



Woodward Canyon owner Rick Small stands in his estate vineyard near his winery at the Walla Walla Valley town of Lowden (photo by Andy Perdue/Great Northwest Wine)

HOPS AND SIPS

Woodward Canyon Winery continues to weave masterpieces

Owner Rick Small uses grapes from vines he used when he made wine in his back yard in the 1970s.

By Eric Degerman and Andy Perdue

Friday, October 20, 2017 1:30am | [LIFE](#) [HOPS AND SIPS](#)

Rick Small continues to quietly craft some of Washington's best red and white wines, just as he has done since launching one of the Walla Walla Valley's first wineries more than three decades ago west of downtown in the quiet community of Lowden.

Here in an unassuming facility, he and winemaker Kevin Mott produce arguably the best cabernet sauvignon in Washington, recognition earned year after year in blind tastings. At the recent Great Northwest Invitational Wine Competition, Woodward brought home two golds for cabernet sauvignon, adding to medals for the same wines at this year's Cascadia

International Wine Competition, Walla Walla Valley Wine Competition and Washington State Wine Competition. By any measure, that is showing remarkable consistency during the course of several months and different judging panels.

Part of the secret sauce for Small is using the grapes from the same vines he began using in the 1970s when he made wine in his back yard. For Small, working with these vines is like pulling on a comfortable pair of old jeans.

We recently tasted through Woodward's lineup. Ask for these wines at your favorite wine merchant or contact the winery directly.

Woodward Canyon 2016 Sauvignon Blanc, Walla Walla Valley, \$29: This is the 13th vintage of sauvignon blanc from Rick Small's estate vineyard, and it is as brilliant as ever with aromas of sweet herbs, fresh melon and tantalizing acidity. The perfect tension of fruit and acidity makes this the perfect foil for Dungeness crab cakes.

Woodward Canyon 2015 Chardonnay, Washington, \$44: This blend of grapes from estate grapes in the Walla Walla Valley and famed Celilo Vineyard across the river from Hood River, Oregon, turns this into one of the most interesting white wines in the region, thanks to complex aromas of white pepper, melon, pineapple backed by big, round, crisp acidity through the long finish.

Woodward Canyon 2014 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Walla Walla Valley, \$49: Perhaps the most interesting wine in his portfolio because the maturity of these estate vines are starting to reveal bigger, much more complex wines than in past vintages. The resulting wine reveals perfumy aromas of black currant, plum, vanilla and black olive backed by firm tannins that gives the wine muscular shoulders and lots of substance for the generous finish.

Woodward Canyon 2014 Artist Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, \$59: A blend of grapes from top vineyards that include Champoux, Woodward Estate, Summit View and Sagemoor. The result is a round and balanced red with notes of black licorice, plum and black olive. For those looking for a red to age, this is it.

Woodward Canyon 214 Estate Reserve, Walla Walla Valley, \$79: This is one of Woodward's most fascinating reds because the blend changes each vintage. This example is a Right Bank-style blend that is heavy on cab, presenting aromas and flavors of black plum, pipe tobacco, black olive and squid ink with touches of cocoa powder and black licorice.

Woodward Canyon, 2014 Old Vines Cabernet Sauvignon, Washington State, \$99: Rick Small uses the same vines he has used since his first vintage of this wine in 1981: Champoux, Sagemoor and his Estate. The result is a Washington classic that not only is delicious now but also ages gracefully for decades, revealing layers of complexity or purple fruit, spices, graphite, all backed by silky, gentle tannins.

Andy Perdue and Eric Degerman run Great Northwest Wine. Learn more about wine at www.greatnrthwestwine.com.



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