

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 us considerable poetic license to select our favorite barrels from each vintage, regardless of provenance.

In 2015 we selected 13 barrels, from three different blocks at Bethel Heights:

Selection 114 (planted 1996)
provides the firm structure

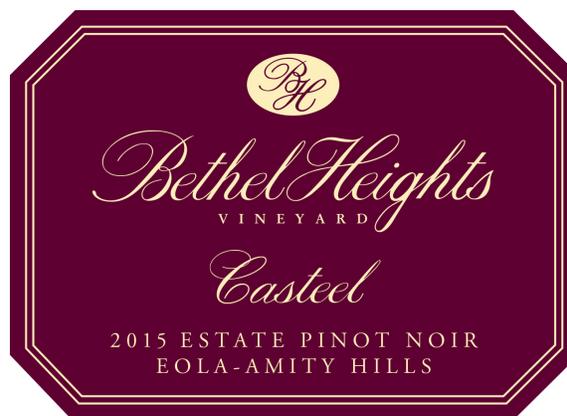
Selection 115 (planted 1994)
provides the flesh January 2018

Pommard Selection (planted 1979)
provides restraint, balance and depth

94 VINOUS, January 2018

Deep vivid red. Smoke-accented black raspberry, cherry cola and candied rose scents, along with hints of star anise and mocha. Silky, sweet and broad on the palate, offering juicy, densely packed red and blue fruit and spicecake flavors that pick up floral pastille and licorice flourishes as the wine opens up. Supple tannins add shape to a smooth, extremely long finish that leaves behind sappy red berry liqueur and five-spice powder notes. -- Josh Reynolds

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2015 PINOT NOIR CASTEEL

Harvest date: September 20-22, 2015

Grapes at harvest: Brix 23.5, pH 3.25, TA 6.4 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.7%, pH 3.54, TA 5.3 gr/liter

Barrel aged 16 months in French oak, 35% new barrels

326 cases produced

Bottled unfinned on February 21, 2017

THE 2015 VINTAGE was characterized by early bud-break, early bloom, plenty of sunshine and a big heat spike in early August. A hot summer like this can push potential alcohols, forcing an early harvest that precludes hang time. But September brought mercifully cool temperatures and chilly evenings. Sugar accumulation was arrested and the vineyard was allowed to develop flavor. Not overripe flavors. Not high alcohol flavors, but instead the integrated, intense, and focused flavors only afforded by generous hang time at low temperatures.

VINIFICATION: All the fruit was destemmed without crushing. After a 3-day cold soak, the fermenters warmed naturally and were gently punched down twice a day at the onset of fermentation. After fermentation reached peak temperatures (82-88 F), the new wine was aerated once a day, and pressed at dryness. After settling, the new wine was racked to barrels, and aged on lees. This extraordinary vintage begged for barrel time. We waited sixteen months to bottle.

TASTING NOTES: Aromas of black cherry, pine resin, and black currants with hints of cooking chocolate and cinnamon lingering in the background. Flavors of black berries and dark chocolate 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 the core of our Estate maintained the energy and focus we have come to expect, to support and carry the fruit long into the future.