



2014 Estate Syrah

History

Founder of Cristom Vineyards, Paul Gerrie, made the decision to pioneer Syrah in the Willamette Valley by grafting over plantings of Chardonnay on the lower slopes of our estate. In 2002, the classic varietal was grafted over Chardonnay vines originally planted in 1993 on two devigorating American rootstocks. We carefully selected the block of vines to graft over, choosing a site lying low on the hillside where heat accumulation is at its highest on the estate, giving Syrah the best opportunity to ripen in a moderate maritime climate.

In 2002, 2.5 acres (1.01 hectares) of Chardonnay were grafted over to four clones of Syrah. After cool growing seasons in 2007, 2008 and 2010, Cristom made the decision to graft half of the estate Syrah over to Viognier in 2011. All that remains is 0.31 acres (0.125 hectares) of each of the four clones totaling 1.24 acres (0.50 hectares).

The four clones of Syrah selected – 174, 383, 470, 877 – were chosen primarily for their recognized heritage of producing small berries, encouraging our chances to ripen Syrah in the Willamette Valley.

Planted on one of the lowest slopes on the estate (270ft to 310ft /82m to 95m) and entirely in Missoula Flood Sediments, the grafted vines produced their first fruit in 2003. The Missoula Flood silts are very deep soils lying over very old basalt paleosol, and are very well drained and can be some of the most vigorous soils on the estate. The entire block is planted in a nutrient-rich Willamette Silt, named Woodburn. Woodburn soils series are young silts left behind from the floods caused by ancient Lake Missoula at end of the last Ice Age around 15,000 to 13,000 years ago. Vines can be vigorous in these rich soils and we work hard to manage the canopy and use cover crops to slow the vegetative growth and direct the vines' energy into the fruit. Because of the rich and silty soil, vines are planted here at the lowest density on the estate of 1,210 vines/acre (2,990/ha) to allow each vine to have more space, spread out and create a larger canopy. By leaving more space for us to leave more shoots for each vine, gives a place for the vines' vigor to be released so that each shoot produces optimal fruit.

We produce an extremely limited quantity of this wine each year making it one that you will want to try to obtain upon release. The Cristom Estate Syrah wines are defined by spice, balance, perfume, texture and nuance, and they can gain complexity in the bottle for a decade or more.

Mesoclimate

The maritime climate at Cristom Vineyards has moderately warm days and especially cool nights, allowing the vines to retain acidity and produce intense and fragrant aromas and flavors. The estate Syrah is planted on the lower slopes of our site and is significantly impacted by the cool Pacific Ocean breezes that flow through



the Van Duzer Corridor. The corridor allows cool marine breezes to flow east into the Willamette Valley and moderates high summer temperatures, cools the vines, and moves air through the canopy to reduce disease pressure. This cool ocean air results in lower average temperatures at night than the northern Willamette Valley, and helps us to maintain good natural acid structure in the wines. Still impacted by the winds, the estate Syrah is partially protected by a tree-line that separates the lower and upper hillsides on the estate.

Due to our altitude and location on the 45th parallel, there is a high diurnal temperature variation at our estate – meaning that there is a significant difference (often 35 degrees or more) between the daytime high and nighttime lowest temperature during the growing season. This significant temperature shift helps to preserve natural acids in the grapes by allowing the vine to shut down at night, slowing the ripening process, often resulting in more hang-time on the vine and later picking dates. While the climate is optimal for Pinot Noir, the estate Syrah can struggle to ripen in the coolest Willamette Valley growing seasons.

Farming

Farmed sustainably since we purchased the property in 1992, all of the estate vineyards have been certified sustainable by Low Input Viticulture and Enology (LIVE) since 2007.

Vintage Notes

The 2014 vintage will be remembered as one of the great vintages in Willamette Valley winegrowing history. A warm, but nearly ideal growing season delivered the rare combination of abundant quantity and exceptional quality fruit that developed into aromatic wines of balance, depth and concentration. The season got off to a warm and dry start with the earliest budbreak and bloom we have recorded at the Cristom Estate in our history to that point - a full two weeks earlier than our twenty-year average. Growing conditions were mostly dry and warmer than normal throughout the spring providing a great environment for flowering and fruit set and the vineyards produced heavy clusters and large berries. The warm weather conditions continued throughout the summer leading to record high temperatures and the earliest start date to harvest in over two decades. The 2014 vintage broke the previous record for heat accumulation during the growing season, set in 1992.

With such exceptional vine fruitfulness and set, we made the deliberate decision to thin more modestly than we historically have per vine, leaving more fruit spread out across the canopy. Our reasoning behind keeping more clusters on the vine in 2014, was given the unusually warm growing season we were trying to gain hang time at the end of the season. If we thinned more aggressively as we do in an average year, we feared we would shorten the season and the fruit would result in high sugars and green flavors. We hung just over 2.8 tons/acre in our estate Syrah as opposed to our ten-year average of 2.5/tons acre. Our gamble paid off, and the expected abundant quantity and additional hang time



combined for dark and concentrated fruit with balanced acids and sugars without experiencing any heat stress.

We picked all four clones of the estate Syrah on October 9, 2014 and harvested a total of just over 3.5 tons. Each clone came in to the winery very ripe, ranging from 26.2 -26.5 degrees Brix and with ripe pHs between 3.31 and 3.53. The four clones were fermented separately in 1.0 to 1.5 ton open-top fermenters, each one consisting of 23% whole-clusters.

The 2014 Estate Syrah is an eleven-barrel blend of the four clones consisting of: 27% clone 174; 27% clone 383; 27% clone 470 and 18% clone 877. The wine has expansive aromas of ripe black and blue fruits, green and black peppercorns, olive tapenade, bacon fat, violets and garrigue. Medium bodied on the palate, the blackberry fruit is pronounced and combines with morello cherries, Asian spices and smoky charcoal tones. Cola berries and black currants linger through a long finish with fine and integrated tannins.

Origin 100% estate fruit

Clones 174, 383, 470, 877

Sub-Appellation Eola-Amity Hills

Appellation Willamette Valley

Soils Missoula Flood Sediments, including: Woodburn and Willamette

Winemaking

- Hand harvested and hand sorted, sustainably farmed estate fruit
- 23% whole-clusters
- Native yeast fermentations
- Minimum effective additions of sulfur and tartaric acid
- 1-3 punch downs daily in 1.0 - 1.5 ton open-top fermenters
- Gently pressed in a pneumatic bladder press and moved to barrel by gravity, and never racked, unless necessary
 - Undergoes a full malolactic fermentation in barrel
 - Fined with egg whites, unfiltered

Ageing 19 months in French cooperage, 27% new oak. 3 different coopers, including: 33% Tonnellerie Remond; 33% Tonnellerie de Mercurey; 33% Tonnellerie de Deferrari

Bottled July 12, 2016

Alcohol 14.5%

Total Acidity 6.6 g/L

pH at Bottling 3.50

Production 11 Barrels; 264 cases