

DON'T MISS Hat Ranch Winery tops Idaho Wine Competition with Cabernet Franc from Lewis-Clark Valley

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By *Great Northwest Wine* on November 9, 2021



During her days at Columbia Crest, the responsibilities for Amy Alvarez-Wampfler included overseeing 10,000 barrels of Chardonnay. At Abeja, the graduate of Walla Walla Community College’s winemaking school and her husband — fellow Ste. Michelle alum Dan Wampfler — team up to craft some of the Northwest’s top examples of Chardonnay year after year. The latest example of their “Washington State” Chardonnay is a blend of two acclaimed sites, Celilo in the Columbia Gorge and Conner Lee in the Columbia Basin, along with Abeja’s Mill Creek Estate. By Oct. 6, they’d brought all the lots into Abeja. Eight months were devoted to *surlie* aging in French oak (88%) and concrete (12%). Very little new wood came into play, and it’s Chardonnay done right. The hedonistic nose of crème brûlée, Bartlett pear and fresh pineapple leads to a rich structure that coats your mouth with honey, sweet fig and tree-ripened nectarine. One judge at the 2021 Great Northwest Invitational Wine Competition in Oregon described it as “heaven-sent.” Considering its pedigree, it was no surprise that it earned best-of-class honors and sailed into the sweepstakes as the best white wine. It came out on top as the best wine of the competition. It also placed [No. 6 on The Seattle Times year-end list of Top 20 Northwest Wines of 2021](#).

Rating: Outstanding!