WASHINGTON WINES: 24 HOT NEW RELEASES

133 BEST SHOPS

THE BOUTIQUE BOOM
+ MUST-HAVE DRESSES, SHOES, BAGS, JEWELRY

PIKE PLACE MARKET AT 100: A CELEBRATION IN PHOTOS
ARE WHALE-WATCHING TOURS HARMING THE ORCAS?
AN EASTERN WASHINGTON FARM STAND TOUR

PLUS:
THIS YEAR'S best sales AND bargains
2007 WASHINGTON WINE GUIDE

In case you haven’t heard, Washington wines have arrived—with 500 (and growing) wineries, there are plenty of reasons to celebrate the history, people and places that have put our state on the wine map. Join us in a preview of the hottest new varietals, pioneering winemakers, swank wine bars and where to taste our favorite new releases.

By Shayn Bjornholm, Shannon Borg, Christina Kelly, Sara Dickerman

And Yemaya Maurer with Becca Bergman and Jenny Fox

Photography by Danielle Leavell and Rick Dahms
OUR STATE OF WINE

Master Sommelier and Washington Wine Commission education director Shayn Bjornholm takes a look at the past, present and promising future of Washington wine.

THIS YEAR COULD PROVE...a truly landmark vintage for Washington wine. The industry is celebrating substantial anniversaries—20 years for the Washington Wine Commission as the premier industry marketing body, and 40 years in business for Chateau Ste. Michelle. And we’ve squarely caught the attention of the nation’s influential wine experts. In January, Wine Spectator magazine’s Harvey Steiman wrote, “The first decade of the 21st century almost certainly will be remembered by wine lovers as the time when Washington arrived.” With more than 500 wineries (up from a mere 19 in 1981), thousands of newly planted acres of vineyards coming of age and a developing world-class enology program at Washington State University (currently available on the Pullman and Tri-Cities campuses), Washington winemakers have every reason to rest on their laurels. But instead, they are asking, “How can we do this better?”

To have a true appreciation for Washington wine, you need to start back in the 1800s, when European settlers planted the first grapes in the wet western part of the state. In 1903, the introduction of large-scale irrigation gave life to the barren desert of Eastern Washington where many of today’s vines are located. In 1969, horticulturist Walter Clore persuaded the state legislature to lift laws that prohibited selling quality California wine. He knew it would force Washington winemakers to raise their standards, grow better grapes and make higher-quality wines from grapes that he knew—from decades of planting trials—would thrive in our climate. In the early ’70s when the Riesling craze hit the country, world famous wine consultant Andre Tchelistcheff began working with Chateau Ste. Michelle, helping it become a top Riesling producer and boosting the confidence of state winemakers.

However, it has really only been in the last 30 years that the state has emerged as a world-class producer of wines. Several key players have had immense impact on getting to this point. In 1979, Allen Shoup, a visionary of wine marketing strategy from Gallo Wine Estates in California, came to Chateau Ste. Michelle (now Ste. Michelle Wine Estates). When he left in 2000, the company had gone from $5 million in annual sales to a handful of states, to $175 million in annual sales to most states and more than 10 countries worldwide. Also during this time, David Lake joined Columbia Winery, another one of Washington’s original producers, as the first Master of Wine—an official certification that includes rigorous testing—to make wine in the United States. He realized the state was capable of producing high quality red wines with classic European structure, such as the Bordeaux-style blends that Washington is becoming known for.

From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, key boutique winery players—Alex Golitzin of Quilceda Creek Vintners, Gary Figgins of Leonetti Cellars, Rick Small of Woodward Canyon Winery, Marty Clubb of L’Ecole No. 41 and Chris Camarda of Andrew Will—balanced daytime jobs with time in garages and sheds where they followed their instincts that Washington wines could astound. And their dreams of owning full-time wineries were fulfilled. Brothers Mike and Gary Hogue of Hogue Cellars and Jeff Gordon of Gordon Brothers Winery created large, high-value brands that increased Washington’s reach beyond the region. Other growers also contributed: Paul Champoux of Chateau Chamoux vineyard, Jim Holmes of Ciel du Cheval Vineyard and Mike Sauer of Red Willow Vineyard, David and Patrika Gelles of Klipsun Vineyards and others all understood early the great potential of their single vineyard sites, which now command top dollars, prominent wine labeling and industry respect from around the world.

Others—like Rob Griffin, who celebrates 30-years in winemaking this year and, like many other Washington winemakers, attended the world-class University of California at Davis—looked to Washington to strike out on their own. Griffin moved to Washington in 1977 when there were fewer than 10 wineries in Washington, though most of his classmates were encouraging him to stay in California. He became the...
THE BRIGHTEST STAR ON THE WASHINGTON WINE HORIZON OFFERS BRIGHT FRUIT, EARTHINESS AND MORE THAN A LITTLE SEDUCTION [BY CHRISTINA KELLY] Northwest winemakers are producing Syrah to high acclaim, showcasing the charms of this versatile wine with styles ranging from light, young and juicy to elegantly mature and loaded with black fruit and flavors from the barrel. Syrah is a little like summer berries—there are many different ones to choose from. Side by side on the wine shop shelf you can find mild, fruity and ready-to-drink Syrah that loves all types of food, while the next bottle can be very spicy, heavy and chewy, requiring foods that can stand up to the heat and spice in the bottle.

We've selected a bevy of beauties to consider next time you're in the mood for a Syrah experience. See more tasting notes at seattlemag.com.

1. BETZ FAMILY WINERY 2004 SYRAH LA CÔTE ROUSSE ($44)
   • This is a stunning wine, powerful and dense, with black cherry, smoky blackberry and fine tannins that give it structure and elegance. This wine is available through the winery's mailing list only. Pairs with: Syrah-braised lamb shoulder with potato soufflé.

2. SEQUEL 2004 SYRAH (LONG SHADOWS VINTNERS) ($55)
   • 2004 was a tough year for Syrah due to a freeze, but this one is a spice chest and fruit basket—blueberry, plum and dark cherry aromas with shades of white pepper and a hint of vanilla. Pairs with: Grilled lamb burgers and grilled radicchio.

3. REININGER 2001 WALLA WALLA VALLEY SYRAH ($35)
   • This Syrah has a deep purple color and bright blackberry, plum and black pepper flavors with jumpy tannins and good acidity. Pairs with: A cured meat plate with salamis, cheeses and grilled vegetables.

4. VA PIANO 2005 WALLA WALLA VALLEY SYRAH ($38)
   • Justin Wyile makes this hearty Syrah in an approachable but complex style, full of spice and cherry, with mellow tannins and good acidity that matches well with many foods. Pairs with: Grilled lamb chops and roasted rosemary potatoes.

5. MARK RYAN 2005 WILD EYED SYRAH ($40)
   • This Syrah beckons you to drink it now, but show restraint for six months, and Wild Eyed Syrah will evolve into a “bedroom-eyed” wine as it gains elegance. Big, brash and meaty with dark cherries, white pepper and subtle notes of cocoa and bramble. Pairs with: A grilled tenderloin steak and mushrooms.

6. BARNARD GRIFFIN 2004 COLUMBIA VALLEY SYRAH ($50)
   • This reserve Syrah is a great example of the quality wine Rob Griffin and Deborah Barnard have been making in their Richland winery since 1983. A dusty nose, but full of voluptuous cherry and berry fruit on the palate. Pairs with: Balsamic vinegar and cherry-marinated grilled chicken skewers.
WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN FOR WASHINGTON'S STANDBY VARIETAL [BY SHAYN BJORNHOLM] At Washington wine drinkers mature, many of us are realizing that wines with a more tart acidity and lighter body are fine friends for our favorite cuisines. Riesling is a great example of this. In the 1970s, Chateau Ste. Michelle had immense success with Riesling, since Americans enjoyed the affordable sweet tipple in the infamous German Blue Nun vein. While eastern Washington might seem too hot to grow this cool-climate grape, winemakers are finding success in using shade canopy techniques and planting in areas with cool nighttime temperatures that provide Riesling's hallmark crisp acidity and offsets the ripe apple and peach fruit-driven core. And with Riesling enjoying a 24 percent increase in U.S. sales in 2006 alone, there are more quality-driven, food-friendly options from Washington wineries than ever.
Here are some of Shayn Bjornholm's current favorite Rieslings:

1. WOODWARD CANYON 2006 DRY RIESLING, COLUMBIA VALLEY ($25) • Sourced from DuBrul Vineyard, located on a rocky, south-facing slope overlooking Yakima Valley, this is one of the United States’ great Alsace-style Rieslings (read: fuller bodied, just a hint of sweetness and crisp acidity). The amazing mineral- ity is a majestick counterbalance to the grape’s natural red apple and green peach fruit-forward, highly floral characteristics. Pairs with: Seared duck breast with grilled brandy-misted peaches.

2. J. BOOKWALTER 2006 RIESLING, COLUMBIA VALLEY ($15.50) • This wine is a more powerful style with a lightly floral lift, but grounded with kicked-up dirt road and apricot pit aromas. It is a bit less acidic than most in Washington and has a very long finish. This is a softer, easier-drink- ing wine for those weaned on the sweeter style. Pairs with: Red-curry-dusted rock fish fillet with mango chutney.

3. & 4. POET’S LEAP 2005 RIESLING (FROM LONG SHADOWS WITH ARMIN DIEL OF NAHE, GERMANY) ($20) • CHATEAU STE. MICHELLE 2006 EROICA RIESLING (WITH ERNST LOOSEN OF MOSEL, GERMANY) ($22) • No discussion of a Washington Riesling renaissance would be complete without a proper ode to the two that started it. Both of these wines were released with an eye toward supplying the world’s renewed demand for this majestic grape. Both were made in partnership with Iconic Riesling producers from Germany, the oldest Riesling-producing country in the world. Both prove that Washington has one of the top climates for the grape, even amid the desertlike vineyards east of the Cascades. Pairs with: Each other—in a side-by-side taste-off to see the different imprints made from the winemakers’ vastly different regional wine-making styles in Germany.

5. O.S. WINERY 2006 CHAMPOUX VINEYARD RIESLING, HORSE HEAVEN HILLS ($20) • Be warned—this is as close as Washington gets to the super-high-acid (bordering on tart), clean and super-subtle offerings of the famed Mosel region in Germany. Granny Smith apples, candied lime zest and honeysuckle flower aromas, but this wine finishes off-dry, with zippy, mouthwatering power. Gorgeous. Pairs with: Waldorf salad.
A gathering of just a few of the dozens of winemakers, grape growers and industry professionals that have help build the Washington wine industry in the past three decades:

Left to right: Alex Golitzin (seated), Quilceda Creek Vintners, established 1978; Clay Mackey and Kay Simon, Chinook Wines, established 1983; Patricia and David Gellers, Klipsun Vineyards, Red Mountain, established 1984; Chris Camarda, Andrew Will Winery, established 1989; Gary Hogue (standing), founder (with his brother Mike, not pictured) of Hogue Cellars in 1982 (sold in 2001); winemaker Jean-François Pellet (seated), representing Pepper Bridge Winery, which was established by Norm and Virginia McKibben in 1991; Allen Shoup (standing), who joined Chateau Ste. Michelle in 1980 and retired as CEO in 2000—in 2002 he started Long Shadows Distinguished Wineries and Vineyards (Long Shadows’ 2003 Feather won the Seattle magazine 2007 Wine of the Year award); Marty Clubb (seated), L’Ecole No. 41, established 1983. Photographed by Rick Dahms in the library at the ruins in Seattle.
WASHINGTON WINEMAKERS SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT RED  [BY CHRISTINA KELLY]

Many Washington winemakers have found magic in following the French Bordeaux tradition, which has long recognized that blending red grape varieties is a great tool for enhancing a wine's quality and character. While Cabernet Sauvignon often provides the backbone, character and longevity of a red blend, add a little Merlot and you will have suppleness and softness to go with the tannins. A touch of Cabernet Franc adds earthiness that grounds the wine.

1. WALTER CLORE 2003 PRIVATE RESERVE RED TABLE WINE ($35) • Named after the late WSU horticulturalist, this Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend is loaded with black cherry, plum and blackberry fruit, and has a bit of sweetness and chocolate and an earthiness on a velvety palate. Pairs with: Short ribs marinated with a huckleberry barbecue sauce.

2. GORMAN WINERY 2004 ZACHARY'S LADDER ($25) • One of the most affordable of Chris Gorman’s wines, this Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec blend shows smoke and sweet black cherry on the nose; the velvety tannins give way to juicy black cherry and berry fruit. Pairs with: Roasted duck breast and roasted parsnips.

3. COL SOLARE 2002 COLUMBIA VALLEY RED WINE ($69.99) • A collaboration between Ste. Michelle Wine Estates and Tuscany’s Marchese Antinori, this wine comes from the beautiful new Col Solare winery on the sunny top of Red Mountain. The blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah smells of sun and earth—and rich black cherry and blackberry fruit, with hefty tannins that yearn for a piece of roasted meat. Pairs with: Osso buco and roasted vegetables.

4. ANDREW WILL 2004 SORELLA ($60) • This Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot blend fills the mouth with black and red cherries, sweet oak, pie spices and roasted coffee. The velvety tannins and spicy toast in the finish help make this one of Washington’s best red blends. Pairs with: Beef Stroganoff.

5. SPRING VALLEY 2004 URIAH ($50) • This is a Merlot-based wine with Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. It is dense and bold with smoky blueberry, dark plum and berry flavors and refined tannins. Pairs with: A platter of French cheeses and smoked meats like salami and prosciutto.

6. GIFFORD HIRLINGER 2003 STATELINE RED ($22) • This newish winery—owned by winemaker Mike Berghahn and his parents—will soon be making all its wines from grapes grown on its 15-acre estate. A refreshing lighter style for those who want more acidity, this Cabernet/Merlot blend is full of bright cherry and raspberries. Pairs with: Grilled marinated flank steak and tomato and basil salad.
NEW TERROIR

Three up-and-coming viticultural areas hope to produce all the flavor of classic wine regions and more

BY YEMAYA MAURER

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE that 10 years ago wine aficionados across the nation dismissed Washington vino—if they had even heard of it—and Washington farmers still hung their agricultural hopes on apples. Now that the Evergreen State ranks second nationally in wine production—which flows from more than 500 wineries and annually brings in $3 billion to the state economy—more people are jumping on the winemaker's wagon. And while our most beloved wine continues to come from the Columbia Valley AVA (American Viticultural Area, a grape-growing region distinguishable by geographic features: Washington has nine), including Red Mountain, Walla Walla Valley, Yakima Valley and the newer Horse Heaven Hills, Rattlesnake Hills and Wahluke Slope AVAs, lesser-known wine regions are proving that Washington's diversity in climate, soil and elevation is as wide ranging as our tastes in wine.

Here in western Washington, the 12-year-old Puget Sound AVA is home to more than 100 wineries—challenging the notion that growing grapes in rain-forest-like conditions is a losing proposition. True, the area's cool climate mean grapes reach ripeness at lower sugar levels, resulting in wines with less alcohol than you'll find in robust reds from the other side of the state. And true, many of the region's wineries supplement their production with Columbia Valley grapes, but more are growing the region's signature dry white wine varietals, Madeleine Angevine, Siegerrebe and Müller-Thurgau, on estate vineyards.

Gerard and Jo Ann Bentryn, who own Bainbridge Island Vineyards & Winery—the only winery in the region that makes 100 percent of its wine from estate-grown grapes—contend that what Puget Sound wines lack in body, they make up for with distinctive flavors. "Our wines are superbly matched to our region's food," says Gerard. "When you think about salmon, Hood Canal shrimp, oysters, clams, mussels and lamb, you don't think about 16 percent alcohol wines—you think of crisp, delicate flavors." Other wineries to watch in the region producing wines from Puget Sound-grown grapes include San Juan Vineyards and Lopez Island Vineyards.

Across the Cascades, the Columbia Cascade Region—the area surrounding the triangle formed by Wenatchee, Leavenworth and Chelan—is not designated as an AVA yet, but it is only a matter of time for this area, the state's fastest-growing wine region, soon to include the Lake Chelan and Ancient Lakes AVAs. Broad rivers and lakes bordered by snowcapped peaks and sagebrush-spotted hills define the diverse terroir. Winemaker Scott Benson of Benson Vineyards Estate Winery in Chelan says the area may have the most varied growing regions and climates in the state. "There's no one variety that you say, 'This is what grows here,'” Benson says, adding that his vineyards on the north shore of Lake Chelan have been most kind to Syrah and Viognier; Pinot Noir is also cropping up around the lake. Karen Wade, who owns and operates Fielding Hills Winery in Wenatchee but gets grapes from Mattawa and the Wahluke Slope south of Chelan (which received the official designation in 2006, though grapes from this bone-dry gravel and silt bench have been used for years by many of the state's most celebrated wineries—including L'Ecole No. 41 and K Vintners), is one of many waiting to see what happens. "In the next few years, we'll see what the grapes do,” she says. “Every indication shows it will be a huge success." Others to watch include Chelan Estate Winery, Nefarious Cellars, and Saint Laurent Winery. A few lone pioneers, including Okanogan Estate & Vineyards, are making lovely wines (see p. 130) even further north, near Oroville.

Farther south, pioneering winemakers are laying claim to the Columbia Gorge AVA, established in 2004 along the banks of the Columbia River. The handful of vineyards in this 40-mile stretch—which spreads east along the arid, shrub-steppe gorge—experiment with growing everything from Pinot Noir to Gewürztraminer and Viognier.

Syncline Wine Cellars winemaker James Mantone thinks cooler-climate grapes will define these regions in the future. "Here, the desert meets the marine meets the alpine," he says. "Grapes that don't do as well in other parts of Washington will take off here."

Some wineries that have forged ahead and are already producing must-try wines, such as Cascade Cliffs, with its Italian varietals and Maryhill Winery, which produces the majority of the state's Zinfandel. And at Corr Cellars, Luke Bradford, 28, is the region's youngest winemaker, experimenting with Alsatian-style wines when he's not out white-water kayaking—typical of the risk-taking attitude of many of the pioneering spirits in this region.
FOR THESE AND MANY OTHER WASHINGTON WINEMAKING FAMILIES, THE BUSINESS OF WINE IS A PASSION. Back row, left to right: Tracy and Chuck Reininger of Reininger Winery, established 1997; Ben Smith and Gaye McNutt of Cadence Winery, established 1998; Eric Dunham, with parents Mike and Joanne (seated); Dunham Cellars, established 1995; John Bookwalter and his father, Jerry, of Bookwalter Winery, established 1983. Front row, left to right: Carmen Beiz, and parents Bob and Cathy Beiz, Beiz Family Winery, established 1997 (Bob also holds the Master of Wine credential and was a vice president of wine-making research for Stimson Lane Vineyards for 28 years); Kelly and Tim Hightower, Hightower Cellars, established 1997. Photographed by Rick Dahms in the Maconette Room at the Ruins in Seattle.
THE WINE BAR BOOM

With so many new wine bars around town, how to choose? Check out some of our favorite places to sniff, swirl and sip. BY SARA DICKERMAN

WHY IT TOOK WINE bars so long to get their footing here I don’t know—all I know is in the past year and a half, they’ve become nearly as ubiquitous as the coffee shop. Local mini-chain Purple Café and Wine Bar (with locations in Woodinville, Kirkland and Seattle; thepurplecafe.com) was a pioneer of the form, convincing a trendy crowd who might be more inclined to cocktails that there is a lot of pleasure to be found in sipping wines. And now wine bars are cropping up in every neighborhood from Capitol Hill (Poco Wine Room, 1408 E Pine St.; 206.322.9463; pocowineroom.com) to Columbia City (Verve, 3820 S Ferdinand St., Suite 102; 206.760.0977; vervewinebar.com). It’s good news for wine aficionados and novices alike—through tasting flights, tasting note cards, winemaker events and, most importantly, lots of wines by the glass, these vino-centric bars are making it much less daunting to learn about wine.

Setting the gold standard, as far as I’m concerned, is five-year-old Portalis Wine Shop and Bar (Ballard, 5205 Ballard Ave. NW; 206.783.2007; portaliswines.com). There, owner Jens Strecker presides over a crew of well-versed geeks and mixes neighborhood-bar warmth with seriously interesting pours from around the world. Portalis has all sorts of wine bar virtues: a tiny 1-ounce taster serving for those truly afraid of commitment, a great selection of dessert wines by the glass, good bar snacks, free Sunday afternoon wine tastings and a Wednesday night deal when the $12 corkage fees are waived on all the wine shop’s bottles. Just to show that wine bars have all kinds of moods, DiVino (Ballard, 5310 Ballard Ave. NW; 206.297.0143; divinoseattle.com) has taken over Portalis’ original location just up the street and pours retro-futuristic 1960s Italian design—all white and shiny and a little bit cheesy—into brickly Old Ballard. It’s friendly and fun, with plenty of interesting Italians to slurp.

Italian has been the big theme as wine bars expand in the city. Most notably, the West Seattle restaurant and wine bar Beàto (West Seattle, 3247 California Ave. SW; 206.923.1333; beatoseattle.com) was opened by Italian wine aficionado Brandon Gillespie (see review, p. 156). There’s much more to Italian wines than Tuscany, and Beàto’s list is full of well-chosen regional vino, which could be daunting but for a particularly well-trained staff that can help you negotiate the offerings—which change every two weeks.

Bricco della Regina Anna (Queen Anne, 1523 Queen Anne Ave. N; 206.285.4900; briccoseattle.com) isn’t exclusively Italian
in selection, but chef/owner Kevin Erickson and wine director Jesse Hufstader have a fondness for the food and wine of the region. Bricco manages to be elegant in appearance but totally neighborly. In fact, Erickson claims his customers come in on average two times a week; to keep them from getting bored, the 30-odd-by-the-glass selections change every day or so, and instead of tasting flights, Bricco offers half-glass pours—“create your own flight,” says Erickson. Bricco’s hearty food options include charcuterie, panini, lasagna and an excellent (and excellently maintained) cheese selection.

Most wine bars tend to be warm and earthy in décor, but if you feel like browsing wines in a more sleek environment, there is TASTE (Downtown, 1300 First Ave.; 206.654.3245; tastesan.com), the cool, modern slice of a restaurant in the new Seattle Art Museum. There, the bar is spacious, and the wine list is the most meticulously organized I’ve seen. Wines are listed by tasting notes—“Vegetal Reds,” for example, or “Floral Whites”—but also by varietal, in case you’re looking for a more familiar guidepost. Also look for TASTE’s Flights and Bites selection ($18, price changes according to selection), featuring three tastes of wine paired with three bites of food.

The latest addition to the downtown wine bar scene is the ambitious The Local Vine (Belltown, 2520 Second Ave.; thelocalvine.com), which at press time promised to feature 100 wines by the glass from the North-west and around the world, with a small plates menu focusing on local products, created by chef Jason Wilson of Crush.

At Cellar 46 (Mercer Island, 7650 SE 27th St., Suite 120; 206.407.3016; cellar46.com), a wine shop/bar combo, owner Ryan Allison doesn’t want you to forget that he’s got big wines on hand. Big-format bottles such as various magnums (which can hold the equivalent of two to eight bottles of wine) tower in niches, and a wall of wine nearly reaches the shop’s high ceilings. The wine shop/bar combination grew out of owner Allison’s online business, awinestore.com, which after 12 years of operation had amassed a serious collection, particularly Northwest wines. Cruise the wine bar menu and you’ll see moderately priced Washington Cabernets by the glass listed alongside a $1,500 bottle of California’s cult Screaming Eagle. Though that gesture is a little like driving the Bentley to soccer practice, if you ask me, there are plenty of more moderately priced bottles to discover as well.

Farther out on I-90 at the Issaquah Highlands, there may still be tar paper on the house nearby, but Sip (Issaquah, 1084 NE Park Drive; 425.369.1181) already has a bustling scene. On a recent evening, small groups gathered around Sip’s huge, groovy, boomerang-shaped bar, and the room was animated with conversation. While the couple next to me chose between two bottles of super Tuscans, our bartender, who looked like he probably rides home on a motorcycle, steered us to a beautifully crafted Baer Winery blend. Sip offers half glasses, in case it’s you driving home from the foothills, and four-taste flights with jokeworthy names—“Pinot Envy,” for example—in case it’s your companion at the wheel.

JOIN THE CLUB
WINE CLUBS AND EVENTS ARE POPPING UP ALL AROUND THE SOUND

As Washington state’s reputation for quality wine grows, the opportunities to learn about and taste wine are on the rise. Many wineries offer wine clubs where subscribers receive a selection of wines from the winery a few times a year. But more and more, other local clubs are offering a wider range of wine tastings and education, including lectures, parties and monthly subscriptions complete with tasting notes and, increasingly, recipes for great food to accompany your new favorite wines.

WINECOW (WINE CONNECTION OF WASHINGTON)
This club focuses on having fun with wine and eliminating its “snob” reputation—while promoting great-quality wines with an emphasis on those from the Pacific Northwest. WineCOW also throws occasional wine parties, like last year’s Putt-n-Pour, held at the Interbay golf course. Subscribe to the WOW Club (Wines of Washington) and you’ll receive two to four bottles every other month, plus tasting notes, winemaker comments and food-pairing suggestions for one of two price options: two bottles, $50–$80; four bottles, $120–$160. Redmond, 824 154th Ave. NE; 866.292.8533; winecow.com

WOODINVILLE WOMEN & WINE
WW&W’s appealingly worded mission is to “celebrate the friendship of women with wine and wine education.” The event-based WW&W holds frequent tastings and talks around the area. Event costs vary from $40–$135. Join their e-mail list (robin.ackerman@willowslodge.com) for notification. 425.424.2902; annealberg.com/woodinvillewomenandwine

WAY OF THE VINE
Tabetha Warren’s recently established wine subscriptions focus on the natural and sustainable. She seeks out small producers and chooses biodynamic and organic wines. Subscribers can choose from the World Wine Club, which each month focuses on one region, such as the Rhône Valley or the Willamette Valley ($60–$75 monthly), or the Feast Reds subscription, featuring regionally selected red wines ($80–$100 monthly). 206.859.3523; wayofthewine.com

DAVID LECLAIRE’S WINE EVENTS
When you sign up for LeClaire’s free email reminders, you’ll find out about the many wine tasting events and seminars he hosts, including the popular Shoes & Sips in November, where you can bid on shoes and taste wines at the same time. How cool is that! Visit vinolover.com for more information.

OLYMPIC CELLARS WINE CLUB
Maker of the popular Working Girl wines in addition to premium varietals and occasional seasonal whimsies, Olympic Cellars has offered a wine club since 2001. Three times a year, subscribers select any four bottles of Olympic Cellars wine at a 20 percent discount. Port Angeles, 255410 Highway 101; 360.452.0160; olympiccellars.com Jenny Fox
MASTER SOMMELIER AND SEATTLE MAGAZINE WINE COLUMNIST SHAYN BJORNHOLM HANGS OUT WITH A FEW OF WASHINGTON’S HOTTEST YOUNG WINEMAKERS WHO ARE CHANGING THE FACE OF WASHINGTON WINE, BRINGING THEIR ENERGY AND EXPERIENCES FROM OTHER WINERIES TO THEIR OWN UNIQUE VENTURES

Left to right: Chris Gorman of Gorman Winery, established 2002; Rob Newsom of Boudreaux Cellars, established 1998 (Newsom received Seattle magazine’s 2007 Best New Winery and Best New Winemaker awards); Master Sommelier Shayn Bjornholm (standing); Mark McNeilly of Mark Ryan Winery, established 1999; Justin Wylie of Va Piano Vineyards, established 2003 (vineyards planted in 1999); Ross Michel of Rosé Andrew Winery, established 1999; Anna Schaefer, winemaker (with Ned Morris, not pictured) at aMaurice Cellars, established 2004. Trey Busch of Sleight of Hand Winery, established 2007. PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICK DAHMS AT THE TASTING ROOM IN SEATTLE. THANK YOU ALSO TO PIKE AND WESTERN WINE SHOP.
THE DIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON WINE SHOWS IN THIS COLLECTION OF SUMMER FAVORITES [BY SHANNON BORG] With our wine industry barely three decades old, there is still much room for experimentation. And that’s just what many winemakers around the state are doing. Ever since WSU horticulturalist Walter Clore planted dozens of different varietals around the Columbia Valley in the 1960s, and helped winemakers decide what would grow best, some winemakers have opted to do a bit of their own experimentation, planting grapes they think will do well in uncharted areas. That pioneering spirit lives in Washington through winemakers such as Brent Charnley of Lopez Island Vineyards, Gerard and Jo Ann Bentryn, who have been making estate-bottled German varietals on Bainbridge Island for 15 years, and other winemakers who are forging vineyards in the Chelan and Columbia Gorge regions (see p. 123). Here are a few great examples of what their experimentation is yielding.
Shannon Borg’s favorite summer varietals:

1. LOPEZ ISLAND VINEYARDS 2006 PUGET SOUND SIEGERREBE ($16.99)  
   This little-known German white varietal has found a home in the Puget Sound AVA, and this organically grown example from Lopez Island’s only winery is one of our favorites. Big peach and grapefruit aromas and flavors give way to good acidity for a pleasing summer wine. Pairs with: Alaskan rock shrimp pasta with a little spice.

2. BARNARD GRIFFIN 2006 COLUMBIA VALLEY VIognier ($24.99)  
   Viognier is fast becoming one of our successful experiments. This aromatic Rhône varietal was almost extinct in the 1960s but is experiencing a revival—in our state, Viognier acreage jumped from just 60 acres in 1999 to 362 acres in 2006. This example is perfumed with peach and lime zest—with bright citrus, pineapple and grapefruit flavors and balanced acidity. Pairs with: Dungeness crab cakes with green papaya salad.

3. OKANOGAN ESTATE AND VINEYARDS 2004 PINOT NOIR ($14.99)  
   Yes, a Washington Pinot Noir. There aren’t many, but this one, grown just miles from the Canadian border, shows it can—and should—be done. This light red wine bursts with flavors of ripe cherries; exceptional acidity and hefty tannins make it a versatile wine that will start conversations at the dinner table. Pairs with: Grilled lamb chops and mashed cauliflower with Gruyère.

4. ÀMAURICE CELLARS 2006 VIognier ($25)  
   Winemaker Anna Schafer—just 28 years old—and her parents planted 15,000 vines in their Walla Walla vineyard this year, including Viognier. This gorgeous wine is an excellent example of how hip this once forgotten wine is becoming. With its classic pineapple and citrus aromas, a lush mouthfeel and bright acidity, one sip and you’ll know what all the fuss is about. Pairs with: Seared scallops with grilled pineapple.

5. NACHES HEIGHTS VINEYARD 2006 PINOT GRIS ($16)  
   Philip Cline has planted one of the highest-elevation (1,780 feet) vineyards in the state on a volcanic plateau above Yakima. Look for more wines from this site, as Paul Beveridge of Willridge Winery has also established a vineyard here—managed by Cline—planting many different varietals to see what will do well. This summer favorite has green apple and pear flavors combined with crisp acidity. Pairs with: Golden beets and chèvre salad.

Where to Taste: Wine Shops

LEARNING ABOUT WINE MAY BE AS CLOSE AS THE LITTLE SHOP AROUND THE CORNER

You wouldn’t buy shoes without trying them on, just as you don’t buy a car without taking it for a spin around the block—why should you make an exception for something as capricious as wine? In-store wine tastings require neither a trek to a vineyard nor a wine bar scene but offer the same perks: variety, a little education and all the swirling and sniffing you can handle. Most wine shops worth their grapes will pour you a taste of something anytime, but here’s a reference for official in-store tastings around the area. Becca Bergman