

KIONA VINEYARDS, RED BORDEAUX BLEND, RESERVE

RED MOUNTAIN, YAKIMA VALLEY, WASHINGTON 2013



We had no working knowledge of today's wine when it hit our table earlier in the month and we certainly didn't know it had garnered accolades like "Best US Cabernet Blend" and "Best Bordeaux Blend" from high-profile magazines. We typically steer away from the hubbub of critics—especially claims of this magnitude—but it couldn't be avoided today because we wholeheartedly agree with them! **-Ian Cauble, Master Sommelier**

My first taste of Kiona's 2013 Red Mountain "Reserve" transported me to triple-digit Napa territory and its balance of opulent power and refined elegance can be attributed to two key components: Kiona's experience (they are wine pioneers in Washington) and, equally important, the little gem of a region known as Red Mountain. Only the most privy wine lovers are familiar with this tiny, yet increasingly venerated AVA—as noted by Wine Enthusiast, "Red Mountain has established itself as not only Washington's premier winegrowing region, but one of the finest in the world." I'll leave you with this: Kiona matches the very best Washington has to offer (e.g. Quilceda Creek, Cayuse) at a price that cannot be beaten. It truly is one of the finest Bordeaux Blend values we've ever tasted.

When Kiona founders Jim Holmes and John Williams decided to purchase 80 acres of Washington land in 1972, they did so as an investment, but with the land so dried up and desolate, others thought throwing their money in a wood chipper would be more fiscally responsible. In a *Wine Enthusiast* interview, Jim recalled the scene: "There was no water, no power, no roads. Strangely enough, we decided we'd go ahead and do it anyway"—"it" being grape growing. And so they broke ground in 1975 and began planting a mixed bag of grape varieties spanning 12 acres. At the time, no one else had executed such an absurd idea in this area. Why would they? If there wasn't vegetation prior, it was probably for good reason. Little did everyone know, this "absurd" idea proved to be one of the greatest visionary undertakings in Washington's winemaking history. Today, Kiona's holdings have expanded to 240 acres and the region as a whole has been planted at an unstoppable pace. Additionally, Red Mountain (within Yakima Valley AVA) was awarded AVA-status in 2001, and, not unlike the 49ers, a slew of prospectors have swarmed the area, eager to take a bite out of this grape-growing gold mine.

Today's "Reserve" label is sourced from two prestigious estate vineyards: the original "Kiona Estate" (which was first planted in '75) and "Heart of the Hill" Vineyard, a piece of land that is now considered to be one of Washington's finest. Every grape farmed by Kiona is owned by them—and are available for purchase on their website! Since the beginning, they've farmed with sustainability in mind and used irrigation sparingly. Red Mountain averages five inches of precipitation (snow included) annually and experiences two more hours of sunlight per day than Napa: It has been described as a "blast furnace" that is "unrelentingly hot" but can see temperatures that swing 40 to 50 degrees come nightfall. At their winery, grapes undergo a long fermentation with extended skin contact before resting in 80% new French and American (equal portions) barrels for 22 impressive months. The final blend is largely Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with smatterings of Bordeaux's other four varieties.

In the glass, Kiona's Red Mountain "Reserve" shows off massive concentration and full opacity. Thick, dense tears coat the glass, trying their hardest to ward off the effects of gravity. The wine displays a deep ruby color with dark purple reflections throughout. The nose is intoxicatingly rich with wild blackberry, huckleberry pie, blackcurrant, crème de Cacao, Chambord, black cherry, cedar shavings, waves of baking spice, crushed stones, red plums, violets, and fresh herbs. It's unmistakably "New World" but it isn't an opulent brute; there is impressive elegance here and it drinks far below its 14.5% label. Still, the palate is immensely textured with velvety tannins and layers of dense, ultra-ripe fruit. With all this weight and structure, the finish is like a magic trick with its gracefulness: A prickle of fresh acidity and mineral savor keeps it nimble. We were clearly floored upon trying this '13, but it also has a healthy life ahead of it and should be drinking at high levels over the next decade. You, must, however, consume a bottle or two now. Simply decant for 30-60 minutes and serve in large Bordeaux stems alongside a classic, medium-rare cut—a pan-seared strip steak will do the job nicely. Enjoy this affordable beauty!

"Few (if any) domestic Bordeaux blends can compete with this wine on value-for-dollar. It's a serious red that showcases the genuine greatness of the Red Mountain AVA—an appellation we all need to know better!"

SOMM SELECT



COUNTRY
USA

REGION
Washington — Yakima Valley

SUB-REGION
Red Mountain AVA

VARIETAL
Cabernet Sauvignon 52%, Merlot 35%, Petit Verdot 6%, Malbec 3%, Cabernet Franc 2%, Carmenère 2%

ALCOHOL
14.5%

OAK
80% New (Half French, Half American)

SOIL
Sandy Loess

FARMING
Sustainable Practices

SERVICE TEMPERATURE
65°F

GLASSWARE
Large Bordeaux Stem

DRINKING WINDOW
Now-2028

DECANTING
30-60 Minutes

PAIRING
Pan-Seared Strip Steak
<http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/pan-seared-strip-steak>