PATRICIA GREEN CELLARS

2023 Balcombe Vineyard Pinot Noir

AVA: Dundee Hills

LOCATION: Breyman Orchard Rd.

SOIL TYPE: Jory

YEAR PLANTED: 1990

CLONAL MATERIAL: Pommard

VINEYARD SIZE: 6.45-acre vineyard

PICKING DATES: September 19th and 22nd

TONS/ACRE: 1.97

OWNERS: Joyce Cooke

PRODUCTION: 490 cases bottled

2023 Vintage Story: ***2023 was my 30th vintage making wine in Oregon. I had always wondered what a vintage would be like if everything basically just went right. Well, that's the 2023 vintage. Superlative weather throughout the spring and summer leading into another earlier (by historical standards) harvest where the weather was excellently agreeable. This is both a bountiful and beautiful vintage. Across the board every vineyard performed to their highest level. Every bottling, and we did 34 bottlings of Pinot Noir, is at an apex. In short, at least in the here and now, I think this has a very good case for being considered the greatest vintage in Oregon's history. At the very least, this is the best Patricia Green Cellars of our 24 vintages.***

Site History: The vineyard was initially planted in full in 1990 by Mort and Joyce Cooke. At the time this site was seen as one of the higher vineyards that could possibly work in the Dundee Hills (that idea seems cute and naïve at this juncture, of course). Patty had taken over the farming of the vineyard directly adjacent to Balcombe, White Rose Vineyard, in 1994 as that site had fallen into disrepair and was choked with mildew. At the end of the 1996 harvest Mort Cooke came to the winery and said, "When I planted my vineyard and for a few years after I looked at my site and thought it looked great in comparison to White Rose. Since you took over that vineyard, I now think that vineyard looks great and mine looks terrible. Can you do for my site what you did for White Rose?" 25 years later we are still farming the vineyard and are the only winemakers to have vinified the fruit from this exceptional Dundee Hill site.

Site Characteristics: Balcombe Vineyard is located toward the top of the Dundee Hills on Breyman Orchards Rd. at the southern end of the Dundee Hills. Adjacent vineyards include White Rose, Domaine Drouhin, Stonehedge (Eyrie) and some Domaine Serene sites. It was planted in 1990 to Pommard clone. In 1997, while at Torii Mor, we began farming this vineyard and getting all the fruit from the 6.45 acres. We have worked with the fruit every year since, so we've become pretty accustomed to how the grapes grow, ripen and ferment into wine. The vineyard sits at about 600-700' elevation on a relatively gently, mostly west-sloping hillside with lots of sun exposure. The vineyard is divided into five specific sections all of which are fermented separately (this becomes important later).

The Blocks: Patty divided this vineyard into five distinct sections when we started with the vineyard in 1997. The site is one contiguous block of vines nearly laid out in a rectangular shape. The rows are long from the top of the property to the bottom, with a change in elevation of about 75 feet over the span of the rows. The blocks were divided fairly evenly top to bottom and left to right with the exception being the portion that dips below the house with a series of shortening rows. The blocks were designated as 1A and 2A at the top, 1B and 2B at the bottom and 3 below the house. For several years the mainstays of this bottling have been the 1A, 2A and 2B blocks although over the past several vintages Block 3 has been included in total.

Farming Practices: We have done the management of this property internally since the Torii Mor days with the exception of 2014 and 2015 when Sterling Fox's management service did the work. Also, at that time, the vineyard was switched entirely to organic farming practices and remains so to this day. The vineyard has always been dry farmed.

Picking Dates, Tonnages, Tons/Acre: Block 1B was harvested on the 19th while the rest of the vineyard was harvested on the 22nd. While fairly uniform in tonnage the 4 blocks that comprise the Balcombe Vineyard bottling came in at 1.97 tons/acre, slightly lower in tonnage than Block 1B at 2.00 tons/acre.

Vinification: Blocks 1A and 2B saw 60% whole cluster fermentation, Block 2A was done, as per normal since the 2016 vintage, at 100% whole cluster and Block 3 was left completely destemmed.

Winemaking: Fermentations were managed exclusively by pigeages to ensure gentle handling, extraction and delicate tannin construction. Cold soaks were generally 4-5 days across all the fermenters. Full fermentation from beginning to pressing was 17-19 days. A 48-hour settling of pressed wine occurred prior to being racked to barrel. All wines were on full lees until assemblage for bottling. Bottled without fining or filtration.

Barrels: This 20-barrel bottling (that largest Balcombe bottling in several years) consists of equal parts (4) new barrels, once-filled and twice filled (20% each), with the balance being neutral barrels (40%). Wine was in barrel until July and bottled in early August allowing for around 10 months in barrel.

Notes: Balcombe Vineyard is our quintessential Dundee Hills AVA bottling. At over 30 years of vine-age it has the capacity to show the specific characteristics that make wines from this particular region so compelling. The fruit is bright, fresh and intense without being too intense or sweet for its acidity and structure. The overall impression of the wine is one of incredible texture, managing to be silky and graceful without feeling overly polished. The structure of the acidity and tannin is generous but impeccably balanced allowing for a seemingly forward and youthfully approachable wine to age gracefully for more than 20 years in most vintages and likely well past that mark in this unusual but grand vintage.

The wine finished with numbers of a TA of 5.4, a pH of 3.55, a free sulfur level below 30 ppm and a total sulfur below 75 ppm.

Tasting Note: The 2023 Balcombe Vineyard Pinot Noir is the continuation of our journey with this great Dundee Hill site. Counting all the Balcombe, Balcombe Block 1B, Memorial/Anniversary and Notorious bottlings that have come from this site we now total 51 unique bottlings from this vineyard. While every vintage of this bottling is special, we have entered a realm of 30+year-old vines and ludicrously excellent vintages combining to create wines that have another gear that we never envisioned even just a few years ago. Everything that makes Balcombe Vineyard special as a stand-alone wine is here but, in a way, where everything has extra emphasis. The red-fruited flavors are deep, the texture is some harmonious combination of liquid and silk, the tannins are supple and pull everything towards the back and center for a long, sweet and glorious finish. This is assuredly a special and immensely age worthy wine from a site that has shown that it had the capacity with 10 year-old vines to produce wine that are still thrilling to this day.