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## DRINK

ONE COUPLE, TWO ADVENTURERS IN THE WORLD OF WINE MAKING.



Two people took a chance. They took a deep breath, some tentative steps and then jumped right into the big, bold world of winemaking. Husband-and-wife team Scott Elder and Stephanie LaMonica (after much musing, deliberation and study) founded The Grande Dalles vineyard and wine producer in 2006, planting their first vines among the wheat of breathtaking Rock Flour Hill in the Columbia Valley AVA, just outside of Dalles, Oregon. The result was intoxicating.

The Grande Dalles is a realized dream, one that took a long time to come into fruition. While Scott studied for his doctorate in France, one Mr. Belin, owner of the local wine store La Cave de Longchamp, nurtured his fledgling love for wine. Sixteen years later, when Elder was working in dreary Ireland, immersing himself in vineyard books and surfing the web to learn about soil, climate, topography and land ownership, he determined to plant a vineyard in Oregon. The journey was a long and arduous one, but Elder had good help (LaMonica) and he was

never one to give up. It must have been that same drive that pushed him to disc fields, harvest wheat and raise pigs to put himself through college that kept him going.

Wines, individual by nature, The Grande Dalles wines are for individuals. "We grow what we like. Not everyone will like our wine, but that's not the point," says LaMonica. "We make wine with whatever the year gave us," says Elder. The couple toils to capture the character of each year in each vintage, adapting annual changes imposed by Mother Nature to craft their unique wine creations. The couple stresses a connection that they believe the wine world is losing — they emphasize the link between people, land, year and wine. They want people to think about their life and where they are when they drink The Grande Dalles wines. "If there is a dream, go out and get it," says LaMonica. Cheers to that!

This year, The Grande Dalles has produced three outstanding bottles, all with equally outstanding, sentimental names. The 2010 Gampo Sangiovese pays tribute to Gampo, LaMonica's Italian grandfather,

and the Home Place Tempranillo honors Elder's farm-life upbringing. Leroy's Finest, a Riesling, tips its hat to vineyard consultant Leroy. The Grande Dalles red wines are about forward tannins and minerality. They possess earth tones and herbal notes, reflecting the earth from which they originate — the rock flour of Grande Dalles, made up of silt, sand and clay. Fruit plays a supporting role in the wines. In 2011, Elder and LaMonica will introduce Longchamp, a Cabernet Sauvignon-focused wine.

The Grande Dalles bottles great wine, but even more so, it embodies heart, soul, hopes and dreams. Uncork a bottle by this duo and prepare yourself for that first inspired sip (and undoubtedly many more to follow.) Complex, savory and surprising, Grande Dalles wines please the senses and the mind. ANASTASIA KUDRASHOVA