

FOOD & WINE

Winemaker of the Year.

F&W honors Charles Smith, a former rocker making excellent wines in Washington State.

By Richard Nalley

Charles Smith

Nine years ago, this California native was managing a rock band in Copenhagen when he made an unusual career shift: “I left my life in Denmark and moved to Walla Walla, Washington, where I knew exactly one person.” That was Cayuse Vineyards’ Christophe Baron, who had rhapsodized to Smith about the potential of Washington Syrah. Smith taught himself how to make wine by creating minuscule lots of Syrah for his own K brand. Now his wines are some of Washington’s most sought-after. And Smith’s The Magnificent Wine Company wines (House Wine Red and White) and “modernist” Charles Smith Wines (The Velvet Devil Merlot, Kung Fu Girl Riesling and more) are among the best values anywhere. Despite his success, Smith remains a rocker at heart, with the 80-mph motorcycle habit to prove it.

