

2023 PINOT NOIR *Bernau Block*

VINTAGE FACTS 2023

2023 in the Willamette Valley began with a very cold, dry winter followed by a short, wet spring. The cooler weather led to a late bud break around April 27th through May 1st, which was two to three weeks behind average. It quickly warmed up and accelerated the time between bud break and bloom. Similar to the 2011 vintage, bud break was short, with flowering happening in a single week. A hailstorm during the flowering period led to lower yields for the 2023 vintage. Lower yielding vintages tend to produce wines that are very concentrated in color, tannins and body.

The summer was ideal with temperatures staying around 80 degrees. A heatwave from August 13th - 16th reached temperatures over 100 degrees in certain areas and quickly broke. The berries on the vine were at the tail end of veraison during the heatwave and were able to handle most of the heat stress. It caused an increase in sugar levels in September, just in time for harvest.

With a record yield from our estate vineyards in 2022, the 2023 harvest reflected the typical vineyard cycle of a lower yield after a high yield. Picking began around the first week of September and finished in late October. Temperatures stayed ideal until the last week of September when rain arrived. Growers either worked through the rain to finish their harvest or paused until it passed the following week. Intermittent rain followed throughout the rest of the harvest. Willamette Valley Vineyards brought in 90 percent of its grapes by this period. Although it was a challenging vintage with lower yields, winemakers are excited about how this unique vintage will display.

THE VINEYARD

Estate, Bernau Block: Planted in 1983 by Founder Jim Bernau, the Estate Vineyard sits on a south-facing volcanic slope at 500–750 feet elevation. The Bernau Block Pinot Noir is sourced exclusively from these original 15 acres, which Bernau planted with a Christmas tree planter pulled behind his 33-horsepower tractor. French clones 667 and 777 were later grafted on a portion of the vines.

WINEMAKING NOTES

The stylistic vision is pure Pinot Noir fruit with a soft, juicy mouthfeel, balanced oak and soft, sweet, ripe tannins. The methodology includes attention to detail from vineyard to bottle. Picked at peak ripeness, the fruit was gently destemmed for intraberry fermentation, which adds lively fruit-forward characteristics. Prior to fermentation, the must underwent a five-day, pre-fermentation cold soak providing improved complexity, color and mouthfeel. On the fifth day, the must was inoculated with commercial yeast. After 8-12 days of fermentation in small fermenters, punched down by hand, the must was pressed out and allowed to settle in the tank overnight. The new wine was barreled with light, fluffy lees where it underwent complete malolactic fermentation.

TECHNICAL DATA

Grape Type: Pinot Noir

Clones: 667, 777, Pommard and Wädenswil

Appellation: Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Jory (iron rich volcanic), Nekia (shallow iron rich volcanic)

Harvest Date: September 16 – 26, 2023

Harvest Statistics

- **Brix:** 23.9°
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 5.63 g/L
- **pH:** 3.40

Finished Wine Statistics

- **Alcohol:** 13.7%
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 5.82 g/L
- **pH:** 3.36
- **Sulfate Level:** low

Fermentation: Small bins and stainless steel tanks

Barrel Regimen: 16 months in barrel, 21% new French oak, 79% neutral

Bottling Date: March 5 – 6, 2025

TASTING NOTES

Ruby red in the glass, aromas of cherry pie, dried cranberry, cinnamon, fresh boysenberry and graham cracker delight the nose. The palate carries flavors of strawberry, Italian plums, crushed herbs and cedar. Vibrant tannins and acidity lead to a lingering finish.

Peak Drinkability: 2025 – 2035

FOOD PAIRINGS

The Bernau Block craves savory and grilled meat pairings, including beef Wellington, Oregon lamb chops, smoked salmon, crabcakes and dishes featuring native Oregon truffles.

