

THE NEW OREGON CHARDONNAY

Winegrowers came to the Willamette Valley thirty years ago looking for the perfect place to grow the Burgundian winegrape 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, the primary Chardonnay clone available in Oregon in the '70s and '80s was the infamous Davis clone 108, which did not perform consistently well in our climate. So we started over in the early nineties with new "Dijon clones" imported directly from Burgundy, creating a revolution in Oregon Chardonnay.

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 the relatively rare 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.

FOOD RECOMMENDATION: The bright, bold acidity of this classic Chardonnay style lends itself to many food choices. As a contrast, it works well with rich texture and flavor (such as a creamy butternut squash soup) essentially cutting through and tempering the richness of the food. This wine also works well with sweet shellfish, and, given the acidity, some oyster and mussel preparations.

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2011 CHARDONNAY • ESTATE GROWN



Certified Sustainably Grown

55% Dijon Clone, 45% Old Vine Wente Clone

Dates picked: October 25 to November 2, 2011

Grapes at harvest: Brix 22.1, pH 2.96, TA 7.9 gr/Liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 12.7%, pH: 3.21, TA: 6.8 gr/Liter

938 Cases produced. Bottled September 25, 2012

Suggested retail \$25

THE 2011 VINTAGE: In a nutshell, this was the latest vintage on record in the Willamette Valley. All of the principal phenological benchmarks were much later than normal: budbreak delayed until early May, bloom at only 50% on the 9th of July, *veraison* just beginning in early September. Except for one hot spell in early September, temperatures rarely found their way into the '90s in 2011.

Harvest began on the 24th of October, the latest ever experienced at Bethel Heights. In the end, the long, relatively dry fall and very extended hang time led to wines of great concentration and intensity with moderate alcohol. It was hard to live through, but it's easy to love the results.

VINIFICATION: The fruit was whole-cluster pressed, barrel fermented in neutral 500L oak puncheons, traditional 228 L barrels, and one new 3000L foudre (a big oval shaped oak tank). The new wine was aged on the lees with complete malolactic fermentation, and bottled after eleven months in barrel.

TASTING NOTES: The wine opens with spice driven aromas of nutmeg and toasted pine nuts with a strong undercurrent of custard derived from extended lees contact. As the wine breaths, aromas of lemon zest, cider apples, and oak spice begin to emerge. The palate is focused, and framed by a taut vein of acidity that carries the wine to a mineral laden finish. This wine has the structure to evolve beautifully in the bottle for several years to come.