



Mithun designed the new Novelty Hill/Januik Winery tasting room in Woodinville

NOVELTY + HISTORY

A new Woodinville tasting room highlights the talents of a longtime Washington winemaker

BY SHANNON BORG

THE HISTORY OF WASHINGTON wine is at work in Mike Januik's delicate creations. As head winemaker for Chateau Ste. Michelle from 1990 to 1999, he had access to fruit from some of the state's best vineyards. And after almost 10 years on his own, he still does, but now he's pouring his wine just down the street from Ste. Michelle at the sleek new Novelty Hill/Januik Winery tasting room.

Januik has been making acclaimed wines under the Januik Winery label—which he and his wife Carolyn own—since 1999, and for the Novelty Hill label since 2000. Among other accolades, he has been called “a magician with Merlot” by *Wine Advocate*, and his 2003 Novelty Hill Cabernet Sauvignon was one of only four Washington wines on *Wine Specta-*

tor's Top 100 Wines list in 2006. His history with Chateau Ste. Michelle and his longstanding reputation for making delicious, delicate, well-balanced wines, from Sauvignon Blanc to Chardonnay to Bordeaux-style blends, has earned him the access he enjoys. Nearing harvest, Januik visits vineyards—Red Mountain's Klipsun Vineyards, Weinbau on the Wahluke Slope and others—about once a week. “I go through the vineyards, and although of course we measure pH levels [the acid/alkaline levels] and Brix [the level of sugar in the grapes], we pick on taste.”

In the past year or two, making wine wasn't the only thing on Januik's mind. He and his partners, Novelty Hill's owners Tom Alberg and his wife Judi Beck, have focused on building the snazzy new Nov-

elty Hill/Januik Winery and tasting room in Woodinville. The new room, which opened last fall, was designed by Seattle architecture firm Mithun, known for sustainable design, in collaboration with landscape designer Katherine Anderson, whose plan includes a firepit and several different levels of gardens. Its huge cement walls and chandeliers that resemble blown glass offer a level of contemporary rustic elegance that would be as at home in Napa as they are in Woodinville.

For Januik, the large new facility “makes everything easier,” he says. “The new, up-to-date facility means we save about 25 percent more energy and have better process control.” Alerts from the winery computer let him know if temperatures in the fermentation tanks change unexpectedly. But technological advancements aside, he's as excited about keeping things the same as about all the changes. “I'm happy with what we are doing, and with the great vineyards we are working with,” says Januik. “The wines from Cold Creek and Champoux vineyards that we made back in [the late '80s and early '90s] are aging very well; it will be exciting to continue to see what happens and build that history.” **S**