



2006 WILLAMETTE VALLEY DEGLACÉ

BACKGROUND Dessert Pinot noirs are relatively rare in the world. The inspiration for our Deglacé occurred in 1988, when Michael Adelsheim was lucky enough to have an empty glass when Rheingau winemaker Josef Becker walked by with his 1976 Spätburgunder Trockenbeerenauslese at a party after that year's International Pinot Noir Celebration. Skipping the superlatives (and a few years), we set out to produce something similar with the 2001 harvest, mostly so we would have a wine with which to finish our winery dinners. There are two ways in which dessert wines of moderate alcohol content are traditionally produced: the grapes can become desiccated by botrytis cinerea ("noble rot") or they can be pressed when still partially frozen. An Oregon Pinot noir producer would never want "botrytis" to spread in the vineyards (it ruins red wines), and we can't remember a fall when we had an early freeze (i.e. before the winter rains started.) Thus, in winemaker Dave Paige's first year with Adelsheim, one block of grapes was chosen for the experiment - which was to take the grapes to a freezer instead of the winery. The resulting faux "ice wine" was delicious, and a hit...so we have continued to produce it every year.

GROWING SEASON Although storms carrying a lot of rain swept through Oregon in mid-January, slowing up pruning work, by the time spring rolled around, the 2006 growing season had caught up to what we assume to be "normal" timing in this day and age. Bud break occurred in the third week of March, and bloom about the second week of June. Perfect bloom weather resulted in too many clusters, each with too many berries. Thus, we had to spend a significant amount of time in "green harvest" passes to pare back the crop to what our climate could actually ripen. Harvest was accomplished in near perfect weather, warm enough that everything ripened smoothly, yet not all at once, with cool mornings for picking and very little rain.

VINEYARDS One hundred percent of the grapes for this wine were grown at our Ribbon Springs Vineyard, where we chose several blocks that have given us in past vintages the intense strawberry flavors important for this wine. These blocks were picked on Oct. 4th, 5th, and 7th, averaging 26° Brix (in the last week of the month-long harvest.)

WINEMAKING After the grapes were picked, they were quickly trucked to a cold-storage facility and frozen. During a two-week period in early February, they were brought back to the winery in small batches and allowed to partially thaw (so we could actually press them). As is the case with traditional ice wines made from grapes frozen on the vine, this process raises the sugar percentage by keeping some of the water still frozen as ice. This year, the first juice from the press was 42° Brix. Each batch was pressed over many hours (during which the grapes continued to thaw out) and just hard enough to achieve a soft peachy color. Most of the juice was gently pumped into a stainless steel tank, though 20% went to older, neutral-flavored, French oak barrels. Yeast that would allow an especially cold fermentation (which retains the maximum possible fruit esters) was added to the juice to start the six-week fermentation. When the wine was bottled on May 2, 2007, it still carried a residual sugar level of 20%.

THE WINE Even with this sweet wine, we stay true to our winery philosophy that a wine's highest use is in pairing with meals. That means retaining enough of the grapes' natural acidity to ensure that the wine never becomes too cloying. Our Deglacé has amazing apricot, fig and honeysuckle flavors that should prove to be a perfect match with red berry tarts, pumpkin cheesecake, and a wide range of other desserts.

THE LABEL This wine belongs to our series of relatively rare wines, officially (and lovingly) designated as "Wacky", since they are not what one expects from a Willamette Valley winery. We use the same Ginny Adelsheim drawing for all of them, a "portrait" of our winery as seen from a hill in our Calkins Lane estate vineyard. As for the name "Deglacé"...well, "glacer" means "to freeze" in French, so "deglacé" means something that has been "de-frozen"...at least according to our way of thinking!

PRODUCTION We produced 614 cases, each with 12 half bottles, of the 2006 Deglacé Pinot noir.

