

The New Oregon Chardonnay

Winegrowers came to the Willamette Valley thirty years ago looking for the perfect place to grow the Burgundian varieties, Pinot noir and Chardonnay - a place where longer hours of daylight and cooler growing conditions would allow these North European varieties to ripen slowly, with a long period of flavor development at the end of the growing season. Unfortunately, most of the Chardonnay clones available in Oregon in the '70s and '80s did not perform consistently in our climate, so we started over in the mid-nineties with new "Dijon clones" imported directly from Burgundy, creating a revolution in Oregon Chardonnay.

"Oregon Transformed"

Sommelier Selections

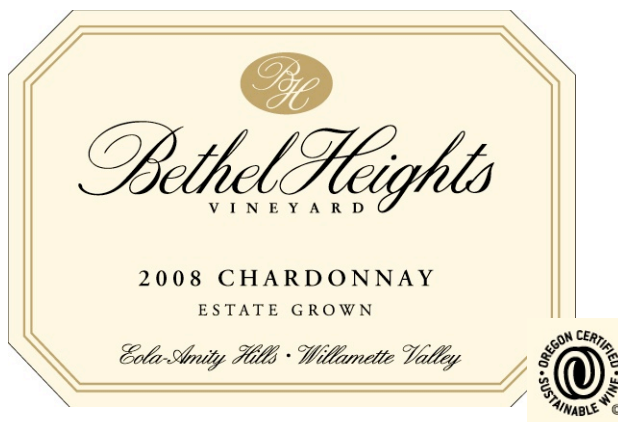
"The wines using the Dijon clones in Oregon have complexity and vibrancy. They offer lush, rich, ripe fruit and spicy aromatics similar to California, but the mineral, earth and bright acidity gives these wines a uniqueness and sense of place that is so attractive in these days of mass produced, overblown, sweet and manipulated Chardonnay."

Patrick Comiskey

Wine Review Online

"Oregon's Chardonnays are showing character as they never did before... Chardonnay that's on a par with the region's much heralded Pinot Noirs... gently perfumed, well-structured, mineral-tinged wines with high-toned fruit... Like Meursault, the fruit is rich without being cloying, redolent of fresh apples and pears, and bears a pleasing hint of nuttiness."

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2008 CHARDONNAY • ESTATE GROWN

Certified Sustainably Grown

67% Dijon Clone, 33% Old Vine Wente Clone

Date picked: October 14 - 20, 2008

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 23, pH: 3.1, TA: 8 gr/Liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.2%, pH: 3.22, TA: 6.7 gr/Liter

872 cases produced, bottled September, 2009

CHARDONNAY CLONES AT BETHEL HEIGHTS: In 1994 we started planting new Dijon clones of Chardonnay at Bethel Heights, but left intact our original three acres of Wente Clone Chardonnay planted at Bethel Heights in 1977. Over the years we have come to respect what this old Wente clone contributes to our wine - a structure of bright acidity to balance the ripe richness of the Dijon clones, especially welcome in warmer years.

THE 2008 VINTAGE: 2008 kept us on our toes from beginning to end. A very cool spring led to a late budbreak as the vines struggled their way out of dormancy. Then, a very unusual heat event in May really got the vines rolling. Bloom came late in June, when a 102 degree day pushed all of the vines into full bloom, seemingly on the same day. Realizing that we were in for a cliff-hanger because of the late bloom, we ruthlessly thinned our vines in August. The rest of the vintage was magical, with an endless stream of sunny days stretching into late October.

(The daily unfolding of the 2008 vintage is chronicled in our journal "2008 Harvest, Block by Block," at bhvblog.wordpress.com.)

VINIFICATION: The fruit was whole-cluster pressed, barrel fermented in French oak (20% new barrels), aged on the lees with complete malolactic fermentation, stirred every two weeks, and bottled after eleven months in barrel.

TASTING NOTES: Aromas of mineral, lemon zest, sea salt, and autumn fruits. Exuberant entry featuring focused green apple and Asian pears, bright framing acidity, and a long steely finish. This wine, while approachable now, will benefit from 3-4 years of cellaring.