



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

The 2021 Auction features wines exclusively from the 2019 vintage. This vintage is consistently described by winemakers as “an old-school Oregon vintage,” a break from the trend toward hotter vintages with a little bit of rain to keep things exciting. With words like “transparency” and “expressiveness” coming up again and again, it’s clear 2019 reminded winemakers what they love about making wine in the Willamette Valley, and they can’t wait to see the aging potential of these compelling and true-to-Oregon wines.

What were the growing conditions?

With fine spring weather and budbreak right on schedule, the 2019 growing season resembled the last few years in the Willamette Valley—until midsummer rain threw the less experienced, and perhaps some of the region’s newly arrived California transplants, a curveball. Experienced Oregonians were unfazed and happy to help, and winemakers embraced the longer hang time and opportunity for nuanced fruit development that came with the cooler end to the season.

“2019 felt to me like something of a return to normal, or at least what I used to think of as normal,” says Steve Goff, winemaker at Colene Clemens Vineyards. “It felt like a real Northwest summer, and I think heat units and days above 90 degrees bear that out as they were a lot closer to historical averages.”

Through June the 2019 vintage looked just like 2018, and in fact, thanks to the warm early season, overall heat accumulation was the same in both vintages. “We enjoyed some pretty fine weather and a relatively early bud break in April of 2019,” says Doug Tunnell of Brick House Wine Company. “Spring temperatures were slightly above normal and flowering in June was quite successful. Vines set a fairly large crop. It seemed like we might be cruising for an exceptional year until patchy mid-to-late summer rains set in.”

Rain in late June and early July meant farming had to be meticulous. “Heat accumulation tapered off and the increased humidity ramped up disease pressure, especially compared to the very warm and very dry years of 2014, 2015 and 2016,” Tunnell explains, adding that due to the rain he held off harvesting most of his blocks until late September. “Given the relatively early bud break, this meant the fruit had ample time on the vine to develop wonderful flavors.”

The cooler weather continued into harvest. “September and October saw some of the lowest heat accumulation totals since 2007, so maturity was more a matter of how ripe growers were able to get the fruit, rather than how ripe they wanted to get the fruit,” notes Ben Casteel, Bethel Heights winemaker, referencing a vintage that similarly challenged winemakers—but has spectacularly rewarded aging. “This distinction lies at the core of what defines a ‘cool-climate’ growing region, and 2019

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwwines



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

was a welcome return to form.”

For seasoned Oregon winemakers well accustomed to rain, the extended hang time before harvest thanks to cooler temperatures was welcome. “I love vintages like this,” says Et Fille winemaker Jessica Mozeico, “where we can get a few extra weeks of hang time (versus 2014 to 2016) for phenolic ripeness and flavor maturation!”

Lingua Franca winemaker Thomas Savre recalls a growing season that felt longer than usual, explaining, “We experienced a heat wave at the beginning of April followed by a cooler and slightly wetter summer. What we would define by ripe was achieved a week later than in the previous vintage.” Like Mozeico, he was pleased with the results of the longer hang time. “2019 felt like a true Oregon vintage with a chilly and humid finale that shaped a perfect and delicate cluster with some character!”

What do winemakers have to say about the 2019 wines?

Many winemakers consider vintage variation and vintage expression the heart of Willamette Valley character, and 2019 made them fall in love with the region all over again. “I will remember 2019 as challenging at every turn as a growing season, but from the earliest fermentations, through elevage, and now to bottling in early 2021, I have marveled at the delicacy, complexity and graceful architecture of the vintage,” says Casteel.

He shares other winemakers’ assertions that the cool vintage was most welcome. “I have quietly opined to members of our staff and to peers in the industry that I have wanted to see another cool, challenging season after a string of vintages defined in one way or another by heat,” he explains. “The interest for me in grape growing and winemaking is vintage, in all of its variations; to see our vineyard through the lens of the growing season, rather than through personal style and differing opinions on what we define as ‘ripe.’” Ultimately, says Casteel, “2019 may lack the opulence of the vintages that preceded it, but it more than makes up for it with enhanced tension and energy. After a few years of learning to live in the sun, it’s nice to remember we can still walk in between the raindrops when needed.”

Alloro Vineyard winemaker Tom Fitzpatrick points out that the September rains were scattered, and hardly a cause for concern at his Chehalem Mountains site. “Meteorologists began to scare everyone with indications that these were the first of the fall storms arriving early,” he recalls. “However, as often happens here in the Willamette Valley, weather patterns shifted, creating much drier conditions by mid to late September.” Fitzpatrick was able to let his fruit hang and develop as the weather warmed. “I always love these cooler conditions early in the ripening period, which promise to deliver some of the more subtle flavors and aromas intimately tied to each particular site,” he says. “The warmer and drier conditions late in the ripening period

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwines



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

often promise to contribute concentration, fullness and structure. Aromatically expressive wines that are full, round and structured, with good concentration, are what I had hoped for and what we were delighted to have received.”

Savre is unequivocal in his enthusiasm: “The 2019 tastes like what Oregon is all about, enigmatic and very diverse but soulful with pride!” He offers a vibrant comparison between 2018 and 2019: “When the 2018 vintage was like the summer dinner party, outside with friends, grilling up, cocktails to start followed by sipping wines from international, new and upcoming places, finishing with some good music and fun late in the night; 2019 was like the proper Sunday lunch, where you dress super well to be cool with the family! Champagne to start, with nice appetizers, a serious menu and digestif, and then for hours sitting and talking about politics and listening to classical music.”

Goff echoes the thoughts of many seasoned Oregon winemakers. “A little rain and dampness at harvest was maybe unusual in the context of the previous five years, but is pretty normal when I look back at my twenty years in the Valley,” he says. “Not surprisingly the wines remind me of the wines we were making when I came up here in 2001 and for many of my first dozen or so vintages. They are beautifully balanced, with modest alcohols, plenty of structure and ample fruit in a more finesseful package.”

It’s a vintage for Willamette Valley aficionados and novices alike, he adds. “For longer-time fans and followers of Oregon Pinot noir I think these wines might remind them of what drew them in the first time around.” For more recent converts, he says, “they should offer up a nice change of pace and introduce them to the concept of vintage variation, and the many positive and delicious things that can be born out of that.”

Reflecting while bottling his 2019s, Robert Brittan of Brittan Vineyards reports that the wines are pretty, elegant and restrained. “Many Oregon winemakers have been targeting lower alcohols for a while now,” he says, “and here we have a vintage which shows ripe flavors, and fruit maturity, but did not get concentrated sugars from late-season heat events.”

Shy at first, the 2019s are now showing their true colors, he adds: “ripe flavors with a very compelling acid structure and a fullness that comes from the fruit more than alcohol.” Brittan says the 2019s remind him of wines he made in the ’70s and ’80s even more than recent vintages. “What is exciting to me, as someone who loves ageworthy wines, was the longevity of those earlier wines. A few of those turned out to be 30-year wines, or more,” he points out. “It will be interesting to see if these 2019 wines develop with similar aging potential.”

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwwines



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

From the northernmost corners of the Valley to its most southerly vineyards, winemakers are excited about the 2019s, especially their grace and potential for aging. “At the time I thought the vintage was a welcome change of pace compared to the string of hot vintages that we have had recently—a vintage that was much more ‘classic Oregon,’” recalls Jon Tomaselli, associate winemaker at Torii Mor. “With Pinot noir being a cool-climate variety, I think it is optimized with that type of growing season. As a winemaker I always prefer these years.”

He adds, “There is a beautiful transparency to the wines that lets all the little traits of each site show through. These wines are much more intellectual than a hot year, offering a look into the window of each specific site.” Tomaselli cites 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2019 as his recent favorite vintages, concluding of the 2019s, “The wines evolved into exactly what I hoped they would be and why I love Pinot noir so much.”

How Did the Nested AVAs of Willamette Valley Perform?

Chehalem Mountains

The Chehalem Mountains AVA is incredibly varied in terms of soil type, elevation and exposure, each factor playing a role in each individual site’s expression, explains winemaker Gina Hennen of Adelsheim. “Its diversity keeps things interesting for winemakers, and becomes a great strength in a year like 2019 when we needed to make carefully considered picking decisions,” she adds. “Due to the inherent variety of the Chehalem Mountains, there was always a block (or five) at the perfect point of ripeness on any given day, so picking could continue smoothly and at a steady pace.”

Fitzpatrick says the 2019 wines express everything he loves about the AVA. “The cooler conditions early in the ripening period elevated many subtle flavors and aromas, including rose petal, Italian spices, and fragrant Ceylon tea,” he notes, “all classic characteristics of Alloro Vineyard’s Chehalem Mountains personality.”

Dundee Hills

For the Dundee Hills AVA, “2019 was a classic Oregon Vintage from the start,” says Archery Summit winemaker Ian Burch. “The wines are angular, complex and fresh and have a beautiful acidity and low alcohols—all of the makings of a beautiful wine.” He feels the 2019s have picked up more “juiciness and flesh” in barrel, and concludes, “I think that these wines will be long-lived and celebrated for years to come.”

Eola-Amity Hills

Blessed by its proximity to the Van Duzer Corridor, the Eola-Amity Hills AVA is windy, and in 2019 that was a boon to winemakers dodging rain and disease pressure. “As we were entering this last mile in the marathon season, the wind helped so much in the process of maturity, and helped the grapes to stay away from some insidious pathogens! The wind and consequences of those winds are so impactful,” explains Savre.

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwwines



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

Casteel notes that 2019 was not without challenges for this nested AVA. “If I am going to maintain (and I have) that being in a cooler area has its advantages in warm growing seasons, it also holds true that cooler, wetter vintages put us in a tricky position,” he explains. “The Eola-Amity Hills are not uniform, but we waited through several rain events during the 2019 harvest simply because the fruit wasn’t ripe yet. At the time, I couldn’t recall a vintage so challenging.” The triumph now that the wines are in barrel is that much more meaningful. “In spite of it all, the 2019 wines make all of the struggle worth it,” he says. “They are wines of poise and tension, attributes that define our neighborhood and the wines therein.”

Laurelwood District

The Laurelwood soils for which this AVA is named are a complex mix of windblown loess on top of red Jory basalt, explains Raptor Ridge winegrower Scott Shull, which yields “spicy Pinot noir wines with blue and black fruits and ample but melted tannin.” Shull says for his site, 2019 finished warm and dry. “Laurelwood soils really hit their sweet spot,” he adds. “We’ve been sampling the newly bottled vintage and it’s just stunning!”

McMinnville

Cool years are celebrated in the McMinnville AVA, where long end-of-season hang time is key. “Given that most of our vineyard sites are on fairly shallow, rocky soils with high mineral content, the maturing fruit is often precariously balanced between ripeness and structure, intensity and finesse,” Brittan explains. “As a result, we are always at the mercy of the weather in those final three weeks.” While that means warmer years can push earlier harvests and higher alcohols, but perhaps less complexity, “Cooler and longer-maturing vintages often give us more finesse in flavor and structure and more complexity in aromatics. The 2019 vintage is in this latter, cooler cohort,” he says. What should McMinnville AVA fans expect? “More nuance, more red fruit notes and fine tannins—intriguing wines in their youth, with anticipated complexity in their maturity.”

Ribbon Ridge

“I’m a firm believer that cooler, even wetter seasons can often produce the most outstanding Pinot noirs and Chardonnays,” says Tunnell. “I’m thinking of 2011 on Ribbon Ridge, a vintage that produced some spectacular Pinots that gained great style and breed with a few years in the cellar. Despite the late season rains in 2019, the best wines show no signs of dilution and are really quite attractive.” Tunnell says he just racked their third bottling of 2019 and is confident that the Ribbon Ridge wines of the 2019 vintage will be “delightful,” adding, “I think they show early indications of being those fairly rare wines that can both satisfy early on but also cellar well for some years to come.”

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwines



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

Tualatin Hills

For winemaker Alfredo Apolloni of Apolloni Vineyards, the 2019 harvest was about 10 days later than in 2018, which meant picking the last of his Pinot noir the third week of October in the cool Tualatin Hills AVA. “The longer, slightly cooler vintage created Pinot noir more reminiscent of a few decades ago, showing more earthiness and lower alcohols,” he explains, recalling that “the scattered showers through September kept us all on our toes in the vineyard and the winery.” With maturation, he says, “the 2019s are showing a nice balance of fruit and earth as they head out of the barrel cave and into the bottle.”

Van Duzer Corridor

The Van Duzer Corridor’s famous afternoon winds proved a key advantage during 2019’s rainier days. Winemaker Joe Wright of Left Coast Estate explains, “Our AVA played a critical role this vintage—with plenty of fall rain, the prevailing coastal winds allowed our vineyards to dry out time and time again, allowing for optimum fruit development and lowering overall risk of disease onset.” Harvest, he adds, offered “plenty of windows and ultimately an end to which we could pick in earnest a great vintage.” Wright says he was a fan of the 2019 vintage from the start. “For all of us at Left Coast this was a classic Oregon vintage: on average cool, with plenty of hang time for full development and a retained acidity so the wines have energy and focus.”

Yamhill-Carlton

Gran Moraine winemaker Shane Moore recalls finishing harvest by the first week of October, right on schedule. He adds that Yamhill-Carlton’s fairly early average harvest dates compared to southern parts of the Valley were “certainly an advantage” in 2019: “We were able to avoid at least one or two rain events that the later-harvesting sites I work with went through.” Moore echoes one of Tomaselli’s vintage comparisons. “I knew the wines would be on the more transparent and elegant side during harvest—I thought they might be like the 2010 vintage,” he says. “Now that they are all in bottle I think that is a pretty accurate assessment.”

WILLAMETTE
VALLEY WINE

PO Box 25162
Portland, OR 97298

503.297.2962
willamettewines.com

@wwines