

2023 PINOT NOIR *Founders' Reserve*

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, 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.

WINEMAKING NOTES

The stylistic vision is pure Pinot Noir fruit with a 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, with approximately 90% of the berries remaining intact for intra-berry fermentation, which adds lively fruit-forward characteristics. Prior to fermentation, the must underwent a seven-day, pre-fermentation cold soak which provides complexity, color and mouthfeel. On the seventh 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 malolactic fermentation.

HISTORY OF FOUNDERS' RESERVE PINOT NOIR

Willamette Valley Vineyards was established in 1983 when Oregon native Jim Bernau planted Pinot Noir in an overgrown pioneer plum orchard in the Salem Hills, watering his vines by hand using 17 lengths of 75' garden hose. He was supported by a dedicated group of wine enthusiasts committed to producing the highest quality Pinot Noirs while being good stewards of the land. As a tribute to these individuals, we have created this special blend of Pinot Noir sourced exclusively from the Willamette Valley.

TECHNICAL DATA

Grape Type: Pinot Noir

Clones: 114, 115, 667, 777, 4407, Pommard and Wädenswil

Appellation: Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Jory (iron rich volcanic), Nekia (shallow iron rich volcanic), Laurelwood (windblown, glacial loess) including Pisolites and Missoula Flood sediment

Harvest Date: Sept. 15 – Oct. 7, 2023

Harvest Statistics

- **Brix:** 23.4°
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 6.72 g/L
- **pH:** 3.58

Finished Wine Statistics

- **Alcohol:** 13.2%
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 5.83 g/L
- **pH:** 3.64
- **Sulfate Level:** low

Fermentation: Small bins

Barrel Regimen: 10 months in barrel, 20% new French oak

Bottling Date: September 2024

TASTING NOTES

Bright ruby in color, the wine opens with aromas of rose, black cherry tart, baking spices and toasted oak. A fruit-forward palate of cranberry and raspberry is accented by dried herbs, ginger, black tea and white pepper. Integrated tannins and balanced acidity frame the medium-bodied wine.

Peak Drinkability: 2024 – 2030

FOOD PAIRINGS

Enjoy with classic pairings like salmon with wild rice, lamb lollipops, pork tenderloin and mushroom risotto and desserts like chocolate torte.

