

## Willamette Valley Hillside

Oregon's wine pioneers came to the Willamette Valley looking for the perfect place to grow Pinot noir – a place where longer hours of daylight and cooler growing conditions allow wine grapes to ripen slowly, with a long period of flavor development at the end of the growing season, and harvest in late September or early October. Ninety percent of the Pinot noir grown in Oregon is grown in the Willamette Valley.

But once that most fundamental choice has been made, it must be said that most of the acres in the Willamette Valley are not really suitable for growing fine wine. Indeed, most of the acres of the Willamette Valley are deep, rich valley-floor soils brought to us all the way from Montana by the Missoula Floods at the end of the last ice age. These valley floor soils are paradise for a great diversity of crops, but they can spell trouble for Pinot noir. Pinot noir at low elevations is subject to frost damage in the spring, and in such deep soils it can become overly vigorous, and unable to ripen its fruit properly.

In almost all cases, the great Pinots of the Willamette Valley are grown on a few hillsides well above the valley floor. South or southeast facing hillside vineyards are the common feature, regardless of a significant diversity of soil types and weather patterns, among the six new federally approved AVA's (American Viticultural Areas) within the Willamette Valley.\*

The fruit for our 2008 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir came from a number of different vineyards within two of these new AVAs: the Eola-Amity Hills (where Bethel Heights is located) and the Dundee Hills. This is the first wine we have made from vineyards outside the Eola Hills in many years; some Dundee Hills fruit just happened to come our way unexpectedly and was too good to resist. The blend is pure Willamette Valley!

\* Dundee Hills AVA, Eola-Amity Hills AVA, Chehalem Mountains AVA, Yamhill-Carlton District AVA, Ribbon Ridge AVA, and McMinnville AVA

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2008 PINOT NOIR • WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Harvest dates: October 15 – 23, 2008

Source: 60% Eola-Amity Hills, 40% Dundee Hills

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.15%, pH 3.56, TA: 5.8

1433 cases bottled September 2009

Suggested retail \$28

**THE 2008 VINTAGE:** *“Summer temperatures were so cool in Oregon in 2008 that Pinot Noir producers worried that they would never get their grapes ripe. But when the calendar turned to October, the sun came out and kept shining until all the grapes were in. Temperatures stayed warm but not hot. In cellar after cellar on a visit this past September I tasted barrels, tanks and just-bottled wines of light texture and refinement, with glowing flavors, silky tannins, long finishes and that elusive element every Pinot Noir producer seeks – finesse. ... When the stars align, as in 2008, it can result in that perfect vintage Oregon vintners dream about.”*

Harvey Steiman, *Wine Spectator*, 2/28/10

**VINIFICATION:** The fruit was destemmed into 1.5-ton fermentation bins and kept cold for five days before fermentation began. Following ten to fourteen-day fermentations, the new wine went into French oak barrels (35% new) for ten months.

**TASTING NOTES:** Initial aromas of chocolate, plum, and raspberry over clove, wet earth and barrel spice. Lush raspberry and blackberry flavors emerge on the palate, balanced by crisp acidity and age-worthy, fine-grained tannins. As with most classic cool vintages in Oregon, this wine is approachable in its youth, but will reward those patient enough to give it some time to age in the bottle.