

Over the past two years a cult following has sprung up around the *persona* of Charles Smith, imbuing him with larger than life attributes. By and large, he has acquired this status the old-fashioned way, he has earned it. When I tell enquiring minds that I'll be visiting Charles later in the day, they know exactly where I'm going. Once past the *persona*, however, Charles continues to make some of Washington's finest wines. Native yeast fermentation, footcrushing, spontaneous malolactic fermentations, gentle basket pressing, no fining or filtration are routinely practiced in the cellar. Even more important, Charles knows where to find the great grapes. In a region where blending is still the rule of thumb, he is the ultimate *terrificist*. Almost all of his wines are sourced from single vineyards. There are three groupings, the K Vintners selections, the Cayuse selections and the Charles Smith selections.

2007 "Royal City" Syrah 99pts

"(4 barrels were produced) Made with 100% whole clusters. An inky purple/black in color, it deals out aromas of mineral, truffle, espresso, licorice, lavender, incense, and blueberry. Super complex, suave and debonair on the palate, this is a lengthy, concentrated, impeccably balanced, complete Syrah that will benefit from a decade of cellaring but is almost too addictive to resist now. Those with willpower who are able to delay gratification will be well rewarded for cellaring this beauty for a decade or more."

2007 "Old Bones" Syrah 99pts

"This is composed of 50% Heart and 50% Skull aged in 500 liter new barrels. Savory, rich, layered, and already complex, this exceptionally lengthy mouth-filling, hedonistic Syrah offers just a micrometer of extra flavor interest compared to either Heart or Skull individually. The new oak and a broader palette of flavors to choose among are the most likely contributors."

2007 "Heart" Syrah 98pts

"Sourced from Stone Ridge Vineyard in the Royal Slope, it was aged entirely in neutral oak. Earth, underbrush, truffle, brier, game, bacon, and blueberry aromas lead to loaded, super-rich, unctuous, full-bodied Syrah. Mouth-filling, already complex, and multi-dimension, it has exceptional length and impeccable balance. Give it 3-4 years to become a bit more civilized and enjoy it from 2014 to 2027."

2007 "Skull" Syrah 98pts

"Also from the Stone Ridge Vineyard on the Royal Slope, it was aged in 20% new oak with some stems. It is a more brooding effort with aromas of earth, underbrush, truffle, Asian spices, incense, and blueberry. It is slightly more structured with a bit more density and richness. Give it 6-8 years of additional bottle age and drink 2017 to 2032."

2007 K Syrah "Phil Lane" 96pts

"Deep purple-colored, it surrenders a captivating nose of *pain grille*, mineral, truffle underbrush, and blueberry. Dense, savory, and mouth-coating on the palate, it is already showing signs of complexity. Give it another 2-3 years of cellaring."

2007 K "The Creator" 95pts

"Made of 60% Cabernet from the Cayuse Callioux Vineyard and 40% Syrah from Morrison Lane Vineyard. A bit reticent aromatically, it gives up aromas of smoke, Asian spices, incense, mineral, black currant and blueberry. Structured, spicy, and full-flavored on the palate, this length effort will develop for another 4-5 years and provide prime drinking from 2013 to 2027."

2007 K "El Jefe En Chamberlin" 95pts

"A blend of 75% Tempranillo and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aromas of smoke, espresso, mineral, licorice, and blackberry lead to a dense, concentrated, impeccably balanced wine that should continue evolving for another 4-6 years and offer a drinking window extending from 2014 to 2027."

2007 K "Roma En Chamberlin" 95pts

"A blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 38% Syrah. It exhibits a nose of cedar, spice box, violets, black currant and blueberry. Smooth-textured, layered, and sweetly-fruited, it has outstanding depth and richness with a sense of restraint. Give it 2-3 years and drink it through 2022."

2007 K Syrah "The Deal" Sundance Vineyard 94pts

"A large step up. It delivers more aromatically and on the palate; bacon, game, lavender, incense, and blueberry scents jump from the glass. Velvety on the palate with notes, and impeccable balance, this pleasure-bent Syrah can be enjoyed now and over the next 8 years."

2007 K "Ovide En Cerise" 93pts

"A blend of 67% Cabernet Sauvignon and 33% Syrah. Meaty, gamey, and kinky on the nose, on the palate it is medium to full-bodied with an easy-going personality. This friendly effort is loaded with fruit, Asian spices, and herbs leading to a lengthy, pure finish. Give it 2-3 years to fill out although it can be enjoyed now."

2007 K "The Boy" 93pts

"A blend of 90% grenache (from Cayuse) and 10% syrah, co-fermented. It sends up a sexy aromatic array of wild berry aromas, earth notes, herbs, incense, lavender, black cherry, and plum. On the palate it is full-bodied, savory, and layered, with a sense of elegance."

2007 K Syrah "Morrison Lane" 93pts

"This wine exhibits an alluring perfume of meat, bacon, game, incense, lavender, and blueberry. Easy-going and succulent, it is the most elegant of the Syrah offerings."

2007 K Syrah "Northridge" 93pts

"This wine sports a brooding bouquet of balsam wood, smoke, Asian spices, lavender, and blueberry; on the palate it is smooth-textured, elegant, ripe, and lengthy...."

2007 K Syrah "Pheasant" 91pts

"Displays an aromatic array of earth notes, smoked meat, leather, and plum. Mouth-filling and chewy on the palate..."

2009 K Viognier 91pts

"It offers up a fragrant perfume of pit fruits, honeysuckle, and mineral. Creamy textured, fresh, concentrated, and well-balanced..."