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Zags

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Review

Northwest  
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## Northwest Wine: Taste of Cascadia returns to Lodge at Columbia Point on Sunday

Wed., May 15, 2019, 4 p.m.



Mike Rader of Kennewick uncorks bottles of wine in preparation for the 2019 Cascadia International Wine Competition in Richland. (Richard Duval)



By Eric Degerman  
Great Northwest  
Wine

RICHLAND – California transplant Kat Dykes last month awarded gold medals as a judge at Cascadia International Wine Competition. At 1 p.m. Sunday, the wine concierge at the Lodge at Columbia Point will present more than a dozen of those top wines for ticket holders to judge for themselves at the second-annual Taste of Cascadia in the Richland luxury hotel built by the late Tom Drumheller.

“We will have 11 wineries and winemakers here pouring in the living room, and, with this nice weather, we should be able to open up the double doors to the fire pit on our riverview deck,” Dykes said. “We’re also promoting this as a wine-and-food event, so there will be plenty of passed gourmet hors d’oeuvres.”

[Admission is \\$89](#) for three hours of nibbling on executive chef Pauline Garza’s appetizers and tasting gold-medal wines presented by winemakers and winery owners. And \$10 of each ticket goes to the Tom Drumheller Memorial Scholarship for Washington State University hospitality students. In the spring of 2017, a few months before he was diagnosed with cancer, Drumheller was inducted into the school’s Carson College Business Hall of Fame. The Walla Walla native died Sept. 17, 2017, two days after the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Lodge.

At 1,040 entries, the seventh-annual Cascadia is the largest international wine judging in the Pacific Northwest. Dykes was among 22 winemakers, viticulturists, wine buyers, writers and restaurateurs from California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and British Columbia who gathered at the nearby Courtyard Marriott Columbia Point.

“I renewed my friendship with chardonnay and viognier that week,” Dykes said. “And I was totally surprised by some of the wines from Idaho.”

For the second year, one of the brightest stars at Cascadia was Clearwater Canyon Cellars in Lewiston, Idaho, and Coco Umiker, the award-winning winemaker for the Lewis-Clark Valley brand. She accepted Dykes’ invitation to pour a trio of her wines that won either a best-of-class award or a double gold medal.

“We participated in Taste of Cascadia last year and have been keeping our fingers crossed that we would have the opportunity to participate again this year,” Umiker said. “It’s a great honor to have three of our wines included among such a delicious collection.”

Sharing the wine library Sunday with Umiker, Wine Press Northwest magazine’s “Queen of the Platinum Judging,” will be Prosser winemaker Justin Michaud of Coyote Canyon Winery and owner/grower Mike Andrews. They teamed up for the 2015 Coyote Canyon Vineyard Estate Sangiovese, which the Cascadia judging panel voted as best of show.

Dunham Cellars, winner of the Tom Drumheller Memorial Award for the Best Walla Walla Wine at Cascadia, will pour its 2016 Three Legged Red Wine.

Other wineries scheduled to pour are Ambassador Wines of Washington, Mercer Estates, Muret-Gaston, Schooler Nolan, Sleeping Dog, Tertulia Cellars and two winemaking schools, College Cellars of Walla Walla and Yakima Valley Vintners on the Grandview campus of Yakima Valley College.

“It’s nice that those two colleges will be here,” Dykes said. Cascadia also allows the Lodge at Columbia Point to promote its wine program, which includes naming each of its 82 guest suites after a different Washington winery.

“A lot of these wineries were very good friends with Tom,” Dykes said. “The wineries love it because they have a place to send their guests, and we have an arrangement with the wineries where we give their club members a discount on their rooms.”

There’s the expectation that three times a year each of those 82 wineries will attend to pour for guests at the Lodge. “So many wineries see the benefit and want to be a part of this program that we are going to open it up,” Dykes said.

This past winter, the Lodge began a series of Thursday afternoon pop-up tastings in the wine library, and Dykes taps into her longtime ties with KVEW-TV to promote each tasting the night before with the “Wine Wednesday” winemaker interview by reporter Kristin Walls.

“These are winemakers who may not have a tasting room and want to get their wines in front of people,” Dykes said. “They pour three of their wines to our guests and the public, and there is the opportunity for people to purchase those wines.”

And while Clearwater Canyon does not fit the template of a Washington winery, Dykes countered, “Oh, I’m definitely bringing Coco in for a pouring.”

The opportunity to evaluate 200+ Northwest wines alongside some of the West Coast’s top wine professionals also has Dykes considering contacting Cascadia’s top-performing wineries to see if they want to be part of the Lodge at Columbia Point’s yearlong wine program.

“Our hope is that we can feature some of these people,” said Dykes, who began her involvement in the wine industry first as a broadcaster in the 1990s. She later was hired to work at Hogue Cellars by Wade Wolfe. Dykes also oversaw wine programs for Columbia Valley grocers and restaurants.

This year, complementing Cascadia will be an exhibit from Pacific Northwest wine photographer Richard Duval. “Art from the Vine” emphasizes the fine art nature of the terroir drawn from Duval’s portfolio of travels to wine regions in Washington, Oregon, California, Italy and Austria.

He prints them directly on aluminum in a process that results in sharp detail and rich color. “Harvest Moon Over Sagemoor Vineyard” is a composite of three exposures captured at dawn when the moon was setting over the vineyard north of Pasco.

“So much of my wine imagery is defined by vivid color and strong contrasts between shadow and light,” Duval said. “Printing on metal dramatically underscores these features and allows me to offer a finished print that is much more contemporary in its presentation than a traditional matted and framed print.”

Last year during the inaugural Taste of Cascadia, winemakers were spread out across four areas and two floors of the hotel. That will change Sunday. “This year, it will all be on one floor, so it will be much easier to maneuver,” Dykes said. “We will have the wines available for purchase, just like last year, but the checkout will be streamlined – more like an express line.”

And if someone wants to have a bottle signed by a winemaker, bring a gold Sharpie and a smile. For ticket information, contact the Lodge at Columbia Point via [www.lodgeatcolumbiapoint.com](http://www.lodgeatcolumbiapoint.com) and (509) 713-7423.

*Eric Degerman operates Great Northwest Wine. Learn more about wine at*

Wordcount: 1070

Published: May 15, 2019, 4 p.m.

Tags: ae, dining, food, Lodge at Columbia Point, Northwest Wine, Taste of Cascadia, Walla Walla, wine



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**Downtown Spokane**  
999 W Riverside Ave  
Spokane, Wa 99201

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P.O. Box 2160  
Spokane, WA 99210

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