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# SAVOR WALLA WALLA

May 17th will be a  
Date to Savor

by Blythe Thimsen

Raise a glass, the royals are coming!  
In a first-of-its kind event, a large contingency of Walla Walla wineries – the royals of Washington wines – are descending upon Chateau Rive, in Spokane, on Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> for Savor Walla Walla, a one-day wine event to remember. Twenty-eight wineries, 90 wines, unprecedented access to the winemakers themselves, and four hours of access make this *the* wine event of the year for Spokane.  
John Allen, owner of Spokane's popular VINO! A Wine Shop, has spent years in his shop, and at wine dinners and events, educating customers and oenophiles about the beauty of Walla Walla wines, but he has always been limited to featuring one or two wineries at a time.  
"For a long time, I've wanted to sponsor some kind of event in Spokane featuring the wines of Walla Walla," says Allen. "The difficulty with that is having a venue, publicity, being able to do more than just a winery or two. When I mentioned it to Kim, she jumped all over it."





Kim, is Kim Morin, former owner of Saunders Cheese Shop, a fellow wine connoisseur and someone who has a knack for coordinating. “Kim and I have done programs together since she was in the cheese shop next door to Vino!, and when I suggested we do an event, her brain just clicked into gear and you really can’t shut her up! For years I’ve known it was possible, but the pieces just hadn’t fit together until the Miracle Morin showed up and said ‘Let’s do it!’”

Coordinating an event the size of Savor Walla Walla takes a great deal of leg-work and pre-planning, which required a scouting trip to Walla Walla, to meet with perspective wineries and secure commitments and wines. Oh the burdens they undertake for their job! “It’s like the seas part when John shows up,” says Morin of the wineries’ reactions to seeing John walk through their doors while on their scouting trip.

“They know me, I’ve hosted them up here a lot,” he says, touching on his longstanding and solid relationships with many Walla Walla wineries.

The months of planning have paid off, with Savor Walla Walla fast approaching. As Allen and Morin work to finalize details, it is with confidence that they are bringing wine lovers of Spokane an event that will go down in the books.

“There have been a number of very successful wine events in Spokane, including Cork & Keg, Uncorked! and Taste Washington,” says Allen, but this is the first all Walla Walla wine event. “There will be a ton of variety. Attendees are going to learn about one of the most highly regarded wine districts in the state of Washington. The price is phenomenally low; for \$35 you can come in and taste, conceivably, almost 90 wines, with wines from 28 wineries.”

“It can be \$15 to go to just one professional tasting, for one winery,” says Morin, “or you can come to Chateau Rive,

have access to 28 wineries, all of which are bringing three wines.”

The opportunity to introduce those wineries to Spokane is something that Allen believes is long overdue. “The market holds a great deal of promise for Walla Walla that I don’t think *they* realize,” he says. “When we host a Walla Walla winery tasting in our store, the place will be packed because it’s a Walla Walla wine. Anytime we have a Walla Walla winery visit Spokane, typically, it’s just completely packed. So we know there is a high demand for Walla Walla wines in Spokane. We know in our store that we sell tons more Walla Walla wine than anything else.”

The Walla Walla wineries have their own alliance, the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance. According to Allen, the Alliance affords their members, which includes most of the wineries in Walla Walla, the opportunity to go as a group to Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and New York City, to showcase their wares, but they haven’t brought their group to Spokane because we are a small market. “Here’s the opportunity for a person to come to this particular

tasting and not only taste the wines, but also order them for future purchase.” We are an untapped market.

It is a three hour drive to Walla Walla; six hours round trip. Not impossible to drive down and back for tastings in one day, but it is impossible to visit 28 wineries in one day,

even one weekend. Impossibility turns to possibility, though, when the wineries come to you.

There are at least 180 wineries in Walla Walla, and Savor Walla Walla, in its inaugural run, allotted room for 28, making the process of narrowing down wineries painful. “We just reached out to the ones we know about, the ones we have personal relationships with, and those were the ones that we first talked to,” says Allen. “It seemed like when we talked to anyone about it, when they first got an idea of what

These are  
all wines  
with soul.

was going on, they were like - boom – ‘Yes we’re in! Don’t leave us out.’”

You won’t want to be left out, either. With only 250 tickets available, and well over 250 wine enthusiasts in town, tickets are going quickly.

A private industry tasting earlier in the day will precede the 5:30 p.m. premier tasting (\$50); the general admission is at 6:30 p.m. Attendees will receive a take away wine glass to use throughout the evening. In addition to the wineries, one brewery, and Twilight Cider will also be pouring, and Greenbriar Catering will be providing light bites.

“This is not a food event, this is all about the wine,” says Morin. “The focus is not on the food, the focus is on the wineries and the winemakers.”

“These are small sips, one-ounce tastes,” explains Allen. “If you go a restaurant, a standard pour is five to six ounces. So if you have 15 tastes, you’ve had the equivalent of three glasses of wine.”

Liquor laws prevent the transaction of sales on the premise, so credit cards will be placed on file, and sales will be processed through Vino! A Wine Shop. “We are not allowed to take money, swipe for money or give any purchased alcohol product that night,” says Allen. That means when you find those wines that you can’t live without and want to add to your collection, they will be ordered for you and available one to two weeks after the event. The wait will be worth it though, as, in Allen’s words, “these are all wines with soul.”

Soul that Spokane has never had in its midst to this degree. “This is unprecedented,” says Allen of the event. “The most prestigious wine producing area in the state of Washington is going to come and visit us. It’s like having a guest in your home, and they are *really* important. From a wine perspective, this is a big deal to put all of these people together.”

It will be an event to savor. **🍷**

For participating wineries, see page 170. For more information about Savor Walla Walla, visit [www.Facebook.com/SpokaneCdaLiving](http://www.Facebook.com/SpokaneCdaLiving); visit [www.ticketwest.com](http://www.ticketwest.com) for ticket purchase.