

Winemaker—Casey J. McClellan

As the founder of Seven Hills Winery, Casey McClellan has earned a reputation as a visionary winemaker who has helped to champion the diversity of the Northwest's most renowned appellations and vineyards. Recognized for crafting benchmark Washington State wines—with an emphasis on Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Bordeaux red blends—Casey has established a storied wine program that has been praised for its character, quality and fair pricing.

Casey's roots run deep in the Northwest. He was born in Oregon City, Oregon, and was raised in Walla Walla, Washington. As a fourth-generation farmer, Casey started working in agriculture in the seventh grade, and ultimately helped to put himself through college working wheat and pea harvests. In 1982, he joined his father in planting Seven Hills Vineyard. One of the first three vineyards in the region, Seven Hills played an important role in shaping the viticultural destiny of the valley, and has since emerged as one of Washington's grand cru sites.

After earning a degree in pharmaceutical studies from the University of Washington in 1983, Casey and his wife Vicky traveled to Europe for an 11-week bike trip that wound its way through the great winegrowing regions of France and Germany. "Vicky and I learned about terroir at 10 miles an hour," says Casey. "Riding our bikes through the countryside, we felt the wind and sunshine on our faces, we smelled the earth and saw vineyard after vineyard. We also saw how physically integrated winegrowing and winemaking were with the surrounding communities, their food and their lifestyle. It was a revelation."

Inspired by his experience planting Seven Hills Vineyard, and by his travels, Casey enrolled at the University of California, Davis, where he completed a Masters of Science with a focus on enology. During his studies, Casey won several coveted awards, including the Wine Spectator, August Sebastiani and Gino Zepponi scholarships. After leaving Davis, Casey and Vicky spent six months in Porto, Portugal, where they immersed themselves in the region's centuries-old winemaking traditions.

In 1988, Casey and Vicky returned to Walla Walla Valley to found Seven Hills Winery. "We wanted to do something original," says Casey. "And we believed in Walla Walla Valley and its amazing potential for producing wines that could shine on a worldwide stage."

Throughout his career, Casey has been a passionate advocate on behalf of Walla Walla Valley and Washington winemaking. He has also developed lasting, personal relationships with many of the Northwest's top growers. These relationships, and Casey's commitment to wines that authentically express the richness and elegance of Washington winemaking, have made Seven Hills one of Walla Walla Valley's preeminent wineries.

