

## *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.

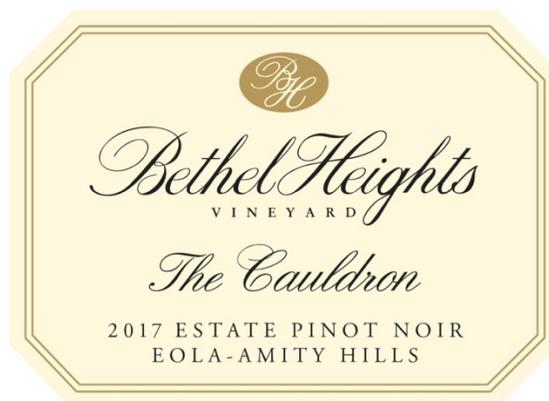
Then, with the passage of time, certain other patterns began to emerge.

### *The Cauldron*

The South Block is the third piece of the triptych of Pommard Pinot Noir planted by my family in 1979 on the east side of Bethel Heights, but it was never given the same block-designated status as its siblings, the Flat Block and the Southeast Block. This is perhaps because it is such a sprawling six-acre parcel. It begins at the top with shallow volcanic soil on a gentle South facing slope before abruptly falling off to the West and settling into a natural bowl-shaped depression at the bottom, about two acres in area, that we came to call the Cauldron. Natural erosion over time has led to a deeper collection of soil here than on the shallows above, and its steep sides prove a bastion against the marine winds from the West. This protection allows an expression both graceful and complex, a lens into Bethel Heights without the bluster and turbulence of the wind. It is singular and unique.

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 so 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



### 2017 PINOT NOIR *The Cauldron*

Harvest date: October 9, 2017

Fruit source: Estate South Block,

own-rooted Pommard clone planted 1979

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 24.1, pH: 3.214, TA: 6.6 g/L

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.8 %, pH: 3.5, TA: 5.7 g/L

Barrel aged 14 months in French oak, 40% new barrels

100 cases bottle unfinned on January 22, 2019

**THE 2017 VINTAGE** was our sixth very warm vintage in a row. The summer overall was hot and dry, with a couple of significant hot spells with consecutive days over 100 degrees, but September cooled down mercifully, with a few brief rain events that helped maintain freshness through the final ripening phase.

**VINIFICATION:** The grapes were destemmed into one 5-ton stainless steel open top tank, one 4-ton open top wood tank, and three 1.5-ton bins. After a 3-day cold soak, fermentation initiated and the wines were pumped over only once a day to minimize extraction in a warm vintage. The new wines were pressed after 13 days at dryness, settled for 7 days, and racked into oak barrels for a 14-month *élevage*,

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The 2017 Cauldron showcases both the lovely fruit and earthen characters we love in our old Pommard blocks: blackberry, cassis, a dried herb that never moves to herbaceous, and a smell of autumn leaves that surround the block at harvest time. This young wine has a similar density and tension to the 2017 Currents and will certainly reward some cellaring to polish the youthful rough edges.