

## *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. I’ve mistaken wines from the East 777 Block for the Flat Block many times in the past, despite it being a different clone, nearly triple the number of vines per acre, and 23 years younger. It also happens to sit on a shallow, flat bench that it shares with the Flat Block. And that led to thoughts about terroir, the French term for “sense of place,” and what it really means.

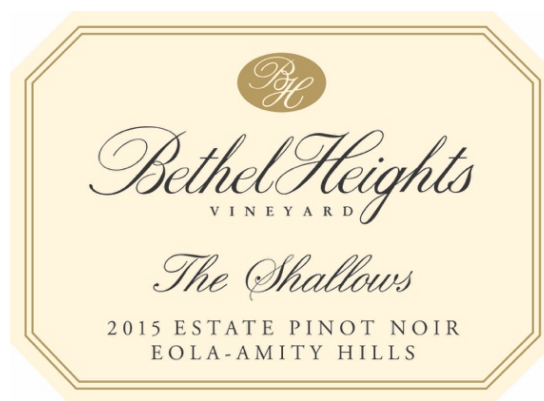
At its most fundamental, terroir encompasses all the limiting conditions of the place you’ve decided to plant some grapes: geology, geography, topography, climate, ampelography, and on and on. Terroir does not fit neatly into the tidy rectangles of vineyard blocks. We had to start looking beyond the blocks, following where the wines lead us. While we respect our history and what we learned in the process, we don’t allow it to hold us back from where we may go next.

~ Ben Casteel

### *The Shallows*

Perched on a rocky bench with only a slight skim of soil over bedrock, vines planted in The Shallows find their foothold deep in the interstices between basalt boulders. Their tenacity yields wines of purity, subtlety and elegance.

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### 2015 PINOT NOIR *The Shallows*

Harvest date: September 24, 2015

Fruit source: East Block Dijon clone 777 planted 2002

Grapes at harvest: Brix 23.9, pH 3.19, TA 5.7 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.5%, pH 3.52, TA 4.5 gr/liter

Barrel aged 15 months in French oak, 33% new barrels

131 cases produced

Bottled unfiltered February 21, 2017

**THE 2015 VINTAGE** was characterized by early bud-break, early bloom, and a big heat spike in early August. A hot summer like this can push potential alcohols, forcing an early harvest, but September brought mercifully cool temperatures and chilly evenings, and the vineyard was allowed to develop the integrated intense flavors only afforded by generous hang time at cool temperatures.

**VINIFICATION:** The grapes were destemmed into two vessels: a 3-ton stainless steel tank and a 1.25-ton bin. After a 3-day cold soak, fermentation initiated and the wines were pumped over once a day to minimize extraction in a warm vintage. The new wines were pressed at dryness, settled for 7 days, and racked into oak barrels for a 15-month élevage.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Shallows in many ways mirrors its neighbor, the Flat Block, albeit younger and planted at a significantly higher density. Both sit perched on a flat bench on our property, splitting the slopes above and below. The Shallows favors purity and poise over power, with aromas of new strawberry and orange blossom, and a slender frame that is a hallmark of the shallow soils and rocky terrain where its planted.