

Sharp Dressed Man **Brian Carter**

of *Brian Carter Cellars*



Brian Carter, a winemaker with more than two decades of experience and numerous awards for his work at some of Washington state's leading wineries, talks candidly about the enjoyable and demanding aspects of a seemingly glamorous career.

As 2007 Washington Winemaker of the Year, what's the best tip you can give someone who wants to open a winery?

Win the lottery first. Then go work as a cellar rat for a while to make sure you really love driving a forklift, moving hoses and cleaning equipment.

Some people have the impression that winemakers have a romantic and laidback lifestyle. Would you say that's true?

You are asking a guy who is currently working 12-hour days, six days a week. Laid back? Flat on your back would be more like it.

If you had to pick one thing that diners should think about when ordering wine, what would it be?

Make sure the Brian Carter Cellars name is on the label—oh sorry! Look for balance. Ask for a wine suggestion that will complement your meal, not overpower it. The wine you select should enhance your overall dining experience.

Is there a dress code for winemakers? What's hanging in your closet?

Are clothes supposed to hang in the closet? When I'm out in the vineyards or in the cellar, I definitely want comfort over style. Sandals and shorts dominate the summer; loose-fitting, lightweight pants and knit shirts dominate the winter. The great thing about being a winemaker is that you can wear rubber boots all day and change into your Armani suit that evening for a special wine event. For the omnipresent Seattle rain, I prefer hats over umbrellas. I have a collection of ties from the thirties and forties that I especially like to show off. My favorite bow tie was given to me by my grandfather.

What wine would you pair with a classic Dick's Deluxe Cheeseburger?

Let's see, is that with or without onions? Regardless, I'd probably go with the magic Brian Carter's Abracadabra blend.

If you had to choose between a 2006 Red Carlo Rossi and a 2007 Shimmering White Franzia, which would you pick?

That's a tough choice. How about the White Franzia—I think it would be great poured into my next pasta marinara.

What's in your personal wine cellar right now?

I was on a trip to Carmel with my restaurateur girlfriend a year ago, and we had a fabulous bottle of 1979 St. Clement Cabernet. We liked it so well we bought one off the list to go. We are planning a dinner around that wine soon.

—Jeannine Hall Gailey