

July 21, 2014

WINE News

We have a bit of a wine crush on Oregon's Willamette Valley right now, the source of some of the most delicious, distinctive, terroir-driven wines grown anywhere. Read on, then taste for yourself!



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OREGON *It's Back, Baby!*

We've sent a total of eight staff members to Oregon this year so far, setting the record for the most K&L employees to visit a region outside of California in a six-month period. This was not by accident either. The 2012s are starting to hit our shelves, and there is a definite buzz about their quality. The 2012 vintage in Oregon was warm and dry, resulting in an early harvest. I have tasted several of the 2012s, and I have been very impressed. They show excellent right out of the gate, with plenty of upfront ripe fruit, great middle fruit and good acidity to help keep things together. Here are a couple of my favorites so far:

2012 Haden Fig "Bjornson Vineyard" Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$27.99) This reminded me of a great Gevrey-Chambertin in style. It is a big, rich, slightly meaty wine that shows loads of spicy fruit and hints of dried herbs and smoke. The core of fruit never lets up, and the wine finishes spicy and exotic. One of my favorites of the vintage, so far.

2012 Archery Summit "Premier Cuvée" Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.99) One of the best efforts from Archery Summit in some time. A blend of fruit from their six vineyard sites, including Arcus and Red Hills Estate. This wine shows lots of upfront fruit

with classic Oregon earthiness. Even with all its fruit, there is a silky mid-palate feel. Lots of finesse and complexity, though it needs some air to open up.

2012 Beaux Frères Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$59.99) This blew me away! Never light in style, the 2012 is about as full and opulent as you can get from Oregon without being clumsy and disjointed. Despite its size and power, this wine has wonderful perfume and freshness, as well as length. I would love to hold a few bottles of this for five years or so to see how it rounds out.

—Clyde "Trey" Beffa III

On the Oregon Trail

By Bryan Brick

Back in mid-May, Mari Keilman, Joe Manekin, Sal Rodriguez, John Majeski and I spent the better part of four sun-filled days in Oregon's Willamette Valley soaking up knowledge like vines soaking up the 80+ degree heat. We started where Willamette Valley winegrowing all began, at the original Eyrie vineyard, which was planted by David Lett in 1966 and is now lovingly and intelligently tended to by his son Jason. We wrapped up our visit tasting some of the most interesting wines of the trip with Barnaby and Olga Tuttle at their living room table in NE Portland. In between we visited a few of

the best wineries and vineyards in Oregon. In this newsletter we share with you a handful of our favorite wines and experiences from our trip.

Of course, the wines featured here are a small percentage of what we tasted. But combined with the wines on page 6, from another group's experience at this year's Pinot Camp, we think we offer a comprehensive view of Oregon wine from the 2011 and 2012 red wine vintages, as well as the lovely white wines from 2013.

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If you follow Oregon, you know by now that 2011 was a difficult year. There was considerable rain, and it never really warmed up. However, the sun finally came out in early October, and it stayed warm and dry long into November. The resulting reds are delicate and sublime, very aromatic and full of energy and, much like the 2010s, are putting on more and more weight in the bottle. Oh, and the white wines are some of the best I've ever seen, although most now are long sold out.

The 2012 vintage was the opposite. It was perfect—the easiest vintage most growers can remember. Both the reds and whites are very friendly out of the gate, with ample fruit, great texture and sound structure. In other words: 2012 is a very good to truly great vintage that is going to be very well received by the press. The wines are a treat to drink in their infancy and should last for years to come.

The 2013 vintage was wildly intriguing. It will be remembered for a massive rain event, known to some as the “Pineapple Express,” that blew in early in the harvest. The storm dropped more than six inches of rain in less than 48 hours and created a dilemma for growers: pick before the rain at lower sugar or wait it out, hoping for dry weather on the other side, selecting out any mildewed, rotten or botrytised fruit. We saw examples that reflected both choices, and I have to say both resulted in interesting and delicious wines. This is going to be a great vintage for blending. The best wineries will do a very good job, as already demonstrated by the 2013 white wines and rosés, which are almost uniformly delicious and full of energy and charisma.

TAKING THE HILL

One of my favorite things about this job is being out in the vineyards. So I set up a hike for our team with Pat Dudley and Ben and Mimi Casteel of Bethel Heights and Steve Doerner from Cristom, trekking from the estate vineyards at Bethel Heights, over the hill through Temperance Hill Vineyard and back down into Cristom's estate vineyards. While on this hike we really got to experience the wholeness of each site—from the vines to the soil to the surrounding flora and fauna to the differences in farming techniques—and we really started getting the elusive concept of terroir.

Bethel Heights

Like many wineries, Bethel Heights was started by a family looking to change careers and to move to the country. Ted Casteel, Pat Dudley, Terry Casteel and Marilyn Webb, together with Pat's sister Barbara, found a 75-acre site north of Salem and moved there in 1978. Since then they've made classic and classy wines from their estate vineyards and some purchased fruit. In 2006 the second generation of the family took over day-to-day operations, Ben on the winemaking side and Mimi in the vineyards. Any time this happens there can be some trepidation about what will change, but I can say without hesitation, and without any disrespect to the founding generation, that the winery and the wines have improved since that time.

A perfect example of the new generation's skill is the **2012 Bethel Heights “Aeolian” Eola-Amity Hills Estate Pinot Noir (\$39.99)**. This new bottling, which is positioned between their classic “Estate” and their “Casteel Reserve,” focuses on younger vines from the prop-

erty planted in the '90s. This deep wine is full of lush cherry/blackberry fruit, with a classic Oregon wet earth component and highlights of camphor and spearmint. Silky smooth, with a wonderful texture, this is still vibrant, not sacrificing energy for mouthfeel, and has pinpoint focus throughout.



For those on a tighter budget, I recommend the **2011 Bethel Heights “Estate” Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$27.99)**. Even before I went on the trip I was touting this wine as one of the best to come from the vintage at its price. Wildly aromatic, with lovely notes of sage, blueberry, crushed rock and a hint of lavender, this is wholly feminine, airy on the palate and quite spatial. It's a Pinot for classicists that are looking for substance over style. Long, savory and with sneaky depth, this wine is perfectly suited for the dinner table.

Cristom

I first visited Cristom six or seven years ago after I discovered them during Pinot Camp. The wines are stunning and unmistakably from Oregon, though with an intangible quality that few other wines from the valley have; they have been among my favorite producers ever since. Steve Doerner has been the only winemaker since Paul and Eileen Gerrie founded the winery in 1992, and he still lives on the property. (Before Cristom he was at Calera for 15 vintages.) I think his immersion in this piece of land for the last 20+ years really allows him to have the focus and enthusiasm that he does for his wines.

A perfect example of Steve's skill is what he does with Pinot Gris. There is nothing boring about the **2013 Cristom Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Gris (\$16.99)**. Lemon verbena, green tea, fresh pea tendrils and a ripe pear note combine on the complex and well-meshed nose. Zingy, refreshing and brisk, this is much more linear than the pervading style, but somehow it is much more complex at the same time. Cantaloupe, ripe pear fruit found and a pretty white floral quality on the palate really keep this interesting and delicious.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

It is incredibly refreshing and quite telling in many ways that some of the oldest producers in the Willamette Valley are still making the best wines. Be it because of their wealth of experience, the age and placement of their vines or their trust in themselves and their house style, wineries like Elk Cove, Chehalem and Ponzi remain in the spotlight.

Elk Cove

Elk Cove was one of the prettiest properties on our trip, with crimson clover in bloom running through the rows of vines. We walked a newly planted, and yet to be named, estate vineyard with winemaker Adam Campbell and VP of Sales and Marketing Shirley Brooks to stretch our legs a bit, sipping on one of the stunners of our visit, the **2012 Elk Cove Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$26.99)**. It's sunny and warm, like being wrapped in a big ol' hug of red cherry, raspberry and some darker earth tones like clay and fern fronds. Ripe and lush on the entry, this is wildly inviting and certainly showing tremendous

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TRISAETUM *Exceptional Riesling and More*

Trisaetum's James Frey has an electric personality. (He claims to be a bit of an introvert, but if it's true he does a great job covering it up.) He's deeply motivated and takes his winery very personally. So personally, in fact, that he and his family planted the vines, and the winery's name is a blending of his children's names: Tristen and Tatum. His approach to winemaking is reflective of his desire to leave something good and sustainable for his children when he retires.

Trisaetum is situated in the Ribbon Ridge AVA, a sub-region of the Willamette Valley and the smallest AVA in Oregon. The vineyards are dry-farmed, a popular method with other wineries in the region, and they use the gentle gravity flow method of moving

juice to tank and from tank to barrel. James makes dry Rieslings from three separate vineyards with specific climatic differences and off-dry expressions of the same. They make a late harvest version, as well.

The **2013 Trisaetum "Wichmann Vineyard" Dundee Hills Riesling (\$24.99)** offers up very pretty vanilla and floral notes on the nose. I find there to be a hint of orange spice and a more obvious crisp green apple note on the palate. The word succulent comes to mind, while the wine lingers with honey and apple flavors on the finish.

Another distinct offering is the **2013 Trisaetum "Coast Range" Willamette Valley Dry Riesling (\$24.99)**. First off, there's an herb and citrus note on the nose. On the palate, there's some very lovely fruit

and a sweet, rich spiciness that broadens the wine's appeal. The finish leans a little toward herbal and vegetal characteristics, which makes this delicious on its own or served with grilled chicken.

Although James and the folks at Trisaetum are really serious about their Riesling, their Pinot Noirs can hold their own quite well. From the winery's coolest site comes the **2012 Trisaetum "Coast Range" Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir (\$37.99)**. It's beautiful, soft and savory, with a lovely amount of acid to really brighten it up and rich vanilla that isn't over the top. The tannins are smooth and linger quietly. It should age nicely for a few years or drink now with grilled salmon or roasted pork.

—Sal Rodriguez

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concentration and balance considering it is still so youthful. There are a lot of great mid-priced 2012 Pinots, but few, if any, are better..

One of the best Pinots of the vintage on the higher end from the entire trip was the **2012 Elk Cove "La Bohème" Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$44.99)**. This estate vineyard was planted in 1985 to a selection of the best Pommard clone already on the property and named after the Campbell's favorite Puccini opera. Sexy, with exotic spices encompassing the wealth of intense black cherry, wet asphalt and pomegranate aromas. Certainly full of youthful fruit and layered spice on the palate, it is still quite a ways away from a fruit bomb. It's built more like a fort and ready to go 10 years in the cellar, but those lacking patience will enjoy its youthful exuberance now.

Ponzi

Ponzi was our last visit of the day, and we took our time at Maria and Louisa Ponzi's wonderful new winery and tasting room. They earned a reputation as one of the best producers in the valley after they planted their first vineyards in 1970 and produced their first wine in 1974, and these wines solidify it.

One of the winery's flagships is their Pinot Gris. You can get a sense of the entire vintage by tasting just this one wine every year. In the **2013 Ponzi Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$14.99)** you get the bright tangy apple and pear flavors of the vintage after the rains and the richer core of citrus fruit and floral complexity from before. It's a fresh, complete and supremely drinkable wine for \$15.

Also a tremendous value is the **2012 Ponzi "Tavola" Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$23.99)**. Darkly fruited, with considerable spice and a pretty lace of violets, this wine is shocking in the amount of complexity it has for the price. Juicy from the onset, with Asian plum, sandalwood, rose petal, raspberry and cola flavors.

Chehalem

Simply put, everything we tasted at Chehalem was delicious, even the Blue Star doughnuts that they brought in for breakfast. Honestly, what Harry Peterson-Nedry and crew are doing these days is pretty special. In managing numerous estate vineyards and honing in on what exactly those vineyards provide on their own and as components of the Three Vineyards bottlings, they have a wide palette of flavors and styles from which to blend. Harry was also kind enough to make some typically "winery only" bottlings available to us, which are just simply too good, and too unusual not to include here.

First is the **2012 Chehalem "Ridgecrest Vineyards" Ribbon Ridge Gamay Noir (\$24.99)**. As a lover of great Gamay (think Marcel Lapierre or Jean-Paul Thévenet Morgon) I think Harry's is up there with the best. Wildly complex, the nose is full of fresh red fruits and purple floral tones, with an undercurrent of green, leafy vegetation. Tangy, acidic and vibrant, this is the kind of wine I want to drink by the bottle. Fresh cherry/raspberry fruit combines with notes of fennel pollen and sweet tea to round out this food friendly wine.



Harry couldn't say no to selling us the next wine. If he did, we'd probably have rioted and trashed his tasting bar because we were so fired up about it. The **2013 Chehalem "Sext" Willamette Valley Riesling (\$24.99)** is freaking delicious and should be consumed with abandon. This slightly fizzy wine is reminiscent of Moscato d'Asti, but made from Riesling, much more interesting and less sweet. All pureed stone fruit and lacy minerality on the nose, its touch of perfectly balanced residual sugar acts as a fuse to all the explosive peach, baked apple and apricot preserves packed into the palate. A must try!



Jason Lett at Eyrie Vineyards.

LETT IT BE *Eyrie Vineyards*

The red-tailed hawk tirelessly scans the horizon for a nesting place, choosing an isolated tree or grove of trees that offers an ideal vantage point high above the earth. Such sturdy nests, once constructed, can be comfortably occupied for decades to come. In the world of wine there are a few men and women of rare vision, not unlike those sharp-eyed raptors, who seek to leave their special mark upon the land for future generations. David Lett, founder of Eyrie Vineyards, was barely 25 in 1965, fresh out of UC Davis, with a smart detour in Burgundy under his boots and a strong, irrefragable passion to make wine. Driven by tenacity and intuition, the following year he and his wife Diana transported a few thousand Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and other varietal cuttings up to northern Oregon, hiked and studied myriad hillsides, microclimates and soils, and eventually planted their roots on a few acres of pristine, southern-exposed slopes in the Red Hills of Dundee, 30 miles south of Portland and within actual eyeshot of a hawk's eyrie. These were the very first vineyards in the Willamette Valley. Their willingness to explore the beautiful valley and Pinot potential of the region eventually attracted a handful of other early, now iconic winemakers, including Dick Erath, Jim Maresh, Nancy and Dick Ponzi and Dave Adelsheim. After enduring a learning curve for the first few years, David Lett's efforts soon paid off when his 1975 South Block Reserve Pinot Noir surpassed all but one Burgundy at a Drouhin tasting in Paris in 1980, an event that forever sealed the Willamette Valley's reputation as the New World's prime region for finesse-driven, cool-climate Pinot Noir. In his characteristic wry manner, Lett later observed, "that made all the damn peasants out here in Oregon, who didn't believe we were world class, take a look at us."

Over the next two decades Lett expanded his original 20-acre Eyrie estate by purchasing three other vineyards—Daphne (formerly Stonehedge), Three Sisters and Rolling Green Farm, all tended with the same painstakingly natural, dry-farmed, non-interventionist philosophy that compelled him to plant roots there in the first place. He remained an outspoken, influential and wise presence in the valley until his premature death in 2008, affectionately nicknamed "Papa Pinot" by those who knew, respected and treasured him.

I welcomed the rare opportunity to visit the historic Eyrie Vineyards this spring with fellow co-workers, and was met by David Lett's son Jason, who took over the winery in 2005 and was shepherding it through another growing season. Having grown up in the vineyards, he spoke with gentle ease about the sense of bestowed responsibility and challenges—a small producer offering a distinctive sense of place while retaining uncompromising ethics—that faced the winery as it entered its fifth decade, and of the importance of maintaining the Eyrie style of natural, lithely-textured, aromatically pure, age-worthy wines. As he walked us through gnarled rows of vines in the older parcels of the estate, Jason talked of the iron-rich Jory soils underfoot, of their origin in the huge volcanic eruption between 15 and 17 million years ago that covered an area of the Northwest the size of Great Britain in lava and dust. And of the great Missoula floods that later tore through the valley, filling it like an inland sea to a depth of hundreds of feet before leaving rich sediments behind. This dramatic geology lesson was buried beneath the library of old vines that stretched before us as we also noted the diversity of plant life that shared space between the rows, natural inhibitors of pests and disease. Everything in balance, everything in harmony, tread lightly.

Please note that our inventory of Eyrie wines is always rather scarce, as they just don't make very much wine, but what they do make, well... The **2012 Eyrie "Estate" Dundee Hills Chardonnay (\$24.99)** reflects what has been described by many as an epic vintage—the warmest summer in years, a long growing season allowing for perfectly balanced ripeness and acidity. But as with everything Eyrie, it's the raw material that sets this delicately straw-colored Chardonnay apart, imbuing it with refined elegance and lingering aromatic complexity. Liminal notes of poached pear, quince, lees, apple and spice play upon the palate in a stunning wine that will continue to evolve for at least a decade, probably two.

Another superb wine that expressed the vintage but still retained the transparent Eyrie style, the **2012 Eyrie "Estate" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$32.99)** was rounder and riper than in 2011, with more lavish spice, silky red and black cherries and raspberries on the palate, pleasant acidity and a touch of iron and bramble on the fine, flavorful finish. A marriage of suave and sensual, and although age-worthy, this promises considerable charm now.

I should preface this last selection by thanking Jason Lett for sharing his time, vines, words and wines with the lucky few of us who visited him that sparkling spring day. As we sat there pondering and searching the sky for signs of a telltale red-tail, he disappeared briefly and came back with a bottle of **1996 Eyrie "Reserve" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$219.99)**, my new epiphany wine. Crafted from fruit grown on the original Pinot Noir vines that put Willamette Valley on the wine map a half century ago, the reserve bottling is "mostly whole berries picked in the cool of the morning, de-stemmed and fermented in small bins, punched down every four hours and gently pressed and transferred to oak barrels," where it takes a nap for nearly two years. Unfined, unfiltered and unimaginably delicate in color, revealing flavors of orange peel, cherry, black tea, forest floor and potpourri spice. A wine for the sages, speaking words of wisdom.

—John Majeski



Erin Nuccio of Evesham Wood in the Eola-Amity Hills.

Eola-Amity Hills: The Van Duzer Effect

By Joe Manekin

Located south of McMinnville and extending as far south as Salem, the Eola-Amity Hills AVA is one of the Willamette Valley's six sub-appellations, officially recognized in 2006. This part of the Willamette Valley seems quieter, more relaxed than the areas around the towns of Newberg and Dundee. There are terrific views of both the Coast Range and the Cascades (my favorite is from Bethel Heights). And of course, there is wonderful wine made here. The soils often depend on elevation and vary within the same vineyard, with higher elevation sites tending to have more volcanic soils, like Jory, and lower terrain showing more marine sediment. One defining feature of the Eola-Amity AVA is its decidedly cooler climate, due to the so-called "Van Duzer effect," a cool afternoon breeze that blows from the Pacific through a gap in the Coast Range. Wines from the Eola-Amity Hills, viticultural and production differences aside, tend to show tangy, darker fruit than wines from Dundee. On our recent trip, we visited four Eola-Amity based wineries: Bethel Heights (see page 2), Evesham Wood, St. Innocent and Brooks.

Evesham Wood (pronounced "Eve" like Adam and Eve, we learned) produces some of my absolute favorite Pinot Noirs from anywhere—they certainly are among the very best Pinot Noirs for the price. It is with this strongly held belief that we headed to Evesham Wood, curious to learn any secrets or key factors that make their wines so consistently delicious. Founded 29 years ago by Russ and Mary Raney, the goal has always been to make small volumes of terroir-driven wines. These two were particularly influenced by the wines of Henri Jayer and Michel Niellon, so needless to say the bar was set rather high! In 2010, the Raney's sold to two long-time admirers and more recently, winery assistants, Erin and Jordan Nuccio, who continue to operate with the same philosophy and guiding principles as the founders. These are a few of the keys to what makes these wines great: organic viticulture, with fruit purchased from similarly minded growers, fermentations with a *pie de cuve* (basically a house starter induced fermentation), aging in primarily well-used oak barrels, racking by hand and no filtration. Current owners Erin and Jordan Nuccio also make very tasty wines under their own Haden Fig label at Evesham Wood. Their brightly fruited **2012 Haden Fig Willamette Valley Chardonnay (\$15.99)** is so good for the price, with just a trace of discernible wood. The **2013 Evesham Wood**

"Blanc du Puits Sec" Willamette Valley Pinot Gris-Gewürztraminer (\$15.99) has great aromatics, palate weight and tension between high acidity and well balanced residual sugar; think of it as off-dry in style. It's a natural with food, and has earned a permanent spot at our Thanksgiving table. Finally, the **2012 Evesham Wood Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$24.99)** shows all the energetic, focused, tangy plum, violet and dark cherry fruit I expect in this wine, with the vintage's warm and dry character tastefully marking it with a juicy, subtly rounder quality—relative to this wine, mind you, no ripe and juicy, sun-kissed California Pinot here!

At St. Innocent, the wines have consistently (and deservedly) garnered a solid reputation with both critics and Oregon Pinot fans. The **2012 St. Innocent "Shea Vineyard" Yamhill-Carlton District Pinot Noir (\$49.99)** is from a classic, warmer vineyard. From it St. Innocent creates a big wine packed with juicy red fruits and subtle hints of licorice; it's a larger scaled Pinot Noir that is tasty and very well made. Showing more cut, focus and fruit purity, the **2012 St. Innocent "Temperance Hill" Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$34.99)** demonstrates both the high quality of Temperance Hill fruit and some marked Eola-Amity tension on the palate.

A relatively newer winery, founded in 1998, Brooks continues to earn a reputation for producing a diverse range of wines featuring a great variety of whites to complement the expected Pinot Noir offerings. While founder Jimi Brooks, sadly, is no longer around, the winery is in good hands with his son Pascal, his sister Janie and winemaker Chris Williams. On their organic Eola-Hills Vineyard they have 10 acres, consisting primarily of mid-1970s Pinot Noir and Riesling (Pinot Gris, Pinot Meunier and Muscat are also planted). Brooks also carefully sources fruit from throughout the valley, as well as some Gewürztraminer from Washington. The **2012 Brooks "Amycas" Oregon White Blend (\$15.99)**, a blend of Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Riesling, Muscat and Gewürztraminer, is an original wine with spicy, creamy yellow fruit, hints of tarragon and nice length. A typically tightly wound offering from 2011, the **2011 Brooks "Muska Vineyard" Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$42.99)** shows aromas of red and dark fruits and untoasted oak, with a fresh, lively palate that should soon blossom into yet another classic, beautiful 2011.

OREGON PINOT CAMP *Four Days, Lots of Wine*

Alright, we admit it—we have a crush on Oregon. In the last two months, more than a dozen K&L staff members have been in Oregon, some for work, some on their own time, to continue to explore the bounty that Oregon wine country is producing. All of us have fallen under the spell of the area, infatuated with the delicious, elegant wines from the genuine, passionate folks up there.

Christie, Patrick and I spent four days in the Willamette Valley at Oregon Pinot Camp at the end of June learning about the region's diverse soils and microclimates, the attention to detail in viticulture and excellence in winemaking. However, it was the passion and true community spirit that Oregon wine country embodies that stood out for me. The region was planted to Pinot Noir in 1966, followed by Pinot Gris in the early 1980s. Because the region is still so young in a global context, the sense of connection to its founders, primarily set apart by just one generation, is palpable. A few lucky wineries have the second generation at the helm, taking their wines and the region into the future.

Lange Estate

Lange Estate Winery and Vineyards is one such place. Don and Wendy Lange founded their winery in the Dundee Hills in the north Willamette Valley, planting Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay in the early 1980s. In 1987, they became only the fourth producer of Pinot Gris in the New World. Today, their son Jesse Lange is the Winemaker and General Manager of Lange, bringing his commitment to his family and their stellar wines to the world. With fruit from their original estate plantings, as well as fruit from other long-term growers in the Dundee Hills, Jesse makes an incredible amount of wine each vintage. He told me that this year alone he made 14 different Pinot Noirs! Here are two current offerings from Lange:

2012 Lange Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$15.99) Waxy Bartlett pear, lemon zest and minerals, with notes of white flowers and medium-plus, lively acidity. A spectacular, real Oregon Pinot Gris.

2011 Lange “Reserve” Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$29.99) Red cherry, sandalwood, red plum, red currant and thyme, with medium-plus acidity and soft, elegant tannins. A classic Dundee Hills Pinot!

—Sarah Covey

Domaine Serene

The massive and impressive Domaine Serene sits atop a hill that overlooks the vastness of Oregon wine country. It's a beautiful place that is great for its view, but more importantly, for its incredible ability to produce top-notch Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Owners Ken and Grace Evenstad have been making wine since the 1990 vintage, and even then they were met with much critical acclaim. Just recently, their 2010 Domaine Serene “Evenstad Reserve” Dundee Hills Pinot Noir was named #3 on the *Wine Spectator's* Top 100 Wines of 2013. It was a well-deserved accolade and brought even more attention to the fact that Oregon Pinot Noir is to be respected and cherished. The 2010

vintage has sadly sold out, but the **2011 Domaine Serene “Evenstad Reserve” Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$59.99)** is here. I think wine-maker Erik Kramer achieved victory again with this bottling, evoking deep and rich flavors of raspberry, violets, vanilla and light toffee. The light acidity keeps these flavors in check, and the tannins are soft, making this wine immensely enjoyable. It was treated with 55% new French Oak for 13 months, so it's definitely a bigger, broader Pinot Noir and not for the faint of heart.

For those looking for a slightly lighter Pinot, in style and price, we are fortunate to have just bought more of the **2010 Domaine Serene “Yamhill Cuvee” Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$38.99)**. Lovingly known as the “little sister” to the Evenstad Reserve, this Pinot is a steal. It still offers the grace, elegance and red fruit notes of the Evenstad Reserve, but adds more minerality and a slight spice. It received 91 points from *Wine Spectator* and 90 points from *Wine Enthusiast*. Domaine Serene is on a roll!

—Patrick Cu



Underwood by Union Wine Co.

I'm extremely excited to announce the inaugural release of one of our favorite value Oregon wines in the best possible package for easy and efficient summer sipping: Yes people, this is wine in a can! But don't let that aluminum pop-top fool you, the cans are filled with the same juice that goes into the bottles of Underwood by Union Wine Company. The **Underwood by Union Wine Co. Pinot Noir (375ml can \$5.99)** is from the 2013 vintage, but is very similar to the beloved 2012 that flew out of here before we could take a

breath between sips! It has gorgeous aromatics of strawberry and pomegranate, with great texture and supple acidity on the palate, peppery spice and a minerally finish. Super food-friendly and easy to drink anywhere!

I'm also ecstatic about the **Underwood by Union Wine Co. Pinot Gris (375ml can \$5.99)**! This is the first release of this wine from Underwood, and it is equally great in quality. It is a crisp, dry, fresh and bright style of Pinot Gris, with slight fruit flavors of white nectar, tree fruit and citrus, and it's not at all sweet, thank goodness! It's absolutely perfect to pull a can from an ice cold cooler and be refreshed wherever this summer takes you, whether it be camping, boating, picnicking, beaching or rocking out at the Hollywood Bowl.

—Christie Cartwright

The Dundee Hills: Wine at the 45th Parallel

By Joe Manekin

What makes the Dundee Hills so ideal for producing great wines?

Let's begin with the dirt. Some 17 million years ago, a volcano erupted in eastern Washington, which spread basaltic lava, which was then pushed upward due to tectonic shifting, and finally, with the sequence of massive flooding events known as the Missoula floods, the famed volcanic "Jory" soil of the Dundee Hills settled in at elevations above 300 feet. Other soils complementing the Jory include marine sedimentary and loess. Then let's talk latitude. At 45 degrees, Dundee is nearly parallel to Beaune. This allows for longer days and periods of sunshine during the growing season; combined with a climate that is generally cooler, and certainly much damper, than our coolest AVAs in California. The season is long, which allows for both sugar and physiological ripeness. That means complex flavors that do not come at the expense of acidity and freshness. Of course, every winery has their own characters, their own story to tell, their own wines and take on what the Dundee Hills can offer. Independent of each other, Arterberry Maresh, Cameron and Domaine Drouhin Oregon arrived to these hills outside the small town of Dundee and established themselves as a few of the preeminent wineries of the area.



Arterberry Maresh's vineyards are located fairly high up in the Dundee Hills, at about as high as vines are planted in this AVA, around 800 feet above sea level. After selling their fruit for some years (they still sell grapes to a few folks, Teutonic for example), you get the sense that young winemaker Jim Maresh knew what he had and wanted as much of it as possible for his own wines. Jim is, I'm guessing, 27-30 years old, and easily one of the more informal folks we met in his sweatpant shorts and white tee get-up. Regardless, Maresh makes very good Pinot Noir and arguably one of the best Chardonnays in the world. Yes, I did just say this is one of the *best* Chardonnays in the world! The **2012 Arterberry Maresh "Maresh Vineyard" Dundee Hills Chardonnay (\$69.99)** is rich, with flavors of golden fruits and apples, a wine that Maresh says might be the best Chard he's made. The **2012 Arterberry Maresh "Maresh Vineyard" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$54.99)** is delicious: pure Dundee red fruits, leaner than many other 2012 Pinot Noirs in the valley, but with the cut and tension of a great young wine.

Cameron Winery is, according to Jim Maresh, "near the residential area" of the Dundee Hills, read: lower down the hill. I don't think he meant that as a slight, just a point of differentiation and a comment on owners John Paul and Teri Wadsworth's relatively newer arrival (in the mid-1980s) on the scene in this longest established Willamette Valley AVA. It's easy to be sidetracked by the quirkiness, the hilarious website (www.cameronwines.com) and force of personality that is part of the experience Chez Cameron. However, then you would be missing how serious, stylish and unapologetically chiseled and old-fashioned these wines are. Some useful data points would include: plantings of "heritage clones" or cuttings from Joseph Swan, Mt. Eden, Hanzell and even a scant amount of Nebbiolo vines from Produttori de Barbaresco (Ovello); organic cultivation with bee hives, chickens and goats on the property; a cellar full of largely used (some very well-used) barrels, primarily from a boutique cooper whose medium toast is considerably lighter and more subtle than that of others' barrels.

The **2011 Cameron "Arley's Leap" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$54.99)** is from a section of own-rooted vines on the famed Abbey Ridge vineyard. It does not see a single new oak barrel, and given the cooler, long 2011 season, it is a masterpiece of a wine. At less than 12.5% ABV this is a wine where fragrance and acidity take center stage; it should age for a long time. The **2011 Cameron "Abbey Ridge" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$54.99)** shows a slightly spicier, more pungent and dark-fruited profile, while still retaining its high acidity, lower alcohol and old school Burgundy look-alike characteristics. It too is a steal for anyone looking for more complex Pinot Noir that, for this taster, not only outshines nearly all of its domestic competition, but many similarly priced Burgundies as well.

Domaine Drouhin Oregon (DDO) lent some serious credence to the idea that the Willamette Valley, and in particular the Dundee Hills AVA, was *the* spot (outside Burgundy, of course) for world class Pinot Noir when they arrived on the scene in 1987. As impressive as the property, the vineyard plantings and, of course, the wines all are, is the fact that everyone in Willamette Valley speaks so highly of DDO. In true Willamette Valley fashion, the Drouhins have always had a collaborative spirit, seeking out local expertise, walking vineyards and tasting other people's wines. While we would love to write up some of their Pinot Noir, at the moment there just isn't quite enough of it available to promote here. However, the **2012 Domaine Drouhin "Arthur" Dundee Hills Chardonnay (\$29.99)** is delicious—bright, citric, slightly spicy, sort of a Meursault meets Chablis take on things. For the detail minded, the wine is aged half in barrel (15% new) and half in tank. It's yet another example of why we increasingly believe in the powers of Willamette Valley Chardonnay!

—Joe Manekin

TEUTONIC *Oregon Wines to Convert Any Europhile*

A great wine is a great wine regardless of where it comes from as long as the wine is balanced, complex, structured and reflective of its terroir. There may however be witty banter as to what regions produce the greatest number of great wines and why. Burgophiles would argue that the tradition, consistency and terroir in the Grand Cru vineyard of Romanée-Conti contribute to DRC and Burgundy leading the pack. Champagne enthusiasts would tell you that the limestone content of the Clos du Mesnil vineyard produces one of the highest acclaimed Champagnes in the world. Port collectors would chime in that it's the ideal weather conditions within the last three months of the grape growing season that make for the most superlative wines, worthy of aging for generations. And they would all be correct in their own right, and most wine connoisseurs wouldn't even bat an eyelash to retort. Tell that same group the exact same notion about the greatest wines coming from Oregon and you wouldn't have so many eager believers. But why not?

I've spent a significant amount of my time on the sales floor of the Hollywood store convincing both the staff and Europhiles that great wines can and do come from the U.S. There are numerous vineyards in our country, especially in Oregon, that mirror the exact same growing conditions as the greatest wine growing regions of the Old World. Barnaby and Olga Tuttle from Teutonic Wine Company seek out such growing conditions when looking for vineyards to source for their German-inspired whites and reds.

Barnaby and Olga believe that the best wines are handmade, food-friendly and truly show their terroir. So in order to produce wines that are reflective of their philosophy, the Tuttle's focus solely on old vine, high elevation, unirrigated, cool climate vineyards. Following this philosophy allows the grapes to have longer hang time, giving them the opportunity to extract complexity from the vineyard without compromising the pH and spiking Brix levels. And choosing to only use old, unirrigated vineyards means that the vines have been forced to shoot their roots deep into the mother rock, allowing the grapes to showcase the sites' minerality and terroir. These conditions, according to Barnaby, produce wines that are high acid, low alcohol, complex, mineral-driven expressions of their terroir, just like the greatest wines from around the world.

2013 Teutonic "Maresh Vineyard" Dundee Hills Pinot Gris (\$19.99)

From the historic Maresh Vineyards, this is a real crowd pleaser. The glycerol texture, beautiful weight and notes of tropical fruit, like pineapple, and white flowers hint at the presence of residual sugar, but the acidity and brightness balance any sweetness.

2013 Teutonic "Crow Valley Vineyard" Willamette Valley Riesling (\$18.99)

If this wine was ever presented blind, people would be hard-pressed to guess it's from Oregon—it is the closest thing to a German Riesling that I've ever tasted from the U.S. Botrytis, sweet earth and celery root on the nose lead to a palate expressive of peach, apricot and honey. So friendly yet immensely complex. This level of quality in a German Riesling would cost at least three times as much.

2012 Teutonic "Laurel Vineyard-Bergspitze Weisse" Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir (\$24.99)

Teutonic's tenets of high, dry, old and cold are exemplified perfectly in the Laurel Vineyard-Bergspitze Weisse Pinot Noir. Super bright, high in acid, light in color and low in alcohol, it's loaded with all tart red fruit, earthy spice and forest floor.

2011 Teutonic "Laurel Vineyard-Bergspitze Schwarz" Chehalem Mountains Pinot Noir (\$39.99)

Lovers of Old World Pinot Noir are required to taste this. When Pinot Noir is grown in the most ideal growing conditions like the Bergspitze Schwarz you get intense aromatics of cedar, lacquer and spice, coupled with a sour cherry and tangy orange palate. Pure elegance.

—Mari Keilman



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