



Handcrafted

Single Site

Pinot Noir

Notes from the Back Deck

Yamhill, October 20th, 2020

The Covid Crop!

We finished harvest in early October and what a year! We saw wet weather around bloom in early June, the most critical time of the year which determines fruit set. The wet weather and lack of heat at that time resulted in one of the worst fruit sets the Northern Willamette Valley has seen since 2010. In a normal year we would set around 36 tons of fruit at Lenné and we saw half of that this year.

If that wasn't enough, September fires on the eastern side of the valley produced a blanket of smoke which covered the Willamette valley for just over a week. Many producers scrambled to get grapes tested to determine the amount of taint in their fruit with the thought of not picking at all if the levels were too high. Ironically, the main lab that tests for smoke taint is in the Napa Valley and had to be evacuated leaving many local producers guessing at the level of taint. Some producers who got their grapes in early decided not to pick and two major grape buyers in Oregon cancelled all their Willamette Valley grape contracts.

The smoke cleared and we harvested under clear skies. It is too early to tell how much smoke taint are in the wines as it becomes most noticeable after the wines come out of primary and secondary fermentation. We hope we escaped the worst but time will tell. So far we don't detect any taint in the Chardonnay but the Pinot is still up in the air since the taint is on the skins and Pinot sits with the skins during primary fermentation.

There is a real possibility that we may not make any single clone wines, South Slope or Kill Hill from the 2020 vintage but we will have a better idea by the end of December. One thing is certain we will all remember 2020 as long as we live. Fortunately we have a great line up of wines coming your way with five Pinot Noirs from the 2018 vintage. This vintage reminds me of the 2006 vintage; big and opulent but with enough fine grained tannins to make them live a decade or more. In fact I just had a 2006 Lenné Estate over dinner with friends and it blew us all away.

The 2018 wines will always be opulent and are delicious even now but they are simple. A few years in the bottle will add to their complexity if you can resist drinking them now. We have also included the 2019 Chardonnay in this shipment. If someone makes a better Willamette Valley Chardonnay this year we would love to taste it, it is that good.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday and thank you for gracing your table with wines from this very special hillside in the heart of Yamhill.

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But as always, I prefer you email me directly if you have any questions or concerns at steve@lenneestate.com

