

**Sumac Ridge Estate Winery****2006 Chardonnay, Black Sage Vineyard  
(Okanagan Valley)**

Harry McWatters, the founder of Sumac Ridge Estate Winery in 1979, recently announced that he will step down as the winery's president at the end of April (and will start a wine education centre). However, he and his family remain 52 percent owners of Black Sage Vineyard, one of Sumac Ridge's primary assets. The other 48 percent is owned by Vincor Canada, the Constellation Brands subsidiary that owns Sumac Ridge.

McWatters bought the 115 acre property in 1992 for \$3,200 an acre, putting in 100 acres of *vinifera* - the single largest *vinifera* planting in Canada at the time. What seemed like a gamble at the time produces some of Sumac Ridge's best grapes. The property has also appreciated so dramatically that neither partner is in a hurry to buy the other out. Comparable raw vineyard land in the Okanagan now trades for upwards of \$135,000 an acre.

The Chardonnay from Black Sage's sun-baked, sandy soil invariably is rich and ripe. Winemaker Mark Wendenburg adds more texture with barrel fermentation and malolactic treatment. This buttery wine has gobs of sweet tropical flavours with a lingering finish of cloves. The winery has preserved enough acidity to keep the fruit bright and lively. 88 points.

Reviewed March 19, 2008 by [John Schreiner](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Sumac Ridge Estate Winery](#)

**Vineyard:** Black Sage Vineyard

**Vintage:** 2006

**Wine:** Chardonnay

**Appellation:** [Okanagan Valley](#)

**Grape:** Chardonnay

**Price:** \$19.99

**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.