



## Serious Oenophiles Should Get to Know Gibbons Lane

Randy Buckner, Wine and Spirits

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Gibbons Lane is a relatively new winery. Its first commercial release was the 1999 cabernet sauvignon and merlot, a minuscule 100-plus cases. The current releases top the scale at 400 cases.

Owner and winemaker Carolyn Lakewold states that she has an ultimate goal of 1,000 cases per vintage. She feels that she can maintain her tight hands-on approach at this level.

Lakewold has a background in education. She taught English as a second language for several years, as well as performing coaching duties. Reaching a burnout point, she let her heart direct the next phase of her life.

She gave Doug McCrea of McCrea Cellars in Rainier a call, and before long, she was working as a cellar rat for McCrea. She credits him for training her in the chemistry of winemaking and showing her how wonderful Washington fruit can be. She also became fast friends with Bob Andrade of Andrade Cellars in Olympia and states that she talks to him daily on wine matters. She learned a lot about types of oak, levels of toast and blends from Andrade.

While Lakewold used McCrea and Andrade as mentors, her wine style is clearly her own. Never a home winemaker, she ended her education career in 1998 and jumped into winemaking feet first. She is after wines with great finesse and tannins that support the wine's structure without removing the enamel from your teeth. She wants oak barrel flavors to play a supporting role instead of overwhelming the wine. Most importantly, she wants her wines to be approachable on release, yet will still improve with years of cellar aging. I find these goals very refreshing in the face of so many over-extracted, over-oaked wines on the market today.

Lakewold's wines are marketed under the Donedei label. Donedei is named for a home in France where she has stayed on her visits. The name literally translates as "gift of God." The fruit is predominantly from Red Mountain and only free-run juice is used in her wines. The wine is aged in 80 percent French and 20 percent American oak.

Below are notes on the current releases as well as comments on the 2001 barrel samples. It appears that the teacher has become a very good student as well.

2000 Donedei Merlot, Columbia Valley, Washington, \$34, 140 cases: You'll find lots of lovely black cherry fruit on the nose, with a touch of raspberries and spice. The tastes are complex and fruity, with ripe tannins, brisk acidity and a lengthy aftertaste. Very drinkable right now, the wine will improve for at least five years in the cellar and may go considerably longer. 91/91.

2000 Donedei Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington, \$36, 260 cases: A Bordeaux blend that is purple-red in color. The nose displays a host of cassis, blackberry and spice notes. More tannic than the merlot, this is a definite candidate for the cellar. Extremely well-structured, this is a current match for a hearty roast beef; just released. 91/91.

I tried several barrel samples from the 2001 vintage. They are equally impressive and may even be a notch above the 2000 offerings. Already showing great fruit, the balance is there, which is all important to me. This is a winery for serious oenophiles to keep an eye on.

*Gibbons Lane Winery*

*P.O. Box 7755  
Olympia, WA 98507*

*Phone: 360-264-8466  
Fax: 360-352-8593  
Web site: none currently  
E-mail: donedei@aol.com*

*Founded: 1997  
Winemaker: Carolyn Lakewold  
Wines: cabernet sauvignon, merlot  
Case production: currently just over  
400 cases, with a goal of 1,000 cases.*