

CHEHALEM

SPRING 2006



CHARDONNAY *A New Oregon Variety*

By Harry Peterson-Nedry

OREGON HAS A TENDENCY TO TAKE ON CHALLENGES, pull for the underdog, and abuse itself for the sake of principle. The Oregon wine industry has a case in point with, of all things unlikely, Chardonnay.

Oh, you remember Chardonnay. It's that variety that floats California's boat in a sea of heavily wooded and sometimes slightly sweet wine that for many consumers defines white wine. It is seriously and well done by some, but in general has been American-ized or Australian-ized, losing spirit and uniqueness to gain commercial acceptance. And what a shame for those who do it well, both domestically and, especially, where it originated and where the standard for the variety still resides, Burgundy.

THE GRAPE

Chardonnay, a cross between Pinot Noir and an almost extinct Croatian variety named Gouais Blanc, is likely named for the town in the Maconnais region of France. The white wines of the Maconnais, Chablis, and Côte d'Or range from steely and mineral-like to richly emollient with wood-fermented counterparts. The latter extreme prompted New World wines to emulate the process, especially when the fruit was noticeably lacking in pedigree—oak as a substitute for rich flavors, malolactic fermentation (ML) to add complexity, and, a New World invention for Chardonnay, residual sugar to round the palate.

Unlike the centuries-long selection of plant materials that took place in Europe, the New World regions planted what the Europeans gave them, sometimes in places appropriate, but many times not. Chardonnay is an agreeable grape, socializing freely in many places where it shouldn't be grown, losing brightness, losing things to say that are intelligent, and losing the energy to work well, as high temperatures turn snappy to languid, stimulating to cocktail posing.

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(Above) Clusters of ripe Dijon clone Chardonnay.

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT)

Chardonnay is indeed one of the noble grape varieties, with many contending it to be the noblest of the whites (I might bump Riesling one rung above). But to be ultimately noble, rather than a pretender to nobility, plant, place, and process need to be matched. The right variety and clones in the wrong place miss ascendancy, as do oak barrels and ML with poorly grown fruit.

OREGON AND ITS CHARDONNAY HISTORY

We have grown Chardonnay since initial plantings in the sixties in the Willamette Valley. However, we missed at first. We had *the wrong clones in the right place*, and it took a couple of decades to identify and correct the problem. We found that the California clones, selected for warmer sites, were 180 degrees away from what we needed. The grapes we grew rarely got ripe, retained too much acidity, and were harvested later than Pinot Noir, in the rains. We didn't need longer growing seasons and higher acid levels, we needed to grow Chardonnay that ripened predictably with richness and softness, and before the rains.

David Adelsheim is largely considered responsible for prodding the industry to investigate new clones. He was struck by the synchronous timing in Burgundy of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay harvests, as compared to Oregon's, two weeks after Pinot Noir. With David Heatherbell of Oregon State University, Adelsheim used a strong relationship with Raymond Bernard of the French viticultural research institute in Dijon to bring optimal plant material to Oregon for both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Bernard led an extensive program to identify selections appropriate for replanting Burgundian vineyards. These same selections were well suited to Oregon as well. They are still known as Dijon clones and have been available for extensive planting in Oregon since the mid-nineties.

Whereas Pinot Noir benefits from a richer variety of fruit colors on its palette, Chardonnay is utterly transformed by Dijon clones, making wines that are rich without oak, complex with or without ML, and a travesty to leave sweet.

Oregon's legacy of lackluster wines from the older Chardonnay clones has taken time to live down. Chardonnay acreage is greatly reduced now, as people either abandon it entirely or replant Dijon clones. Chardonnay acreage in

2005 was only 56% of 1995's Chardonnay acreage, as total acreage for all varieties has doubled. Chardonnay's little sister Pinot Gris is now Oregon's largest white variety, at 224% of Chardonnay. And today, Chardonnay constitutes only 6% of Oregon's grape acreage, whereas it was 21% of total acreage in 1995.

So why be excited by Chardonnay when so many are abandoning the variety, when the longstanding king of whites is being "dissed," and Pinot Gris is challenging the throne nationally as the second best-selling white variety?

Those not willing to invest energy and money in Dijon clones are just getting out of Chardonnay, leaving the serious and committed. Acreage is dropping, but that includes yankouts less new plantings, i.e. less and less

old clone and more Dijon clone. In 2005, 24 acres of Chardonnay were lost, including 44 acres of old clones pulled and 20 new Dijon acres planted.

The excellence of new fruit sources isn't the only development to benefit Oregon Chardonnay. Modern knowledge of rootstock as well as site and soil strengths and limitations have also played a role. For example, recognizing the irrigation benefits on certain soils to maximize fruit characters has helped us limit "untypical aging" (UTA), a fault identified in

dry-farmed white wines in the last few decades. Even the viticultural practices used in our search for Pinot Noir's Holy Grail have been adopted for Chardonnay, such as crop-thinning, dense plantings, fruit exposure, and organic farming.

STYLES OF CHARDONNAY

As with Chardonnay from the Old World, several styles can legitimately be made from high-quality Chardonnay fruit without making it a trick pony. Dijon clones are rich and complex enough to stand and walk without wood, yet are firmly structured and balanced enough to support moderate use of new oak. It's within this range that most of us in Oregon play.

Chehalem makes INOX™, a bone-dry, stainless-steel fermented Chardonnay without a whisper of oak and no buttering with ML. This wine is the pure expression of Chardonnay fruit, which few of us have ever tasted and which many wine-makers in the past were afraid to taste, afraid we wouldn't find anything there. Dijon clones



Raymond Bernard (of the French institute in Dijon) at the Peterson-Nedrys in 1986.

provide the flavors that gimmicks such as oak, ML, and sugar tried to imitate in warmer regions and in Oregon's old days.

We continue our appreciation of fully French oak barrel-fermented Chardonnay with Ian's Reserve. This wine sees one-third new oak and partial to full ML. The Ian's Reserve and its counterparts in our sister wineries have helped establish a valid middle ground between White Burgundy and Californian and Australian Chardonnay. Recently recognized by critics as its own category, Oregon Chardonnay provides richness and complexity, but is strung on a nervy structure of acid and fruit freshness. Balanced, it keeps interest suspended with vibrant white fruits, minerality, bright acids, and moderate alcohols.

ORCA

As Oregonian as the cool climate that makes the Willamette Valley the perfect place for varieties such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Riesling, collaboration seems to follow us, less a strategy and more a principle—a mantra. It might be the same gravitational pull of bodies together that Minnesotans find around a heater in the deadening white of winter, or that draws South Dakotans to shut down family-planning clinics when they're feeling especially mean-spirited.



The winemakers of ORCA (from left to right): Eric, Luisa, Dave, Veronique, Rollin, Tony, and Harry.

CREDIT: KEVIN BELL

Several of your favorite Oregon wineries have joined together in a sense of passion and joint will to form ORCA, the OREGON Chardonnay Alliance (www.oregonchardonnay.com). This group began to improve the breed of Chardonnay first in the vineyard, then in the winery, next in the press, and finally in the marketing of our wines. Besides Chehalem, it includes Adelsheim, Argyle, Domaine Drouhin, Domaine Serene, Hamacher, and Ponzi. Others will join us in this group of friends creating uniquely Oregon Chardonnay.

It must be admitted that Chardonnay seemed like an especially good target for a resolute and stubborn effort, with people not respecting it anymore. Nobility comes from a core of purity, not a minstrel face paint applied to please the crowds. 🍷

🍷 Visit chehalemwines.com for more information.

CHARDONNAY REVIEWS

Wine Review Online, November 2005,

"Chardonnay Pilgrims, Take Heart," Patrick Comiskey Oregon's Chardonnays are showing character as they never did before...Chardonnay that's on a par with the region's much heralded Pinot Noirs...gently perfumed, well-structured, mineral-tinged wines with high-toned fruit and relatively low alcohols. Like Meursault, the fruit is rich without being cloying, redolent of fresh apples and pears, and bears a pleasing hint of nuttiness.

Wine Spectator, June 30, 2005, "Oregon Tunes In To Chardonnay," Harvey Steiman Oregon's versions are lighter, generally with higher acidity and less opulence than the typical California style chardonnay. The wines can be charming, and the best have real elegance...

2002 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay

93 *Wine Review Online.com*, August 30, 2005,

"Oregon's Stylish Chardonnays," Michael Franz With low oak...this is on the fresh, primary fruit side of the Chardonnay spectrum, and very successfully so...impeccably pure and impressively persistent. A core of ripe pear fruit is the lead attraction, with nuances and layers of flavor...more from the multiple dimensions of the fruit than from oak trickery.

90 *The Wine Advocate*, October 2004, Pierre Rovani Typically one of Oregon's finest whites.

Vanilla bean, toast and spicy minerals can be found in its complex aromatics. Medium bodied, suave, and silky textured, it is a supple, sensual wine...

A- *Oregon Wine Report*, Issue 23,

Cole Danehower An uncommonly rich and tasty chardonnay that somehow manages to walk the fine line between big and broad, and focused and intense. There is a subtle butteriness behind the fruit, but the flavors are bright and forward, and the wine seems a mixture of the best Oregon freshness and the best California weight—perhaps as good a definition as any for New World Burgundian Chardonnay...

Decanter, September 2005, Norm Roby The best...New Oregon Chardonnay[s] offer brightness with pear, melon, fresh lemon with mineral and hazelnut flavors...They have a silky texture, a raciness and a lengthy finish that is not derived from alcohol or oak. Top Selection: 2002 Ian's Reserve.

2004 INOX™ Chardonnay

Decanter, September 2005, Norm Roby Oregon can now make unoaked Chardonnays like no others...The 2004 Chehalem INOX stands out.

91 *Wine Review Online.com*, August 30, 2005, "Oregon's Stylish Chardonnays," Michael Franz Bright and wonderfully fresh...great aromas and flavors from Chardonnay without augmentation from oak...it is remarkably fresh and zesty in the glass...

90 *Wine Enthusiast*, May 2006, Paul Gregutt Bring[s] bright, acid-driven fruit to the forefront. Full-bodied and flavorful, with nicely mixed stone fruits, pineapple, green berries and lemony citrus. It sets up sharply on the palate and holds true, just waiting for some fresh shellfish.

🍷 For more reviews on Chardonnay visit chehalemwines.com.



IN THE VINEYARD

LONG-TERM PLANTING, OR REAPING WHAT WE SOW

OVER THE LAST YEAR WE'VE PLANTED TWO NEW BLOCKS of grapes in our Wind Ridge Vineyard on Ribbon Ridge that speak of the past and to the future.

Last Spring, we planted a new block of Pinot Noir, using new rootstocks (3309), drip irrigation to start, and new spacings (2000 plants per acre), but employing old clones (Pommard), which began the industry. Considering the site's excellence, the pedigree of plant material that came from our first and best planting (5-Acre Block), and all we've learned since 1982, we're anticipating a great future for the block.

Last month, we planted an adjacent block with futuristic whites. As you know, I'm convinced Riesling is Pinot Noir in a white seersucker summer suit—complex, reflective of place, and elegantly ageable. We planted a block that includes enough of all the clones of Riesling available (6 or maybe 7) to make commercial-sized ferments, so we can learn about the breed as we grow the volume of world-class Riesling. And then, there's the block of Grüner Veltliner to really stretch comprehension, as we see with two acres what this great Austrian variety does here.

BECAUSE THINGS ARE CHANGING

We experiment partly because we're restless and curious—OK, because *I'm* restless. But partly, we look to change because we have to. I'm in the no-nonsense, scientific camp on the reality of Global Climate Change and bear a sense of urgency that things need now to be done—or eventually *we're* done.

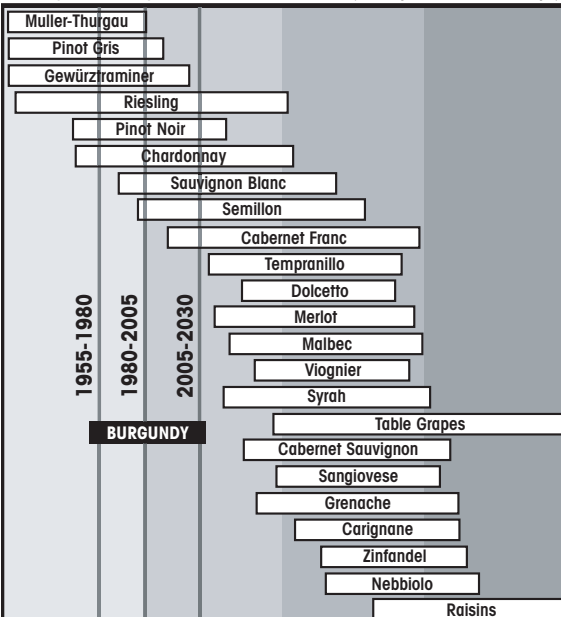
Myriad sources and views of data, both long-term and short-term, confirm startling symptoms of our altered climate. Close to home, we have only to look at the consistently higher heat accumulations of recent vintages and the extremely remote probability that the last ten vintages in a row all being at or above the mean for the 1961–1990 period is by chance. Statistically significant, no doubt.

The evidence is so overpowering that vineyard owners, even in generations-heavy European regions that have grown and become identified by single varieties of grapes, are now asking: "What will we grow when it becomes too hot for what we know?"

GRAPEVINE CLIMATE/MATURITY GROUPINGS

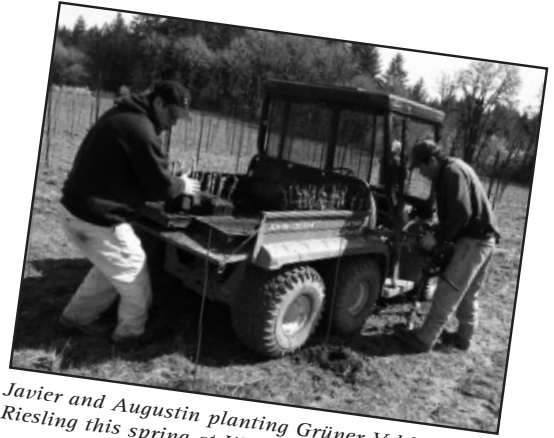
COOL 55-59°F	INTERMEDIATE 60-63°F	WARM 63-66°F	HOT 66-75°F
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Average Growing Season Temperature (NH Apr-Oct; SH Oct-Apr)



Length of rectangle indicates the estimated span of ripening for that varietal

Average Growing Season Temperatures have continued to rise, pushing ripening in traditionally cooler regions like Burgundy earlier and almost outside appropriate ripening windows for Pinot Noir.



Javier and Augustin planting Grüner Veltliner and Riesling this spring at Wind Ridge.

Dr. Gregory Jones of Southern Oregon University, a geographer/climatologist specializing in characterizing viticultural regions (his parents own Abacela in the Umpqua), has investigated climate changes over recent decades and their potential impact on normal ripening parameters of grape varieties worldwide.

Conclusions show improving ripening conditions with varieties that traditionally have had difficulty ripening in some years. And, with varieties that were well suited to regions historically, there are tendencies toward overripeness and early ripening that compromise finesse and elegance. With this change being ongoing rather than a single shift, it is ominous to hear the climate freight train gaining speed in the distance, without a plan to slow it.

We all must consider cause-and-effect, understanding what we've done to start this engine of change, so we can have a chance of slowing it. We must demand of ourselves, our companies, and our governments a will to change, even if it takes sacrifice. Or else, on our grandchildren's vineyard watch we'll be harvesting Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet, and Grenache in the Willamette Valley, rather than Pinot Noir. 🍷



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

2003 Reserve Pinot Noir

93 *Pinot Report*, December 15, 2005 Deep earthy aromas dominate the nose, some fruit underneath; deep, rich, good berry fruit, earthy, forest floor notes; toasty oak, moderate tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. A big style of Pinot but everything is also in balance.

90 *Wine Spectator*, December 31, 2005, **Harvey Steiman** Ripe and rich...fleshy with black cherry, kirsch, peppermint and a touch of game as the finish persists impressively.

2003 Corral Creek Pinot Noir

91 *Pinot Report*, December 15, 2005 Spice, earth berry and cherry aromas; deep, rich, concentrated cherry flavors with earthy notes, spicy oak, good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and intense, this Pinot has many layers of flavor and a silky texture.

2003 Ridgecrest Pinot Noir

92 *Pinot Report*, December 15, 2005 Intense, rich aromas of black cherry, berry, chocolate, and earth; rich black cherry and berry flavors, juicy fruit, spicy oak with some chocolate notes; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot is rich and delicious, with forward fruit but layers and layers of complexity beneath it.

2003 Stoller Vineyards Pinot Noir

94 *Pinot Report*, December 15, 2005 Deep and rich with beautiful cherry and berry fruit, complex earthy and forest floor notes; silky texture, good structure and balance; long finish. Very nicely integrated—delicious complex flavors and terrific balance...

2003 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir

93 *Pinot Report*, December 15, 2005 Rich, forward spicy, cherry aromas with complexing earthy notes; bright and forward cherry and berry fruit, very nice underlying earthy notes, sweet oak, good structure and balance; long finish.

90 *Wine Enthusiast*, May 2006, **Paul Gregutt** Editor's Choice. A beautiful wine, exceptionally smooth, supple and silky. It has youthful spice and fine, mixed red fruit and berry flavors.

The Oregonian, October 16, 2005, "Vintage Isn't Everything, but It's a Lot," **Matt Kramer** Some winemakers failed the 2003 test...Yet others created superb pinot noirs, indeed some of the best Oregon has produced...**Chehalem 3 Vineyard** is exceptionally ripe-tasting, dense and rich... one of the best of the 2003 vintage so far. It delivers a lot of pleasure allied to real character.

2003 Cerise

The Kansas City Star, February 8, 2006, "Grape Escape," **Doug Frost**

So completely charming as to bowl me over. Any lover of red wines, as long as he or she is not wedded to pure power, should enjoy a happy affair with this redhead.

2004 Reserve Pinot Gris

90 *Wine Enthusiast*, February 2006, **Paul Gregutt** Thick, weighty and ripe, with unctuous pear and stone fruit flavors. It's blended from the three estate vineyards—Ridgecrest, Stoller and Corral Creek. The result? A classic Willamette Valley Pinot Gris, creamy...with lively spice.

2003 & 2004 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris

Wine & Spirits, April 2006

One of the top 10 Restaurant Pinot Gris, as listed in *Wine & Spirits* 17th Annual Restaurant Poll.

2004 Reserve Dry Riesling

89 *Wine Spectator*, April 30, 2006, **Harvey Steiman**

Dry and refreshing, a lively mouthful of delicate green apple, peach, floral and citrus flavors, a classic Riesling profile, destined to get fleshier as the wine ages.

89 *Wine Enthusiast*, May 2006, **Paul Gregutt**

For those who love the austere, steel and stone flavors of bone-dry Riesling, this will be a welcome discovery. It has plenty of power, citrus rind flavors of fruit and skin, a persistent minerality and a clean, fresh finish.

The Oregonian, March 14, 2006, "The Next Big Thing...", **Cole Danehower**

Oregon's...drier, more complex rieslings are beginning to attract a small but devoted following.

2004 Reserve Dry Riesling: Classically dry and weighty, with lime, ginger and white fruits. 🍷

🍷 For more reviews on our wines, visit chehalemwines.com.



NEW RELEASES

IT'S ALWAYS EXCITING TO RELEASE the first wines of the last harvest. Here are my notes for these wines as we bottle the 2005 whites and awaken the 2004 reds we bottled last fall:

2005 Pinot Gris Brilliantly bright wine with pale chartreuse hue. Ginger, melon, white blossom, and talc aromatics, with suggestions of tart green apples and hard pears. Flavors extend from the aromas, with additional juicy apricot breadth and richness. Great balance with the best acid structure seen in many years and capable of aging for many years. As good as we've ever done, with perfect ripeness, cool vintage acidity, and a yield as little as 1.0 tons per acre. Ouch for us, kisses for you.

2005 INOX™ Chardonnay We're now in a groove with this very popular Dijon clone Chardonnay, made without oak, ML, or sugar. Lush, "Juicy Fruit" nose (a marker for Dijon clones), showing white and yellow fruit, including peach and pear. Aromatic white blossoms of jasmine or gardenia, all richly formed, with balance, great acidity, and ripeness. There's firmness for aging and hints of grapefruit, Caribbean ginger ale, and mineral flavors that will expand to greater complexity in the future.

2005 Dry Riesling Reserve The classic style of bone-dry Riesling we always make, only made more knife-edged in acidity. Platinum hue, with aromatics of white fruit, spiciness, and white blossoms that will open fully with time. The bright, cutting acidity and mineral elements contrast with a rich weight on the palate, complex peach undertones, and an extremely long finish. Wait until it gets some age. You may even want to try it in your dotage.

2004 Cerise™ Possibly the best Cerise™ we've made, with the dark, purple, firm and fruit-driven characteristics of great Gamay Noir, but complexly done. Pepper, some new leather, blue fruit, plums, spices wide-ranging through clove and cinnamon in aroma and on the palate. A dried chukar cherry flavor and sweetness with a slight accent of sourness and pepper in the finish. Well balanced, tart, and a great value as our least expensive red wine.

2004 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir It's not surprising that this is a lovely wine. With crop yields as low as 1.5 tons per acre and a cool, long ripening finish to a warm start, we were able to retain acidity rather than burn it away in the last days, but finished without disease and with full ripeness. Bright red raspberry fruit on the nose and palate, great spice, a sweet cherry finish, and very fine tannin silk on the palate. Exceptionally good balance, with lushness, sappy fruit, and a long finish. Exceptional purity. Similar in many ways to our 1998 3 Vineyard. Very little, very pretty, very soon gone.

2004 Corral Creek Pinot Noir Bright, light-to-moderate garnet color. In the style of most Corral Creek Pinots, with dusty red fruit, stone or mineral nose, perfect balance, and an austere understatement that is its signature. Firmness, with bacon and wood elements, red and yellow cherries midpalate, and sweet red cherry on the finish. There is an interesting mix of austerity and acidity, strung on a ribbon of velour. 🍷



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

HEARTY WELCOMES AND GOODBYES

This year we have welcomed new members of the Chehalem family and said thank you to some striking out for new adventures:

David Zurowski assumes National Sales Manager responsibilities, after years in winery, distributor, and resort roles in CA and AZ.

Heather Belt joins the Direct Marketing team, focusing on communications for all of sales, with a background in publishing.

Kelly Karr, a heart of the operation for nine years and the spirit with which many of you identify Chehalem, has struck out for new challenges and shorter commutes. We wouldn't be where we are today without her.

Anna Campbell, a biologist with family roots in the Oregon business at Elk Cove, now assists Mike Eyres as our Cellarmaster.

Michael Davies, who left winery and vineyard roles to pursue personal projects, is expecting a child in May. Always creating, Michael!

FREE SHIPPING! Take advantage of FREE SHIPPING for case orders shipped FedEx ground anywhere in the U.S. until May 31st. You won't get free shipping again until October.

MEMORIAL DAY OPEN HOUSE

May 27-29, 2006. 15% case discount on new releases this weekend only! Hours are Saturday-Monday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. \$10 fee includes wine tasting and assorted appetizers. FREE for Tasting Panel members.

ANNUAL TASTING PANEL DAY

July 8, 2006. This is our day to celebrate with all the members of our Tasting Panel. Mark your calendars and watch the mail for your invitation. For details, e-mail Caroline at carolinr@chehalemwines.com.

CHEHALEM ART SHOW *August 19-20, 2006.* Our most popular summer event. Visit some old favorites as well as some new artists this year and help us toast new releases. Invitations will be sent out before the show. 🍷