

WINE BUSINESS MONTHLY

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7th Annual List of Top U.S. Wine Companies

WBM

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INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

What Top Winery Executives are Saying

PLUS

Hot Brands • Number of U.S. Wineries Tops 6,200

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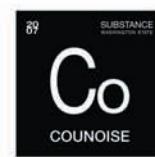
PRODUCT REVIEW: Portable Tanks

Review of the Industry



Hot Small Brands of 2009

Cyril Penn



THE FOLLOWING PAGES are devoted to wines that winemakers will want to check out. Our seventh annual "Hot Small Brands" list includes some of today's most exciting brands from small- and medium-sized producers—a select group. We pick just 10 wines from North America for the list, only six from California.

When *WBM* published the first annual list of "Hot Small Brands" in 2003, we sought to identify and recognize small- or medium-sized wineries—none that produced more than 150,000 cases a year—the up-and-comers that had experienced the most growth in a short period of time. We didn't want to include new launches from corporate wineries that would be big at the get-go because of size and distribution clout. We didn't have much interest in so-called cult wines. We measured growth in case sales, which was typically the result of smart marketing. At that time, there were vast supplies of bulk wine which coincided with the emergence of so-called "lifestyle" brands—and the "critter craze." Fun and whimsical labels were gaining ground, and some start-ups grew extremely quickly.

For the most part, we were on the mark. Many of our early picks went on to new heights. Some were acquired by corporate wine companies while nearly all continued to grow.

We gravitate toward wineries and brands that represent market trends or innovation, that take a leadership position in their regions, or that make unusual varietals or unexpected wines.

Smart marketing only goes so far. These wines need to pass the taste test. Consider this list to also be a collection of wines our editors would serve at a party. We do serve them during a gathering we host during the annual **Unified Wine & Grape Symposium**.

1. **PACIFIC RIM** Washington
2. **WINES OF SUBSTANCE** Washington
3. **CAMBIATA** Monterey County, California
4. **ABACELA** Southern Oregon
5. **CINDER** Idaho
6. **SWANSON VINEYARDS**
Oakville (Napa Valley), California
7. **L'AVenture** Paso Robles, California
8. **MARYNISSEN ESTATES** Ontario, Canada
9. **BARTHOLOMEW PARK WINERY**
Sonoma Valley, California
10. **RAFFALDINI VINEYARDS AND WINERY**
North Carolina

2004

Hot Small Brands of 2004

1. **RED TRUCK**
Cline Cellars (Sonoma, California)
2. **CARTLIDGE & BROWNE**
Greenfield Wine Company
(American Canyon, California)
3. **SEVEN DEADLY ZINS**
Michael David Winery (Lodi, California)
4. **OLIVER WINERY**
Oliver Winery (Bloomington, Indiana)
5. **ANGELINE WINES**
Martin Ray Winery (Santa Rosa, California)
6. **ROCK RABBIT**
Purple Wine Company
(Graton, California)
7. **THREE THIEVES BANDIT**
Three Thieves (Lodi, California)
8. **SOFIA MINI**
Niebaum-Coppola (Rutherford, California)
9. **SCREW KAPPA NAPA**
Don Sebastiani & Sons
(Sonoma, California)
10. **GRACELAND CELLARS**
Signature Wines (Oakland, California)

2005

Hot Small Brands of 2005

1. **PARDUCCI WINE CELLARS**
Mendocino Wine Company
(Ukiah, California)
2. **SOLOROSA**
SoloRosa Wines, (St. Helena, California)
3. **CHEAPSKATE**
WineSmith (Napa, California)
4. **VELVET RED**
St. James Winery (St. James, Missouri)
5. **INCREDIBLE RED**
Peachy Canyon Winery
(Paso Robles, California)
6. **HARD CORE**
Core Wine Company
(Santa Maria, California)
7. **KUNDE ESTATE**
Kunde Estate Winery & Vineyards
(Kenwood, California)
8. **HITCHING POST**
Hartley Ostini Hitching Post Winery
(Buellton, California)
9. **ANDRETTI WINERY**
Andretti Wine Group (Napa, California)
10. **ESSER VINEYARDS**
Esser Vineyards (Napa Valley, California)

2006

Hot Small Brands of 2006

1. **A TO Z WINEWORKS**
(Dundee, Oregon)
2. **HOUSE WINE**
Magnificent Wine Company
(Walla Walla, Washington)
3. **LIBERTY SCHOOL**
Treana Winery (Paso Robles, California)
4. **SHANNON RIDGE**
High Valley (Lake County, California)
5. **TWENTY BENCH**
Nine North Wine Company
(Napa, California)
6. **CYCLES GLADIATOR**
Wimbledon Wine Company
(Napa, California)
7. **BEDELL CELLARS**
(Cutchogue, New York—Long Island)
8. **ARTESA VINEYARDS & WINERY**
(Napa, California)
9. **BLACK STAR FARMS**
(Suttons Bay, Michigan)
10. **BUENA VISTA CARNEROS**
(Sonoma, California)

2007

Hot Small Brands of 2007

1. **WILLAMETTE VALLEY VINEYARDS**
(Turner, Oregon)
2. **CEJA VINEYARDS**
(Carneros, California)
3. **TANGENT**
(San Luis Obispo, California)
4. **CLOS DU VAL**
(Napa, California)
5. **KUTCH WINES**
(Russian River, California)
6. **CORO MENDOCINO**
(Mendocino County, California)
7. **J.R. STOREY**
(Sausalito, California)
8. **L'ECOLE N° 41**
(Lowden, Washington)
9. **KING FAMILY VINEYARDS**
(Crozet, Virginia)
10. **GRUET WINERY**
(Albuquerque, New Mexico)

2008

Hot Small Brands of 2008

1. **GRAZIANO**
(Mendocino, California)
2. **FOUR VINES PEASANT**
(Paso Robles, California)
3. **BECKER VINEYARDS**
(Texas Hill Country, Texas)
4. **RED TAIL RIDGE**
(Seneca Lake, New York)
5. **SOJOURN CELLARS**
(Sonoma, California)
6. **DOMAINE DROUHIN**
(Dundee Hills, Oregon)
7. **JEFF RUNQUIST WINES**
(Clarksburg, California)
8. **MARILYN REMARK WINERY**
(Arroyo Seco, California)
9. **TRIO VINTNERS**
(Columbia Valley, Washington)
10. **PURPLE WINE COMPANY**
(Napa Valley, California)



5. CINDER: PUSHING THE POTENTIAL OF IDAHO 2008 VIOGNIER ~ IDAHO



Melanie Krause went to school in Washington state, studied agriculture and, like many in the Northwest, worked for **Chateau Ste. Michelle** early in her career. She started as a vineyard technician and transitioned to winemaking, working as an enologist at Chateau Ste. Michelle's **Canoe Ridge Estate Winery** where she was promoted to assistant winemaker. Four years ago, Krause and her husband **Joe Schnerr** moved to Boise to start a winery. Krause had been checking out vineyards for a few years, saw potential and liked the business opportunity Boise, her hometown, presented.

She leveraged her winemaking skills to keep costs down, trading consulting for the use of winemaking equipment and getting help from friends with **Fraser Vineyard**, **Sawtooth Winery** and **Parma Ridge Vineyards**, pioneers in the area. She made a small amount of wine in 2006 and started "**Cinder**," named for the layers of volcanic remnants found under the vineyards in Idaho.

In 2008, Krause and her husband found a warehouse and started a cooperative winery, Idaho's first. They share equipment, space and utilities with two other wineries.

"The challenge with Viognier is to not get it too ripe to where it gets flabby," Krause said. "We've been able to make wines with a nice crisp finish."

Half of the Viognier sees "neutral" barrels while the rest is made in stainless steel tanks.

"We're doing a lot of exploration about what's going to grow really well here," Krause said. "The two varieties I'm most psyched about are Viognier and Tempranillo. Syrah does well here too, but it does well in a lot of places."

PRICE: \$17
PH: 3.65
TA: .56 g/100mL
ALCOHOL %: 13.9
RESIDUAL SUGAR LEVEL: 0.3%
CASE PRODUCTION: 280 cases