



# Grapevine

October 2011

*Have you Checked our web site?* [Http://WWW.columbiawillamettewine.org](http://WWW.columbiawillamettewine.org)

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## President's Message

### Greetings!

I am still thinking about the wine tasting we had this month. The Ponzi wines were superb and the food bites were some of the best we have had in the last year. These food bites were able to both complement and enhance each of the wines. If you missed the tasting all I can say is boy am I sorry.

The winery next month is one of my favorites in the Columbia Gorge, Dry Hollow Winery. They are located in The Dalles in the middle of a cherry orchard, just a beautiful spot. They have a variety of whites and reds, but my favorite is the Merlot, with hints of berry, cherry and a touch of smoke. Another big plus with Dry Hollow Wines is that you will find they are definitely priced right.

I hope you can make the Tasting next month. The wines will be great and Chef Michael will be working to come up with food bites that will be as good as the last tasting.

We're looking forward to seeing you...and please bring a friend.

Neal Hammel – President

## Upcoming Programs!!!

- October 12th—Dry Hollow Vineyards from The Dalles  
<http://www.dryhollowvineyards.com/>
- November 9<sup>th</sup> – Anam Cara from Newberg <http://www.anamcaracellars.com/>
- Cost: \$30 Members / \$35 Guests (Payment at the door by cash or check only)

**RSVP: Required by Saturday October 8th**

**Ray Maddix ([maddix@comcast.net](mailto:maddix@comcast.net)) or**

**Phone: 360-944-2051**

- **Mark your calendar for these terrific programs!!!**

## **Varietal Notes**—by Norman Banks, Wine Maker Confluence Winery

*This is the 31st of a series of Varietal Notes taken from my pamphlet on wine varieties, and I am amazed that I had not yet profiled Merlot, one of the staples of the Bordeaux wine industry.*

### **MERLOT (Merr-low)—French—Bordeaux**

**Wine Characteristics:** Fruits called on to describe Merlot are blackcurrant, black cherry and plums, with accents of chocolate, spicy fruitcake or Christmas cake. Merlot in France is generally less tannic than Cabernet Sauvignon, and as such, it is often used in claret blends to tame the Cabernet and also to 'flesh out' weaker vintages. Merlots from Yakima Valley, Washington seem to follow the French wines but also can make very pleasing "standalones." Merlots in California frequently display harsher tannin and less fruit, possibly owing to generally higher alcohol found in many California reds.

Like Cabernet, Merlot is a good accompaniment to simply prepared beef and with lamb dishes, or simply just enjoyed.

**Grape Profile:** Merlot is the most widely planted red grape in France's Bordeaux region, although it is eclipsed in stature by Cabernet Sauvignon, the grape with which it is routinely blended. Whereas Cabernet Sauvignon has its ancestral home in the left bank communes of Bordeaux, Merlot is most famous for the wines from the right bank, especially from Pomerol and St. Emilion. Although somewhat less widely traveled when compared to Cabernet, this thin-skinned, large-berried variety has found a new home in California and in Washington's Columbia and Yakima Valleys. It is also important in some of the top wines of Italy, and can also be found in Australia, South America (particularly in Chile), Italy and Eastern Europe. Merlot ripens earlier in the season than Cabernet Sauvignon and is less hardy, prone to a variety of ailments from shatter (the loss of potential fruit during flowering of the vine) and to rot and mildew. It is more adaptable to cool climates than Cabernet Sauvignon, but similarly prefers a relatively warm environment.

## **Education Corner** by Nicholas Meyerhofer (CWES Board Member)

### **Malolactic Fermentation**

The annual fall crush is almost upon us, so this month's education corner will focus on a term that is related to the post-crush fermentation process. We often hear it, but perhaps we're not exactly certain what it means or implies: **malolactic fermentation**. Just what is it, and how does it affect the taste of wine?

Malolactic fermentation is the natural process of converting **malic** acid to **lactic** acid. It occurs by allowing bacteria to feed on a wine's malic acid. Typically, it is encouraged in red wine and even in some whites, e.g. Chardonnay.

There are several reasons a winemaker may encourage this process. The main effect one will notice in a wine that has undergone malolactic fermentation is a "softening" of the wine's mouth feel. This process effectively reduces a wine's natural acidity, thus reducing its crisp or tart characteristics. It can also reduce or even remove other undesirable flavor components.

## **Recipe by Norman Banks (CWES Board Member)**

### **Tarte aux Pommes**

*This flat pie (tarte) is something you will find all over France. It can be made with apples, prunes, apricots, or most any fruit that is in season.*

#### **Ingredients:**

Pastry for one pie crust  
4 or 5 apples, cored and sliced into thin wedges  
3/4 cup heavy cream  
2 egg yolks  
4 T. sugar

#### **Preparation:**

Roll out dough to fit a pizza pan, making a 1-inch high edge.

Lay apple slices, slightly overlapping each other, in concentric circles around the pie shell, all the way to the center.

Blend the cream with the egg yolks and pour over apples.

Sprinkle with sugar.

Bake for 40 minutes at 375 degrees, or until the custard is set and the apples are nicely browned.

Serve warm!