

**Orofino Vineyards****2006 Sagebrush Series Merlot
(Similkameen Valley)**

Sagebrush Series is a new label from John and Virginia Weber's Orofino Vineyards, created to mark wines made from Similkameen Valley vineyards other than the estate vineyard. The grapes for this wine were grown in a vineyard (not named on the label) in nearby Keremeos.

Orofino is among the handful of relatively new wineries working on elevating the profile of the emerging Similkameen, a valley parallel to the south Okanagan with under-exploited potential for vineyards. Hot, dry and perpetually windy, the Similkameen seems suited to grow big reds, although not to the exclusion of carefully selected white varieties. Orofino succeeds with both red and white varieties.

The Webers gave this Merlot only 10 months of aging in a combination of French and American oak barrels. As a result, the fruit aromas and flavours come through vividly: aromas of black cherries and black berries with herbal and cedar under tones. On first opening, the texture is firm and pleasantly rustic. By the next day, the tannins have mellowed to expose mouthfilling flavours. The lesson: decant this wine now or cellar it for a year to get the most from it. 88 points.

Reviewed October 19, 2007 by [John Schreiner](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Orofino Vineyards](#)

Vintage: 2006

Wine: Sagebrush Series Merlot

Appellation: [Similkameen Valley](#)

Grape: Merlot

Price: \$25.00

THE REVIEWER**John Schreiner**

John Schreiner has been covering the wines of British Columbia for the past 30 years and has written 10 books on the wines of Canada and BC. He has judged at major competitions and is currently a panel member for the Lieutenant Governor's Awards of

Excellence in Wine. Both as a judge and as a wine critic, he approaches each wine not to find fault, but to find excellence. That he now finds the latter more often than the former testifies to the dramatic improvement shown by BC winemaking in the past decade.