

# Whitehouse-Crawford Restaurant

Walla Walla, Washington



Whitehouse-Crawford  
Restaurant  
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KERRY NEWBERRY

## SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON IS NOW A DINING DESTINATION.

Based in Portland, Ore., Kerry Newberry is a freelance writer covering food, wine, and travel. She contributes regularly to *Edible Portland*, *Oregon Wine Press*, and *Culinate*; her work has also appeared in *Tasting Panel Magazine*, *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, *The Oregonian*, *MIX Magazine*, and *Fodor's Travel Publications*.

It looks like the Wild West in Walla Walla. Big blue sky sweeps over undulating wheat fields, sagebrush, tumbleweed, and tangled grapevines. Where farmers and ranchers mingle with world-renowned vintners, neither cowboy boots nor white tablecloths are out of place.

Here, no less than in Napa or the Willamette Valley, "the restaurants follow the wine," says Jamie Guerin, chef and co-owner of Whitehouse-Crawford Restaurant, which he opened in the

spring of 2000. Formerly the chef at French classic Café Campagne in Seattle, Guerin has seen Walla Walla evolve over that short period. In 1990, the valley contained six wineries and 100 vineyard acres. Today, more than 100 wineries and 1,800 acres of vines flourish in the internationally acclaimed region, which boasts some of the most fertile soil in North America and, at the peak of summer, bursts forth with a cornucopia of produce (like its famed sweet onions).

Photos by Ali Walker

## RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHT



Whitehouse-Crawford Restaurant exterior (left) and dining room (above); chef-partner Jamie Guerin (bottom).

Drawn to a simpler lifestyle and the farm-fresh ingredients chefs dream of, Guerin was quick to adapt from his cosmopolitan ways to those of the country. With his tousled hair, low drawl, and five-o'clock shadow, Guerin certainly fits the laid-back image of an area where bicyclists and grass-fed cows outnumber the buildings and hybrid cars roam winding back roads.

### WHITEHOUSE-CRAWFORD RESTAURANT FACT SHEET

- Hours: Wednesday-Monday, 5-10 p.m.
- Seating: 99
- Table Turnover Time: 2-3 hours
- Average Daily Covers: 100
- Annual Sales: \$1,100,000
- Check Average: \$50
- Entrée Prices: \$16-39
- Wine Staff: Wine director Robert Ames and two sommeliers
- Wine-Program Focus: Walla Walla wines and great wines of the world
- Wine Sales as Percentage of Total Sales: 26%
- Wine Sales per Cover: \$13.50
- Wine Sales by Format: 70% by the bottle, 30% by the glass
- Wine List: 14-page leather-bound book
- Number of Wine Selections: About 250
- Selections Changed: Weekly
- Top-Selling Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot, Chardonnay
- Bottle Price Range: \$25-325
- Median Bottle Sale Price: \$72
- Corkage Fee: \$15 for first 750-ml bottle, \$25 for each bottle thereafter; \$30 per magnum
- By-the-Glass Pour: Choice of 3 oz. or 5 oz.
- Inventory Management: Point-of-sale and manual count
- Inventory Turnover: About 6 times per year





Whitehouse-Crawford bar (above); spaghetti squash-parsnip pierogi in beet broth with horseradish crème fraîche (bottom).

And just as “Walla Walla is its own unique place,” in Guerin’s words, so Whitehouse-Crawford could not exist anywhere other than its spot at the corner of Third Avenue and Cherry Street. This graceful brick building, erected in 1904 to house a wood-working mill, was rescued from demolition and restored prior to the restaurant’s opening; it’s now listed on the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The old mill lives on in vintage black-and-white photos adorning the brick walls, as well as

in the storied red-fir floors, made from the original joists, beneath stately whitewashed wood beams. At one end of the dining room, picture windows look into the barrel room of neighboring Seven Hills Winery.

The soul of the restaurant, to Guerin, inheres in the best of what Walla Walla has to offer, past and present—a sentiment expressed by the decor, at once rustic and elegant. “We have white tablecloths because they look nice,” says Guerin. “But there is no dress code—we want people to relax.” Whether dressed down or up, many Whitehouse-Crawford customers are out-of-towners, driving all the way from Seattle or Portland, Ore., or even flying from New York City or San Francisco directly into the Walla Walla airport in search of an intimate dining experience.

The 220-bottle wine list is a definite draw. Managed by wine director Robert Ames, it combines a selection of benchmark wines from around the world with an encyclopedic collection of local offerings, including limited-production and older vintages from the region’s pioneers dating back to 2000. Ames finds that patrons typically know what they want from Walla Walla, ordering bottles from cult wineries like Abeja that are not open to the public. “To experience an older Woodward Canyon or Leonetti Cellar and know that the provenance on it is just impeccable—yes, they will have it,” says Ames. “The price is not an issue; it’s an opportunity.” That said, his list is approachable at all price points, from the 2008 àMaurice Malbec (\$55) by rising star Anna Schafer to a coveted 2008 Cayuse



### MENU EXCERPT

#### STARTERS

Selection of Cheeses with Housemade Crackers and Rhubarb Chutney	\$14
Vietnamese-Style Deep-Fried Calamari with Ginger and Two Dipping Sauces	\$12
Buttermilk-Fried Quail with Shaved Asparagus Salad and Honey	\$12
Pan-Fried Maryland Softshell Crab with Stir-Fried Greens and Sweet-and-Sour Sauce	\$15
Basket of Crispy-Fried Sweet Onions	\$6

#### ENTRÉES

Oregon Beef Tenderloin with Red-Wine Sauce, Mushrooms, and Shallot-Thyme Mashed Potatoes	\$39
Grilled Pork Shoulder with Harissa, Cilantro, Carrot Purée, and Spring Vegetables	\$26
Braised Tofu with Lemongrass, Ginger, Asparagus, Mushrooms, and Green-Garlic Yakisoba	\$24
Roasted Copper River Salmon with Fregola, Salmon Roe, Arugula, and Pickled Spring Onions	\$28
Mad Hatcher Farm Chicken Cooked Under a Brick in a Stew of Spring Vegetables with Bacon	\$26
Whitehouse-Crawford Burger with Bacon, Cheddar, Mustard Aioli, and Fried Onions	\$16

RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHT

WINE LIST EXCERPT

WALLA WALLA WHITE

**Chardonnay**

Abeja, Columbia Valley	2009	\$54
àMaurice Cellars, Columbia Valley	2008	\$45
Buty, Conner Lee Vineyard, Columbia Valley	2010	\$55
DaMa, Columbia Valley	2009	\$35
Forgeron Cellars, Columbia Valley	2009	\$41
L'Ecole No. 41, Columbia Valley	2010	\$35
Woodward Canyon, Washington	2009	\$63

**Viognier**

àMaurice Cellars, Estate "Sparrow," Walla Walla Valley	2010	\$52
Bergevin Lane Vineyards, Columbia Valley	2008	\$41
Seven Hills, Talcott Vineyard, Columbia Valley	2010	\$32
Tertulia Cellars, Lonesome Spring Ranch, Yakima Valley	2009	\$33
Tranche, Roussanne 67%, Viognier 33%, Columbia Valley	2007	\$48
Walla Walla River Winery, Walla Walla Valley	2007	\$29

**Sémillon/Sauvignon Blanc**

Amavi Cellars, Sémillon, Walla Walla Valley	2010	\$35
Beresan, Sémillon Estate, Walla Walla Valley	2009	\$31
Buty, 61% Sémillon, 21% Sauvignon, 18% Muscadelle, Columbia Valley	2010	\$41
L'Ecole No. 41, Sémillon, Columbia Valley	2009	\$31
Robison Ranch Cellars, Sémillon Spofford Station Vineyard, Walla Walla Valley	2009	\$33
Saviah Cellars, "Star Meadows" (Sauvignon Blanc/Sémillon), Columbia Valley	2010	\$35

**Riesling**

Charles Smith Wines, "Kung Fu Girl," Columbia Valley	2009	\$28
Poet's Leap, Columbia Valley	2010	\$35
Seven Hills, Columbia Valley	2009	\$28

**Pinot Gris**

Seven Hills, Oregon	2010	\$30
Tranche, Columbia Valley	2007	\$32

**Other White**

L'Ecole No. 41, Chenin Blanc "Walla Voila," Columbia Valley	2009	\$30
Waterbook, "Mélange Blanc," Columbia Valley	2008	\$31
Yellow Hawk Cellar, Muscat Canelli "Dry-Style," Columbia Valley	2008	\$28



Vietnamese-style fried calamari (top); pork terrine with foie gras and black truffles (above); wine director Robert Ames (bottom).

God Only Knows Grenache (\$175). The elusive Cayuse Edith Grenache Rosé is well worth the \$69 price tag, if it happens to be on the list.

Every season, Guerin and Ames collaborate to create a six-course, wine-paired tasting menu. The best seat in the house for this extravagant taste of place is at the chef's counter, a half-circle perched before the live theater of the open kitchen. Guerin's mantra is "solid food with fresh ingredients" sourced from local farmers, ranchers, and bakers. When mushrooms are in season, for example, foragers swing by with bushels of

wild morels, corals, and porcini from the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Goat cheese from Monteillet Fromagerie in nearby Dayton is often on the menu. A simple *amuse-bouche* of garlic scapes and sun-dried-tomato pesto on a cracker tastes of the garden; a basket brimming with paper-thin ribbons of fried onion is a tangle of crunchy, sweet, and salty goodness. And a signature entrée of grass-fed beef tenderloin in red-wine sauce with wild mushrooms and shallot-thyme mashed potatoes pairs perfectly, of course, with a lush Walla Walla red.

On any given night, the wine-loving tourists at Whitehouse-Crawford are joined by a cross-section of the close-knit local community. From the butcher eating a burger at the bar to a symphony member snacking on cheese, Guerin reports, "it can be like a party in here." Not infrequently, a customer will order a bottle of wine made by a fellow patron. "We'll say, 'Hey, there's somebody here drinking your wine; do you want to go over and say hi?'" People get a real kick out of that," says Guerin. Such moments encapsulate the many charms of Walla Walla. 🍷

