

L'Ecole No 41

REGIONAL



Martin 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

Founded in 1983, L'Ecole No 41 was Walla Walla's third established winery (after Woodward Canyon and Leonetti) and recently marked its 27th year by harvesting its latest Walla Walla fruit source, Ferguson Ridge. Three years ago, owner Marty Clubb broke ground on a rocky piece of land in the Sevein development on the slopes above Seven Hills. The site, a 40-acre parcel named for Jean and Baker Ferguson, the winery's founders (and Clubb's in-laws), is one of the most challenging viticultural environments in the valley. In fact, a huge band of basalt had to be pulverized to give the wines a place to take.

Even now that it's established, Ferguson Ridge remains a severe place for viticulture. "The environment on that south hill is pretty intense," Clubb says. "It's very windy, and it can get pretty hot—for a young vineyard, that can create some challenges. But if you get over the hump it can really become a performer."

Until such time, L'Ecole continues to rely on Pepper Bridge and Seven Hills as its primary vineyard sources in Walla Walla, providing fruit for Apogee and Perigee, respectively. The 2007 vintage of these flagship reds will be reviewed in our December 2010 issue, and both are true to form: Perigee is the more expressive in youth, showing a leafy, wind-bitten intensity to the fruit, while Apogee demonstrates more depth of flavor and greater tannic density in its structure, a wine built to age.

This *Winery of the Year* award is based on L'Ecole's Columbia Valley bottlings: Both the Cabernet and Merlot—wonders at their price points in these trying times—took home a score of 92 points: The '07 Cabernet, with its plummy core and earthy tannins, is vinous and rich at once, while the '07 Merlot has a similarly impressive frame to support a lean muscularity. Both are the sorts of wine I'd want to cellar a case of, and then pull out a bottle of each, month by month. —P.J.C.



TOP-SCORING WINES

92 '07 Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon \$30 (10/10)

92 '07 Columbia Valley Merlot \$25 (10/10)

89 '09 Columbia Valley Walla Voila Chenin Blanc \$15 (10/10)