

## *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. These currents 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



### 2017 PINOT NOIR *The Currents*

Harvest date: October 7, 2017

Fruit source: West 114 (1996) and West 115 (1994)

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 23.7, pH: 3.1, TA: 7.6 g/L

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.6 %, pH: 3.31, TA: 6.5 g/L

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

100 cases bottle unfinned on January 22, 2019

**THE 2017 VINTAGE** was hot and dry overall, 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 100% destemmed and fermentation began after a 3-day cold soak. The wines were pumped over only once every other day to minimize extraction in a warm vintage, from a block with enormous phenolic potential. The new wines were pressed at dryness, settled for 7 days, and racked into barrels for a 14 month *élevage*.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Currents wines have been the metronome of the West side of our property since the inception of the series in 2014; firm, boisterous, and compact in their youth. In 2017 for the first time we co-fermented the two blocks that make up the sweeping hillside where the grapes are grown, and we have been thrilled with the results. Aromas of blueberry, watermelon, black peppercorn and hints of vanilla over an electric vein of acidity and tannin.