



## 2022 Bearwallow Vineyard (Anderson Valley, CA) Pinot Noir

**AVA:** Anderson Valley

**LOCATION:** Hwy 128 in Navarro, CA

**ELEVATION:** 300'-600'

**SOIL TYPE:** Shale, quartz and sandstone, AKA Bearwallow-Wolfey

**YEAR PLANTED:** 2000 and forward

**CLONAL MATERIAL:** Dijon 115 and Djon 777

**VINEYARD SIZE:** 35-acre vineyard

**PICKING DATE:** September 14th

**TONS/ACRE:** 10.2 tons; 2.81 tons/acre

**OWNER:** Rhys Winery

**PRODUCTION:** 700 cases bottled

**Site History:** The vineyard was originally planted as a 6+ acre site in 2000. Kevin Harvey, owner of Rhys Winery, purchased the property in 2008 and has since added onto it, bringing its total to just under 35 acres with about 70% being planted to Pinot Noir and the rest to Chardonnay. The Anderson Valley was only recognized as a stand alone AVA in 1982 and even then most of the wines produced were destined for sparkling wine as the region was seen as a place where fruit simply would not ripen enough for high-quality still wines. Even today there are still only 22 vineyards in the AVA membership which is less than that of Ribbon Ridge which is Oregon's smallest AVA. Bearwallow is located in what is commonly referred to as the "Deep End" since it is closer to the Pacific Ocean than it is to Boonville, the big "city" located within the AVA.

**Site Characteristics:** This vineyard combines a weird combination of familiarity and like being on a different planet. The windy and increasingly rural drive on Hwy 128 evokes a sense of Oregon's winemaking countryside, especially if you have just come up through the adjacent Napa Valley. However, once you get into the vineyard you realize that there isn't any place in Oregon like it nor any place even theoretically like it. First of all the site plays a weird optical trick because everything to the west of it is basically lower in elevation the vineyard appears to be up in the mountains at some outrageous elevation. Despite nearly being able to see the Pacific the site tops out at 600' which is only slightly higher than our Estate Vineyard. Bearwallow is extremely steep and given that it is planted in a loose sandstone/shale type of soil it is very difficult to get around in and would be impossible to on wet days. Fortunately, it is very dry there and tractor work is able to be kept to a minimum. In normal years they do about one spray for botrytis (as opposed to the every-10-days-regimen most Willamette Valley sites are on) and the rest of the work is all by hand. Locals say for every mile you drive west out of Boonville the temperature drops a degree. On the day of our visit it was over 100 when we landed in Sacramento, yet not even 80 when we arrived in the vineyard in the mid-afternoon. It is a unique and excellent place to grow grapes.

**PGC Blocks:** All our fruit comes from the original 2000 vintage plantings. At that time nearly 100% of Pinot Noir planted in the Anderson Valley was Dijon clone.

- **Dijon 115:** Two different sections (B4 and C5B) totaling 1.77 acres. 2007 planting.
- **Dijon 777:** Two different sections (B1 and C5A) totaling 1.86 acres. While a Dijon clone, this is better known and far more widely planted in California than Oregon. Bountiful clone with small clusters and dynamic fruit profile.

**Farming Practices:** Bearwallow is farmed with a combination of organic and Biodynamic methods.

**Picking Dates, Tonnages, Tons/Acre:** September 14th: Dijon 115 4.86 tons, 2.75 tons/acre. Dijon 777 5.34 tons, 2.87 tons/acre.

**Vinification:** Multiple different approaches across 6 fermentations (1 fermenter each):

- Destemmed: Combo fermenter of Blocks B1, B4 and C5B (83% Dijon 777/17% Dijon 115)

- 40% Whole Cluster: Block C5A Dijon 777 and Block B4 Dijon 115
- 50% Whole Cluster: Block C5A Dijon 777
- 100% Whole Cluster: Block B1 Dijon 777 and Block B4 Dijon 115

**Winemaking:** Fermentations were managed by a combination of pumpovers early in the process and exclusively prior to fermentation beginning as well as pigeages to ensure gentle handling, extraction and delicate tannin construction. Since this fruit was picked 2 full weeks before we picked any Oregon fruit we had the luxury of managing only these 6 fermenters for nearly their entire fermentation lengths. Cold soaks were generally 5-6 days. Full fermentation from beginning to pressing was 16-17 days except for the 40% whole cluster Dijon 777 which went for 20 days. 48-72 hour settling prior to being racked to barrel. without fining or filtration.

**Barrels:** This 28-barrel bottling consists of 6 (21%) new barrels (each fermenter had a new barrel as part of its makeup) and 4 once-used barrels. The remaining 18 barrels were all 3-7 times previously used. As is the case with many wines seeing new barrels in 2022 there is a greater than usual spread of new barrels including Cadus, Francois Freres, Segiun Moreau, Tonnellerie Sud Ouest and Chassin.

**Notes:** This wine's existence has a few factors to it that make it one of the most unique bottlings we have every produced.

- 1) The April frosts in 2022 seemed devastating at the time they occurred. Best guesses, even by the most experienced vineyard managers, were overall losses of 50-90% depending on site location. In short, things look incredibly grim and just 1 year removed from the 80+% losses incurred by the 2020 wildfires the outlook was frightening. I contacted Kevin Harvey since I sort of knew him and I was aware that Rhys Winery had been on an aggressive vineyard development campaign over the past 15 years and thought it might be possible they had some fruit available.
- 2) Rhys Winery doesn't sell much fruit. The only other non-Rhys customer of Bearwallow Vineyard fruit is Rivers-Marie Winery. So, this is a rare wine that only happened because another winery was trusting of us to represent their vineyard well, apparently as curious to see what we could do as we were and just happened to have a little more than their current plans called for. This project could have much more easily never gotten off the ground than coming to full fruition.
- 3) While the approach Patricia Green Cellars has taken over the years (crazy numbers of bottlings from multiple vineyards in most of the Willamette Valley's nested AVAs) seems like an obvious (if unusual) route to take that was not the case two decades ago. Patty and I were not 100% sure that the way we managed vineyards and made wine was what was leading to wines that we felt "showed the nature of the site." Perhaps we were simply, if unconsciously, making wines in a winemaker-driven way that was giving us the results. At the time we didn't know enough about the geology and microclimate of our Estate Vineyard versus that of Balcombe Vineyard or Four Winds Vineyard or Anden Vineyard (to bring back some stuff from the past) to know where the impact was coming from. In 2002 we thought the best way to learn was to go off the charts entirely. We became the first Oregon winery to bring Pinot Noir from a California Vineyard. We harvested a little under 3 tons of fruit from the Sonoma Coast based Hirsch Vineyard. And, to our great pleasure, that wine tasted like Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir! In many ways that wine taught us more about *terroir* and our winemaking endeavors than any wine we had previously produced. Last checked in on it in 2022 and it was going strong.

In the spring of 2022 I initially reached out to Jasmine Hirsch to see if we could re-create the situation on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the vintage. Fortunately or unfortunately, Hirsch Vineyard had seen a couple of very light vintages the years prior and they were cutting back on selling fruit so as to keep their own winery in enough fruit. However, the experience from 20 years in the past had put us in a comfort zone of knowing that we could bring fruit from that far and that we could make a wine that was true to the area.

The thing that struck us early on in the fermentations was how bright, crunchy and fresh the fruit tasted. There was a piercingly red-fruited quality to it that was both intense and razor sharp. We remarked all the time about how people who weren't experienced with Anderson Valley Pinot Noir would not peg this as a California Pinot Noir. Of the 32 individual bottlings of Pinot Noir we produced from the 2022 vintage this has the lowest ABV at 12.5%. This is no light weight wine, however. The nature of this area is to produce wines with bracing fruit underpinned by a distinctly mineral character in the finish and fine, strong tannins that belie the high-toned nature of the fruit. That is what this wine does in spades. The fruit is on the reddest of the red fruited spectrum (almost in a Sour Patch Kids sort of way except not candied or confectioned) that is expansive throughout the mid-palate. This leads into the finish of stone, quartz and a mélange of dried berries ranging from raspberries to blueberries. It is a gorgeous and elegant wine that has a resolute backbone to it. This is a wine that will assuredly last past the two decades that the 2002 Hirsch Vineyard Pinot Noir bottling has cruised through. Zingy, refreshing and yet with a burgeoning complexity that will evolve over time. A rare and amazing wine. It is possible that they will have to change the name of this AVA to Jim Anderson Valley after this wine is released!

This finished with a TA of 6.2, a pH of 3.38 and was bottled with under 25 ppm free SO<sub>2</sub> and less than 70 ppm total SO<sub>2</sub>.