases) gem came out on top. Get it while you can. We don't see many Mourvedres produced in this state and with quality like this staring to appear, we can certainly expect more.

### Pondera Malbec 2008 \$38.99

Pondera is one of those great wineries that never seems to get any buzz. This fantastic Malbec has been hard to keep in stock and combined with his also awesome Chardonnay that could also have made this list; he really came out with a killer lineup this year. Watch out for these guys, they are on fire.

### Reynvaan The Unnamed Syrah 2009 \$55.99

As seen on the front of this newsletter, this winery is hitting on all cylinders. All four of the Syrahs they make could have made this list, so we chose our personal favorite. Crazy and wild, with smoked game, herb, lanolin and toast. Imagine a wet sheep standing too close to a campfire and you get the idea here.

### Sheridan Block 1 Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 \$115.99

Let's see here: ultra-rare juice from a very distinct vineyard, from a guy who harvests by taste, not numbers and a Parker score of '98'. What is there not to like here? If you had to pick one distinctive and radically different Cab in Washington, this is it.

### Stevens Timely Malbec 2009 \$30.99

Another ultra-limited production wine, and yet another Malbec. Does that give you any indication of how much we like what we see about this varietal in Washington? Classic milk chocolate bon-bon notes with vanilla and candied cherries. If any Malbec could be defined and elegant, this is it.

### Whitestone Cabernet Franc 2008 \$27.99

Michael Haig is now starting to get some big time national press and we have mixed feeling about it. Will there be enough wine for us with all these '92's and '93's rolling around? Most famous for his rock solid blend; Pieces of Red, this year it is his Cab Franc that takes the prize. Candy, strawberry and wheat toast.

All wines subject to prior sale.

### Reuse that heavy duty Compass Wines Bag!

Those extra heavy duty bags that we use are made out of recycled milk jugs, so in keeping with the spirit of reuse-recycle etc. we will now be giving a \$.10 credit back to you every time you reuse your old bag in the shop. Reuse your old bag, and we will give you credit back on your purchase that day. Just our way of saying 'thanks for the loyalty, and save a milk jug!'

# Top 5 Whites

## Top 5 White Wines of the Year in alphabetical order

### Chateau Ste Michelle Harvest Select Riesling 2010 \$7.99

Um, yes you read that correctly. When judging at the Wine Press Northwest Platinum Awards judging, I got on my soapbox for this stunning example of Washington Riesling. About 5% residual, it is an explosion of peaches, apricots and fresh pineapple. A staggering value from the big boys.

### Hard Road to Hoe Ice Breaker Apple Ice Wine \$40.99

There were originally 3 apple wines on my list to pare from, and any of them could have made the cut, but the fabulous intensity and piercing acid finish of this is hard to pass on. Imagine a Granny Smith extract right out of the icebox, with a squeeze of Meyer lemon and you get the picture.

### Pomum Idilico Albarino 2010 sold out

All I can say is WOW for the potential for this grape in Washington if this wine is a foreshadow of what is to come. Bracing acidity, with lime zest, kumquat and Texas Ruby grapefruit. My mouth is watering just thinking about it. I only wish we had more of it.

### Rotie Southern White 2010 \$28.99

We see many a Viognier in this state and more white Rhone blends every day, but we have never seen one quite like this. Explosive notes of honeysuckle, fresh roses and jasmine. Fabulous aromatics and just a kiss of sweetness. A fantastic benchmark for white Rhone blends in Washington.

### Woodinville Wine Cellars Sauvignon Blanc 2010 \$17.99

For the first time, both 'Sean Boyd's are on this list, and both for white wines. The other guy nailed the white Rhone and this one slayed Sauvignon Blanc. His reds get most of the credit, but his SB is year in and year out the one we got back to time and time again. Oysters anyone?

## Our annual 'I just fried my credit card' value pick for the New Year

### Chevalier Du Moulin Bordeaux 2009 \$8.99

This issue of the newsletter is all about Washington, except this phenomenal value. In the last few years, Bordeaux has been blessed with some of the greatest vintages in history, with pricing to match. Big press plus soft U.S. Dollar value vs. the Euro equal's expensive wine. However, not all is lost. 2009 is being bantered about as one of the greatest vintages ever so that means that even the lesser appellations in the region had the potential for great fruit. That theory is showcased here. Bright berry and, crisp acids and gentle tannins all for a daily drinker price and it actually tastes French!

# Wine Clubs

## Welcome to the world of wine clubs.

We have several different clubs for all your hassle free wine buying. We will select your wines and either ship them to you, put them in your locker, or have them ready for pickup at the store. And best of all, by being a club member, all featured wines come to you at a minimum of 10% off our everyday price.

### The New Washington 'Hot List' Wine Club

Our new Washington 'hot list' wine club will provide the lucky recipient with two bottles of wine per month, of the newest, hottest and tiniest production wines in the state. We are lucky to be in a position to taste and actually have the opportunity to buy many of the ultra limited production wines made out there that often are only available at the winery (or through us). In many cases, we are talking about production levels in the range of less than 50 cases total. The price will vary each month, with the average bottle being in the \$30-\$40 range, and always discounted well below our usual price. If you want the newest and the hottest properties, and those hyper limited production wines that others just dream about, then this club is for you.

### Washington Wine of the Month Club

One, or one each red and white, Washington wine each month.

\$14.99 for one bottle, \$28.99 for one each red and white

### World Club

6 bottles of great value wines from around the world \$75.00/month

### Washington Club

6 bottles of the finest Washington has to offer \$150.00/month

### Unlimited Club

You decide what you want, or let us decide! Do you want Grand Cru Burgundy, First Growth Bordeaux, or California Cult wines? Give us a budget, and let us do the rest. Some restrictions apply. Mkt/month

### Rare Washington Club

Sold Out

### Washington's New Classics Wine Club

With the 'Rare Washington Wine Club' all filled up now, we continue to be bombarded with calls for a new club, loaded with a bunch of the new wine stars in the state. We will set aside any amount you would like of each of the following wines upon release.

We bill your credit card as the wine arrives, and either ship the wine, or keep it in the store for pickup. All of these wines are released periodically throughout the year, but we will not hit you with more than two in a given month.

You will get the following wines: OS BSH, Cadence, Fidelitas Optu, Sheridan L'Orage, Five Star Cabernet Sauvignon, Mark Ryan Dead Horse, Rulo Syrah, Gorman Evil Twin, JM Tre Fancuili, Woodinville Wine Cellars Indomitable, Boudreaux Merlot, Bergevin Lane Intuition.

Mkt/month

# Upcoming Events

## Our annual Junk Food and Fine Wine Tailgate Party and Wine Tasting Party Friday, February 3 / 6:00-8:00

This one sells out every year for good reason. Killer wines, really crappy foods that we all eat but don't want to admit. In the past, some of the favorite pairings have been 1975 Rieussec with McDonalds Apple Pies, Bollinger Champagne with Twinkies and Leonetti Cab with Taco Bell beefy tacos. What will this year bring? Usually we have about 8 pairings, but you have to show up to find out what the menu will be. Reservations required and this one does have a fee to pay for all the food. \$30 per person

## Tuscan Wine and Food Fest! Saturday, February 11 / 1:00-5:00

Nardone Italian Imports and the winemakers from two fantastic properties in Tuscany will be here with a great selection of wines and delicious Italian foods. The winemakers from **Bibbiano**, in Chianti and **Il Conventino** from Montepulciano will both be pouring their classic wines and Giovanni Nardone will bring his scrumptious cheeses, pastas, sauces and the like, all of which is perfectly matched to these wines. As usual, this is a free event.

## Western Washington and Puget Sound appellation tasting

Saturday, March 17 / 1:00-5:00

Come try a selection of some of the fantastic wines that are now being grown on the West side of the state, including our 'Wine of the Year'. A great opportunity to taste some of what is being farmed right here, in our own backyard. This event is free, of course!

### Challenger Ridge Vineyard

Pinot Noirs Skagit Valley

### Mt Baker Vineyards

Pinot Gris and Chasselas Nooksack Valley

### Lopez Island Winery

Siegerrebe San Juan County

### Whidbey Island Winery

Madeline Angevine Island County

### Hollywood Hill Vineyard

Pinot Noir Woodinville

Regent Stretch Island

### Perennial Vintners

Melon de Bourgogne and Muller Thurgau

Bainbridge Island

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Contact us 360.293.6500  
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Store Hours  
Monday - Thursday 10 - 6  
Friday 10 - 7  
Saturday 9 - 6  
Sunday 11 - 5

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