

Wicked Cellars Tasting Notes
Saturday, December 8th; 4-7 pm
Force Majeure Vineyards with Owner
Paul McBride

\$10 Tasting Fee

Paul McBride and vineyard manager Ryan Johnson first launched Force Majeure Vineyards as "Grand Reve Vintners" in 2004. Grand Reve quickly achieved critical praise and a loyal following for both its wines and vineyard efforts. Now with a new name, Force Majeure is building on its initial success with continued innovation in winegrowing and winemaking.

The term "Force Majeure" describes the powerful and relentless elements of Nature that form the terroir of our vineyards. It also describes the unstoppable force that occurs when the highest level of viticulture combines with an all-star ensemble of Washington State winemaking talent. Their goal is to present a portfolio of wines that compare with the finest in the world.

Ryan Johnson, Force Majeure Vineyards' partner and vineyard manager, oversees several of Red Mountain's finest vineyards including the renowned Ciel du Cheval, individually selecting the rows of vines to be custom-farmed to his exacting standards for this project. The best of that fruit is presented to a team of talented winemakers who craft it into innovative, limited-production wines that uniquely express their Red Mountain origins. Winemakers include: Ben Smith of Cadence, Mark McNeilly and Mike Macmorran of Mark Ryan Winery, Ross Mickel of Ross Andrew Winery, Carolyn Lakewold of Donedei, Chris Gorman of Gorman Winery and James Mantone of Syncline Cellars.

2011 Collaboration Series Viognier \$32.99

70% of this Viognier comes from Force Majeure's ankle-busting hillside planting with the remaining 30% from Ciel du Cheval. Mark McNeilly vinifies it using a combination of neutral oak and stainless steel, also putting it through partial malolactic fermentation.

The result is a lovely Viognier that conveys richness and vibrancy in turn, no easy feat with this grape. There is great plumpness to the mouthfeel, complemented by a clean acid spine and a cooling mineral tone. Flavors are typical of Viognier – peach, honeysuckle, candied ginger, and white flowers – but the overarching sense of balance is atypical indeed.

2009 Collaboration Series I \$59.99

Collaboration Series I is Cabernet-dominant Bordeaux blend (66%, rounded out with 12% each Petit Verdot and Cab Franc, and 10% Merlot). It takes full advantage of Ben Smith's winemaking talents and skill in assemblage, the putting together of the individual components of the wine.

Vineyard Manager Ryan Johnson selects and meticulously farms some of the most coveted vines at Ciel du Cheval for this project. The result is a sophisticated blend that not only captures the beautiful, unmatched intensity of Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, but also possesses the earthiness, spiciness, and minerality from the addition of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

The 2007 vintage of this wine was rated at 94 Points by *Wine Advocate*, 93 Points by *Wine Spectator* and 94+ Points by *The Rhone Report*.

2009 Collaboration Series III \$59.99

Collaboration Series III is 100-percent Syrah that reveals winemakers Mark McNeilly and Mike Macmorran ability to deftly capture Washington's distinctive fruit intensity and richness. Their goal is to create a pure expression of Red Mountain Syrah where the fruit is unleashed and the "powerful elegance" of Ciel du Cheval is center stage.

The *Rhone Report* (Jeb Dunnuck) rates this at 97 Points; *Washington Wine Report's* Sean Sullivan declared it "***** Exceptional," and *Wine Spectator's* Harvey Steinman awarded it 94 Points

2008 Collaboration Series IV \$59.99

The 2008 Collaboration Series IV marks the third vintage of this right-bank, Merlot-dominant Bordeaux-styled blend with judicious amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and the occasional dash of Petit Verdot. Winemaker Carolyn Lakewold brings her joie de vivre and flair to a project that rewards her passion for artisanal winemaking with the oldest Merlot vines at Ciel du Cheval.

The 2008 offers a powerful nose of ripe fruit, cherry cola, forest underbrush, sage and savory herbs, baking spices and chocolate. On the palate, it brings loads of ripe black and red fruits, licorice, cola and spice notes. This is artisan winemaking at its finest that will continue to improve with 3-5 years of cellar time.

2009 Collaboration Series V \$74.99

Collaboration Series V is Force Majeure's venture with rock star winemaker Chris Gorman and has a simple goal: "Make wines that turn heads." Formerly a Grenache-based wine, starting with this 2009 vintage, CSV V moves to 100% Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from old vines as well as newer clonal blocks at Ciel du Cheval.

Those who have sampled Gorman's Cabs and BDX blends under the Gorman label know just what to expect: a massive, beautiful, burly wine. Aromas of kirsch, violet, graphite, and wood smoke give way to a rich, ripe palate, lifted by minty top notes. This coats the entire palate, picking up steam before a delicious, ripe tannin finish showing plenty of depth and chew.

Washington Wine Report's Sean Sullivan rates it ***** (Exceptional).