

# Wine & Spirits

23RD ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

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## 2009 wineries of the year

### Chateau Ste. Michelle

MULTISOURCE



Bob Bertheau

**Founded:** 1934  
**Winemakers:** Bob Bertheau, Joshua Maloney & Wendy Stuckey  
**Viticulturalist:** Rich Wheeler  
**Acres owned:** 3,500  
**Annual production:** 1,900,000 cases  
**Estate grown:** 40%  
**Owners:** Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, Woodinville, WA  
**Known for:** Washington's oldest winery, and the prime force behind its riesling renaissance  
**Location:** Woodinville, WA  
**Website:** ste-michelle.com

This summer Chateau Ste. Michelle brought together Eroica joint producers Ernie Loosen and Bob Bertheau for a ten-year vertical tasting at the winery (1999 to 2008). A dozen years ago, when Loosen approached then-CEO Allan Shoup with the idea of starting a joint venture involving riesling, the notion seemed far-fetched. But Ste. Michelle took the risk, and that leap of faith has played a major role in the resurgence of riesling in the Pacific Northwest.

It's easy to lose count of all the ways that Chateau Ste. Michelle serves as a leader of its region—a fact that this, its 15th Winery of the Year honor, speaks to. Only two other wineries in the world have earned as many.

Eroica, from its inception, has been a blend of old and emergent Columbia Valley riesling sites in cool and warm places. The first three vintages of Eroica relied heavily on fruit from Cold Creek, one of Ste. Michelle's warmest vineyard sites; fortunately, the '99 and '01 vintages were cool enough to clearly establish the balance that the wine would be known for through the years. Since 2001 the fruit sources have moved progressively northward, with the last four vintages benefiting particularly from the cool-climate contributions of Ancient Lakes vineyards, such as Evergreen.



The 2007 Eroica was Ste. Michelle's best-performing wine this year, a blend of wines from Horse Heaven, Evergreen and Viewcrest vineyards, a cool, lean white with scents of lemon and tangerine, the flavors taking on the sort of transparency and composure that comes with a decade's experience.

Ste. Michelle's merlots excelled as well, especially the Canoe Ridge and Indian Wells bottlings. The latter has a lightness of tone, a hint of evergreen gracing a rich, deep core of plummy fruit. The Canoe Ridge Merlot, by contrast, delivers a mélange of Asian spices, five-spice powder and Yunnan tea scents, along with finely delineated flavors of mocha and spice. Both display qualities that merlot doesn't often achieve in this country, but which, in experienced hands, seem effortless. —P.J.C.

#### TOP-SCORING WINES

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| 93 | '07 Columbia Valley Eroica Riesling \$24 (8/09)              |
| 92 | '05 Horse Heaven Hills Canoe Ridge Estate Merlot \$22 (4/09) |
| 91 | '06 Columbia Valley Indian Wells Merlot \$18 (8/09)          |

### Fifteen Awards

Chateau Ste. Michelle '88, '89, '90, '97, '99, '00, '02, '03, '04, '05, '06, '07, '08, '09, '10