

Chelan Sips

By Julie Arnan | October 6, 2016

At the end of August, my family spent three days exploring the south end of Lake Chelan with stops in the blink-and-you-miss-it town of Manson and, of course, Chelan itself. Wineries started springing up along the shore in the early 2000's and in 2009, the region earned its own AVA designation. Some of the wines are produced from local grapes and some are made from grapes grown in other parts of the Columbia Valley. According to my Chelan Electric Bikes tour guide, the wine industry has almost singlehandedly transformed the area economically. While the AVA is still trying to find it's unique voice, Lake Chelan certainly offers some of the best tasting environment experiences in the state.



Karma Vineyards Estate Blanc De Noir 2013

(Lake Chelan; \$70)

Located along Lake Chelan's south shore, Karma Vineyards (named for the proprietors' two children Karle and Matthew) specializes in bubbly. They use "methode Champenoise" – or Champagne method – which means the bubbles are produced naturally in the bottle and no additional CO2 is added. The lineup of sparkling wines ranges from dry to sweet. I prefer the

drier end of the spectrum. This Blanc de Noir delivers a toasty nose and still maintains fruity flavors of strawberry and a touch of citrus without being sweet.

Fielding Hills Winery Merlot 2010

(Wahluke Slope; \$58)

Fielding Hills Winery would be a fantastic place to sip wine even if the wines weren't so topnotch. Winemaker Mike Wade sources his grapes from estate vineyards across the Columbia Valley, but the fruit is crushed and the wine made in Lake Chelan. Oh, and he only makes red wines. It was hard to pick a favorite from the tasting room lineup, but the 2010 Merlot stood out with its smoky black currant and berry aromas, silky milk chocolate and salty minerals on the palate, and great retained acid due to some stellar harvest management. This wine begs to be pairs with grilled meat.

One Wines Red 2012

(Horse Heaven Hills; \$40)

Step into the discreet tasting room just three block east of downtown Chelan and it won't take long before you realize this place has both looks and personality. Bold, vivacious, fiery – co-owner Jo Cowell is as exciting as her wines and personifies whatever is the opposite of a shrinking violet (expanding dandelion doesn't quite have the right ring to it). Each vintage Jo and Greg produce one white, one rosé, and one red wine. The 2012 Red is a Cabernet Sauvignon dominant Bordeaux blend featuring lush blackberry, plum and chocolate aromas turning towards cherry on the palate. The tannins provide great structure but have been carefully balanced so they don't over dry the tongue. This wine finishes with peppercorn spice and a juicy reminder to take another sip.

Wapato Point Cellars Williams Merlot 2013

(Lake Chelan; \$54)

Curving up the east side of the lake into Manson, Wapato Point Cellars is both winery and restaurant where visitors can take their favorite bottle from the tasting room to the dining room. The red selections are Merlot-heavy and locally sourced. The 2013 Williams Merlot starts with red fruit aromas – red currants and cherry – while the flavor leans toward blue fruits and dark plums with a big load of spices like black pepper and cinnamon. It is definitely drinkable now, but could be interesting to see what a few years in the cellar might do.