

2009 Cuvée Elena 220 cases

Tasting Notes

Our Southern Rhone inspired blend was selected from our most balanced and elegant barrels from the 2009 vintage. Cuvée Elena delivers blackberry, fig and delicate perfume, complemented by hints of violets, spice and garrigue with graceful length. This wine is mouth filling and intensely satisfying with with a fine, silky finish.

Harvest Notes

Varietals: 50% Grenache / 41% Mourvedre / 8% Syrah / 1% Carignan

Vineyards: McKinley Springs – Horse Heaven Hills: Grenache, Syrah and Carignan
Ciel du Cheval – Red Mountain: Mourvedre and Syrah
Coyote Canyon – Horse Heaven Hills: Mourvedre

Appellation: Columbia Valley

Vineyards

At McKinley Springs Vineyard, Syrah typically ripens in the first weeks of September and gives us some of the most intense grapes we work with. Carignan and Grenache are both late ripening and usually the last grapes we pick each harvest. Planted at 1,100' in elevation on Warden sandy silt loam soils with north south row orientation. The canopy is trained VSP with the west side left to “flop” to protect the grapes from the hot afternoon sun. Shoot thinning and green thinning occur to ensure an even intense crop. Perhaps it is the elevation, or the soils, but this vineyard gives us some of the best balanced fruit we work with.

The forces that helped form Ciel du Cheval, and the Red Mountain geology in general, were truly gigantic. The deep bedrock of most of the Columbia Basin is basalt, formed from the massive lava outflows caused by intense volcanic activity. On top of the basalt lie layers of sediment deposited by repeated ancient floods—the largest floods ever recorded. On top of the sediment are layers of sand and silt from eons of erosion and weathering. The high alkalinity and high calcium carbonate content produce wines of incredible structure and longevity.

Jim Holmes, a pioneering grower on Red Mt, planted Ciel du Cheval vineyard in the late 1970's . His vineyard is known for producing the most elegant wines from Red Mountain. Ryan Johnson, the vineyard manager, is one of the most intuitive, insightful and humble people we have met in the wine industry. His attention to detail and willingness to work with wineries makes Ciel a pure joy to work with. The fruit we work with at Ciel is all Fan Trained.

Coyote Canyon Vineyard lies in the northern part of the Horse Heaven Hills and straddles the Missoula Flood high-water mark. The Mourvedre is planted to a steep south facing slope in rocky soils at 1,200' in elevation. The high calcium content of the soils translates into wines with great fruit expression while retaining bright acidity. The vines are trained VSP up and down the slope face.

Vinification

The fruit was hand harvested and transported to the winery in the early morning. All fruit was de-stemmed with no crushing. Grenache and Carignan were de-stemmed, saignée performed, inoculated fermentation in small open tops with manual pigeage and aged in neutral barrels. For Mourvedre and Syrah, inoculated fermentation occurred in 33 hectoliter concrete cubes, with a max temp of 81 degrees, twice daily pumpovers and early delestage. Syrah was also fermented with 20–30% whole clusters This bottling is 100% free run juice that was put directly into 4–7 year old barrels, some in 700L size. Unfined. A light, polish filtration preceded bottling. Barrel time of 16 months.

