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Why Oregon Will Fondly Remember 2011

Eric Asimov

How important is vintage in discussing fine wines? I'd say we overrate it, or at least over-generalize about it. That said, sometimes a particular vintage stands out, either because it is so unusual or because its character somehow impresses itself indelibly on the wines. Such is the case with the 2011 pinot noirs from Oregon.

The year was unusually cool and long, resulting in great anxiety for growers, who wondered if their grapes could possibly be harvested before rain and cold set in. Luckily, a clear, warm October saved the vintage. The result was wines that differ markedly from other recent vintages.

People like me who love pinot noirs of finesse and restraint will adore the 2011 vintage. The best wines are clear, focused and vivacious... Despite their delicacy, I think the best will age surprisingly well.

The Libertine

The root of the word is *liber*, "free." A libertine is one who is unconstrained by boundaries and rules, who might lounge lazily around the house long after everyone else has gone to work, and never apologize. When we released our other 2011 pinots into the world in 2013, we named this one Libertine and let it sleep in. We decided the time had come to hold just one wine long enough to prove the case for cooler Oregon vintages.

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2011 PINOT NOIR • LIBERTINE

Certified Sustainably Grown

Fruit Source: 50% Carter Vineyard, 50% Bethel Heights

Harvest dates: October 26 - November 2, 2011

Grapes at harvest: Brix 21.8, pH 3.15, TA 6.8 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 12.1%, pH 3.5, TA 5.5 gr/liter

Barrel aged 12 months in French oak, 50 %new barrels

200 cases produced

Bottled unfined September 28, 2012

VINIFICATION: The fruit was picked under cold conditions in late October and early November. The fruit was cold soaked for 6 days before fermentation, which stretched for nearly 2 weeks. The new wine was pressed at dryness, settled for 72 hours, and racked to barrel.

WINEMAKER NOTES: The wine opens with aromas of raspberries, rose petals and oak spice, with undertones of orange blossom and hazelnut. A bright, energetic burst of new strawberry and white peach wakens the palate, before a sinewy, athletic vein of acidity and fine grain tannin carry the wine through the finish.

AGEABILITY: The 2011 Pinots bear the basic hallmarks of terrific ageability: they are low in alcohol, have bright, balancing acidity, and a razor thin veneer of tannin to frame, but not overwhelm, the delicacy of the fruit. The 2011 Libertine is no exception, and we expect this wine to age gracefully for well over ten years.