



## MEDIA KIT

# Lenné Estate Vineyard & Winery

Lenné is an estate producer in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA of Willamette Valley, OR. The primary focus of Lenné is consumer wine education which includes blind tastings, vineyard tours, and education-focused wine club events both onsite for locals and via virtual tastings for their out-of-state members.

Owner/Winemaker Steve Lutz is famous around the valley for his laid back yet passionate approach to the wine business, and he never sells a wine before its time.

## THE STORY OF LENNÉ

To hear Steve Lutz tell it, his vineyard sits on the poorest soil imaginable. “The worst in the county,” he boasts with pride and bravado. That is because he believes the depleted ancient sedimentary soil, outside of Yamhill, OR, is the best soil to grow Pinot Noir grapes. Though he does not speak highly of the soil, he loves the 21 acres he produces six wines from.

“It’s a pain to work with, but it controls vigor and produces small clusters and berries,” he says of his steep hillside vineyard called Lenné. Those are two integral factors to making great balanced wine.

Steve has been in and out of the wine business for over 30 years. In 1986 he began making wine for himself in Napa Valley, and in 2000 he began searching for his own site to make Pinot Noir in the Northern Willamette Valley. Eight months into the search he climbed a steep hill located outside the town of Yamhill in the Yamhill-Carlton American Viticultural Area (AVA) and offered to buy the site within the hour. “It’s the luckiest thing that has ever happened to me. It’s a gem,” Steve says lovingly about the site that has brought him both joy and adversity.

In 2005 after he tasted the first wines to come off the stressed vineyard and after “just writing checks, which was tough on a marriage,” he told his wife, “Don’t worry about it, everything’s going to work out.” The Pinot Noir tasted like chocolate, black cherry, and mocha that has been a constant thread throughout all Lenné’s estate Pinot Noirs. With the 2014 vintage, Lenné’s vines were reaching maturity, giving Steve and the winemaking team a good feel for the clones and the type of wines they can produce. The name Lenné was born from a chicken farm in the small village of Wokingham, west of London. It was there that Steve’s late father-in-law Len raised his wife Karen and the rest of the family. The chicken farm is long gone, replaced by upscale houses, but Lenny lives on as he helped Steve and Karen put down a payment on Lenné. “I’d like to think he is up there now, doing what he can to keep us going,” Steve says of the operation’s namesake.

### FAST FACTS

- \* **FOUNDED:** 2000 by Steve Lutz
- \* **PRODUCTION:** 1500 – 2000 cases
- \* **Seven all estate grown Pinot Noirs**
- \* **FIRST NORMAL VINTAGE:** 2007
- \* **Nutrient-poor peavine soil**
- \* **All dry-farmed vines**
- \* **Planted 2001**

## THE LENNÉ ESTATE VINEYARD

*“I didn’t choose Lenné, it chose me.” – Steve Lutz, Owner/Winemaker*

The first thing Steve says when asked to describe his site is: “This is tough stuff to grow grapes in” only later revealing that though the site is considered to have the worst soil in the county, it is an “A-plus” site. When you dig into the soil, you really do wonder how anything grows. The team at Lenné has had some disasters that could support that inference. With thousands of plants lost since the original plantings in 2001, the Lenné Estate Vineyard has not had it easy.

The initial planting in 2001 consisted of three blocks made up of Pommard 777 and 115. The grapes were planted on a 7x3 spacing without irrigation. The site stressed the young vines leading to nearly 35% of plants lost in the first year. The steep slope also proved difficult to work safely, and destruction from deer impeded young vine growth. Three years later, the vines were still struggling to develop enough roots to sustain growth. In 2003 an addition 2.5-acre block of Pommard was planted behind what is now the tasting room to account for the difficulties. The block succumbed to the record setting 2003 heat wave and all but a handful of plants were lost. In 2004 the block was replanted along with an additional 2.5-acre block of Pommard 667 and 114. Finally, in 2004, the vineyard produced a small amount of fruit and by 2006 there was enough from each block to vinify each clone separately. In 2007 Lenné produced its first normal fruit set, seven years after the first planting.

With somewhat of a heroic comeback, Steve can look back and say that the 20.9 acres of south-facing Pinot Noir sitting at an elevation between 375 to 575 feet has proven itself as a sweet spot for growing deliciously complex fruit. The vineyard has matured, and the vines have sent roots into the subsoil, accessing water and nutrients capable of sustaining them. The steepness of the slope and the southern orientation quell any worries about under ripening, and the primarily peavine soil is shallow, has little organic matter, is well-drained, and consists of clay, sandstone, siltstone, basalt, tuffaceous rock and shale. It makes for delicate small-clusters and berries. It is also safe to say that the soil has built character in the team that has worked with it over the years.



## THE WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Owner/Winemaker Steve Lutz thinks of himself as a minimalist winemaker. He does not add enzymes to the wines to extract color. He presses the juice when there is still a lot of natural CO<sub>2</sub>, and he does not allow the cap to fall to ensure as fresh a wine as possible. He does not utilize centrifugal pumps which would contribute to oxidation. For him, the goal is to get the fruit from vine to bottle as intact as possible and let secondary flavors develop in the bottle, not the winery.

Because of the poor soils at the Lenné Estate, the fruit that Steve is working with has concentrated flavors. Despite the headache of farming the worst soil in the county, the poor soil controls the vigor of the vine and makes a complex enough fruit as to not require much manipulation. They do, however, manipulate the fruit by aging it in 35% new French oak for 11 months, and the wines are filtered at bottling. “It’s pretty basic winemaking,” he explains. “It’s the site that gives concentration and density to the wines. There’s no way to compensate for poor soils, which is a very definition of the philosophy of minimalist winemaking. Poor soils control vine vigor resulting in small berries with few seeds and more concentrated fruit flavors”.

Lenné Estate produces 1,500 to 2,000 cases of Pinot Noir across two labels and seven wines annually. Lenne’ also produces three single clone bottlings – Eleanor’s 114, Jill’s 115 and Karen’s Pommard – all names after the most important people in Steve’s life. Lenne’ also crafts an estate Chardonnay.



*Single Clone Bottlings*



*The Lenne' Estate Lineup*

## THE PEOPLE



### **Stephen Lutz - Owner/Winemaker**

Steve Luz has been in the wine business since 1981. After graduating from the University of Oregon in 1979, he spent two years of working in the corporate world before his zeal for wine took over. He moved to Napa Valley to pursue a career, working briefly in the cellar at Beringer Winery and then working in the tasting room at Franciscan before becoming an assistant tasting room manager at Inglenook Vineyards (pre-Francis Coppola). Two years later Steve went on to manage the now-defunct Vichon Vineyard's tasting room and finally to manage the tasting room and create wine club at Merryvale Vineyards. He also made his first homemade Pinot in 1986 from fruit in the Carneros region of Napa Valley.

In 1992 Steve left Merryvale to start a gourmet pizza business called Borolo's Gourmet in Santa Rosa, California. He operated the business for five years before selling it to move to England where he met his wife, Karen. After some time away from the West Coast, Steve had clarified his vision: he would return to his career in wine in the Oregon wine country. In 2000, after some consulting for Chateau Benoit Winery, Steve accepted a position as VP of marketing and administration at Anne Amie Vineyards. In the same year Steve and his wife bought 21-acre parcel two miles east of Yamhill. In 2001 they planted 15 acres of Pinot Noir, actualizing Steve's dream to not only work in the wine business but to be involved in the process of making delicious wine.

In 2005 Steve left Anne Amie to oversee the construction of a tasting room on his property and manage the vineyard fulltime. Finally, in 2007 Steve opened the tasting room and started selling his **first estate wine from the '04 vintage**. Steve currently manages all vineyard, winemaking, and business aspects of Lenné. He takes a unique laid-back approach to his wine business and lives with Karen in Portland.



### **Eric Bruce - Hospitality Manager & Lead Wine Educator**

Eric has been involved with wine for as long as he remembers. His dad, Brad Bruce, has been a professional wine judge for over 30 years, and Eric was known to join him at some of their hometown San Diego wine competitions.

Eric moved from the Bay Area to Willamette Valley in 2011 and began a self-described transition from introvert - website and videogame designer during the earliest days of the internet - to an extroverted hospitality manager in 2015.

Eric started working harvest as an intern "Cellar Rat" in 2015 for a large production facility in Dundee. After five 14-hour day shifts, he landed an associate position in the Dundee tasting room of a Walla Walla boutique producer. Eric eventually ran that tasting room until October 2017 when he made the move to Lenné, where he thrives as the front of the house for the brand.

Eric's personality, operations, and people skills have had a sizable impact at Lenné which has grown overall tasting room sales, wine club memberships, and allocation programs to match its limited production.

## THE WINES

**LeNez** The LeNez Pinot Noir is a blend of all five Pinot Noir clones on the estate vineyard: Dijon Clones 777, 115, 114, 667, and the Pommard clone. It is generally the most fruit forward out of all Lenné's wines. It is very approachable when young and will improve five to eight years after release. LeNez (pronounced "LEE-NAY") means "the nose" in French. The name is a pun a homage to Lenny's distinctive profile.

**Lenné Estate** The Lenné Estate Pinot Noir is the flagship release. It is a blend of all five clones with always at least 50% Pommard. The wine blends fruit, acidity, and tannins for a beautifully balanced offering. This wine often has black and cherry aromatics with fine grained tannins and acidity. It will improve for a decade from the vintage date.

**Jill's 115** The Jill's 115, named after Karen's mother, comes from the block just down the slope from the Lenné tasting room. It is a Pinot Noir characterized by fruit-forward notes of red cherry, black currants, and tropical aromatics with a soft, elegant mouthfeel. The 115 clone always produces Lenné's silkiest, softest wine because of the copious amount of fine-grained tannins characteristic of this clone. Like all the Pinot Noirs grown at Lenné, there is a signature mocha aromatic.

**Karen's Pommard** Karen's Pommard, named after co-founder Karen Lutz, comes from the highest elevation, northwest corner of the vineyard and reveals black cherry and dark Bing cherry fruit. Originally brought to the U.S. from France in 1959, this clone was one of the first Pinot Noir clones planted in Oregon and remains one of the most popular and complex. Lenné Estate's Pommard always shows full bodied flavors and an earthy note with mocha notes that are the terroir aromatic of Lenné.

**Kill Hill** The Kill Hill Pinot Noir comes from the steepest, most stressed part of the Lenné vineyard and combines the Dijon 114 and 667 clones in near-equal proportions. The 114 is a red fruited clone with bright fruity acidity while the 667 is structured and intense with a strong note of spice. The resulting wine usually evokes black raspberries with a "wet stone" minerality imparted by the rocky soil. Kill Hill is always the biggest wines Lenné produces and is an annual favorite of wine club members.

**Eleanor's 114** Eleanor's 114, named after Steve's mother, is made with Dijon 114 clones which is the reddest fruited clone at Lenné. While many vineyards grow this clone, only a handful of other wineries in the Willamette Valley produce a 114 wine as a single clone. The clone is wonderful in blends, adding finesse, bright acidity, and red raspberry fruit notes to the wine. At Lenné the terribly rocky soil imbues the 114 with enough backbone and body to stand alone, letting its bright, red fruited aromatics shine. Like all Lenné's Pinot Noirs, this wine is best consumed six to 10 years after vintage.

**Cinq Élus Pinot Noir** This wine is crafted from the blending of the single best barrel of all five of Lenné's Pinot Noir clones. Cinq Élus means "five select" in French and is Lenné's finest wine – only produced in exceptional vintages. A whole formed from many delicate parts, this wine is the best expression of the terroir of Lenné and boasts aromatic and flavor elements from all five clones including mixed berry aroma, acidity, a dense mid-palate, fine-grained tannins, and a long, complex finish. The team at Lenné recommends a minimum of six years of aging on this wine to let the five personalities come together as one.

**South Slope Select** The South Slope Pinot Noir is a premium blend of the Pommard and Dijon 115 clones. Two of Steve's favorite clones, these two blends beautifully with the earthy body of Pommard balanced by the fruity complexity of 115. With aging this wine gains richness and a sandalwood aromatic. The wine has tremendous concentration and layers with black and Bing cherry fruit, vanilla, and mocha flavors.

## EXPERIENCE LENNÉ

In addition to making wine, Steve's passion is **educating his customers about wine**. Since 2008, Steve has taught several courses such as the "Red and Black Seminar" which defines the differences between the Yamhill-Carlton District (red) and the Dundee Hills region (black), two significant American Viticultural Areas of the Willamette Valley. Steve believes that while there are many different influences distinguishing one Pinot Noir from another, none are more important in the Northern Willamette Valley than soil type. While a variety of subsoils exist, at the most basic level they can be separated into two main types: volcanic and sedimentary. In his course, Steve explores the experience of these different soil types on a quarterly basis at the winery. Visitors have a chance to taste the wines blind and guess what soil type each wine represents after Steve spends some time familiarizing them with the main characteristics of each area. The group then works on ranking the wines and comes up with a group preference.



He also offers **blind tastings and virtual tastings** regularly – allowing guests to sample eight wines side by side, discuss their merits and traits, and then witness as they are revealed one by one. Serving a lineup of competitive brands is unheard of at tasting rooms anywhere as there is no way to control the outcome, but luckily, Steve's wines usually end up with a high rating.

You can visit the Lenné Estate Tasting Room for on-site tastings Wednesday through Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m. They have a **heated patio and a roof top deck** with gorgeous vineyard views to enjoy the Willamette Valley. The tasting flight usually consists of five wines – a Chardonnay and four Pinot Noirs. The cost is \$20 per person which is refunded with any two bottle purchase or a wine club join. A reserve flight is available for \$30. **Dogs and food are welcome at the Tasting Room**. The team at Lenné offer gourmet charcuterie and cheese boards made in-house. Steve also fires up the pizza oven, but only for wine club events. Lenné offers **vineyard tours and education focused wine events** both onsite and virtually for out-of-state members. You can view upcoming events [here](#). Owners Steve and Karen Lutz also rent out an apartment on top of the tasting room through **AirBnB** for a truly immersive wine country experience. You can view the listing [here](#).

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