

Notes on blending the Casteel Pinot Noir

Over the past twenty years Bethel Heights has been known for crafting limited bottlings of distinctive vineyard and block designated Pinot noir wines. In 2002 we took a new path and produced our first Casteel Reserve Pinot Noir, a blend of barrels from several different blocks, selected to express the epitome of that particular vintage. This is the only Bethel Heights Pinot noir that carries our family name rather than a place name, which gives the winemaker considerable poetic license.

Each vintage as we taste through the vineyard we begin to forecast long before harvest which blocks are going to compose this wine: the blocks that will lend structure for aging and the core of fruits and earth that will give the wine a soul.

In 2012 we selected eight barrels, from two different blocks at Bethel Heights:

Selection 114 (planted 1996) provides the skeleton and central nervous system: this firm structure we see here defines the architecture of our final creation.

Selection 115 (planted 1994) provides the flesh: generous fruit blessed by a gentle warm air current that flows through this block.

94 WINE & SPIRITS "This has a dark resolve. Its red plum and floral scents, its focus and depth all gain with a day of air. But its texture is the marvel here, firm and muscular, with an acidity that gives the wine an almost propulsive quality."

92 STEPHEN TANZER'S INTERNATIONAL WINE CELLAR "Intense mineral- and spice-accented aromas of red berries, cherry pit and fresh rose. Shows excellent clarity and power in the mouth, offering sappy raspberry and bitter cherry flavors and a suave touch of spicecake. Finishes with a snap of juicy acidity, supple tannins and strong floral persistence."

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2012 PINOT NOIR ♦ CASTEEL

Certified Sustainably Grown

Harvest dates: October 6 and 7, 2012

Grapes at harvest: Brix 23.5, pH 3.2, TA 7.2 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.5%, pH 3.36, TA 5.9 gr/liter

Barrel aged 14 months in French oak, 40% new barrels

230 cases produced (460 six-packs)

Bottled unfiltered and unfined on February 28, 2014

Suggested Retail \$ 60

THE 2012 VINTAGE provided us with a dramatic contrast to 2010 and 2011, when we were firmly in the grip of unusually cool climatic conditions. Although 2012 began slowly, with a late bud-break and a cool spring, by late June the momentum shifted, and for the rest of the season we enjoyed endless sunny days with warm temperatures and perfect ripening conditions. Harvest allowed us ample time to bring in each block at optimum ripeness.

VINIFICATION: All the fruit was destemmed without crushing. After a five to eight-day cold soak, the fermenters warmed naturally and were gently punched down twice a day at the onset of fermentation, then at peak fermentation temperatures (82-88 F), the new wine was aerated once a day, and pressed at dryness. After settling for one week, the new wine was racked to barrels, and bottled after 14 months in barrel.

WINEMAKER NOTES: Flavors of wild raspberries and Rainier cherries play over a sinewy, taut structure of mineral laden acidity and fine-grained tannins. In a vintage that threatened to be over-wrought and soft, we were very pleased that our Estate fruit maintained the energy and focus we have come to expect, the energy that will support and carry the wine long into the future.