



2022 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: October 11th and 18th

TONS/ACRE: 2.04

OWNERS: Joyce Cooke

PRODUCTION: 474 cases bottled

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, Stonehenge (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 have become 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 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 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 except for 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: While the frost event in April played less havoc with the buds here there was a difference in the ripening pattern in this vineyard. Usually, this site is picked in its entirety on one day or picked on back-to-back days. This year the blocks on the section furthest eastern side of the vineyard ripened a full week earlier than the rest of the vineyard. Tonnage was 11.24 tons in total and while the vineyard is 6.45 acres in size only about 5.5 acres are currently producing giving us 2.04 tons/producing acres. Balcombe, unfortunately, is historically speaking, a fairly low production site.

Vinification: Most fruit from Balcombe saw between 40-50% whole cluster fermentation in 2022 although one fermenter was done 30% whole cluster and another 100% whole cluster. This gives us significant whole cluster diversity in a relatively small amount of fruit.

Winemaking: Fermentations were managed exclusively by pigeages to ensure gentle handling, extraction, and delicate tannin construction. Cold soaks were generally 4 days across all eight fermenters. Full fermentation from beginning to pressing was 17-18 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 19-barrel bottling (the largest Balcombe bottling in several years) consists of only 3 new barrels (16%), a large selection (11) of once filled barrels (58%) and the balance being neutral barrels (26%). Wine was in barrel until late July and bottled in late August allowing for around 9 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 region so compelling. 2022 is a SENSATIONAL year in the Dundee Hills and our flagship wine of that AVA is on full display in this bottling. 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 5.6, a pH of 3.49, a free sulfur level below 30 ppm and a total sulfur below 75 ppm.