

THE CASTEEL PINOT NOIR

Over the past twenty years Bethel Heights has been known for limited bottlings of distinctive vineyard and block designated Pinot noir wines. In 2002 we took a new path and produced our first Casteel Pinot Noir, a blend of barrels from several different blocks in the estate vineyard, selected to express the epitome of the vintage at Bethel Heights. This is our only Pinot noir that carries our family name rather than a place name.

THE 2016 VINTAGE

2016 was the earliest vintage we have ever seen at Bethel Heights since our first harvest thirty-five years ago. Our vineyard was almost a month ahead of “normal” at every turning point in the growing season. And yet, the wines of 2016 are not the uniformly opulent offerings one would expect from a year defined by precociousness. Ripeness came early, but not at the expense of purity and elegance, especially in our older, own rooted plantings that make up half of our estate vineyard.

94 THE WINE ADVOCATE

The nose of the 2016 Pinot Noir Casteel bursts from the glass with violet and lilac aromas over blueberry pie, cardamom, potpourri, bitter peel, tree bark and tilled loamy earth. Medium-bodied, the palate is packed full of blackberry and bramble berry preserves notes, with a wonderful frame of fine-grained tannins and loads of freshness, finishing very, very long with layer after layer of earth and savory notions.

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A very complex and soulful impression on the nose with wild, spice-dusted red cherries and a sappy, blue-fruit edge. The palate has freshness with a succulent build of tannins that delivers a long and deeply juicy, focused finish. Drink or hold.



2016 PINOT NOIR CASTEEL

Harvest date: September 19, 2016

Grapes at harvest: Brix 23.7, pH 3.3, TA 5.8 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.9%, pH 3.5, TA 5.4 gr/liter

Barrel aged 14 months in French oak, 40% new barrels

225 cases produced

Bottled unfined in January 2018

FRUIT SOURCE: For the 2016 Casteel we chose barrels from a relatively young block planted in 1994 (West Block 115) for its especially exuberant fruit, but in this vintage defined by almost excessive generosity, we turned to older vines planted in 1977 (Shed Block 777) for restraint, balance, and depth in the blend.

VINIFICATION: All the fruit was destemmed without crushing. After a 3-day cold soak, the fermenters warmed naturally and were gently pumped over twice a day at the onset of fermentation. After fermentation reached peak temperatures (82-88 F), the new wine was aerated once a day, and pressed at dryness. After settling, the new wine was racked to barrels, and aged 14 months on lees.

WINEMAKER NOTES: In a vintage that threatened to be over-wrought and soft, we were very pleased that our estate maintained the energy and focus we have come to expect, to support and carry the fruit long into the future. Aromas of black cherry, pine resin, and black currants dominate, with hints of cooking chocolate and cinnamon in the background. Flavors of black berries and dark chocolate play over the sinewy, taut structure of this wine with its mineral laden acidity and fine-grained tannins.