

## *Beyond the Blocks*

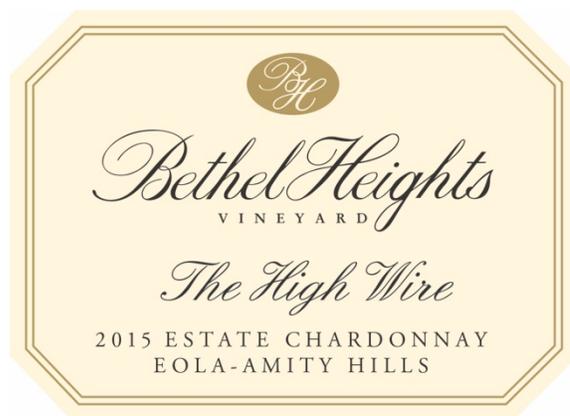
Bethel Heights, like most vineyards, is laid out in a series of rectangular shapes, or “blocks.” We began designating wines from some of our single blocks in 1991, both for exceptional quality and for the distinct differences they showed from one another. The distinct personalities of the Flat Block, the Southeast Block and the West Block are deeply woven into the fabric of Bethel Heights’ history; it would be impossible to tell that history without them.

Then, with the passage of time, certain other patterns began to emerge, first in our Pinot noir and then in our Chardonnay. Our oldest Chardonnay, the own-rooted Wente clone vines planted in 1977, trained on the old “California sprawl” high wire trellis system, were a source of much disappointment in the early years, always ripening too late with searing acidity that had to be balanced out with fruit from other parts of the vineyard. Having stubbornly survived a failed attempt to graft them over to another clone, these vines reached full maturity in relative obscurity, until a string of unusually warm vintages finally showed us the possibility that they could become something extraordinary. Since 2014 The High Wire has been bottled as a stand-alone wine.

### 96 THE WINE ADVOCATE

The 2015 Chardonnay The High Wire delivers intense aromas of lemon peel, yuzu, white peaches and green guava with hints of struck match, crushed almonds, croissant and orange blossoms. Medium-bodied, the palate is wildly intense, filling the mouth with citrus and mineral layers that challenge the quality of anything out of the Côte de Beaune. The finish is especially long.

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



2015 CHARDONNAY *The High Wire*

Harvest date: September 20, 2015

Fruit source: own-rooted Wente clone planted 1977

Grapes at harvest: Brix 21.6, pH 3.21, TA 6.5 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.2%, pH 3.27, TA 5.9 gr/liter

Barrel aged 15 months in French oak, 42% new barrels

188 cases produced

Bottled unfiltered January 10, 2017

**THE 2015 VINTAGE** was characterized by early bud-break, early bloom, and a big heat spike in early August. Fortunately September brought mercifully cool temperatures and chilly evenings, and the vineyard was allowed to develop the integrated, intense, and focused flavors only afforded by generous hang time at cool temperatures.

**VINIFICATION:** The Wente grapes were whole cluster pressed under a blanket of carbon dioxide and the juice settled cold for 72 hours before being racked to barrels. The new wine completed alcoholic fermentation in a month, underwent full malolactic fermentation in the Spring, and spent 15 months in barrel prior to bottling.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Wente has produced some of our most detailed and compelling wines in recent years, and 2015 was no exception. For me, it's the most compelling wine of either color we produced in 2015. Aromas and flavors of flint, preserved lemons, graham, and baked pears, the wine is both sleek with mouth-watering acidity and very fine grained tannins giving clear definition, but also shows considerable generosity in texture and weight.