

## *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



## 2019 PINOT NOIR *The Currents*

Harvest date: October 1, 2019

Fruit source: West 114 (1996)

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 23.4, pH 3.04, TA 7.8 g/L

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.3 %, pH 3.39, TA 5.8 g/L

Barrel aged 11 months in French oak, 30% new barrels

64 cases bottled unfinned on August 12, 2020

**VINIFICATION:** The fruit was hand sorted and completely destemmed into 4, 1.5-ton bins. After a 5-day cold soak, fermentation initiated and the wines were punched down twice a day. After 13 days the new wines were pressed at dryness, settled for 3 days, and racked into oak barrels for a 11-month *élevage*.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** The Currents continues to surprise me after 15 years of working with the block. Some of its defining personality traits remain the same (the blueberry character is unmistakable most vintages and the acidity is always on the high side) but 2019 marked the first time I didn’t find us concerned with aggressive tannins. The acidity provides structure to the palate, but there is real generosity and body to this wine, which doesn’t align with my historical knowledge of the block or with the vintage. The 2019 vintage will take some time to settle in, as with most cooler vintages. I think the early drinking window for The Currents will be best 2026 – 28, and for those who appreciate some aged character, 2035 and beyond.