

## THE CASTEEL PINOT NOIR

For many years Bethel Heights was recognized primarily for our limited bottlings of distinctive vineyard and block designated Pinot noir wines from our estate vineyard. In 2002 we took a new path and produced our first Casteel Pinot Noir, a blend of barrels from several different blocks, selected to express the epitome of that particular vintage at Bethel Heights. This is our only 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.

## THE 2019 VINTAGE

In contrast to the previous five vintages which were all dry and quite warm, 2019 started with cool, moist weather in the Spring that persisted into early summer. Even after it warmed up somewhat in mid-summer, we had unusually high levels of humidity, and this continued into a cool, damp Fall. Maturation was delayed and disease pressure (mildew, botrytis), amplified by the humid conditions, challenged growers every step of the way.

In spite of these challenges, 2019 had a happy ending. The crop was small, with small berries and lots of intensity. The cool season also allowed us to outperform on “hang time” (the time from bloom to harvest). Instead of the normal 100 days, we were able to leave the fruit on the vines for 110 to 120 days without excess sugar accumulation, giving us enhanced depth and complexity.

### 98 WINE ADVOCATE

The 2019 Pinot Noir Casteel is powerful and expressive, with structure and perfume that promise a long life in the cellar. It explodes with aromas of black and blue berries, dried flowers and licorice, plus a singular streak of saline-like character. The medium-bodied palate is silty and seamless, with extraordinary floral perfume, layering and length.



## 2019 PINOT NOIR CASTEEL

Fruit source: Bethel Heights West 115 and West 777

Harvest date: October 1, 2019

Grapes at harvest: Brix 22.6, pH 3.2, TA 6.5 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.3%, pH 3.45, TA 5.0 gr/liter

Barrel aged 10 months in French oak, 50% new barrels

165 cases produced (330 six-packs)

Bottled unfined August 2020

**WINIFICATION:** All the fruit was hand sorted and destemmed into two 1.5-ton bins. After a 4-day cold soak, the fermenters warmed naturally and were gently punched down once or twice a day at the onset of fermentation. After fermentations reached a peak temperature of 88 degrees, the new wine was aerated once a day, and pressed at dryness. The wine was racked to barrels and aged 10 months on lees.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Casteel Pinot Noir is always intended to be the best expression of our estate in each vintage. For 2019, we had two blocks in the vineyard that again exceeded expectations and have become cornerstones of the Casteel program: the West 115 planted in 1994 and the West 777 planted to Chardonnay in 1977 and grafted to Pinot Noir in 2001. Both produce graceful, elegant wines regardless of vintage, with gossamer structure underpinning peach, nectarine, and new strawberry. The Casteel has evolved over the years, and may continue to do so in the future, but the muse has been on the Western slopes of our property for the past 6 years, and when the place speaks, we listen.