



2006 WILLAMETTE VALLEY PINOT BLANC

BACKGROUND Esteemed in Friuli and Alto Adige, tolerated in Alsace, abused in California, Pinot blanc has found an important home in Oregon. The same climate and soils that have made this state famous for Pinot noir and Pinot gris also work for their sibling Pinot blanc, giving us wines that are racy, yet bold in character. By the 1970's in California, producers found that they had no true Pinot blanc in the state, so David Adelsheim led a program to import two clones directly from Alsace to Oregon. Thus, we were in on the ground floor with this wine – 1989 was our first vintage.

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 – our Pinot blanc came in at 3.1 tons per acre. 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. The grapes for this wine were picked on October 13th and 14th and were the last grapes in the door.

VINEYARDS Though our first bottlings of this variety were produced from purchased grapes, we planted 3 ½ acres in the mid 90's in our Bryan Creek Vineyard, on clay-loam basaltic-origin soils in the Chehalem Mountains. Its steep slope and southwest exposure make the site a bit warmer than its relatively high elevation (700 – 800 feet above sea level) would normally be, thus ensuring the grapes always get fully ripe. A small portion of this wine comes from grapes from our friends at Yamhill Valley Vineyards, a vineyard in the McMinnville AVA.

WINEMAKING Following a light whole-cluster pressing in our computer-controlled membrane press to separate the juice from the skins as quickly and as cleanly as possible, the juice was allowed to settle for about 24 hours to let some of the lees fall out. Then the wine underwent a slow, cool fermentation in stainless steel tanks (and 10% of it in older neutral small oak barrels) to preserve its bright focused fruit. Only about 5% was allowed to go through malolactic fermentation, a mark of how fully ripe the grapes got this year. It was bottled in late April of 2007.

THE WINE On the nose of this 2006 Pinot blanc, one finds peach, citrus zest, melon and floral aromas. On the palate, one finds a fascinating mix of Meyer lemon and casaba melon. There's a mid-palate richness that is offset by the wine's general raciness. It pairs superbly with a wide range of foods – from shellfish, to quiche, and on to spicy Asian food.

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 drawing by Ginny Adelsheim for all of them, a “portrait” of our winery as seen from the foot of our Calkins Lane estate vineyard.

PRODUCTION There were 738 cases of the 2006 Willamette Valley Pinot blanc produced.

