

A new dawn is on the horizon for Oregon chardonnay

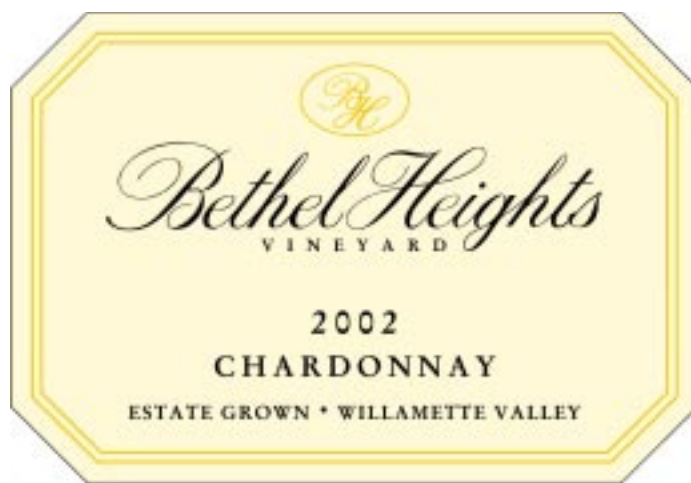
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The wine industry is all abuzz about a new style of Oregon wine that some think may help set a new standard for American chardonnays. And it's all because of new grape clones being planted in Oregon vineyards.

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.

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2002 CHARDONNAY ♦ ESTATE GROWN

50% Dijon Clone, 50% Old Vine Wente Clone

Certified Sustainably Grown

Dates picked: October 13 - 14, 2002

Grapes at harvest: Brix : 22.7-23.2, pH: 3.17-3.25, TA: 6.5-8.0 gr/Liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.8 %, pH: 3.36, TA: 7.0 gr/Liter

832 Cases produced, bottled July 2004

Suggested retail \$25

Bethel Heights Chardonnay: This is the first wine in a new lineage. In the spring of 2002 we pulled out six acres of twenty-year-old vines of the California "108" clone, the clone that defined the style of Bethel Heights Chardonnay, and indeed of all Oregon Chardonnay, from the beginning.

In 1994 we started planting new Dijon clones of Chardonnay in our vineyard, 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 the new Bethel Heights Chardonnay so essentially food friendly.

Vintage 2002: The 2002 growing season proved to be one of the longest and warmest in the last decade. The resulting wines are among the most generous we've seen since the warm vintages of '90, '92 and '94 with very ripe flavors, rich textures and considerable structure.

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