

ROBERT PARKER'S WINE ADVOCATE, SEPTEMBER 2011

"I met up with Charles at his new wine bar in Walla Walla before we drove out to the winery in his 1949 Cadillac, a picture of which is on the web-site (not the deluxe model like my grandfather used to drive). It is always a highlight of my annual trip to Washington because in addition to the tasting, you get a performance but, after all is said and done, when it comes to making wine, Charles Smith is all business. He knows where the vineyards are, he believes in amazingly low yields, and in the winery he is a non-interventionist. All of the following wines were made with native ferments and were bottled without fining or filtration."

2008 "Royal City" Syrah 99pts

The 2008 Royal City Syrah was sourced from the Stoneridge Vineyard. It displays a soaring perfume of sandalwood, garrigue, lavender, smoke, bacon, game, blueberry, and black raspberry. Super-concentrated, it deftly marries power and elegance in a seamless wine that should see its 20th birthday in peak form.

2006 K Syrah "Wells" 97pts

The 2006 Syrah Wells Vineyard comes from a site farmed by Christophe Baron of Cayuse. There are only 35 cases of magnums and Mr. Smith has not decided whether to sell them or drink them himself. The wine was made with 100% stems which no doubt contributes to its kinky, leafy, herbal, exotic aromas. In the glass more spice, notes of camphor, and densely layered fruit lead to a plush, thoroughly pleasure-bent wine that should continue to deliver the goods for another 10-12 years.

2008 K "Roma" En Chamberlin 96pts

The 2008 Roma en Chamberlin, also from a Cayuse vineyard, is composed of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Syrah. Dense, rich, plush, and well-balanced, this already complex wine will also evolve for another 3-4 years and drink well through 2025.

2008 K "El Jefe" En Chamberlin 95pts

Also sourced from Cayuse, the 2008 El Jefe En Chamberlin is made up of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. Earthy minerals, black cherries, tapenade, truffle, violets, and blackberry set the stage for a loaded, complex, powerful offering that offers a drinking window extending from 2014 to 2020+.

2008 K Syrah "Phil Lane" 95pts

The 2008 Syrah Phil Lane is more structured and has greater aging potential than the preceding wines. It merits 3-4 years of additional cellaring and will drink well through 2023 if not longer.

2008 K "Ovide" En Cerise 94pts

The 2008 Ovide en Cerise was sourced from a Cayuse vineyard. The wine is a co-fermented blend of 67% Cabernet Sauvignon and 33% Syrah. Toasty oak, violets, Asian spices, and assorted black and blue fruits lead to a full-flavored, complex, plush wine that will continue to blossom for several more years.

2008 K "The Boy" 93pts

The 2008 The Boy, made with 100% whole clusters, is composed of 92% Grenache and 8% Syrah aged in neutral oak. Ripe cherries and earthy minerals lead to a savory, ripe, southern Rhone-like offering that will provide pleasure for a decade.

2008 K "The Creator" 93pts

The 2008 The Creator, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah in which the latter component dominates the nose. Ripe, spicy, and well balanced, this structured wine will benefit from 2-3 years of cellaring and drink well through 2023.

2008 K Syrah "Milbrandt" 93pts

The 2008 Syrah Milbrandt Vineyard was made with 40% whole clusters. Smoked meat, game, lavender, and blueberry aromas titillate the nose leading to an already complex, smooth-textured, succulent wine that will deliver pleasure now through 2018. There are 800 cases of this nicely priced wine.

2008 K Syrah "Clifton" 93pts

The 2008 Syrah Clifton Vineyard serves up an aromatic array of wild berries, smoked meat, game, and a hint of garrigue. In the glass it reveals greater density than the first two offerings as well as rich flavors, a plush palate feel, and a lengthy, pure finish.

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2008 K Syrah "Pheasant Vineyard" 93pts

The 2008 Syrah Pheasant Vineyard was made with 50% whole clusters. The nose is more brooding and on the palate the wine is more structured. There is plenty of ripe savory fruit and enough fine-grained tannin to support 2-3 years of cellaring. Drink it through 2020.

2008 K Syrah "The Deal" Sundance Vineyard 93pts

The 2008 Syrah the Deal Sundance Vineyard sports a nose of cured meat, wood smoke, exotic spices, lavender, plum, and blueberry. In the glass it is already complex with layered, savory, ripe fruit and a lengthy, pure finish.

2008 K Syrah "Morrison Lane" 93pts

The 2008 Syrah Morrison Lane gives up an enticing bouquet of sandalwood, spice box, garrigue, game, and blueberry. Intense, sweetly-fruited, and impeccably balanced, this lengthy effort will evolve for 2-3 years and drink well through 2020+.

2009 CS Viognier Stoneridge Vineyard 93pts

The 2009 Charles Smith Viognier Stoneridge Vineyard was barrel-fermented in 33% new oak. Light gold in color, it offers up an alluring perfume of banana and other tropical fruits. Creamy-textured, beautifully proportioned, and substantial, Viognier does not get much better than this (and I include Condrieu in that statement).

2008 K Syrah "Northridge" 91pts

The 2008 Syrah Northridge lacks the density and depth of the preceding wines, but is still a first-class effort..

2010 K Viognier Columbia Valley 91pts

The 2010 K Vintners Viognier was barrel-fermented in neutral oak with batonnage. Aromas of peach, apricot, and stony minerals inform the nose of an intense, savory, lengthy wine that will provide enjoyment for several years.