



Substance

Dear Friends,

It's all in the elements.

I realize my enthusiasm for the revolutionary presents itself quite often (justified or not) but this is one of the first instances in the last decade where I've been excited about a Washington winery as a whole (not just one or two wines). This is something old, something new, something borrowed, something...black?

Not only is the wine first-rate but this is one of the most creative outfits our state has yet witnessed - their philosophy is not just about wine (we have lots of good wine) it is about a conceptual whole that makes sense for the common taster and the eonophile alike. It is about bringing the finest single varietal beverage of its type to the everyday dinner table for a pittance - what is done in Europe everyday but has basically escaped the domestic wine industry. They've harnessed the elements of success in today's world (honesty, value and quality) and mixed them in a circus-like cannon awaiting their own human cannonball to blast off. In wine, if you over-deliver on quality, you're going to be around for a while and Substance is on their way...

The creation of young-guns Jason Huntley (Water's) and Greg Harrington (Gramercy Cellars), Substance allows winemaker Jamie Brown the latitude to make wine of terroir without the pressure to sell anything. By doing so, they sell everything - quickly. Water's and Gramercy pay the bills and Substance is a pure labor of love. The project started as a whim of sorts, based on the Periodic Table of the Elements with each wine representing an "element" of the grid - when you look at their web site you will understand.

The 2005 and 2006 wines were quite good but 2007 takes this winery into another tier and it is with this set of new releases that national acclaim will come. Think of Substance as a sort of Adelina of Washington State - Devo meets the wine trade as youth on a mission with nothing to prove but everything to gain.

From Paul Gregutt on the youth movement taking hold in Walla, Walla:

"Despite the many advantages, this is by no means an easy business to break in to. Standards are much higher, competition more cutthroat and costs are far beyond what anyone imagined 20 years ago. It's pleasing to note that, in response to the relentless, price-driven competition from well-capitalized corporate brand-makers, there are few if any gimmick labels coming out of Walla Walla. What I'm seeing instead is a welcome trend to clever, artistic label designs, interesting varietals (often 100 percent, single vineyard expressions of terroir), moderate levels of alcohol, restrained use of new oak and a genuine effort to offer value pricing across an entire portfolio."

That is Substance in a nutshell.

Where others use smoke and mirrors to “create” a Cabernet or low-priced domestic cocktail, this winery’s focus is on the rawest of ingredients and their transparent, varietal expression. You can only fool the consumer for so long and Substance has no interest in fooling anyone. The domestic wine trade better take note - the game has been altered to some degree and Substance is its voice - they are going to change an element of the domestic market that is still unknown, something brimming and bubbling below the surface that will be the result of what they’ve done. That change may come tomorrow or it may be next year but they will receive the credit.

This is one of the most important new entrants in our state since the glory days of Woodward/Leonetti but it’s for a completely different reason. Why?

In one fell swoop, Substance has rendered the notion of wine and its relation to the upper class as obsolete. This winery is for everyone - if the elite want to come along that’s fine with them but they don’t need them to survive - almost a concept of anarchy in the boutique wine trade.

Substance had the foresight to abandon the trophy case ahead of the economic meltdown - to base a model on over-delivery of expectations that emphasized fun rather than exclusion and snobbery. Instead of another \$30-50 (\$100?) portfolio that would get lost in the shuffle (and eventually die off), they are bringing wine to the masses - real wine of exceptional quality for the cheapest prices possible (I mean, really cheap for top-tier domestic wine).

By extending the hand of value, they will gain an audience that is already educated but also one that is still searching for the truth in wine. Anyone that is just getting into the vinous world would be well-served to make Substance their base of knowledge. For those well-schooled, the enjoyment runs even deeper as you can’t believe the value in your glass.

Despite the low prices, these are not simple “crack and pour” wines - they do not have screwcap closures (thankfully) and all of them are best 12-24 hours after opening. They will certainly pair with a frozen pizza but they will also delight the most complex of meals - that’s what I would call versatile. It is also what I would call success in the new world order of an economic pull-back.

I urge you to look at their amazing web site (it’s a game changer) and also their tasting notes on the wines:

<http://www.winesofsubstance.com> (several of the 2007s are technically not available yet, so they still have notes on the 2006 vintage but you will get the idea):

2007 Substance Syrah Columbia Valley (Sy) - \$13.99 This is one of the finest deals going in domestic wine - end of story. My gut tells me it will be sold out at the winery in a few weeks (that is not a scare tactic, it’s just my instinct as they don’t make very much). Already a Paul Gregutt “Pick of the Week”, a wine like this makes me less of a curmudgeon with my domestic wine outlook. This bottle really shines on day two as the oxygen integrates but it’s perfectly good after 1-2 hours as well (it’s the least convincing just after the cork is pulled as every element seems to be in its own corner of the bottle - that changes quickly and bodes well for the next 1-2 years of evolution). This wine is about something sorely lacking in domestic bargain circles: subtlety. It is superbly varietal with terrific cool-toned extract that will please Old and New World fans alike. There are several extra dimensions to this wine in the nose and on the palate that place it at the very top of the under \$15 heap. In addition, this is not a lean, acidic Garagiste wine - it is about (sorry, but I couldn’t resist) substance and balance. There are so many occasions that call for something this well made - it is not just a Monday night quaffer - quite the contrary. For an office party, wedding or other, this is artisanal domestic wine of quality that is typically not available under \$15. **VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

2007 Substance Merlot Columbia Valley (Me) - \$16.99 Ok, why would we offer a Merlot? Because it's great. It can be argued that Washington State made its name with Merlot, long before vintners in Napa discovered its commercial charms. This wine harkens to the glory days of Leonetti Merlot (without the distinctive oak) but it requires the most oxygen exposure of any 2007 Substance release to come around - my guess is that it will be the crowd favorite if allowed to breathe. At first completely closed on itself, with 3-4 hours of exposure (and up to 24) it fills in to reveal layers of chocolate, red fruit, soil and (dare I say) a Right Bank personality with a Washington flair (with only moderate alcohol 13.5-13.7%). I haven't consumed a bottle of domestic Merlot in over ten years - I drank this. Enough said. **VERY HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

2007 Substance Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley (Cs) - \$16.99 This is the most distinctive wine in the group, with a decided slant toward northern exposure - think Saint Estephe meets Walla Walla for \$16.99. The mineral and herbal character of this wine is its hallmark - all wrapped in perfectly extracted varietal fruit and a very balanced approach to alcohol, oak and smokescreens (there are none). Here you will not find oak chips, augmentations, enhancers or anything involved in tricking the consumer into buying the wine - you will just find one of the finest mountain-styled values in Cabernet in the US. This is for Togni or early 1980s Diamond Creek fans looking for a bargain wine, not for fans of 1997 Bryant. A real wine of its place - almost hard to believe at this price level. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** for the style.

Please limit requests to 24/person of each wine - if you desire more than 24, let Niki know and we will allocate additional bottles after all initial orders are filled.

To order: niki@garagistewine.com

All arrive with limited mileage (Walla Walla to our door) and impeccable provenance in a few weeks (early March for local pick up - please check OARS). All will ship during the spring shipping season.

Out of state orders will be held for free under ideal storage conditions (56 degrees/70%humidity) until shipping is possible. Locals may pick up at their leisure.

For current local pick up and arrival/ship information, please see your OARS link below (at the bottom of this offer) - don't know how to access your OARS? Simply click the link and see your account. You can also paste the link into your browser. If you are having trouble with your link or your account, please contact: support@garagistewine.com

NO SALES TO RETAILERS OR WHOLESALERS

Thank you,

Jon Rimmerman
Garagiste
Seattle, WA

Garagiste:\ga-räzh-eest\ n fr. garer to dock, to protect

1. a passionate winemaker who creates fine limited production wines (occasionally in his or her garage)
2. a selective, Seattle-based retail emporium dedicated to the wine artisan and consumer