

# Wine & Spirits

21ST ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

100 BEST BUYS | 100 WINERIES OF THE YEAR

## 100 BEST WINES



WINTER 2007  
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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. Collinsley, 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 [www.dspirmagazine.com](http://www.dspirmagazine.com).



## 2007 wineries of the year



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 2007, got his start at Charbono, So. Melville.

Hoppes's 15-year stint there, mostly at the Carner Ridge and wine facility in the Horse Heaven Hills, gave him an encyclopedic knowledge of the valley's grapes from five appellations and scurries them at the new winemaking facility on Red Mountain. Its strengths come from the vineyard themselves, which are some of the finest in the state: boundary in the Yakima Valley, Ripstein on Red Mountain, Writman and Connor Lee in the Wahluke Slope and Champagne Vineyard in the Horse Heaven Hills.

Hoppes exercises his winemaking skills in Opus, a Bordeaux-style red blend of what I like. "A blend of cabernet, merlot and malbec from four AVAs, the wine arrived muted, like a dimly lit candle when tasted for last April's issue. Tasted recently, it's evolved into a vivid, complex wine, with a brilliant blue-tinted core that lives it up."

Hoppes has the good fortune to purchase fruit from Paul Champagne and his vineyard company in the Horse Heaven Hills. Hoppes has brought cartons of four samples to the lab at Carner 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 moment you crush it."

The 2005 Champagne Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon was Fidelitas' most impressive wine this year, a riveting combination of dark and green-tinged black fruit flavors with a seductive savory element to accent its classic Washington feel. —PJG

#### 2007 BEST WINE BUYING GUIDE

- 83 203 Columbia Valley, Champagne Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 14.07
- 80 203 Columbia Valley, Opus 14.01
- 80 203 Walla Walla Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 14.01

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 French Owners for: Charlie Washington wine location: Benton City, WA Website: [fidelitaswines.com](http://fidelitaswines.com)