

# COLUMBIA CREST

## JUAN MUÑOZ OCA WINEMAKER

Juan Muñoz Oca is the head winemaker at Columbia Crest Winery in Paterson, Washington. Columbia Crest is recognized as the leading producer of acclaimed, high-quality wines from Washington state.

As winemaker, Muñoz Oca is responsible for producing the winery's portfolio of Reserve, H3, and Grand Estates wines. He joined Columbia Crest in 2003 and was named winemaker in 2011. Prior to 2011, he was dedicated to the winery's red wine program. It was during this time that the 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon was produced, becoming the first Washington wine to be named 'Wine of the Year' by *Wine Spectator* in 2009.

Raised in Mendoza, Argentina, Muñoz Oca came under the tutelage of his grandfather, cellar master at Bodegas Toso winery, at a young age. The older man instilled in him a love and respect for wine, as well as for his family's Spanish culture, that was to become the root of a lifelong passion for winemaking. He picked his first grapes at the age of eight, later took an after-school job in a wine cellar, and spent his vacations helping his grandfather with harvest.

"I've been involved with grapes since I was a little boy – my grandfather was in the industry and his father was in the industry – it's all I've known," says Muñoz Oca. "Winemaking has been in my family, it's in my blood, it's what I do, and it's who I am."

During his college years, Muñoz Oca gained more wine industry experience during stints at various wineries in Argentina. After graduating with honors from Argentina's National University of Cuyo with dual degrees in agricultural engineering and winemaking, he studied viticulture in Ribera del Duero, Spain and joined the winemaking team at Terrazas de los Andes, an Argentine premium winery owned by Chandon.

In 2001, Muñoz Oca met the legendary Dr. Robert Wample, then a top viticulturalist at Washington State University. Wample convinced him to further his winemaking career in Washington. In the summer of 2001, he began interning with the viticulture team at Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, and in 2003 began working at Columbia Crest. With time out for stints at Bleasdale Vineyards in Australia and Bordeaux's Chateau Puy Guilhem, he's been at Columbia Crest ever since.

Although his winemaking experience stretches across the globe, it is his time at Columbia Crest that has been the most meaningful. "Washington state is a very special place for winemaking," says Muñoz Oca. "At Columbia Crest, our team is committed to crafting spectacular wines vintage after vintage. We have high quality fruit, ideal growing conditions, and the best viticultural practices. I fell in love with the wine and the people, and that's why I've been here since."



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