



2022 Balcombe Vineyard, Block 1B Pinot Noir

AVA: Dundee Hills

LOCATION: Breyman Orchard Rd.

SOIL TYPE: Jory

YEAR PLANTED: 1990

CLONAL MATERIAL: Pommard

VINEYARD SIZE: 6.5-acre vineyard; 1.5 acre block

PICKING DATES: October 11th

TONS/ACRE: 2.74 tons; 1.83 tons/acre

OWNERS: Joyce Cooke

PRODUCTION: 236 cases bottled

2022 Vintage Story: *Since 2012 the Willamette Valley has experienced what can only be described as a new grape growing paradigm brought about by shorter winters, milder springs, warmer and drier summers and the combination simply has led to historically earlier bud breaks, flowering time and picking dates. In 2022 we were seeing the beginning of bud break in the second week of April. Then a 4-5 day stretch of cold and still early mornings led to a valley-wide frost event that seemed to be the herald of devastation for the 2022 harvest. Buds were simply fried on the vine and within a few days the blackened tiny leaves were beginning to fall off the fruiting canes. However, a little less than a month later a whole new set of secondary buds had emerged in most vineyards. In some cases, so much so that record crop loads were recorded! While the later second buds meant a later flowering and, thus, a later harvest the valley was blessed with the warmest and driest October on record allowing us to pick successfully late into the month of October. This unusual series of events has led to wines that are at once deep and rich but also tantalizing open and drinkable in their youth. This is a vintage that proves we know less about vines than we think we do and that while the risks of climate change abound (we barely escaped fires again in September and October) there is no doubt we are in a golden age of winemaking in the Northern Willamette Valley of Oregon.*

Site History: The vineyard was initially planted in full in 1990 by Mort and Joyce Cooke. At the time this site was seen as one of the higher vineyards that could possibly work in the Dundee Hills (that idea seems cute and naïve at this juncture, of course). Patty had taken over the farming of the vineyard directly adjacent to Balcombe, White Rose Vineyard, in 1994 as that site had fallen into disrepair and was choked with mildew. At the end of the 1996 harvest Mort Cooke came to the winery and said, “When I planted my vineyard and for a few years after I looked at my site and thought it looked great in comparison to White Rose. Since you took over that vineyard I now think that vineyard looks great and mine looks terrible. Can you do for my site what you did for White Rose?” 25 years later we are still farming the vineyard and are the only winemakers to have vinified the fruit from this exceptional Dundee Hill site.

Site Characteristics: Balcombe Vineyard is located toward the top of the Dundee Hills on Breyman Orchards Rd. at the southern end of the Dundee Hills. Adjacent vineyards include White Rose, Domaine Drouhin, Stonehenge (Eyrie) and some Domaine Serene sites. It was planted in 1990 to Pommard clone. In 1997, while at Torii Mor, we began farming this vineyard and getting all the fruit from the 6.45 acres. We have worked with the fruit every year since, so we’ve become pretty accustomed to how the grapes grow, ripen and ferment into wine. The vineyard sits at about 600-700’ elevation on a relatively gently, mostly west-sloping hillside with lots of sun exposure. The vineyard is divided into five specific sections all of which are fermented separately (this becomes important later).

The Block: Patty divided this vineyard into five distinct sections when we started with the vineyard in 1997. The site is one contiguous block of vines nearly laid out in a rectangular shape. The rows are long from the top of the property to the bottom, with a change in elevation of about 75 feet over the span of the rows. The blocks were divided fairly evenly top to bottom and left to right with the exception being the portion that dips below the house with a series of shortening rows. The blocks were designated as 1A and 2A at the top, 1B and 2B at the bottom and 3 below the house.

Block 1B is the most popular wine at Patricia Green Cellars. The Wine Club exists because of it. This block happens to produce wine utterly like anything else from the rest of the vineyard. It is darker, much more structured, more earth bound and deeper than the much higher-toned fruit in the regular Balcombe Vineyard bottling. This block has been this different since our first time working with this site in 1997. Nothing has changed.

Farming Practices: We have done the management of this property internally since the Torii Mor days with the exception of 2014 and 2015 when Sterling Fox's management service did the work. Also, at that time, the vineyard was switched entirely to organic farming practices and remains so to this day. The vineyard has always been dry farmed.

Picking Dates, Tonnages, Tons/Acre: We picked two blocks on October 11th (Blocks 1A and 1B, with the rest of the vineyard hanging for an additional week) Block 1B coming in at about 1.83 tons/acre. Balcombe, unfortunately, is historically speaking, a fairly low production site so even in a year that turned out to be fairly bountiful in many sites. We were not even able to get to 2 tons/acre.

Vinification: Two fermenters of this were both done 40% whole-cluster in 1.75 ton open top fermenters.

Winemaking: Fermentations were managed exclusively by pigeages to ensure gentle handling, extraction and delicate tannin construction. Cold soaks took four days before fermentation began. Full fermentation from beginning to pressing was 19 days. A 48-hour settling of pressed wine occurred prior to being racked to barrel. All wines were on full lees until assemblage for bottling. Bottled without fining or filtration.

Barrels: This 10-barrel bottling consists of 2 new barrels (20%) both of which were Cadus and then a combination of once and twice-filled barrels (50 and 30% respectively) rounded out the wine which has more than ample stuffing to take on the barrel program. Wine was in barrel until late August and bottled in early September allowing for around 10 months in barrel.

Notes: *2022 is a spectacular year in the Dundee Hills. Despite the major frost event in April all our vineyards in this AVA recovered exceptionally well and produced both bumper crops and wines of incredible concentration, focus, drive and elegance. Spread across our Volcanic, Anderson Family, Balcombe, Balcombe Block 1B, Durant Bishop Block, Durant Madrone Block, Lillie's, Mysterious (Arcus Vineyard) and Weber we have our largest and most successful selection of Dundee Hill wines in our 23 year history. All of these wines operate at or around apex levels for each bottling. Not a vintage to be missed from this important Oregon AVA.*

We were able to do two fermentations done with everything from the vineyard being destemmed due to what we felt was undue damage to the stems themselves from the summer of excessive heat. Both went through a standard cold soak of about 4-4 days in 1.75 ton fermenters and both were exclusively pigeaged 1x/day until dry and then pressed and allowed to settle for 2 days. This spent a little less than a year in 38% new barrels and a variety of once used to three times used barrels. As usual, the wine is brooding in its youth and has incredible longevity although the destemming lends a more rich, red and forward tone to the fruit display. Tastings of the 2000 and 2001 bottlings over the past year revealed wines that were in tremendous shape. We are better at what we do now than we were then and the vineyard is 30 years old now, not just getting to 10. This section of the vineyard is a worker. It just cranks out an incredible wine every single year. Every year the vines get more mature and at 30 years of vine age now in a space of full maturity. This is a gorgeous uber-rendition of Dundee Hills Pinot Noir. TA 5.5, pH 3.54. Bottled with about 25 ppm free SO₂ and less than 75 ppm total SO₂.

Tasting Note: *Please be aware that I am loathe to write tasting notes on our wines. Each person has an individual palate and therefore unique experiences with every wine. Also, what a person has tasted in their life and what they enjoy informs them on what a wine is like. If I tell you a wine tastes like cherries and you either have never had a cherry or don't like cherries what I am saying is irrelevant information. That being said I have been asked to include my thoughts on each wine (since we have so many).*

The 2022 Balcombe Vineyard, Block 1B Pinot Noir is, as always, lingering at the top of the heap of a massive number of wines bottled. The distinctively black-red fruit profile that has made this wine our signature Dundee Hill bottling is on display in spades. Fruit and barrel spice open up the wine's aromatic profile and lead into a wealth of fruits, an array of spices and a texture that is both rich and dense at the same time. This wine operates, as per usual, just outside of the norms of Dundee Hill wines that are silkily-textured and red-fruited. This bottling exacerbates that difference and the tannins are forceful yet comfortable within the context of the wine. If you're a long-time Balcombe Block 1B fan, this bottling is not going to disappoint.

