

CHARDONNAY AT BETHEL HEIGHTS

Chardonnay has been the preeminent white wine at Bethel Heights since the first vines were planted here in 1977. Today we have five different blocks of Chardonnay planted on various benches and slopes around our Estate vineyards.

THE 2022 VINTAGE

I would sum up the 2022 vintage as *lucky*; without precedent and very lucky. Had October been anything like it normally is, we would have struggled with phenolic ripeness, analytical ripeness, really all the ripenesses.

A very wet Spring followed by a cooler than normal start to the Summer had me concerned about how deeply into October we would probably be harvesting, and these fears were not helped by the sheer size of the crop we set, even after thinning to one cluster per shoot.

There were moments towards the end of summer when it seemed certain that we would struggle to get ripeness where we wanted, and then those moments blurred into a series of high 70s low 80s temperatures... in October. In the middle of October. I've lived in Oregon my entire life and I've never seen anything like it. Pessimism quickly became optimism as the endless Summer of 2022 rolled on for an extra month. It was the warmest October on record.

For sheer volume, 2022 was one of the most generous vintages in recent memory, and at this state of play the wines are very exciting, show tremendous potential and fascinating variations based on pick date and site.

~ Ben Casteel, October 2023



2022 CHARDONNAY ESTATE

Certified Organically Grown

Fruit source: Justice and Bethel Heights Vineyards,
clones 548, 76, 95, and Wente

Harvest date: September 18 to October 2, 2022

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 22.7, pH: 3.08, TA: 7.1 g/L

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.3%, pH: 3.3, TA: 6.2 g/L

Fermented and aged 12 months in French oak, 30% new barrels

Bottled unfiltered February 12, 2024

300 Cases produced

VINIFICATION: The grapes were whole cluster pressed at low pressure for four hours then settled at 45°F for three days. The juice was then racked to 228 L barrels and fermented for 35-40 days with minimal lees stirring at the beginning and no lees stirring from mid fermentation to dryness. The new wine went through full malolactic fermentation and was aged on the lees undisturbed for 12 months, then was racked from barrel with the fermentation lees to a stainless-steel tank for an additional 4 months prior to bottling.

WINEMAKER NOTES: The 2022 vintage started out very cold, and a late frost event just before bud break caused some attrition in our Chardonnay blocks, which usually start to break bud earlier than Pinot noir. The lower Chardonnay yields gave us wines of purity and persistence, but there is also quiet power and gravity in the mid palate that will emerge more fully with time in the bottle. Our picking decisions for Chardonnay favor tension and vibrancy over opulence and richness, as we believe this gives our wines the best expression of place.