

# QFC Stores add Gig Harbor Flavor to Top-Of-the-Line Northwest Wine

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## Deal with Kirkland business puts sunset view on bottle

By Kalyn Kelley of the Gateway

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Christmas gifts should be a little easier for Gig Harbor residents this year.

This June, with the help of the city of Gig Harbor, both area QFC stores unveiled their specialty Maritime Merlot and Maritime Chardonnay-Viognier wines, complete with a sunset view of the harbor on its label.

“We’ve already sold over 100 cases,” said Jeff Brown, store manager for the Point Fosdick QFC.

Brown said the idea for the specialty wine came to him while attending the grand opening of a store in Redmond.

“They had done a city label for their store and the idea seemed a great way to link with the community,” he said.

Unlike some franchises, QFC managers are able to tailor the items in their stores to the unique culture of their communities.

“It’s a very local, very personal type of thing to be able to offer,” Brown said.

After approving the use of the City of Gig Harbor logo and getting permission from the city photographer to use the iconic Harborview image featured on the city’s Web site, the search was on for a local supplier who could meet the request.

Brown and Point Fosdick QFC wine steward Eric Owens approached Northwest Cellars, a well-known wine distributor based in Kirkland, to carry out the project.

“People are concerned that, because the bottle is a keepsake, that the wine isn’t very good, but this is some of the highest quality we’ve had,” Brown said.

Many customers who have purchased a single bottle to save have come back to buy several more after trying the first, Owens said.

“We’re very proud of this wine, even without the label,” he said.

Although the stores only offer two types of wine in the specialty bottles now, Owen and Brown say they are continually testing new samples for future use.

“We are very careful about what we will use,” Brown said.

Before choosing their merlot and chardonnay-viognier, both Brown and Owen called on their friends and family to evaluate the product, serving it at parties and dinners for months prior to their approval.

“It’s a great feeling to be able to offer your community something like this,” Brown said.

**(Reach Lifestyles Editor Kalyn Kelley at 853-9243 or by email at [kalyn.kelley@gateline.com](mailto:kalyn.kelley@gateline.com))**