



2015 Durant Vineyard, Madrone Block Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Appellation

2015 Durant Vineyard, Madrone Block: We have always been a huge proponent of Dundee Hill wines and we continue to seek out older vineyard sites tucked away in these hills. We were fortunate to land a section of Durant Vineyard in 2010, and we were lucky to supplement that with another section in 2012. This dramatically situated vineyard on Breyman Orchard Road (slightly down the hill from Balcombe Vineyard) has been owned and farmed by the same family for the entire 40+ years of its existence.

Location: Dundee Hills is a sub-appellation within the Willamette Valley located 28 miles southwest of Portland and 40 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Rising above the low, flat floors of the surrounding Willamette and Chehalem Valleys, the Dundee Hills offer spectacular views, including Mt. Hood and Mt. Jefferson's majestic snowy peaks.

Wine history: Winemaker David Lett planted the first Pinot noir in the Dundee Hills in 1965, naming it The Eyrie Vineyard. Soon after, Dick Erath, the Sokol Blosser family and other winemakers cleared south-facing slopes to plant many of Oregon's first vineyards. They whole-heartedly believed this area would one day be an important cool-climate wine-growing region. It didn't take long for the world to discover Dundee Hills and Oregon - after the relatively unknown Eyrie Pinot noir placed among the top three wines in the 1979 Gault-Millau French Wine Olympiades, beating out more famous French labels. Today, the area remains home to many of Oregon's modern pioneer winemakers who continue to successfully grow and make premium wine. The appellation was approved in November 2005.

Climate: The Dundee Hills area is effectively an island protected from great climatic variations by surrounding geographic features. The Coast Range to the west lessens the effects of the Pacific Ocean's heavy rains and windstorms, and causes a rain shadow over the Dundee Hills area, resulting in just 30 to 45 inches of annual precipitation, most of which falls in the winter months outside of the growing season. Because of their slope and elevation, Dundee Hills vineyards benefit from warmer nights and less frost and fog than the adjacent valley floors.

Soils: Dundee Hills is known for its rich, red volcanic Jory soil, which was formed from ancient volcanic basalt and consists of silt, clay and loam soils. They typically reach a depth of 4 to 6 feet and provide excellent drainage for superior quality wine grapes.

Topography: The Dundee Hills viticultural region consists of a single, continuous landmass that rises above the surrounding Willamette Valley floors and is defined by the 200-foot contour line to the AVA's highest peak of 1,067 feet. The area comprises a north-south spine with ridges, as well as small valleys on its east, south and west sides. Dundee Hills is part of a North Willamette Valley hill chain that developed as a result of intense volcanic activity and the collision of the Pacific and North American plates. Dundee Hills is typically volcanic over sedimentary sandstone.

Site Characteristics: Durant Vineyard is, by any measure, one of the pioneer vineyards in Oregon. The site was established and first planted in 1973. Set on Breyman Orchard Rd. at the southern end of the Dundee Hills the vineyard covers about 60 acres in size with a wide range of elevation topping out at about 600' and several different plantings of Pinot Noir and other, lesser 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. We get two sections of the vineyard. The Bishop Block which was planted to Pommard in 1973 and the Madrone Block which is a 2000 planting of Dijon 115 clone.

Wine Making and Notes: The Madrone Block's Dijon 115 planting creates a much different Pinot Noir than the Pommard Clone from the Bishop Block and it is unique enough and special enough to be bottled on its own to show a slightly different characteristic of this Dundee Hills site. The fruit was 100% de-stemmed and went through a normal cold soak of about 4 to 5 days and then was fermented in an 8 ton open top fermenter and was punched down while being pumped over 1x/day before being pressed and allowed to settle for 3 days. This spent about 10 months in a variety of barrels. In an effort to show off this block as much as possible only seven barrels were chosen from the twenty-nine that were barreled down and all of them were barrels that had been used four times previously. This brings in the velvety texture that Dundee Hills Pinot Noirs can have. This is deep in fruit and oozing with textural appeal. This borders right on sultry. Almost certainly the single vineyard designate with the most upfront appeal to it. This will show sweet red fruits which are certainly a staple of the vintage with classic Dundee Hill sweet spices. Hard not to like.

Production: 170 cases bottled.