

# 2023 CHARDONNAY *Estate*

## 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.

## THE VINEYARDS

**Estate Vineyard:** Planted in 1983 by Founder Jim Bernau on a south facing volcanic flow, the vineyard has 67 acres of vines at 500 to 750 feet in elevation. The first Dijon clones were planted in 1993. The Nekia and Jory soils are well drained to a depth of one and a half to six feet.

**Elton:** In 2006, *Wine & Spirits* listed it as one of the five key vineyards in the new Eola-Amity Hills American Viticultural Area. In 2007, Elton Vineyard was named one of Oregon's top ten vineyards by *Wine Press Northwest*. Planted in 1983, the vineyard now includes 60 acres on east-southeast slopes of the Eola Hills.

## WINEMAKING NOTES

The focus of this wine is the combination of all of our clones in our three Estate Vineyards, the majority being Dijon clones, which are particularly suited to our cool climate. The grapes were picked at peak ripeness, and lightly whole cluster pressed to avoid harsh phenols. The juice was cold settled and racked to barrels where it was inoculated with selected yeast strains. Fermentation lasted approximately five weeks at 55-60° F. The barrel lees were stirred once monthly through malolactic fermentation. Sur Lee aging continued until July.

## TECHNICAL DATA

**Grape Type:** Chardonnay

**Clones:** 76, 96, 352

**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. 25 – Oct. 17, 2023

### Harvest Statistics

- **Brix:** 21.8°
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 5.99 g/L
- **pH:** 3.29

### Finished Wine Statistics

- **Alcohol:** 13.2%
- **Titrateable Acidity:** 5.19 g/L
- **pH:** 3.35
- **Sulfate Level:** low

**Fermentation:** French oak barrels

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

**Bottling Date:** August 2024

## TASTING NOTES

Pale gold in color with aromas of chamomile, apple and sweet lemon. The light-bodied palate displays balanced acidity and subtle complexity with flavors of passion fruit, baked pear, subtle brown sugar and sweet barrel notes.

**Peak Drinkability:** 2024 – 2030

## FOOD PAIRINGS

This wine pairs well with seafood and briny dishes including steamed mussels in caper butter sauce, fish piccata, lobster bisque or soft cheeses.

