

International Trophy winner Red Bordeaux Varietals over £15

L'Ecole N° 41, Ferguson, Walla Walla Valley, Washington State, USA 2011 (14.5%)

Harmonious and dark-fruited, this shows the great brightness of the 2011 vintage, with a lifted, tangy, coppery element and great underpinning from herbal aloe characters. Appealing aromas of fine oak, pepper, earth and dark fruit lead to candied violet, bell pepper and sweet spice flavours, with a dry and savoury finish.

£62 Amathus, Handford Wines, Invinity, Philglas & Swiggot, Selfridges

WINNING THIS TROPHY is a real achievement for this Washington State producer – made even greater when considering the quality of the opposition. Our experts were impressed by the ‘dense fruit, balanced palate and deliciously chalky finish’ which set it apart.

This is the first vintage from L'Ecole N° 41's Ferguson vineyard and a meagre 845 cases were produced. The vines are planted at 450m altitude on the southern ridge of Washington State's Walla Walla Valley, where the soils are wind-blown loess derived from ice-age glacial silts. Warm winds and long, cool autumn conditions here allow the fruit extended hang-time, concentrating the rich, dark fruit characters in the finished wine, with an almost espresso-like concentration.

Marty and Megan Clubb took over the L'Ecole N° 41 winery in 1989 from her parents, Baker and Jean Ferguson, who had converted the local schoolhouse (established in 1915 in district 41, hence the name) to a fully functioning winery. Production then was just 1,000 cases a year, but has since risen to 44,000 cases under winemaker Marty Clubb's guidance.

Tasted against

- Château Brown, Pessac-Léognan, Bordeaux, France 2011 • Château Yon-Figeac, St-Emilion Grand Cru Classé, Bordeaux France 2011
- El Esteco, Serie Fincas Notables Cabernet Sauvignon, Salta, Argentina 2012 • Gregor Kuonen, Grandmaître Cabernet Franc, Valais, Switzerland 2012 • Janko, Zavet Stari Belgrade, Sumadija-Great Morava, Serbia 2011
- Rosemount Estate, MV Collection Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, South Australia 2012

Working with 20 growers throughout Columbia Valley, Clubb is a widely respected figure within the local vine-growing and winemaking community. Initially focusing on Semillon and Merlot, he has in recent years broadened the varietal horizons of the winery considerably, and this wine, the latest addition to the stable – a blend of 57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc – is a thrillingly successful first effort from this young vineyard.



Above: winemaker Marty Clubb has increased production and expanded the varieties planted at L'Ecole N° 41