

WILLAMETTE VALLEY
VINEYARDS



A Native Son's Dream

The Willamette Valley is a special place. Her cool climate and storied soils are ideal for Pinot Noir and other cool climate vinifera wine grapes, cane berries, stone fruits, hops and nuts.

Richard Sommer, a UC Davis graduate, was the first to plant Pinot Noir in Oregon and sought an attorney to help him obtain the first winery license since Prohibition. That attorney brought home Richard's wine to share at dinner with his son, our Founder Jim Bernau — lighting a path and lifelong pursuit.

Since founding Willamette Valley Vineyards in 1983 and with the addition of Elton and Tualatin Estate Vineyard, Jim has worked more than thirty years to plant, grow and make a classic, elegant representation of Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley (later established by the Federal Government as an AVA).



Jory, named after the homesteading family of the Salem Hills, is the dominant soil at Willamette Valley Vineyards and Elton. The shallower, volcanic soil on the upper portion of the slopes, Nekia, gives the Bernau Block its pronounced intensity, minerality and earthiness.



Jim Bernau, Founder, harvesting Pinot Noir in the Bernau Block he began planting in 1983 (pictured below).



Bathed in the cool morning sun, Elton Vineyard is in the background. Our new plantings at Ingram Estate are in the foreground.

A Friendship Forged During Finals Week

Fellow winegrowers, Dick and Betty O'Brien planted Elton Vineyard on their family farm in the Eola Hills in the same year — named after Betty's father. Betty and Jim met in 1978 at Willamette University Graduate School and shared their dream of growing world-class Pinot Noir. Elton Vineyard's wine grapes were used by Oregon's best winemakers and earned the reputation as one of Oregon's top 10 vineyards. Since 1997, when Dick and Betty retired, we have been exclusively farming the vineyard.

Their professors helped them plan the first successful community-owned, crowd-funded business in the U.S., now with more than 16,000 wine enthusiasts as owners. (NASDAQ: WVV1)



Elton Vineyard has deep, volcanic Jory soil with a top layer of Woodburn sedimentary soil deposited by the cataclysmic Missoula Lake Flood. Note, the vineyard was planted around a "glacial erratic," white granite that rafted in a chunk of glacial ice in the flood waters from Montana and Canada — contributing a unique aroma and flavor profile. Inset: Close-up of Dick O'Brien (1940–2016) and the glacial erratic that now serves as the family headstone.

The Foundation of an Oregon Wine Pioneer

The first big break for Jim was when Bill Fuller, industry founder and former Napa winemaker at Louis Martini, merged with Willamette Valley Vineyards as a way to retire. Tualatin Estate Vineyard was one of the first established in the Willamette Valley (1973) with 83 acres of vines on their own roots. The plantings have grown to more than 190 acres, all sustainably farmed.

The vineyard is protected from the fall weather by the Coast Range (at right) resulting in some of the valley's earliest harvests. The soil is called Laurelwood, ancient ocean bottom uplift topped with loess — glacial scrapings or “rock flour”. The unusual aspect of this soil is the formation of “pisolites,” iron concretions that appear as rusted musket balls in the top layer, creating a pronounced “rose petal” nose that can be easily blind tasted in a line up of top Oregon Pinots.

Efren Loeza, his family members and crew kept their anniversary employment dates in the merger and now provide the leadership and care for all of our plantings. After 18 years in retirement, at the age of 80, Bill is back making wine with his Willamette Valley Vineyards Vintage 43 in current release.

Tualatin Estate Vineyard is the only vineyard in the world to win the Best of Show at the London International Wine Fair for both the red and white categories in the same year, and the first to produce an Oregon wine named to the *Wine Spectator* Top 100 List.



“I should say that I have never written a letter like this before, but I must admit that I was quite astonished by the consistent high quality of your Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays ... they exhibited balance and unadulterated purity of fruit, with an underlying complexity that seems to swell and improve in the glass as the wine sits.”

Robert Parker of *The Wine Advocate* in a letter to Bill Fuller, Founder of Tualatin Estate.



Winemaker Joe Ibrahim and Assistant Winemaker Gabi Préfontaine | Harvest 2018



Oregon Wine Pioneer Bill Fuller



Willamette Valley Vineyards winemaking team. Pictured behind the right shoulder of Winemaker Joe Ibrahim, holding a wine glass, is Efren Loeza, Vineyard Manager and employee of 39 years. He received the Oregon Wine Board's first Vineyard Excellence Award in 2016.



"If you want to see just how seductive Pinot Noir is made in an easy to drink style can be, don't miss this delicious, beautifully made wine ... may be the world's most delicious and accessible Pinot."
Robert Parker,
The Wine Advocate



Whole Cluster® Fermentation

Years ago, Jim began experimenting with Pinot Noir by gently dropping the hand-picked whole clusters in a chilled stainless fermenter, pushing all the oxygen out with CO2 and sealing the vessel tight. What happened next was magical – the black berries on the stem started swelling up and turning pink. When they burst, they released the most aromatic, fermenting Pinot Noir. Robert Parker of *The Wine Advocate* said our Whole Cluster Pinot Noir “may be the world’s most delicious and accessible Pinot,” advancing Willamette Valley Vineyards’ reputation with this fermentation approach.

In 2015, the first Whole Cluster® Rosé of Pinot Noir was created by fermenting the first free-run juice that burst from uncrushed Pinot Noir clusters. This whole cluster process achieves great color, aroma and flavor in rosé and strengthens our Whole Cluster® Pinot Noir quality.

Because of our first and continuous branded use of this winemaking style, the Federal Trademark office issued the trademark to the winery for the brand name Whole Cluster®.

New Look
for *Dijon Clone*
Chardonnay



The French Connection

The importation of "Dijon Clones" of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay into the Willamette Valley was one of the greatest tipping points in Oregon wine quality. The state's original plantings, which were brought up from California by emigrating winemakers, produced fruit that failed to fully ripen in cool vintages. The new Dijon clones ripen two weeks earlier, yielding beautifully balanced wines of ripe Chardonnay and acidity.



As a member of the Oregon Governor's Delegation to Burgundy in the 1980s, Jim sought native French clones to improve Chardonnay quality.



Pinot Gris was first introduced into the United States from France by David Lett, who planted Gris in the North Willamette Valley at Eyrie Vineyards. Jim got his first cuttings from David. The variety is now Oregon's leading white variety.





Stewardship of the Land ...

Being environmentally sustainable in grape growing and winemaking is important to Oregon winemakers. Together, they formed Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE), the nation's first internationally certified environmental stewardship program. Jim's most valued recognition is from his fellow winemakers when they presented him their first Founder's Award from LIVE.



... and Each Other

Willamette Valley Vineyards is a proud supporter of ¡Salud!. Their mission to provide access to healthcare services for Oregon's seasonal vineyard workers and their families. In 2013, we presented a founding gift to fund a Mobile Wellness Unit that can travel into the vineyards and provide on-site care. In 2014, Founder Jim Bernau was presented the Los Heroes de ¡Salud! Award, recognizing his significant contributions to ¡Salud!'s efforts.



Leda Garside, RN, BSN, MBA
& Jim Bernau.



"Pinot Noir made with consideration for the environment, employees, and community simply tastes better."

Jim Bernau
Jim Bernau, Founder/Winegrower

— Independent and Wine Enthusiast Owned —

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Jim Bernau, Founder/Winegrower