



Charlie Hoppes - Winemaking Biography

Charlie Hoppes first became interested in winemaking shortly after he married in the summer of 1982, while he was working for Boeing as an Industrial Engineer. Charlie had purchased a home winemaking kit and began his ongoing curiosity to experiment with different varieties of vinifera.

In 1983, while White Riesling was abundant and very popular, Charlie purchased some grapes to start his winemaking venture at the home of his father-in-law, Daniel Fidelis O'Neill. A portion of this family name, Fidelis, had been carried for four generations and later became the origin of the name for Charlie's family-owned winery: Fidelitas.

Charlie's interest in grape growing and winemaking continued to grow, and with positive encouragement from his wife and others in the wine industry, he decided to make a shift. Charlie was accepted and began coursework at the renowned Viticulture and Enology program at University of California-Davis in 1985.

Upon graduation in 1988, Charlie received job offers from several Washington winery groups. He took his first position that summer with Langguth/Saddle Mountain, providing a hands-on learning experience that propelled him forward in his winemaking career. In 1990, he accepted an invitation from the then Head Winemaker, Mike Januik, to serve as Assistant Winemaker at Chateau Ste. Michelle in Woodinville.

In 1993 Charlie advanced to Head Red Winemaker at Chateau Ste. Michelle's newest facility, Canoe Ridge, near Paterson, WA. At that time, Canoe Ridge was producing 300,000 cases annually. Working with reserve wine production at Canoe Ridge gave Charlie the opportunity to assist with the first two vintages of Col Solare in 1995 and 1996. He continued as the Head Red Winemaker for Chateau Ste. Michelle through the 1998 vintage.

In the winter of 1999, Charlie moved on with the hope of eventually creating his own brand. He was asked to help start Three Rivers Winery in Walla Walla where he stayed through the summer of 2002. In 2000, Charlie launched his own label, Fidelitas, beginning with 375 cases of Optu Red Wine, which remains in his award-winning product line. Today, Charlie focuses the Fidelitas portfolio on Red Mountain AVA, from which he handcrafts a variety of Bordeaux-styled red and white wines.

Charlie Hoppes now creates 6500 cases annually under the Fidelitas label. His consulting winemaking business, Vinaceus, dba Wine Boss, includes a team of winemakers who oversee production for a number of smaller Washington wineries.

Charlie Hoppes completed his 30th harvest in Washington State in 2017. He was named Winemaker of the Year by Seattle Magazine in 2013, and served on the Red Mountain AVA Alliance Board from 2015 through 2017. Charlie Hoppes is a member of the Washington Winegrowers Association and the American Society for Enology and Viticulture.