

BETHEL HEIGHTS SOUTHEAST BLOCK

The Southeast Block is a six-acre section of the Bethel Heights estate vineyard that consistently gives us wines of distinctive character. It was planted in 1979 on a south-facing slope between 420 and 520 feet elevation. The red clay soil is volcanic in origin, three feet deep and well drained. The vines are 100% own-rooted Pommard clone, planted in Oregon's pre-phylloxera days.

"The roots of these own-rooted vines have grown down and explored our rocky volcanic soil for over thirty years, and in doing so have produced wines that are defined far more by their place, than by vintage or by the hand of the winemaker. Since my father first started bottling wines from the Southeast Block as single-block designates in 1991, this block has given us wines with a firm backbone combined with robust savory fruit and a deep minerality that is unique to this place."

Ben Casteel

THE 2011 VINTAGE 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. But in the end, the long, relatively dry fall and very extended hang time led to wines of great concentration and intensity with moderate alcohol.

The hallmark of the 2011 wines is a sappy acidity that brings the fruit into focus, and gives the wines the grace and transparency that are the gifts of cool vintages.

BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD

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2011 PINOT NOIR • SOUTHEAST BLOCK



Certified Sustainably Grown

Harvest date: October 27, 2011

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 22.5, pH: 3.28, TA: 7.2 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.1%, pH: 3.54, TA: 5.7 gr/liter

Barrel aged 11 months in French oak, 50% new barrels

143 Cases produced, bottled September 28, 2012

VINIFICATION: The fruit was de-stemmed before the five-day cold soak. At the onset of fermentation, the fermenters were punched down twice a day until they reached a peak temperature of 88 degrees, then gently aerated twice a day for the remainder of fermentation. After the completion of alcoholic fermentation the new wine was lightly pressed, settled for seven days, and then racked to a variety of French oak barrels. After eleven months the best barrels were selected and blended for this single-block designated wine.

WINEMAKER NOTES: The wine opens with fascinating aromas of green olives, forest floor, and anise; then black cherries play the dominant note. Good concentration, density and weight on the palate, with dominant flavors of boysenberry and blackberry.

92 WINE ADVOCATE

"The first things I notice here are the mouth-watering sense of salinity allied to deeply savory, marrow- and bone-rich meat stock. These mingle with juicy, crunchy seed and piquantly pit-inflected elderberry and sour cherry on a firm, unapologetically but finely tannic palate, leading to a finish of near vibratory grip and invigoration, to which black pepper and crushed stone add emphasis and intrigue. This unusually forceful yet somehow elegant expression of 2011 energy also illustrates this vintage's paradoxical potential for metaphoric darkness allied to acid-driven brightness. It will, I strongly suspect, be worth following through 2022, and quite possibly beyond."