

Wine & Spirits

21ST ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

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100
WINERIES
OF THE YEAR

100 BEST WINES



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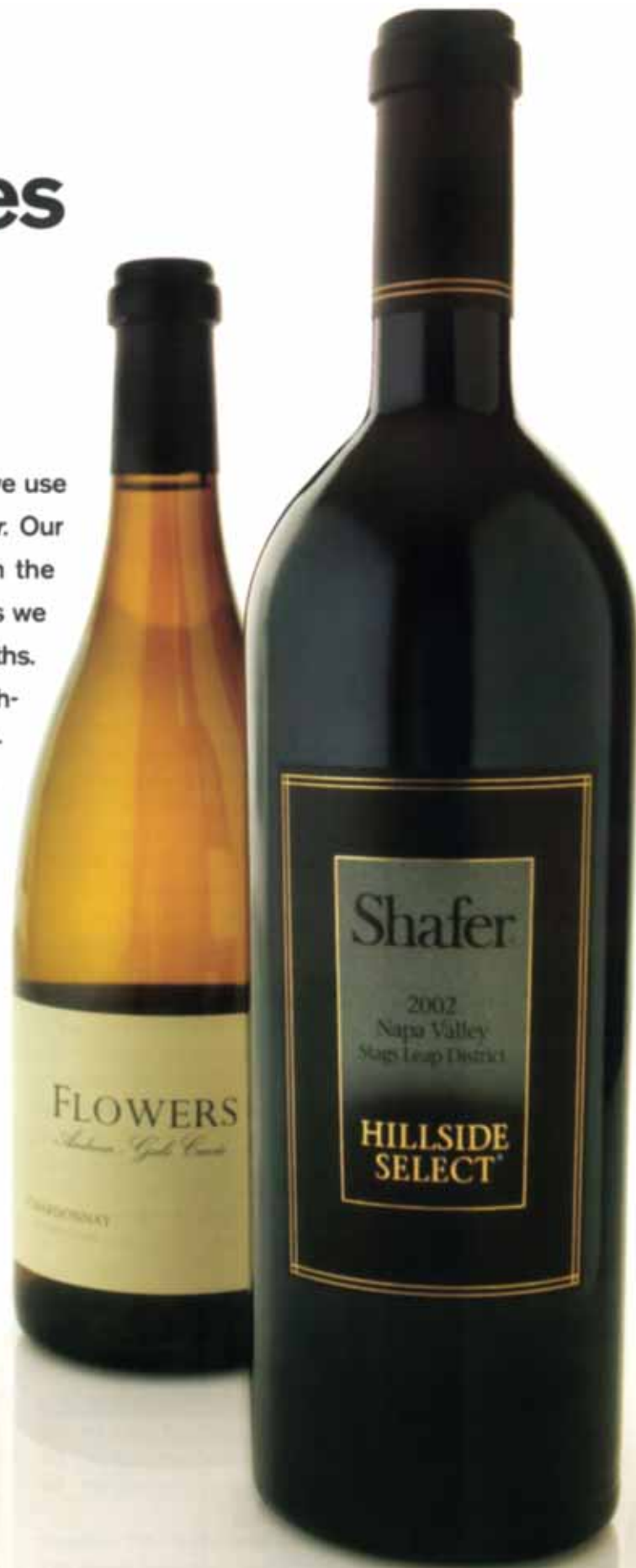
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American wineries of the year

Excellence and consistency are the standards we use to determine our *American Wineries of the Year*. Our 2007 list represents the top performers from the more than 3,300 newly released American wines we tasted blind at our offices over the past 12 months. The final selection is based on each winery's high-scoring wines, the average score of the total recommended wines and the percentage of wines recommended from among those tasted.

Our list of *American Wineries of the Year* is divided into five categories based on each contender's approach to their business: Multiregional producers, who purchase (and often grow) grapes from more than one county appellation; Regional producers, who purchase (and often grow) grapes from within a single county appellation; Estate producers, who own and manage all their grape sources, regardless of where they are grown or the scale of their production; Artisan producers, who make fewer than 25,000 cases of wine per year; and Sparkling wine producers.

In the profiles that follow, *W&S* editors **Patrick J. Comiskey**, **Joshua Greene** and **Wolfgang M. Weber** provide their insight into what makes these wineries great. We include a list of each producer's top three recommended wines (and the date of the issue in which our review first appeared) with their profile as well as a short list of facts about each winery for quick reference. For a complete list of recommended wines from our *American Wineries of the Year*, log on to wineandspiritsmagazine.com.





Dan Goldfield



DUTTON-GOLDFIELD

REGGICAL

Steve Dutton was born into one of the Russian River Valley's most respected grape-growing families, a legacy established by his pioneering father, Warren, who converted some apple orchards in and around the Green Valley to vineyards in the early 1970s. Talented winemakers like Steve Kotler (Kotler Vineyards) and James Hall (Patz & Hall) credited the quality of the fruit Dutton was farming with a vineyard designation on the labels.

By the time Warren passed away in 2003, Dutton Ranch had extended into many parcels all over the Russian River Valley, and top winemakers were lining up to purchase Dutton's fruit. Among them was Dan Goldfield, who made wine for La Crema and later, Hartford Court. In 1998, on Warren's suggestion, Steve Dutton and Dan Goldfield talked over a collaboration in a Sebastopol pizza restaurant and walked out partners. That hardhats, combining Dutton's grapes and Goldfield's winemaking, has resulted in four *Wines of the Year* honors in a row.

Their fruit sources begin with Dutton Ranch but hardly end there. Goldfield has been exploring far-coast vineyards, including McDougall Ranch, a property owned by friends of the Duttons who were called into planting pinot noir in the late '90s. And Devil's Gulch Ranch, near Point Reyes in Marin County, which produces pinot noir that shows the potential of Marin's cool coast reaches.

This year, however, the pair's best wines come from the Dutton Ranch vineyards. The floral, deep-blue zinfandel is from Morelli Lane, an ancient Russian River Valley vineyard Goldfield stumbled upon while off-roading on his mountain bike; he convinced Steve Dutton to revive it. The top wine is the 2005 Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir: Its lilac notes give not a clue to the deep core of black cherry fruit—testbook Russian River tension, from one of its finest sources. —P.J.C.

92 '05 Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch Pinot Noir \$35 (10/07)

90 '05 Russian River Vly. Dutton Ranch Morelli Lane Vyd. Zinfandel \$40 (10/07)

89 '05 Sonoma Coast McDougall Vineyard Pinot Noir \$35 (10/07)

Founded: 1998 Winemaker: Dan Goldfield Viticulturist: Steve Dutton Acres owned: None Annual production: 9,000 cases Owners: Steve Dutton and Dan Goldfield Known for: Masterful pinot noir and zinfandel from Sonoma's cooler climes Location: Sebastopol, CA Website: duttongoldfield.com



Charlie Hoppes



FIDELITAS

ARTISAN

Fidelitas is a new project from winemaker and Yakima Valley native Charlie Hoppes, who, like a number of artisanal winemakers in Washington State, got his start at Chateau Ste. Michelle.

Hoppes's 15-year stint there, mostly at the Canoe Ridge red wine facility in the Horse Heaven Hills, gave him an encyclopedic knowledge of the Columbia Valley and its vineyards. At Fidelitas, Hoppes gathers the valley's synergies from five appellations and assembles them at his new winemaking facility on Red Mountain; its strengths come from the vineyards themselves, which are some of the finest in the state: Boushey in the Yakima Valley, Klipsun on Red Mountain, Weinbau and Connor Lee in the Wahluke Slope and Champoux Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills.

Hoppes exercises his assemblage skills in Optu, a Bordeaux-style red that he says is the most personal in the Fidelitas portfolio, "a signature, a reflection of what I like." A blend of cabernet, merlot and malbec from four AVAs, the wine seemed muted, like a dimly lit corridor when tasted for last April's issue. Tasted recently, it's evolved into a vivid, complex wine, with a brilliant blue-fruited core that livens it up.

Hoppes has the good fortune to purchase fruit from Paul Champoux and his vineyard company in the Horse Heaven Hills. Hoppes has known Champoux for nearly two decades, beginning when Champoux brought cartons of fruit samples to the lab at Canoe Ridge. Ever since, Hoppes wanted to get his hands on that fruit. "Paul gets tremendous balance between black fruit and spice," says Hoppes. "It turns up the minute you crush it."

The 2003 Champoux Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon was Fidelitas' most impressive wine this year, a riveting combination of dark and generous black fruit flavors with a seductive savory element to accent its classic Washington feel. —P.J.C.

TOP-SCORING WINES

93 '03 Columbia Valley Champoux Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon \$55 (4/07)

90 '03 Columbia Valley Optu \$40 (4/07)

90 '03 Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Sauvignon \$40 (4/07)

Founded: 2000 Winemaker: Charlie Hoppes Acres owned: 5 Annual production: 7,500 cases Estate grown: None Owners: The Hoppes family; Bryan and Brenda Alford; Andy and Susan Ferrin Known for: Classic Washington wines Location: Benton City, WA Website: fidelitaswines.com