

## *Beyond the Blocks*

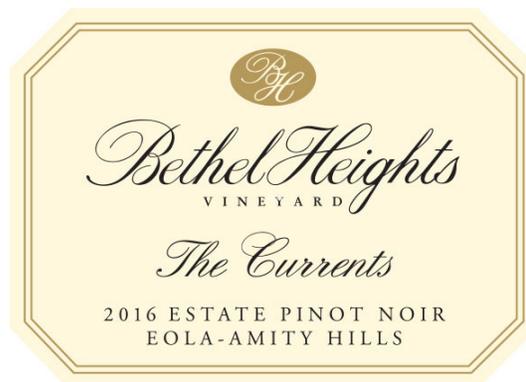
Bethel Heights, like most vineyards, is laid out in a series of rectangular shapes, or “blocks.” We began designating wines from some of our single blocks in 1991, both for exceptional quality and for the distinct differences they showed from one another. The distinct personalities of the Flat Block, 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. The gentle mid-level slope on the west side of Bethel Heights that is now home to The Currents was originally planted to four different white varieties that had such distinctive identities that no commonality of terroir was apparent. It was not until we took out some of those original plantings in the mid ‘90’s to make room for new Dijon clones of Pinot noir, that we began to appreciate the unique character of that slope.

### *The Currents*

The lower Western slopes at Bethel Heights gently undulate to the South, creating sections that are directly exposed to the Western marine winds and those that are protected from it, leading to “currents” of wind that move through the blocks that can be seen in the wines; pieces that are rich and supple alongside more vigorous and structured components.

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



### 2016 PINOT NOIR *The Currents*

Harvest date: September 17, 2016

Fruit source: West 114 planted 1996

Grapes at harvest: Brix 24.9, pH 3.16, TA 7.3 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 14.3%, pH 3.47, TA 6.3 gr/liter

Barrel aged 16 months in French oak, 33% new barrels

121 cases produced

Bottled unfiltered February 5, 2018

**THE 2016 VINTAGE** was the earliest vintage we have ever seen in the Willamette Valley. The growing season was warm and wetter than usual, leading to veraison beginning in early August at Bethel Heights. Harvest started on August 27, and was finished before the end of September.

**VINIFICATION:** The grapes were destemmed into a 4-ton stainless steel open top tank and a 1.5-ton bin that was layered with 30% whole clusters to help manage a huge amount of acid. After a 3-day cold soak, fermentation initiated and the wines were pumped over once every other day to minimize extraction in a warm vintage from a block with enormous phenolic potential. After 13 days the new wines were pressed at dryness, settled for 7 days, and racked into oak barrels for a 16-month élevage.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Currents wines are imposing in breadth and depth even in cooler years, so we need to tread lightly in warmer years and 2016 was no exception. Aromas and flavors of blackberry, blueberry, and pomegranate are all framed by fresh acidity and firm but surprisingly integrated tannins.