

Avalon Wine Club News September 2002

Welcome to the September issue of the Wine Club news! We now offer the newsletter in PDF format on our web site as well as in print, sent with your wine. Let us know what you think of the new format, and look forward to some glorious wines this month!

Big Reds Club

-- Di Stefano Merlot 99
2 bottles

-- Spring Valley
Vineyards URIAH 2000

"Change in barrel program creates more elegant wines for DiStefano"

By Christina Kelly
Avalon Staff Writer

If there are "hoties" in the Northwest wine industry right now, DiStefano Winery has to be among them.

As a producer of classic Bordeaux reds, the small Woodinville, WA winery is generating high scores and gaining lots of attention for its Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah. The winery also produces small lots of Sauvignon Blanc.

Winemaker and owner Mark Newton says his **new barrel program** helped to generate all the fuss.

"We are in the process of switching from 100 percent American oak to 100 percent French oak," Newton said. "We started in 1999 and right now, we're up to 80 percent French and 20 percent American."

"As a result, we think the wines are more elegant, more supple. Our focus is to make the best wines we know how."



Mark Newton

Big Reds Club

Spring Valley
Vineyards
Uriah 2000

Di Stefano
Merlot 99

Reserve PN Club

Bergstrom 2000

Torii Mor
Temperance Hill
98

Torii Mor
Eason 98

or

Cameron
Croft PN 99

New Discoveries

Viento
Sangiovese

Balcombe & Moe
Sangiovese

Pinot Gris

The work, and the barrel program paid off. In looking back at scores from Wine Spectator magazine over the past seven years, DiStefano wines hovered in the mid to high 80s. The 1998 Cabernet Franc scored 84 points; the 1997 Cabernet Sauvignon scored 85 points; the 1997 Merlot scored 89 points. (The 1998 Merlot, however, scored 90 points).

Many in the industry who were familiar with DiStefano wines thought the scores were too low. The wine was good, and better yet, a great economic value. The only consistent comment was some of the wine was too lean and light.



Newton and his assistant winemaker Bill Herzog began grading barrels to see what worked best for DiStefano wines, given the style of pressing, crushing and avoidance of high extractions from the wine. The conclusion, says Newton, was to "go French."

"We are able to blend to the point where we are getting balance in the wine," said Newton, who develops computer hardware for Microsoft. "We are striving for balance, and French oak gave us

the flavor we wanted with our blends."

All About Oak

American oak has a tighter grain to the wood, which imparts flavors at a slower rate. French oak is slower to impart flavor immediately, but after a year, will generally give more flavor to the wine than the slower American oak.

The timing, said Newton, was not the issue. He and Herzog preferred the flavor and aromas of French barrels.

"American oak is very one dimensional with a tendency of heavy menthol overtones," he added.

Once French barrels were selected, Newton said the next question was whether the barrels should be new or used.



New barrels impart a more pronounced flavor, so the wine has to be complex enough to withstand the oak flavor. New

Club

Territorial
Pinot Gris 2001

Walnut City
Wineworks
Pinot Gris 2001

Best Values

Chateau Ste
Michelle
Syrah 2000

Silvan Ridge
Pinot Gris 2000

Dessert Club

Winters Hill
Golden Nectar 01

Honeywood
Cranberry
Supreme

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barrels of American oak give wine a strong, oaky aroma, creamy character and vanilla and dill flavors. French barrels are slightly gentler.

As barrels age, wine absorbs less oak flavor and the distinction between American and French oak becomes less significant.

For his wines, Newton uses 50 percent new oak, and 50 percent 1-year-old oak.

More now than ever,
Avalon recommends the wines
of
Di Stefano!
We have long felt they offered
outstanding values, now more
than ever.

[Check them out here...](#)

New Oak, New Scores

Since implementing his new barrel program, DiStefano wines are hot. His 1999 Sogno Cabernet Franc rated **90 points**. So did the **1999 Merlot**, which was also praised for its great texture and balance. The 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon is outstanding and garnered **91 points**. And his 1999 Ottimo, a winemakers' blend of DiStefano's top five barrels, scored **91 points**.

Although switching barrels made DiStefano's wines more complex, Herzog, assistant winemaker for several years, says both winemakers improved blending techniques.

"We go through every barrel and start our general blending," Herzog said. "We are constantly tasting and blending to get the elegant, Bordeaux style. It's hand-crafted, beginning with beautiful grapes. Our Cabernets are just blowing me away."

The winery produces about 4,500 cases per year. Future plans include building a new winery in the next two years and increased productivity to about 10,000 cases per year. If all goes well, Newton said he will build a restaurant next to the winery and feature interesting wine and food pairings.

Before the growth, Newton said he wants to work more with the vineyard managers and the fields to improve the quality of fruit.

"There is so much to this business. It isn't just making wine," Newton said. "It's growing grapes, pruning and training them and producing low yields. "We want to control the tonnage."

Newton said he believes in the concept of terroir, which is allowing the vineyard to express itself and its uniqueness via climate, soils and other factors. However, his goal is what the staff calls, "terroir blending."



The final expression of a wine is not just one item, said Newton.

"It's not just terroir, although that is certainly an element," said Newton. "It includes yeast selection and barrel selection and blending-all those aspects contribute to a balanced wine.

"In our wines, we believe that people will say the sum is greater than the whole. The sum of everything we do is greater than one aspect. In the end, I think great wines are made in blending terroir."

Di Stefano Merlot 99 \$28.00 suggested retail
our price **\$21.99** or **\$19.80** case price

Wine Spectator rating 90 points: "Another outstanding red by this winery. Loaded with berries, black olives and licorice along with vanilla spice and a smooth finish. Velvety in texture and ripe in flavor, refined Merlot that lets its lovely currant, plum, and spice flavors unfold elegantly around an unobtrusive backbone of tannin and gentle acidity. - H.S."



Over the years we have depended on Di Stefano for pleasing, rich red wines priced very reasonably, and for a wonderful sauvignon blanc that offers incredible value. The Merlot is always a popular offering, and this offering is their best ever. Their prices have remained reasonable and their new barrel program has led to greater depth and complexity of flavors. What was a delicious, rich wine has gained nuance and intricacy.

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Spring Valley Uriah 2000

\$39.99 case price \$35.99

Wine Spectator Rating 94 Points!

Wine Spectator says:

"This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc is one of the best wines in the appellation. It's ultrasmooth and gently spicy, a gorgeous rainbow of plum, cherry, cedar, chocolate and exotic spice flavors that play across a supple frame, polished to a deep sheen and echoing forever. Drink now through 2010.—H.S. "

Spring Valley Vineyard- Immediate Success for New Walla Walla Winery

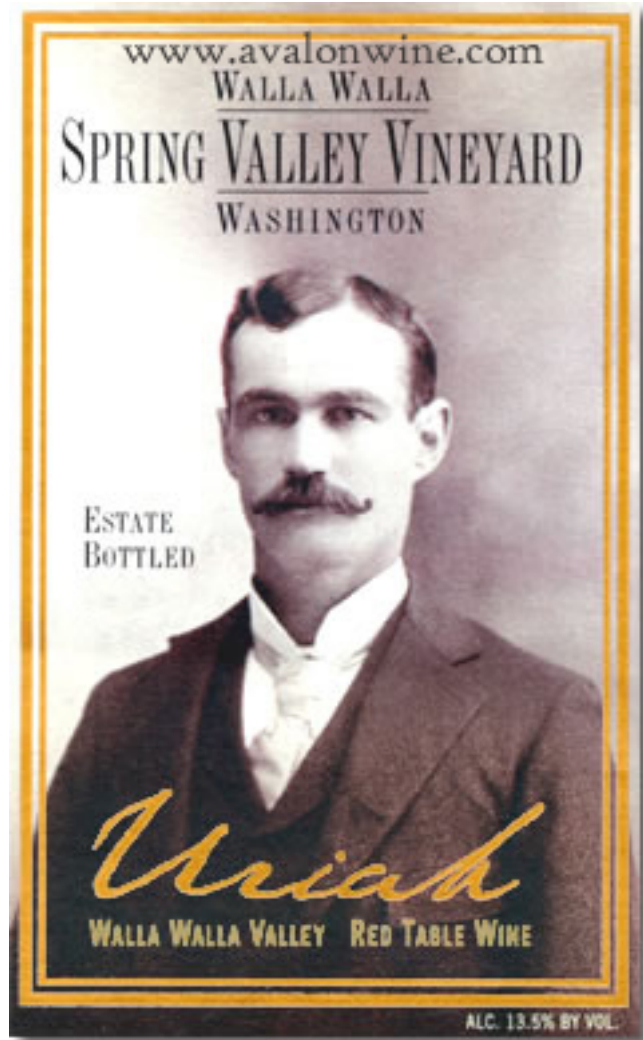
By Christina Kelly
Avalon Staff Writer

(WALLA WALLA)----Sometimes the dark horse bolts out of nowhere to capture a victory, surprising everyone, including the jockey.

Devin Derby, winemaker at Spring Valley Vineyard understands the dark horse well. After two years of learning, experimenting and immersing himself in winemaking, Derby's 2000 Spring Valley Vineyard Uriah recently scored **94 points in a rating by Wine Spectator Magazine.**

The wine also captured a **94 rating by Wine & Spirits Magazine.**

In the land of Leonetti, L'Ecole and Woodward Canyon-all longtime fixtures in the Walla Walla Valley-no one really expected the winery newcomer to score so high out the gate.



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But Mary and Devin Derby are not surprised that wine critics love their blend. For more than 100 years, Derby's relatives toiled over Spring Valley land—four generations, starting with Uriah Corkum during the 1880s. Crops on the original 2,000 acres were nourished, coaxed and encouraged to provide a livelihood for the Corkum family.

There is a connection between Devin and the land that even he doesn't fully understand. But he knows it's there, and after years of dabbling in other professions, he returned to his childhood home to take his place in the family's farming history.

And it all starts with the soil, as vital to grapes as other crops.



"We're a family of farmers who have learned to trust our intuitions," said Devin. "Everything we need is in the vineyard. We decided to pay attention, but not go by the textbooks when we made wine.

"Our grapes have proved themselves. What went into that bottle was our vineyards, our land."

Devin said some of the old-timers in the valley have joked that they can't wait to taste his wine when he really knows something about winemaking. The former commercial photographer just shakes his head, smiles and takes the gentle ribbing as a compliment to his young wines.

Shari Corkum Derby, granddaughter of Uriah, and her husband Dean Derby own the remaining 650 acres of Spring Valley. It was Shari and Dean who convinced Devin and Mary to move from Chicago to Walla Walla to create the vineyard.

"For years they were trying to diversify from wheat," recalled Devin. "Dad's brother manages the vineyard, mom handles the money and Mary and I do most of the winemaking duties. It is a family business."

Devin grew up on the farm until he was about 5-years-old, long enough for him to get a little dirt under his fingernails and the seed of passion in his blood for agriculture. He would return to the family farm during the summers of his youth, looking out as far as the eye could see to the golden wheat fields rustling in a temperate breeze.

In 1991, talk began in the family circle of establishing a winery. Walla Walla was growing in wine production, and the Derby family figured their land could produce

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grapes as well as anywhere in the valley.

Gary Figgins, winemaker for the acclaimed Leonetti, encouraged the Derbys to plant grapes. The area designated for vineyards has excellent drainage. Most of the top covers a deep layer of basalt rock.

"The ground is phenomenal," said Devin. "We knew it could produce great fruit if we just let it do its thing with little interference."

Spring Valley Vineyard has about 40 acres planted, including Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2000 Uria is composed of 60 percent Merlot, 34 percent Cab Franc and 6 percent Petit Verdot.

Critics describe the wine as one of the best in the appellation. The wine has a nice hint of spiciness that stays all the way to the finish. The fruit has cherry and plum flavors with a dab of chocolate. Wine Spectator described it as "polished to a deep sheen, and echoing forever."

Mary Derby worked for years managing restaurants in the Chicago area, and with that, developed wine lists. She said she is partial to wine and food pairing, and doesn't like the type of high alcoholic wines that overwhelm food.

"Our wines are made in the old world style so they work well with food," Mary said. "There is a niche for everyone. We want our wines to be thought of as food friendly."

A barrel tasting of the 2000 Syrah revealed luscious black cherry, chocolate and violet flavors—a wine sure to be fabulous with a nice grilled steak. The couple also has Merlot in the barrel, for a release of May 2003.

In the meantime, Devin is switching over from American oak to more French oak, and experimenting with one-year-old used barrels to see what works better. His wines seem to respond better to new oak, he says.

"My biggest challenge now is finding out what barrels work best for our vineyards," said Devin. "I think we're on the right track with French oak."

As he continues to experiment, his wines continue racking up high scores. The publicity helps to sell his wine, but the Derbys say it also proves that Walla Walla is a region to reckon with in the wine industry.

"We're so young at this. These high ratings for our wines only show that this region is phenomenal for producing great grapes," Devin said. "When our wines do this well, I think consumers look for other Walla Walla and Washington state wines."

With harvest just around the corner, the Derbys said they will briefly bask in the spotlight of their wine, and then get back to work, producing more and better wines for the coming year.

Reserve Pinot Noir Club

**Bergstrom Winery Pinot Noir
2000
\$36.99**



95 points in Wine Enthusiast

This is a chance to try the famous (and very expensive) Archery Summit Estate Vineyard fruit in a reasonably priced blend that is full of youthful exuberance and tremendous potential, not unlike the winemaker!

Wine Spectator 90 Points:

"Supple, round and generous, offering layers of cherry, blackberry and mushroom flavors, persisting nicely through the finish. A veil of fine-grained tannin can use time to soften. Best from 2003 through 2007. 600 cases made. (HS)"



The winery says: "The 2000 Pinot Noir is our flagship blend for the vintage. It should be considered a reserve bottling, as we produced only 600 cases of this concentrated, high-quality wine.

The 2000 blend is full of briary fruit aromas with notes of chocolate, torrefaction, and dark cherry, cedar and balsamic tones. It is a muscular wine at 14% yet restrained and elegant.

This wine will drink well now but will reach its apogee with several years of bottle ageing. We recommend this wine with hearty stews, steaks, lamb, or game."

Vineyard Source:	Hyland Vineyard, Archery Summit Estate, and Grenouillere Vineyard
Harvest data:	Harvested between September 28 and October 8, 2000.
	Brix: 23.0- 23.7, pH: 3.20-3.40, TA: 0.8-0.9
Fermentation:	6 days cold soak, native yeasts used, 2 ½ week cuvaison.

Cooperage:	40% new Francois Freres French oak barrels from the Troncais, Bertranges, and Allier forests.
Bottling:	Bottled unfiltered and unfined 14 months after harvest.
Cases produced:	600
Release Date:	Thanksgiving, 2001.

Torii Mor Pinot Noir 98 Temperance Hills Vineyard \$49.99

Wine Spectator rating 89 points:

"Ripe and juicy, a rawboned red, with jazzy cherry, berry and earthy spice flavors that linger on the solid finish. Needs time in the cellar to soften. Best from 2002 through 2007. 240 cases made. (HS)"



This was the last vintage Patty produced at Torii Mor before founding her new winery. With her 2000 Patricia Green Cellars Pinot noirs coming up for release in November, we thought this would be an interesting wine to try. Here is what happens to Patty's wines with some cellaring time.

Unfortunately, there is no more wine, we pulled these bottles out of our cellar to give you a chance to try this great wine.

Torii Mor Pinot Noir 98 Eason Vineyard \$49.99



Wine Spectator rating 88

points: "Generous and polished, a firm-textured wine, with plum, earthy spice and beet flavors that remain refreshing and focused on the finish. Best from 2001 through 2007. 116 cases made. (HS)"

Cameron Pinot Noir 99 Croft Vineyard

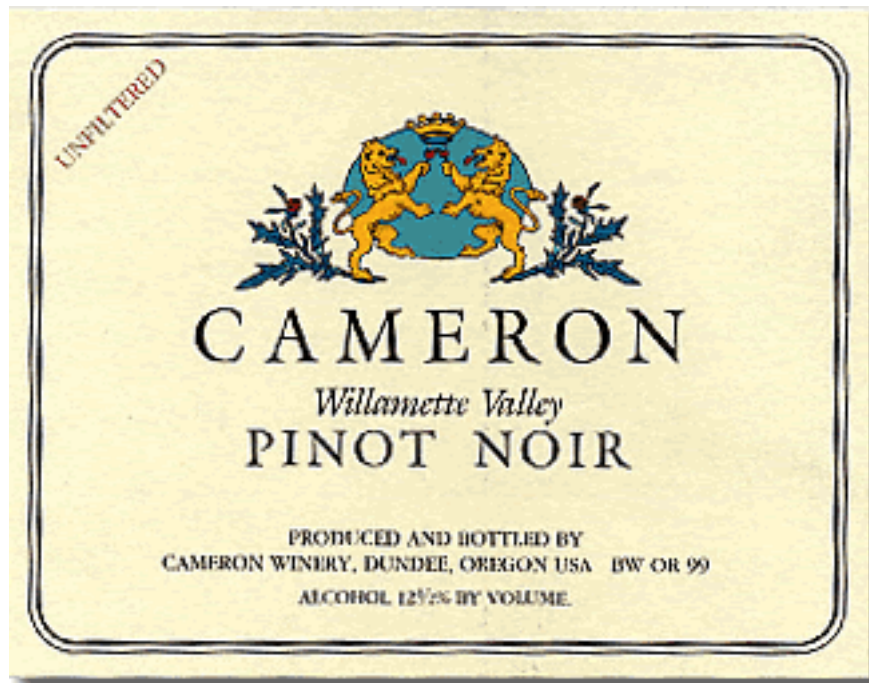
We don't have quite enough of the Patricia Green wines, so a few of you will get the excellent Cameron Croft 99, another totally sold out and highly sought after Pinot noir.

John Paul is both a brilliant winemaker and a killer humorist, publishing one of the funniest newsletters we've ever seen. His Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and dessert wines are made from some of the finest vineyard sites in Oregon, and range from a bargain basement priced Pinot noir to a wonderful "Clos Electrique" made from grapes from his tiny four acre vineyard to a recent Pinot Noir priced in the high range of the market.

The red wines are dark, unfiltered, big, ageworthy, with intense flavors typical of French Burgundies of the Cote d' Or. His "Clos Electrique Blanc" Chardonnay is a blend of six different clones, also grown in his estate vineyard.

John makes wines from grapes harvested from Brickhouse Vineyard, Croft Vineyard, and Abbey Ridge Vineyard. He also makes an Italian-style Pinot Bianco "di Collini Rossi" ("from the Red Hills," his location above Dundee), a late-harvest Riesling called "Eugenia." and "Cameroni". Cameroni is the whimsical name of a Pinot Blanc from Oregon's Cameron Winery.

Careful attention to detail, restriction of yields, and a strong dose of independent thinking make these wines a cult favorite.



New Discoveries Club

Viento Sangiovese Walla Walla Valley 99 \$20.99



Ripe, fruity and stylish yet still with a touch of country charm. A throwback to the Italian roots of this varietal. New oak?? No way!!
Buon Gusto!!

Avalon has been delighted with the wines of this new label. Viento wines are created by Rich Cushman. Rich has made wine in Oregon for over twenty years. His family now works together to make these limited production wines in McMinnville, Oregon.

All of Viento's wines are crafted to emphasize balance, fruit character and the vineyard site. New oak is used very judiciously. They work closely with several exceptional vineyards in Washington and Hood River that are growing varieties beyond the ordinary - including Viognier, Riesling, Syrah, Grenache and Sangiovese. Some of these vineyards are already well known and the others will be. Interestingly for a winery based in Oregon, many of their wines are made from Washington State fruit.

Balcom and Moe Sangiovese \$25.99



In 2001, Balcom & Moe Wines celebrate 30 years of wine grape growing in Washington State and 15 years of winemaking. Winemaker, Maury Balcom, is third generation operator of the family farming operation which consists of more than 150 acres of wine grapes and over 3000 acres of other crops. The winery produces Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sangiovese.

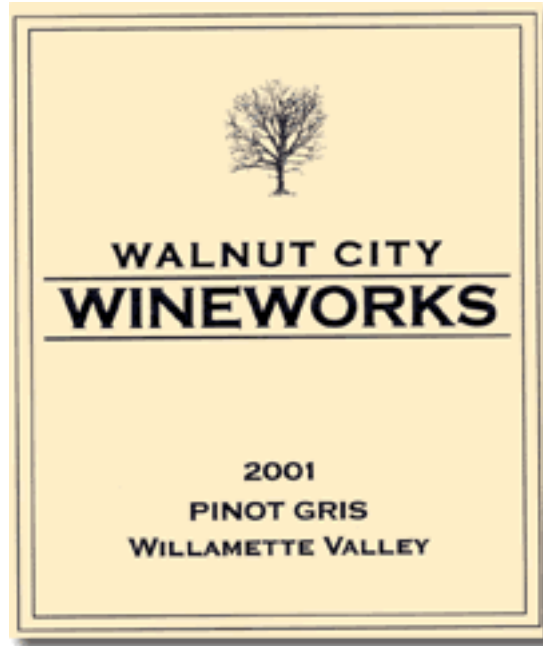
Pinot Gris Club

Walnut City Wineworks Pinot Gris 2001 \$11.99

Working in a reconstructed walnut processor, blocks from McMinnville's historic downtown, their community of winemakers includes Viento, Walnut City, and Zelko Vineyards.

The group produces Pinot noir, Syrah, Viognier, Sangiovese and Bordeaux blends, all from within their unique winegrowing region.

This Pinot gris is rich and intricate, with classic flavors of melon, white stone fruit, and honey. The finish is clean and long, with hints of apricot. Bears all the marks of an experienced and talented winemaker.



Territorial Pinot Gris 2001 \$12.99

First release from this new winery based in the South Willamette Valley.

Fruit from Equinox Vineyard, Croft Vineyard, and Kliever Vineyard, this wine is made from gently pressed whole clusters of grapes. The nose has pear and melon, the flavors are clean and lingering. A popular wine poured at Marché bistro in Eugene Oregon.

Best Values Club

Chateau Ste Michelle Syrah 2000 \$12.99

Exotic spice aromas heightened by a hint of white pepper. Pairs well with beef, grilled salmon and strongly flavored cheeses. 93% Syrah, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Grenache, 1% Merlot. Excellent value!

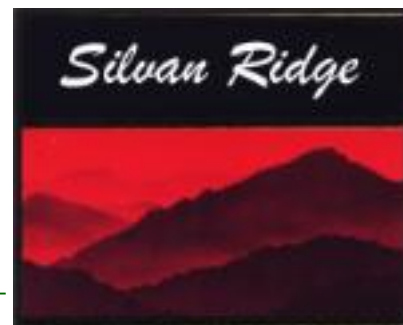


Founded in 1934, Chateau Ste. Michelle is Washington State's oldest winery. Its history dates back to just after the repeal of prohibition when Washington's bountiful fruit and berry harvests were vinified to produce the Northwest's first wines.



Silvan Ridge Pinot Gris 2000 \$12.00

Silvan Ridge is the sister winery to Hinman Vineyards, and produces estate grown wines that consistently win awards and remain reasonably priced. They are particularly well known for their wonderful sweet wines—their early muscat and ice wine have won numerous national awards.



Silvan Ridge began production in 1979, making it one of the older wineries in the Willamette Valley. It's sister winery is Hinman Vineyards; both are owned by Carolyn Chambers.

Silvan Ridge's winemaker since 1998 is Bryan S Wilson. He took a degree in Economics at U of O, then worked at Benziger Winery and Stags Leap Wine Cellars for a decade before returning to Oregon to work as winemaker at Bridgeview Vineyards for 3 years.

Bryan manages the production of 25,000 cases a year of Chardonnay, Pinot noir, Pinot Gris, Merlot, the famous Early Muscat, Cabernet, and Riesling under the Hinman and Silvan Ridge labels. The winery purchases grapes from a diversity of sources throughout Oregon.

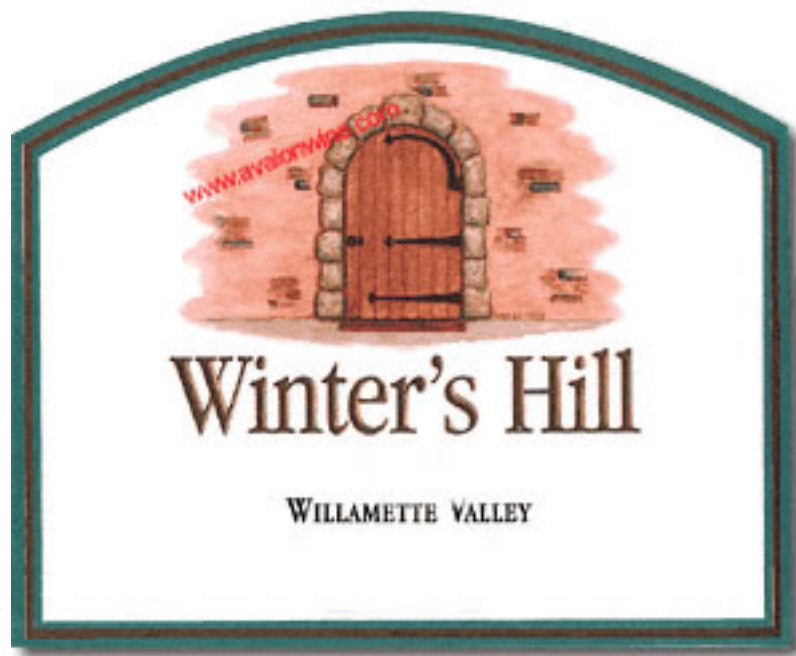
Bryan's winemaking techniques include:

- Small individual lots produced
- Whole cluster pressing for whites
- Small open top fermenters for reds
- Native and cultured yeasts
- Old world techniques, modern technology
- Extensive vineyard and canopy management
- Crop reduction and selective picking employed.

Dessert Club

**Winters Hill
Golden Nectar
2001
\$22.99 375 ml**

Winters Hill Vineyard has been in the family since 1961, when Emily Gladhart's parents, John and Lena Winter, purchased a grain and fruit farm on a corner of Oregon's Dundee Hills. Peter and Emily and their son Russell planted the first 19 acres of grapes in 1990, 12 acres of Pinot noir and 7 acres of Pinot gris. The vineyard's elevation of 525 to 730 feet on south facing slopes provides optimum warmth during summer days while exposing it to cool ocean breezes every afternoon that drop evening temperatures into the '50's. These conditions bring the slow, gentle ripening so essential to the delicate character of fine Pinot Noir and Pinot gris.



Own rooted plantings are all trained to a divided canopy, Scott Henry trellis system. Grafted plantings are currently trained to a single canopy, double Guyot trellis. Their vineyard management practices and Winter's Hills wines are certified as Salmon Safe and LIVE (Low Input Viticulture and Enology) as they adhere to practices that promote sustainable viticulture while minimizing the use of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers and protecting the farmer, the environment and society at large.

The first harvest was in 1992, with all fruit contracted to Erath Vineyards and Lange Winery. Subsequently Winter's Hill fruit has also been contracted to Adelsheim Vineyards, Amity Vineyards, Belle Pente Winery, Cristom Vineyards, Elk Cove Winery, Eola Hills Wine Cellars, King Estates Winery and LaVelle Vineyards Winery. Currently the balance of Winter's Hill production not dedicated to their estate wines are under long term contracts to Rex Hill Winery, Ponzi Winery, Lemelson Winery and Domaine Meriwether (sparkling wine).

Peter and Emily are directly involved in all aspects of vineyard development and management, fruit selection, wine making and marketing. Russell and daughter Amalia and son-in-law Sean Hayes contribute regularly as members of the farm planning committee and as harvest helpers. Even granddaughter Kate helps test the fruit for ripeness. The vines are carefully pruned, trained, thinned and handpicked by a loyal crew of six that has been with the farm for over 7 years. The vineyard is certified by the LIVE (Low Input Viticulture and Enology Program), that seeks to promote sustainable agricultur while minimizing the use of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers and protecting the farmer, the environment, and society at large.

Winters Hill grapes are sought after by wineries and their wines have always been well received, Several have been vineyard designated by the wineries and have won medals in international competitions. Now Winters Hill is making wine under their own label.

Winters Hill Pinot noir has deep ruby colors, layered fruit flavors, and strong tannins for balance and aging. Their Pinot gris has intense floral aromas, luscious fruit flavors, and good acidity that makes for a balanced, very drinkable wine, with spicy food or as an apertif.

Honeywood Cranberry Supreme \$9.99

The perfect wine with chicken, turkey or pork. Honeywood's special recipe of cranberry juice in perfect balance with a blend of quality white wine. Just the right amount of tartness and sweetness, for a refreshing and flavorful treat. Great for holiday fare, it is also used for light lunches, dinners, salads, fruit plates, picnic lunches, in short, a wine for today's lifestyle.

For questions or assistance call (541) 752-7418

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