

# Washington Wine Country

By Terry Tremaine

Photos by Connie Ekelund



Clockwise from left: Cave B Inn; Cave B Inn - A pool with a view

For those of us who associate Washington State with the rain of Seattle, it would seem unlikely that it is second only to California nationally in wine production. The first grape vines were actually planted by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1825. Since that time, over 500 wineries have spread throughout the nine unique American Viticulture Areas that comprise Washington Wine Country. With the wineries has come the fine dining and quality inns commonly associated with wine growing areas.

Cave B Inn at Sagecliffe, in Quincy, certainly strives to provide the experience wine tourists spread the word about. The family owned and cared for property is the Northwest's first destination winery resort. Stunning views of the Columbia River from the top of 900 foot basalt cliffs provide the setting for amenities sure to encourage return visits.

The focus is on the wine but everything about this property makes the wine taste that much better. The inn is comprised of 30 large well appointed rooms, with three different luxury amenity levels spread among 6 different buildings, all with sunset views of the river below from their private balconies.

Tendrils restaurant James Beard Award winning chef, takes full advantage of the working farm environment to source organic produce to complement the wines. The inn even boasts a full service spa.

When the family first began developing the property it included the Gorge, a natural amphitheatre which in the summer hosts international music stars. That has since been sold to eliminate any distraction from the pursuit of the family vision for the winery. Next step is the development of an in-residence artist community and construction of units for sale to those wishing to make those return visits. The vision is certainly grand and easy to accept while sipping wine on your balcony watching the sunset after a gourmet meal.

To get an understanding of the scope of the wine growing area we drove from Quincy to Walla Walla—basically from one end of the prime growing area to the other. Along the way we travelled through a number of very distinct growing regions.

Our first stop was Terra Blanca Winery and Estate Vineyard in the Red Mountain area overlooking the lower Yakima valley. The name of the winery is Latin for white earth and refers to the high calcium carbonate content that whitens the soil and imparts a unique flavour to the wine. Winemaker Keith Pilgrim and ReNae, wife and partner, began planting in 1993.

Keith grew up in Napa and studied viniculture at the University of California. His passion for the Red Mountain area is evident as he takes you through a sampling of their award winning red wines. Production has already reached over 30,000 cases. They have recently added an amphitheatre, beside their two acre lake, as a setting for a variety of performances and outdoor entertainment. The theatre complements the Tuscan style facility housing their tasting room, wood fired oven and demonstration kitchen.

Also found in the Red Mountain area is the Hedges Family Estate. Founded by Tom and Anne-Marie Hedge, they came to the Red Mountain area after having entered the business with a virtual winery and the Swedish government their first client. Again the red wines they produce take advantage of the characteristics of the growing area.

The Hedges are committed to the natural aspects of farming. In January 2007 they began the 3 year Biodynamic certification process. What distinguishes a Demeter certified Biodynamic farm from a certified organic farm is that, in its entirety, a Demeter Biodynamic farm is managed as a living organism. The Biodynamic method dates back to 1924 and is one of the original approaches to organized organic farming worldwide.