

A new dawn is on the horizon for Oregon chardonnay

The wine industry is all abuzz about a new style of Oregon wine that some think may help set a new standard for American chardonnays. And it's all because of new grape clones being planted in Oregon vineyards.

Adelsheim and others began importing earlier-ripening Dijon clones (named after the city in Burgundy) in the mid-1970s, but because the process to select the best clone is so long (up to 15 years) it wasn't until the early 1990s that entire vineyards were planted with the improved clones. Those vineyards had to mature and then winemakers needed to learn how to coax the best out of the grapes. We are just now tasting the results.

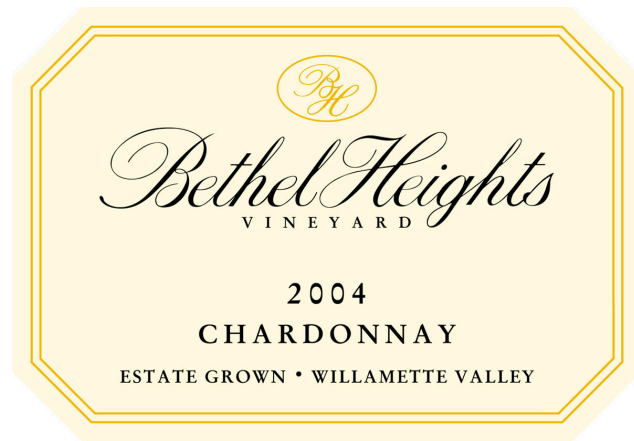
The new wines made from Dijon clones are more elegant with good acidity, soft textures and a distinct mineral character. The flavors and smells bring to mind fresh apples, lemons and toasted hazelnuts. And they can age longer. They resemble more the clean mineral chardonnays from Burgundy than those from California, which can be rich and opulent and buttery with lots of new French oak. By sheer force of numbers the California versions have dominated the marketplace to such an extent that most Americans believe all chardonnays do or should taste like them. Oregon producers would like to change that.

Richard Kinssies
Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Certified Sustainably Grown:

Bethel Heights' estate grown wines are certified sustainably grown by LIVE Inc. and Salmon Safe™. LIVE (Low Input Viticulture and Enology) is accredited by the I.O.B.C. under international standards of Integrated Production. Salmon Safe™ certifies farming practices that restore and protect healthy streams and rivers. For details, go to www.liveinc.org and salmonsafe.org.

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2004 CHARDONNAY • ESTATE GROWN

Certified Sustainably Grown

70% Dijon Clone, 30% Old Vine Wente Clone

Dates picked: September 27 and October 14, 2004

Grapes at harvest:

Brix : 23.0 – 24.0 pH: 3.17 – 3.66 TA: 7.2 – 8.0 gr/Liter

Finished wine:

Alcohol 14.25%, pH: 3.35, TA: 5.5gr/Liter

610 cases produced, bottled May 2006

Suggested retail \$25

The Clones: In 1994 we started planting new Dijon clones of Chardonnay at Bethel Heights, and these have certainly surpassed expectations. But in the midst of our replanting, we left intact our three original acres of venerable pre-Prohibition Wente Clone Chardonnay planted at Bethel Heights in 1977. Over the years we have come to respect what this old clone contributes to our wine - a structure of bright acidity to balance the ripe richness of the Dijon clones. This is the secret ingredient that makes Bethel Heights Chardonnay so essentially food friendly.

The 2004 vintage: A warmer than normal late winter and early spring got the year off to a fast start. Bloom was underway in early June. A hot mid season, combined with the early start, raised concerns about a hot vintage, but cool evening temperatures preserved acidity and balance in the wines. Occasional fall storms created conditions for both great wines and disease pressure. Happily we dodged the worst of the late August storm. A warm September with normal precipitation led to a classic Oregon vintage with intense varietal expression and considerable wine intensity.

Vinification: The fruit was pressed without crushing, barrel fermented in French oak (15% new barrels), stirred every two weeks during primary fermentation, aged on the lees with complete malolactic fermentation, and bottled after nineteen months in barrel.

Tasting Notes: Flavors of pears and apples with earthy background notes; nice integration of wood spice and fruit, rich in the mouth with good balancing acidity.