

L'Ecole N° 41

REGIONAL



Marty Clubb

Founded: 1983

Winemakers: Mike Sharon; Martin Clubb, Managing Winemaker

Viticulturists: Martin Clubb, with Chris Banek (Seven Hills)

Acres owned: 175

Annual production: 35,000 cases

Estate grown: 75%

Owners: Martin & Megan Clubb

Known for: Classic Washington reds, by way of Walla Walla

Location: Lowden, WA

Website: lecole.com

Having established L'Ecole N° 41 as one of Washington's pre-eminent wineries, Marty Clubb has been somewhat obsessive about keeping it there. All signs are that his obsession's paying off, with this year marking L'Ecole's eighth consecutive Winery of the Year honor—a testament to consistency if ever there was one.

One measure of L'Ecole's success has been its commitment to place. Situated in Lowden, Washington, just outside the town of Walla Walla, L'Ecole has always employed plenty of local fruit, though many of its wines fell under the Columbia Valley AVA, as they also drew from fruit sources statewide.

That's starting to change. Now over half of their fruit comes from Walla Walla, the appellation carried by more than two-thirds of their bottlings. Certainly investment in the development of a new vineyard, Ferguson Ridge (part of the vast new vineyard project known as SeVein, formed by Clubb, Gary and Chris Figgins, Norm McKibben and Bob Rupar), represents commitment to the region. There's further evidence in the performance of this year's wines—the top five came exclusively from Walla Walla.

The most distinctive and harmonious of these are Perigee and Apogee. For about six vintages now, these two have been running consistently neck and neck at the top of our critical heap for Bordeaux-style Washington blends.

From Perigee we've come to expect the taut, leafy, red-scented fruit of Seven Hills, while Apogee delivers the more brooding, dense, tightly wound fruit of Pepper Bridge, always indicative of the pleasures to come when it emerges from the cellar. It's not going too far to say that in tasting these wines year after year we've come to trust in the consistency of their iconic vineyard sources. They're models of how a Walla Walla blend is supposed to taste. —P.J.C.



TOP-SCORING WINES

93 '06 Walla Walla Valley Perigee Seven Hills Vineyard \$50 (10/09)

93 '06 Walla Walla Valley Apogee Pepper Bridge Vineyard \$50 (10/09)

92 '06 Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Sauvignon \$40 (10/09)