

CHARDONNAY AT BETHEL HEIGHTS

Chardonnay has been the preeminent white wine at Bethel Heights since the first vines were planted here in 1977. Today we have six different blocks of Chardonnay planted on various benches and slopes around our Estate vineyards.

THE CASTEEL CHARDONNAY

Our family name on this reserve Chardonnay is our license to choose our personal favorite lots from the vintage and give them the luxury of a long slow fermentation in barrique. In 2012 our selection favored the winery block of Chardonnay planted in 1994 to the Dijon 76 selection (77%), blended with a few barrels (23%) from our Justice Vineyard Chardonnay 548 selection planted in 2001.

THE 2012 VINTAGE: In the Willamette Valley, 2012 provided us with a welcome contrast to 2010 and 2011, when we were firmly in the grip of the unusually cool climatic conditions of an extended La Niña. Although 2012 began slowly, with a late budbreak and a cool Spring, by late June the momentum shifted. Bloom was well underway in the final week of June, and we were tracking ten days ahead of 2011.

But the real story of the vintage was the weather for the rest of the season: endless sunny days with warm temperatures and perfect ripening conditions. Many sites saw dry weather for 100-110 straight days. Harvest began almost three weeks earlier than in 2011, with fruit at optimum ripeness.

BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD
6060 BETHEL HTS RD NW
SALEM, OREGON 97304 U.S.A.
(503) 581-2262
www.bethelheights.com



2012 CHARDONNAY • CASTEEL

LIVE *Certified Sustainable*

Date picked: October 5-6, 2012

Grapes at harvest: Brix 22.4, pH 3.0, TA 6.9 gr/Liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.6%, pH: 3.22, TA: 6.2 gr/Liter

Barrel aged 15 months in French oak, 47% new barrels

Bottled unfined February 28, 2014

Cases produced: 44 six-pack cases

VINIFICATION: The grapes were pressed whole cluster and cold, with carbon dioxide added in the press pan and in the receiving tank. The juice was settled for 48 hours then racked to barrel for fermentation, which stretched for nearly 2 months. The new wine completed malolactic fermentation in early 2013 and then aged in barrels on lees until early 2014.

WINEMAKER NOTES: This is certainly a bittersweet wine for me in many ways, namely it serves as a sobering reminder of how a year's worth of work can be undone on a careless Winter afternoon. During the composition of the blend things went awry and only 57 of the original 247 gallons were composed as intended, so only 57 gallons were bottled under the 2012 Casteel Chardonnay label. It was never commercially released and has remained tucked away in our library ever since. I've never written notes on a wine I was responsible for 6 years after bottling it, and this is the first time I've tasted it since. I am happy to report the small amount that was preserved as intended is drinking beautifully, showing aromas of baked Bosc pears, white pepper, and crème brûlée. The acidity is fresh and provides a wonderful counterpoint to the lush texture and expanse of fruit. It's a nice reminder that while wines can show well in their youth, sometimes they only truly effloresce with years in the bottle. *Ben Casteel*