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MULTIPLE WINEMAKERS CREATE FANTASTIC WINES

It doesn't sound like a formula for a successful winery, here in Washington or anywhere else. Seven winemakers crafting seven different wines in one facility? Scary. Yet having tasted all their wines, Long Shadows has certainly made a great success of just this concept.

The brain behind this is Allen Shoup, long-time head of the Stimson Lane wine group (Chateau Ste. Michelle, Columbia Crest and all the rest). It was his idea to bring a series of outstanding winemakers to Washington state to see what they could do with our grapes. Nine accepted the challenge to become his partners, bringing their experience and knowledge to grapes drawn from some of the best vineyards in the state.

The result is a series of very impressive wines; high-end luxury cuvées produced in tiny quantities. In fact, the best way to acquire the wines is directly from the winery at www.longshadows.com. Otherwise, keep your eyes open in better wine

retailers and on wine lists.

Remember, Long Shadows is the name of the group of wines. Look for each wine by its individual name. (The labels are all different, too.)

In some ways my favorite of the wines is the Poet's Leap Riesling (*Columbia Valley*) \$20. The current vintage is 2005, and it demonstrates why Riesling is one of the world's great wines: pure, intense fruit flavors; balance and length; fine, zesty acidity to keep the wine lively and refreshing. Consulting winemaker Armin Diel hails from the Nahe region of Germany (also one of my favorites), and knows a thing or two about great Riesling—it shows here in every sip.

Remember, there will be a trace of sweetness here, but the acid levels balance that out beautifully. Too many wine lovers disdain Riesling after sampling the cheap, simple wines it too often produces. This wine is the antidote to that disease.

Another grape that gets short shrift among many wine enthusiasts is Merlot. And the movie "Sideways" didn't help, either. The 2004 Pedestal Merlot (*Columbia Valley*) \$55 will silence the critics. Michel Rolland, consulting winemaker on this project, got his start crafting impressive Merlot-based wines in Bordeaux—it shows here in the blending of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot into the mix. It's a lovely, rich wine, very much in the showy, international style that M. Rolland helped create.

The 2004 Sequel Syrah (*Columbia Valley*) \$55 is John Duval's contribution to the lineup. Washington state Syrah is already exciting wine fans around the country—this velvety, sassy example will only add to the buzz. (The showy label won't hurt, either.) John made 15 vintages of Australia's most famous and prized wine: Grange. His fine touch is evident here.

The remaining four wines are sold out, but well worth looking for. I had the chance to taste them all recently and came away very impressed. You won't be disappointed in any of them if you are lucky enough to find a bottle.

2004 Pirouette Red Wine (*Columbia Valley*) \$55—an exciting Bordeaux-style wine with the addition of Syrah! This one has two famous winemakers behind it: Augustin Huneeus of Quintessa (and so many others) and Philippe Melka of Bryant fame (and at least a half dozen others).

The father-son team of Ambrogio and Giovanni Folonari are famous for the Cabreo super-Tuscan. The delicious blend of Sangiovese, Cabernet, Syrah and Barbera in the 2004 Saggi Red Wine (*Columbia Valley*) \$45 is one of the best versions of this style I've ever tasted from Washington.

The 2003 Feather Cabernet Sauvignon (*Columbia Valley*) \$55 will fool a lot of folks. It's supple, smooth style is the opposite of Randy Dunn's usual approach: powerful and chewy. But Randy was, indeed, the winemaker on this lovely bottle.

There has to be a day-in, day-out winemaker for all these wines. Long Shadows is fortunate to have Gilles Nicault, formerly of Woodward Canyon, to oversee the entire winery. He and Allen Shoup produce their own wine in the lineup: 2003 Chester-Kidder Red Wine (*Columbia Valley*) \$50. It's a polished, rich yet elegant red that combines all five Bordeaux varieties with a generous hit of Syrah. You'll like it.

Actually, you'll like them all. I certainly did. Now all we have to do is track some down!