



2022 Durant Vineyard, Bishop Block Pinot Noir

AVA: Dundee Hills

LOCATION: Breyman Orchard Rd.

SOIL TYPE: Jory

YEAR PLANTED: 1973

CLONAL MATERIAL: Pommard

VINEYARD SIZE: 55-acre vineyard; 3.5 acre~ block

PICKING DATES: October 11th

TONS/ACRE: 2.72 (see note below)

OWNERS: The Durant Family

PRODUCTION: 389 cases bottled

Site History: Durant Vineyard is, by any measure, one of the pioneer vineyards in Oregon. The site was established and first planted in 1973 by Ken and Penny Durant who, along with their son Paul, owns and farms it to this day. Set on Breyman Orchards Rd. at the southern end of the Dundee Hills the vineyard is about 60 acres in size with a wide range of elevation topping out at about 600 feet, and has several different plantings of Pinot Noir and other varieties. This is a mostly south-facing site that is adjacent to Domaine Drouhin, De Ponte and Sokol Blosser. To give some perspective on how fertile and life-sustaining the soil is in the Dundee Hills there is also a successful olive orchard planted on the property from which the Durants make some pretty damn good olive oil. We get two sections of fruit from the vineyard. The Bishop Block which was planted to Pommard in 1973 and the Madrone Block which is a 2000 planting of Dijon 115 clone.

Site Characteristics: This block is on a long, gently sloping stretch of hill that faces due south overlooking southern Yamhill County. The rows run opposite the normal north-south which is, especially in this day and age, not necessarily a bad thing. Dijon 115 is known for its early ripening and deeply concentrated fruit character and the Dundee Hills soil and warm growing conditions can enhance these attributes to shocking extents. This section of the vineyard is fortunate to be bounded on one side by trees which provide both shade and a cooling effect. This old vineyard is the home to the Durants and is a significant historic Oregon site. While this block took nearly 30 years to be planted the journey from laying fallow for years to the type of wines it is capable of putting out now assuredly was worth the wait.

The Block: These now monster vines were planted back in 1973 making them some of the oldest vines in Oregon, thus giving this bottling an historical aspect to it. 50-year-old vines in Oregon are exceptionally rare both because there was so little planted acreage back then and some of that acreage has been re-planted due to Phylloxera. The fact that this site and wine exist at all is somewhat of a minor miracle. In part due to this, this wine knows exactly what it wants to be. It shows finesse, subtleness, elegance and discreet balance all backed up by a sneaky and looming firmness. Only older vines make wines like this. This is not a wine that needs to make a dramatic entrance, because all the work is done on the back end.

Farming Practices: This vineyard, no doubt, encapsulates a lot about the Oregon farming experience. Assuredly in the 1970s the Durants farmed the way most places on the planet did and it's probably not something anyone wants to think deeply about at this point. However, over time and with prodding from any number of their winery customers (ourselves included) the Durants have moved toward organic farming and even incorporate productive livestock like sheep and goats to keep weeds at bay. Over the years since we began with this family's vineyard (2010) we have seen a marked change in the farming and the resulting health of the plants and soil.

Picking Dates, Tonnages, Tons/Acre: October 11th 7.87 tons (2.72 tons/acre). We actually ended up in a crazy place at one point during the 2022 harvest. Due to the 2021 Reserve Pinot Noir still being in tank and taking up around 1,000 square feet of inside space our fermentation area was more limited than normal. Initially this had seemed like an okay plan but then with tonnages in some places bordering on outrageous we were quickly running out of space. There was nearly 2 more tons in this block than the 7.87 we harvested. We ended up allowing the Durants to pick it for and sell it to Kelley Fox Wines. This is one of four vineyards where we had to make arrangements for other homes for portions of our 2022 harvest. Crazy.

Vinification: All fruit from the Bishop Block was done as 50% whole cluster in 3 x 1.75 and 1 x 2.5 ton fermenters.

Winemaking: Fermentations were managed exclusively by pigeages to ensure gentle handling, extraction and delicate tannin construction. Cold soaks were generally 4 days across all 3 fermenters. Full fermentation from beginning to pressing was 16-17 days. A 24-48 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 16-barrel bottling consists of 4 (25%) new barrels including 2 Cadus, 1 Chassin and 1 Tonnellerie O. As is the case with many wines seeing new barrels in 2022 there is a greater than usual spread of new barrels including Cadus, Francois Freres, Segiun Moreau, Tonnellerie Sud Ouest and Chassin. Of the remaining barrels 9 were only once used and 3 were neutral. We felt this wine had a great capacity to handle a large spread of excellent lightly-used or new barrels.

Notes: The Bishop Block from Durant Vineyard is maybe the most mercurial wine that we bottle each vintage and that should probably come as no surprise. Older vines have tricky natures and often times give off the impression of being quite different shortly after bottling than they were in barrel or turn out to be a couple of years later. That being said the 2022 vintage is, by some miracle, an absolute banner year in the Dundee Hills for Pinot Noir. Wines such as this one and the Weber Vineyard bottling that tend to be structured, restrained and even somewhat backwards in their youth are showing much more brightly out the outset than usual. This bodes well for both the folks that want to enjoy the youthful, primary delicious fruit this AVA offers while still getting in on some of that earth-tinged mineral note and those who are inclined to wait until the jumpiness subsides and see some of what these old-boned vines can produce over time. The block intermingles the fruit, herbs and minerals in ways most Pinot Noirs simply don't have the ability to do. That's the special nature of being able to work with these plants. This wine will take the length and complexity it has already and use the boundless energy in its fruit to stretch out over the years and become a magical wine that coasts through two decades of cellaring.

The wine finished with numbers of a TA of 5.4, a pH of 3.55, a free sulfur level below 30 ppm and a total sulfur below 80 ppm.