



2021 Durant Vineyard, Chardonnay

AVA: Dundee Hills

LOCATION: Breyman Orchards Rd.

ELEVATION: 300-500'

SOIL TYPE: Jory and Willakenzie

YEAR PLANTED: 2000 and 1993

CLONAL MATERIAL: Dijon 95 and Dijon 76

VINEYARD SIZE: 60-acre vineyard, 1.75-acre PGC block

VINIFICATION: Whole bunch pressed, fermented in 200 gallon lots in concrete cubes, racked to barrels at dryness.

PICKING DATE: 09/06 and 9/15/21

TONS/ACRE: 3.29

OWNERS: The Durant Family

PRODUCTION: 348 cases bottled

Site History: Durant Vineyard is, by any measure, one of the pioneer vineyards in Oregon. The site was established and first planted in 1973 by Ken and Penny Durant who, along with their son Paul, owns and farms it to this day. The Durants were pioneers of the Oregon wine industry and were among the original partners in Sokol Blosser Winery before deciding to split off and become solely farmers. While David Lett had planted above and below them a few years prior, they were among the first people after him to plant on Breyman Orchard Rd. The road is now home to a nearly unbroken string of vineyards from top to bottom.

Site Characteristics: Set on Breyman Orchards Rd. at the southern end of the Dundee Hills the vineyard is about 60 acres in size with a wide range of elevation topping out at about 600 feet, and has several different plantings of Pinot Noir and other varieties. This is a mostly south-facing site that is adjacent to Domaine Drouhin, De Ponte and Sokol Blosser. To give some perspective on how fertile and life-sustaining the soil is in the Dundee Hills there is also a successful olive orchard planted on the property from which the Durants make some pretty damn good olive oil.

The Blocks: In 2015 when we re-started the Chardonnay program we did so with fruit from the **Southside Block** which was planted in 2000. This block is located across a tractor row from the Bishop Block Pinot Noir that we receive. This middle-of-the-hill section of Chardonnay is planted to Dijon 95. This is a noticeably warm section of the vineyard, however rows that run opposite normal planting patterns allow for fruit on the backsides of the plants to get much more shade than they normally would. Over six vintages we have learned the art of picking this block just at the apex of being underripe enough. This still gives us generous, ripe and supple fruit once the juice ferments into wine. In 2017 we picked up fruit from a lower-lying section called the **Raven Block** which was planted in 1993. This is at the very bottom of the hill and is quite flat as well as being planted in marine sedimentary soil, making it one of the few Dundee Hills sites to have such a soil type. It is planted to Dijon 76 which tends to be leaner and more austere in nature than Dijon 95. Combined with the much cooler location in the vineyard this fruit is a perfect foil for the Southside Block as it provides a wealth of acidity, lean/lemon-driven flavors and a flinty/minerally character that broadens the overall context of the wine.

Farming Practices: This vineyard, no doubt, encapsulates a lot about the Oregon farming experience. Assuredly in the 1970s the Durants farmed the way most places on the planet did and it's probably not something anyone wants to think deeply about at this point. However, over time and with prodding from any number of their winery customers (ourselves included) the Durants have moved toward organic farming and even incorporate productive livestock like sheep and goats to keep weeds at bay. Over the years since we began with this family's vineyard (2010) we have seen a marked change in the farming and the resulting health of the plants and soil.

Picking Dates, Tonnages, Tons/Acre: The Southside Block was picked on September 6th coming in at about 2.8 tons/acre. The Raven Block was picked on September 15th and was heavier at 3.9 tons/acre. Thus, the Raven Block accounts for about 56% of the final wine and the Southside 44%.

Winemaking: All the fruit was immediately pressed after picking, allowed to settle, racked and inoculated with a yeast specifically designed for Chardonnay. The wine finished primary in concrete cubes after about 3 weeks. It was then racked into barrels and the wine was in barrel, with no extra SO₂ addition beyond the minimal amount the juice was pressed with, for 14 months. It was then racked to stainless tank and given one SO₂ addition and was allowed five months in tank. This wine did not finish secondary fermentation and due to this the wine was sterile filter prior to bottling.

Barrels: In 2021 we made the decision to use only Damy barrels for our Chardonnays. We had been using Damy as part of the Chardonnay bottling since 2017, but went for the full spectrum of it based upon the wines from the 2017-2019 vintages. This is a combination of two new, two 1-year, 1-two year and one 4-year puncheons and 1 new regular sized barrel. This makes for a 40% new barrel usage.

Winemaking and Notes: This is the sixth and seemingly final bottling of our Durant Vineyard Chardonnay. With the beginning of our Estate Vineyard Chardonnay bottlings taking place we decided to keep the Chardonnay “program” to just one wine. What began as a project to connect ourselves to the local wineries making increasingly terrific Chardonnay has quietly and easily turned itself into a fully developed aspect of the winery’s production and identity. We have been fortunate to have a long and extremely positive relationship with the Durant family over the years and having access to a beautiful and well farmed vineyard with mature vines from which to produce our Chardonnay has certainly been a huge part of making this venture a successful one straight from the start. It is sad to see it go but our relationship with the Durants is strong with Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc.

We have found our own footing with regards to production and style over our few short years, however. What started as a happy accident, the fermentation of the Chardonnay in concrete cubes, has become an intentful way to go about things. Now all our Chardonnay is fermented in 200 gallon lots in concrete cubes so as to keep the fermentation as cool as possible while still being active, minimize the uptake of barrels (especially new ones) into the flavor profile of the wine and harness the power of the consistency of larger lot fermentations for an easy yet extended fermentation that allows for the development of brilliant aromatics and rich texture.

We are interested in texture, brightness of acidity, fruit intensity and overall balance in our wines. This particular Dundee Hills vineyard is an excellent place to naturally find these characteristics. The rich soil in which the Dijon 95 is planted accentuates fruit depth and richness while the marine soil and cool locale of the vines emphasizes minerality, clarity and brightness. There is a wealth of fruit that toggles between lemon and apple but that is offset and buffered by a sense of minerality and a rich but not heavy aspect to the wine’s weight and mouthfeel. This wine is an extremely nice place now but we anticipate years of development. While we can only date back to the 2015 vintage (and a wine that is made from different components and in a different and more rudimentary manner) that wine is still showing youthful energy and has every indication of further upside. The 2019 should be a rock solid wine for years and years to come.

The wine finished with a TA of 7.6 and a pH of 3.12. The free SO₂ was left at under 15 ppm due to the low pH and total SO₂ was just over 61 parts.