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MERLOT GONE MAD SHOWCASES WASHINGTON'S SECRET WEAPON

50 Washington Wineries Paired with Education and Merlot-Friendly Foods

SEATTLE (March 30, 2010) Washington State merlot is among the finest in the world and there is a movement locally that reinforces that now is the time for merlot to reclaim its rightful seat at the table...the wine table, that is. Washington State merlots have over-delivered in quality for many years, yet merlot has still received a bad rap. **Merlot Gone Mad** is here to change that and on May 2, 2010 at Tulalip Resort Casino more than 50 Washington State wineries will showcase their finest merlots and educate attendees as to why this varietal that flourishes in our state is actually a secret weapon. Merlot Gone Mad is a benefit for the Washington Wine Industry Foundation 501c3.

Seattle Times columnist Paul Gregutt recently wrote that "recent data reported that merlot actually turns out to be the most-purchased wine variety – red or white – in the country." Paul goes on to say that in Washington State many vintners actually blend merlot into their Cabernets to improve the wine. In a state where Merlot can stand on its own and improve quality, texture and flavor in other blends; its time to let the secret out and bring everyone else to the party. On March 25th, the first Twitter merlot tasting had folks across the globe tasting Washington merlot and sharing their views via social media. Truly new ground for connecting merlot lovers and offering wineries the opportunity to gain followers, raise awareness and get their wines moving. This superstar grape was also recently touted in a *Costco Connections* article by Annette Alvarez-Peters where she stated "Washington merlots are fruit forward, well balanced, structured and delicious. The vineyards of eastern Washington are ideal for producing high-quality merlot grapes. Long, warm to hot days and cool, dry nights allow for optimum acidity levels and stunning flavor development."

Merlot Gone Mad will be held in the Orca Ballroom at Tulalip Resort Casino. The 15,000 square foot room will be outfitted for a stellar event with winery tables interspersed with Tulalip chef stations, each featuring a different menu aspect including beef, lamb, chicken, seafood and dessert. All foods will be prepared expertly to pair well with merlot. A large flat screen will display up to the minute tweets about the merlots being tasted to create the buzz in the room. In addition, Merlot Gone Mad will feature a complimentary mini-seminar for 80 people showcasing a merlot tasting with grapes from different AVA's including wines from Northstar, Camaraderie Cellars and Klipsun Vineyard. Round trip transportation from Seattle or Bellevue locations will be available for \$25 per person and expertly provided by Butler Transportation.

Tickets are \$45 per person and all inclusive. Must be 21 to attend and have proper ID. Tickets are available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/103702>. Visit the Taste of Tulalip booth and receive a voucher for a free VIP fun book valued at up to \$100 in free play.

About Merlot Gone Mad

Merlot Gone Mad is produced by Peha Promotions and Tulalip Resort Casino and is a benefit for the Washington Wine Industry 501c3 Foundation. Merlot Gone Mad is sponsored by Taste of Tulalip, Peha Promotions, *Seattle Magazine*, *WINO Magazine*, 98.9 KWJZ, Butler Transportation, American Lamb Board, Washington Beef Commission and Isernio's Chicken Sausage. **Facebook:** Merlot Gone Mad. **Twitter:** Mad Merlot and hashtag is #madmerlot. **Website:** <http://www.tulalipresort.com/entertainment/merlot-gone-mad.aspx>

WINERIES TO DATE:

Barrage Cellars
Boudreaux Cellars
Buried Cane
Camaraderie Cellars
Canoe Ridge Vineyard
Cedergreen Cellars
Chateau Ste. Michelle
Chatter Creek
Columbia Crest
Columbia Winery
DeLille Cellars
DiStefano Winery
Donedei
Dunham Cellars
Fidelitas
Five Star Cellars
Forgeron Cellars
Gamache Vintners
Goose Ridge Estate Winery
Gordon Brothers Family Vineyard
Grand Reve
Hard Row to Hoe Vineyards
Hightower Cellars
J Bookwalter Winery
Jones of Washington
Kiona Vineyards & Winery
Mannina Cellars
Maryhill Winery
Masquerade Wine Company
Milbrandt Vineyards
Northstar
Northwest Totem Cellars
OS Winery
Otis Kenyon Wine
Red Sky Winery
Robert Karl Cellars
Saint Laurent Estate Winery
Sleight of Hand Cellars
Soos Creek Wine Cellars
Sparkman Cellars
Stemilt Creek Winery
Tamarack Cellars
Terra Blanca Winery
Tertulia Cellars
Townshend Cellar
Willis Hall
Wilridge Winery