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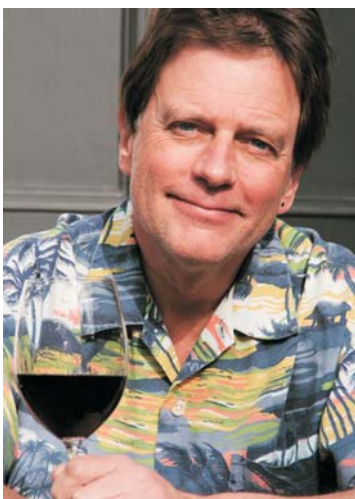
100 point wine

Though I've been writing about wine with (at least) a weekly column since the mid-1980s, it was not until I became the NW editor for the Wine Enthusiast a decade or so ago that I began scoring wines on the 100 point system. My feelings about the pros and cons of that system are well documented (see my book), but the fact remains that it is very popular with both consumers and the trade. I have reviewed and scored thousands of wines, but have never found one that I felt deserved the perfect score - until now.

The Royal City Syrah has not been released yet, but I have tasted it on three separate occasions, and on each occasion I have reached the same conclusion. It is the finest syrah I have ever tasted from Washington state, and in fact as good as any young syrah I have ever tasted from anywhere. It sets an extremely high standard and masterfully displays the complexity, power and pure pleasure which Washington wines are capable of delivering.

Tasting Note: Charles Smith 2006 Royal City Syrah

In 2005 Charles Smith introduced three high-end Syrahs, all from the same vineyard, named Heart, Skull and Old Bones. They received Wine Advocate scores of 97, 98 and 99 respectively – a trifecta exceeded only by the three perfect scores reawarded Quilceda Creek – and quickly sold out, despite their record-setting pricing, a down economy, and a consumer base generally uninterested in Washington syrah. In 2006 Smith has made a wine better than each of these, by combining them into a single wine, now called Royal City Syrah. Rich scents of purple fruit, smoked meat, cedar, lead pencil, moist earth and so on proclaim a wine with genuine gravitas. Tasted on three separate occasions, it has repeatedly dazzled me. Though not due for release until this fall – hence shuttered and tight, when first opened – it is an immense and expressive wine, fully-realized and fully loaded. On one occasion, having been decanted and tasted over the next 24 hours (!) it expanded in volume and opened into countless layers of flavors – a complete spectrum of berries and cassis, pepper and spices, woodsmoke and toast, coffee and butterscotch. New World syrah simply does not get any better.



Paul Gregutt, writer & critic
Seattle Times, Wine Enthusiast
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& Wineries: The Essential Guide

I revisited this wine yesterday during a complete tasting at K Vintners and once again was convinced that this is simply a perfect syrah. There is nothing missing, nothing that could be better, nothing suggesting any shred of incompleteness. From the first sniff to the last sip, the wine delivers on all levels. Complex, beautifully balanced, powerful and detailed, it extends itself into a full throttle finish that continues to offer everything a syrah lover could ask for – ripe and sweet fruit, bright acid, polished tannins, layer upon layer of earth and herb, and barrel accents that perfectly introduce the coffee, chocolate, soy and balsamic. This has the “It” factor. Winemaker Charles Smith has roughly 350 cases available, slated for a fall release. I would not be at all surprised if upcoming reviews from Jay Miller and Harvey Steiman are not equally positive. Before word gets out to the rest of the world, you might consider reserving some for your cellar.

This wine has just been listed on the website (see link at the left) and is selling out quickly.

