



2014 Estate Chardonnay

History

In 1992, founder of Cristom Vineyards Paul Gerrie purchased a piece of ground that he saw tremendous potential to grow world class Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. The property was an east-facing hillside in the Eola Hills on basalt soils rising up from 200 feet to 600 feet (61 m to 183 m). The upper field was planted to Pinot Noir in 1982 but it had been abandoned in the late 1980's. Paul would name the upper field in honor of his mom, Marjorie. Paul and vineyard manager Mark Feltz cleared the lower 20 acres (8.09 hectares) that would become Louise Vineyard, named for Paul's maternal grandmother. When planting began on the estate in 1993 Paul reserved a special hillside for Chardonnay. Between 1993-1995, the steepest part of the Louise Vineyard hillside and 2.5 acres on the lowest part of the vineyard was planted to three Dijon clones of Chardonnay. The total estate acreage of Chardonnay at the time was 6.5 acres (2.63 hectares), and Cristom made two different estate Chardonnays. The two Estate Chardonnay wines were named after grandmothers, Louise and winemaker Steve Doerner's grandmother Germaine.

Due to many reasons over the years, what was originally our largest planting of white grapes, in time, was grafted over to Pinot Noir, Syrah and Viognier. What remains is 0.5 acres (0.202 hectares) of Dijon (French/Bernard) clone 95 on the northern edge of Louise Vineyard entirely planted on a moderately shallow, gravelly Columbia River Basalt soil known as Ritner. The east-facing block is densely planted (2,311 vines/acre (5,710 vines/hectare)) and runs east to west down the hillside (365 ft to 320 ft (101 m to 98 m)) on a devigorating rootstock through a consistent basalt soil allowing the fruit to ripen fully and consistently.

We honored the name Germaine Vineyard on the Chardonnay label through the 2013 vintage, distinguishing itself from the Estate Pinot Noir Louise Vineyard. Beginning with the 2014 Chardonnay, we have chosen to label the wine simply "Estate" which we think better represents all of our Chardonnay plantings and remains consistent with our other estate grown and bottled wines.

In 2015, Cristom placed 1.377 acres (0.5574 hectares) of Chardonnay vines in the ground in the newly established Paul Vineyard named for our founder. In 2016, cuttings were taken from various 1988 plantings of Chardonnay at Seven Springs Vineyard in the Eola Hills with plans to graft to American Rootstock, and plant in Paul Vineyard in 2017.

Since its very first release in 1996, our estate Chardonnay has been barrel fermented and gone through a full malolactic fermentation to achieve a lush and creamy texture. Only three barrels and just seventy-five cases of this wine are made annually, making it one of the most rare estate wines Cristom produces.

Vintage Notes

The 2014 growing season was the second warmest vintage in Cristom's history and produced rich and ripe wines. The Chardonnay vines got off to a warm and dry start



with the earliest budbreak we have recorded in the Willamette Valley since 1992 – two to three weeks earlier than average in many areas of the vineyard. Warm weather continued through the spring and summer leading to the earliest bloom we have recorded at the estate, a full two weeks ahead of a twenty-year average. The weather conditions were prime for a heavy fruit set and the vineyard produced heavy clusters and large berries. From the beginning of the growing season it looked to be an early harvest and record highs continued through the summer leading to the earliest start date in over two decades. The generous weather continued all throughout September and we picked the 2014 Estate Chardonnay on September 23rd, 2014. The hand picked and hand sorted estate grapes were gently pressed, settled for one day and then moved to barrel by gravity. The wine was fermented in a combination of neutral French oak barrels and one new French oak barrel and 3/4 of the barrels were fermented using native yeasts. We stirred the lees frequently in the barrel through malolactic fermentation and we think that contributes to the complex mouth-feel and lush texture on the palate.

Our site does not generally naturally produce oily, textured Chardonnays, but the 2014 Estate is an expression of Chard that is richer and rounder than it has been in recent vintages. We believe this wine to be an honest representation of the generous warmth we were given in the 2014 growing season. The unusually high heat and average dry summer lead to an earlier than normal start to harvest and it is possible to think the extra heat lead to more developed flavors leaning toward the citrus, even tropical spectrum. True to the vintage, the 2014 Estate Chardonnay is a richer, softer expression of Chard with ripe flavors and complex phenolics. The warm nature of the season lead to ripe sugar as well and though this wine comes in just over 14.0% alcohol and we think it is well integrated and balanced. To us, this wine is decidedly mid-weight and has aromas and flavors of dried apricot, orange blossom, lemon oil, white flowers, lemon peel and hints of tropical fruits. Three out of four barrels of this wine were fermented using native yeasts and we think that adds to the complex nature of the wine. It finishes with round, soft acidity that is representative of the generous growing season and also the full malolactic fermentation undergoes. An orange blossom and lemon rind bouquet combined with richness on the palate make this wine as enjoyable on its own as well as a serious food wine.

Origin 100% estate fruit

Sub-Appellation Eola-Amity Hills

Appellation Willamette Valley

Clones Dijon 95

Soils Columbia River Basalts including: Ritner and Nekia

Winemaking

- Hand harvested and hand sorted, sustainably farmed estate fruit
- Gently pressed in a pneumatic bladder press and moved to barrel by gravity, and never racked, unless necessary
- Barrel-fermented in a combination of neutral and new French oak barrels using a combination of native and commercial yeasts.
- The wine undergoes a full malolactic fermentation after primary fermentation

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- The wine ages on its lees in barrel, after malolactic fermentation, for 12 months
- Minimum effective additions of sulfur
- It is lightly fined with Bentonite, filtered

Bottled January 10, 2016

Alcohol 14.0%

Total Acidity 4.7 g/L

pH at Bottling 3.67

Production 79 cases