

The New York Times

Why Oregon Will Fondly Remember
2011 Eric Asimov

How important is vintage in discussing fine wines? I'd say we overrate it, or at least over-generalize about it. That said, sometimes a particular vintage stands out, either because it is so unusual or because its character somehow impresses itself indelibly on the wines. Such is the case with the 2011 pinot noirs from Oregon.

The year was unusually cool and long, resulting in great anxiety for growers, who wondered if their grapes could possibly be harvested before rain and cold set in. Luckily, a clear, warm October saved the vintage. The result was wines that differ markedly from other recent vintages.

People like me who love pinot noirs of finesse and restraint will adore the 2011 vintage. The best wines are clear, focused and vivacious...

For a closer look at the vintage, the wine panel recently tasted 20 bottles of 2011 pinot noir from Oregon... Those we did taste were characterized by freshness and subtlety, with flavors primarily of red fruits, flowers and minerals. We were happy to have found very few overbearing or overly oaky wines. Despite their delicacy, I think the best will age surprisingly well.

#6 Bethel Heights Willamette Valley Casteel Reserve 2011 Fragrant, subtle and graceful, with stony, spicy berry flavors.

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2011 CASTEEL PINOT NOIR

Certified Sustainably Grown

Fruit source: Bethel Heights 114 & Justice Pommard

Harvest dates: October 26 & 29, 2011

Grapes at harvest: Brix 22.1, pH 3.14, TA 8.7 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 12.5%, pH 3.45, TA 7.5 gr/liter

Barrel aged 11 months in French oak, 47% new barrels

248 cases produced

Bottled unfinned on September 28, 2012

VINIFICATION: All the fruit was destemmed without crushing. After 5 to 8 day cold soak, the fermenters warmed naturally and were gently punched down twice a day at the onset of fermentation. After the fermentations had reached their peak temperatures (82-88 F), the new wine was aerated once a day, and pressed at dryness. After settling 72 hours the new wine was racked to barrels.

WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES: The wine opens with aromas of caramel, black currant, and almond, with breezy undercurrents of celery seed and balsam. Flavors of cherry and new strawberries develop on the palate over lively acidity, with more subtle mint and cinnamon flavors emerging as the wine warms in the mouth. Fine-grained tannins lend the wine breadth and power.

PORTLAND MONTHLY

#1 Sure-Bet Splurges

Oregon's 50 Best Wines, October 2013

"Every year for a decade, the Casteel family has chosen a few barrels that best express the vintage to create their sought-after Casteel Reserve. The 2011 selection shows stunning balance with intense concentration, low alcohol, and vibrant acidity, teeming with notes of blackberries, black currant, and cherries."