

# Uncorked

Volume 6, Issue 1 • Winter 1999

## Mark Your Calendar!

After the rush of the holidays, it's time to relax a little and take the time to explore Washington's Wine Country. Our annual "Winter White Sale" January 15-31 features great prices on white wines, but there are lots of other reasons to visit our winery in Sunnyside. Here are three:

January 16

### Best of the '90s

Enjoy a special pouring of selected Washington Hills, W.B. Bridgman and Apex wines that won awards in 1998. They'll be served with complementary appetizers during a noon-5:30 p.m. "happy hour" that features live music. Charge: \$5 per person (free for case buyers).

February 13-15

### A Celebration of Red Wine & Chocolate

We're featuring our fabulous Apex Cabernet Chocolate Sauce during this Valley-wide celebration. Try a sample with one of our wonderful reds. 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. both days. (See page 4 of this issue for more about the sauce).



March 13-21

### The Wearin' (& Savin') of the Green

We'll be celebrating St. Patrick's Day all week long with specials throughout the winery's gift shop and retail store (look for the green tag for special savings on gifts, clothes, food & wines). A tip: pick up some W.B. Bridgman Syrah to enjoy with a dinner of corned beef & cabbage!

<http://www.washingtonhills.com>

If you are one of the estimated 75 million Americans who "surf the net" regularly, there's at least one more website you really ought to visit: [www.washingtonhills.com](http://www.washingtonhills.com). It's an all-new, ever-expanding source of useful information about our wines, our winery, our people and our history.

Washington Hills actually was one of the first wineries in the nation to establish a website. CEO Harry Alhadeff was aware that the Internet had tremendous potential for building awareness and for marketing products, and he wanted to make sure the company was on the leading edge. Work on the original version got underway in 1996, and the site went "live" in early 1997. But things move fast in cyberspace, and by 1998 we figured it was time for a remodel.

"Remodeling" a home page is not unlike remodeling a home: it's never as simple, as fast or as inexpensive as you expect it to be. After several months of grueling labor, though, the "new" site replaced the old one in the fourth quarter of 1998. While we tried to retain the overall look, there are lots of new "bells and whistles."

You'll find winemaker notes for virtually all the wines we are producing, and for a lot of library wines as well. From a particular wine's page, you can jump to all the awards that wine has received as well as see reviews that wine writers have given it. Another link sends you to a page that will help you find where the wine is sold in your area or tell you how to order it from the winery.

We've also created a section for past and current issues of "Uncorked," and for press releases, newspaper clippings and magazine articles. Read them on the screen or print them out for use later.

Under "Winery," you'll find a schedule of events for 1999, with up-to-date information about visiting performers, event pricing, etc. The rest of the "Winery" section is under construction, but when it is ready for viewing in February, it will provide detail about what happens in the winery, have a section about the retail wine store and gift shop (including a way to order merchandise), and offer historic information about the winery building based on first-hand accounts from "pioneers" in the Sunnyside area.

In putting together the new website, we made a concerted effort to make it as "user friendly" as possible. We're interested in two-way communication, so you'll find plenty of opportunity in the "Contact Us" section to let us know what you think of our site and our wines. Comment on just about anything, and we'll respond quickly by e-mail.

## The Winners Circle

As 1998 wound down, fewer wine competitions were held, resulting in fewer awards given. Nevertheless, our Apex, W.B. Bridgman and Washington Hills wines received several important honors during the final quarter of the year. Here are a few of them:

### Apex

- 1994 Cabernet Sauvignon  
GOLD MEDAL  
1998 World Wine Championships
- 1996 Chardonnay  
SILVER MEDAL  
1998 World Wine Championships
- 1996 Merlot  
GOLD MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival
- 1996 Pinot Noir  
SILVER MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival

### W.B. Bridgman

- 1995 Cabernet Franc  
SILVER MEDAL  
1998 World Wine Championships
- 1995 Cabernet Sauvignon  
SILVER MEDAL  
1998 World Wine Championships
- 1996 Cabernet Sauvignon  
SILVER MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival
- 1996 Merlot  
BRONZE MEDAL  
American Wine Society 1998  
Commercial Wine Competition
- 1997 Syrah  
BRONZE MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival

### Washington Hills

- 1997 Cabernet-Merlot  
BRONZE MEDAL  
American Wine Society 1998  
Commercial Wine Competition
- 1995 Cabernet Sauvignon  
SILVER MEDAL - BEST BUY  
1998 World Wine Championships
- 1997 Chardonnay  
SILVER MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival
- 1997 Dry Riesling  
BRONZE MEDAL  
20th Annual Tri-Cities Wine Festival
- 1997 Gewürztraminer  
SILVER MEDAL  
American Wine Society 1998  
Commercial Wine Competition
- 1997 Sauvignon Blanc  
BRONZE MEDAL  
American Wine Society 1998  
Commercial Wine Competition
- 1997 Semillon-Chardonnay  
BRONZE MEDAL  
American Wine Society 1998  
Commercial Wine Competition

## Focused Potential

BY BRIAN CARTER  
Washington Hills Cellars Winemaker

It is the end of a busy day at the winery. I am enjoying a glass of wine as I write this, and am reflecting back on today's events: talking to growers; ordering barrels and labels; tasting 20 lots of Merlot; organizing bottlings, rackings & filtrations—all non-stop for the last ten hours. It's times like these when my mind wanders and I wonder....

It has been a long-standing daydream of mine to have a one-wine winery. One wine, representing a single master blend, bottled all at once, sold in its entirety on release day and, finally, all shipped out in one day. Wouldn't that be simple? Think of the focus a winemaker could have concentrating on one wine alone. Think of the occasional day off. Such wineries do exist; for example Chateau Petrus in France.

Washington Hills Cellars is not a one-wine winery. Last time I counted, we were crushing 13 different grape varieties and bottling under 30 different packages. Why do we subject ourselves to such torture? Are we maximizing potential or lacking focus? Perhaps a bit of each, but with good reason.

Let me outline why we have so many wines with designs for more.

First of all, we are a young wine-growing area and we need to explore the potential of many varieties to find out which are best suited to this region. This week I talked to a grower about planting five acres of Viognier for us to supplement the small acreage we already have at our Outlook Vineyards. The only way we can find out how it will do is to plant vines and make wine. It is a risky and expensive proposition, but we are sufficiently excited about Viognier to proceed.

Second, there is consumer demand for new varieties. Just 15 years ago, most wine buyers across America had barely heard of Merlot and, if they had, considered it a blending variety. Where would we be if wineries hadn't explored the production and marketing of this varietal? Well for one thing, we would have missed the most dramatic growth of any wine over the last decade. A similar phenomenon may be developing with

Syrah, in terms of both wine quality and market growth.

Besides, as a winemaker I really enjoy working with all these varieties, both new and old. Some that get comparatively little attention in the wine media are stunning wines. If you were to taste the 1998 Dry Chenin Blanc, still in the tank, you would have a hard time recommending it be discontinued. Similarly, we are making an Oregon Pinot Noir

(somewhat out of form for a Washington winery) that is an amazing wine. Most winemakers hold Pinot Noir to be the ultimate challenge.

Finally, perhaps the best reason to produce all these wines is for your benefit: Life would be too boring if all we had to drink was Cabernet and Chardonnay.

There you have it: Our approach combines a little bit of winemaker fancy, some marketing foresight and an overall philosophy to "do it all." At Washington Hills Cellars our focus

is on maximizing our potential as well as that of the grapes.

And what's next?

Well, on top of everything else, I'm working on a 1998 Dry Rose that probably will be bottled under the Bridgman label, Harry wants us to do Pinot Gris, and several of our growers have started planting Sangiovese. And don't forget those two barrels of Zinfandel Port aging downstairs!

## The grapes were great in '98

Winemaker Brian Carter always has a lot to smile about, but towards the top of the list is the 1998 grape harvest.

"1998 is looking like one of the top three or four in my 19-year history in Washington State," Brian said. "Quantities were good and quality was unusually good to excellent!"

Brian promises that for 1998 we can all look forward to wines with mature flavors and intense fruit aromas.



# The 'bottom line' in wine tasting: Do you like it?

BY TOM COTTRELL  
Director of Marketing

Anyone who reads about wine – as opposed to just drinking the stuff – has, unfortunately, run across descriptions like this: "... a medium- to-dark garnet color with scents reminiscent of ripe blackberries awash in fresh herbs. On the palate, this medium-bodied, tangy, lively, and delicious wine is packed with blueberries, cherries, and mandarin orange notes."

Or this: "... a sumptuous, thick, juicy, dark ruby/purple-colored wine with terrific fruit intensity and purity (gobs of black cherry, berry, and mocha notes), medium to full body, a silky texture, and a lush, heady finish that lasts for more than 30 seconds."

Whether perusing a wine magazine, a wine newsletter, or the pages of a newspaper's food section, no wine enthusiast can avoid the hyperbole of modern-day winebabble. I should know; as a sometime wine writer I have occasionally been guilty of such excesses myself, try as I do to avoid them.

The trouble with such over-the-top wine verbiage is not its floridity; I suspect that a bit of florid language is good for us from time to time. The real disservice these litanyes of descriptors do to consumers is the raising of expectations as to what a wine should taste like.

Blackberry, peach, mocha, mandarin, pepper, smoke, *pain grillé* and all the rest sound very exotic and enticing as descriptors of wine flavors and scents, but did the writer really taste all that in this wine? Does anyone? And if they do, most consumers ask themselves, why can't I?

Perhaps you can with a bit of concentration. And never underestimate the power of suggestion. That "hint of melted road tar" may not occur to you when tasting on your own, but have someone speak the words and you may suddenly find yourself realizing, "yes, that's exactly right!"

So what do you do if you don't smell or taste those "cherry liqueur-like fruit notes... lush with Cabernet's cassis character"? Don't worry about it. There's nothing wrong with your nose or your palate.

Our senses of smell and of taste, like our ability to discern color and sound, are highly individualized. Each of us sees colors in a different way and hears a slightly different range of the sound spectrum; our experiences may vary, but not our enjoyment.

So it is with wine. Some wine writer may taste "blackberries and raspberry liqueur, with

tar, prune, and truffle notes in the background" while you register entirely different experiences when you sample the same wine. Whatever you taste in the wine, it comes down to this: do you like it, and, if so, how much do you enjoy it? Who cares if you describe it in the same way as some wine scribbler in New York? Pleasure is the name of the game—your pleasure.

Should you want to find a wine writer to guide you through the thousands of wines out there in the marketplace, it's a relatively easy task, not unlike picking a good reviewer of movies or restaurants. Sample a few of their recommendations and see if you agree with them. Don't worry about finding that "leesy, roasted hazel nut complexity to go along with copious quantities of tropical fruit, good glycerin, and a medium to full-bodied personality." You've probably got all the personality you need. If you like the wine as much as the writer did – even if it's not for the same reasons — and find that you agree with him most of the time, you've got your guru. If not, go looking for an "expert" whose taste matches your own a little better, no matter how she describes the wines she likes.

.....

## Name that wine

Three noted wine critics were asked to review the same wine from our winery. They all liked it immensely and wrote about it in important wine publications. Can you tell from their descriptions the brand, variety and vintage of the wine they were tasting?

*"A stunningly complex wine with exotic spice and roasted nut aromas and a faint jammy-fruit taste."*

*"Explosive in flavor, it's bursting with blueberry, blackberry, currant and plum, shaded with anise and herbal notes."*

*"Spicy aroma of barrel toast, eucalyptus, black currant and pepper. Concentrated currant fruit flavors with rich, sweet chocolatey oak in the finish."*

Send your guess, along with your name, address and phone number, to the winery or e-mail it to us at the following address: winery@washingtonhills.com.

We will take all correct entries and draw at least one winner. If the winning entry is yours, you will win a special prize!

## Expert Opinions

A recap of a few of our most recent reviews:

*Washington Hills 1996 Merlot*  
"Brick garnet color. Smoky oak, chocolate mint, plum fruit and citrus aroma. Vibrant, spicy fruit flavors balance toasty oak and youthful tannins."

—NORTHWEST PALATE  
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

*W.B. Bridgman 1995 Cabernet Sauvignon*

"Has a fruity, toasty, spicy berry aroma. The palate is similar, with lush fruit, accented with cedar. It is round and flavorful, with a fruity finish."

—THE UNDERGROUND WINE JOURNAL  
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1998

*Apex 1996 Pinot Noir*

"On the light side but smooth and ripe, this generous mouthful of berry and vanilla flavors lingers enticingly on the harmonious finish."

—WINE SPECTATOR, OCTOBER 31, 1998

*Apex 1997 Outlook Chardonnay*

"Lean in structure, becoming more generous on the spice finish with peach accents to the pear flavors."

—WINE SPECTATOR, OCTOBER 31, 1998

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111 E. Lincoln Ave.  
Sunnyside WA 98944



## Our Winter Special: The richest of chocolates, the best red wines

Looking for a special Valentine's Day gift for a special person (or even for yourself)? Look no further. Our "Baby It's Cold Outside" Winter Special will warm the coldest heart and set the perfect mood for a romantic evening.

Kim, our retail manager, has put together an elegant presentation that features a 375 ml bottle of our new Apex® Cabernet Chocolate Sauce with your choice of Apex, W.B. Bridgman or Washington Hills Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot. She has included a box of rich chocolates and truffles, and packaged it all in a beautiful copper-trimmed wicker basket.

You already know how good the wines are, but the Cabernet Chocolate Sauce is a new product you might not be familiar with. Those who have tried it agree that it gives new meaning to the word "sensational." First, there's the



sensation of gourmet chocolate—rich, dark and intensely flavored. Fine Cabernet Sauvignon adds a whole new sensation of complexity. Apex Cabernet Chocolate Sauce is wonderful over ice cream, fabulous with fresh berries, and amazing over a slice of butter-rich pound cake or cheese cake. It's so rich and flavorful, a little bit has a big impact.

Regular price for the sauce alone is \$22.99 per bottle. Kim has worked up some very special prices for the Winter Special. With Apex wine, the price is \$55.85; for W.B. Bridgman wine it's \$39.75; and with Washington Hills wine the price is \$35.75.

The Winter Special is available at the winery and by phone (shipping is extra). Call the winery at 1-800-814-7004 to place your credit card order.



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