

CHEHALEM

2009 RIDGECREST VINEYARDS PINOT NOIR

The Wine

This wine is the oldest of the four vineyard-designated Pinot Noirs we produce. Chehalem has made a Ridgecrest Vineyards Pinot Noir since its first release in 1990, with selected barrels going to an upper-end elegant Reserve from Ridgecrest since 1994, and any not measuring up to this standard being designated 3 Vineyard. It is characteristically brawny, briery, dusty black-fruited, and occasionally currant or cassis, all hallmarks of Ribbon Ridge wines. Deep, sweet fruit has been balanced with fine tannin structure, which, with good acidic structure, gives good ageability.

The Vineyard

Our oldest estate vineyard block, Ridgecrest is a 55-acre vineyard on a 176-acre property. Beginning in 1980, this site pioneered grapegrowing on Ribbon Ridge, a small ridge on the western end of the Chehalem Range. Soils are Willakenzie, a transition soil series exhibiting characteristics of both volcanic and sedimentary underlying structures, marine sediment being predominant. Supple black cherry and blackberry fruits are characteristic of Ridgecrest Vineyards and the Willakenzie soil series. Excellent acidity and a finesseful texture and finish are hallmarks of the vineyard site, being relatively high in elevation, mature in vine age, and deeply rooted. Very ageable wines.

The Vintage

The 2009 vintage may be one of the best, with nice balance in all ways for both reds and whites—very good quality and yields as well as good ripeness and acids. The closest vintage in memory might be 2002. It was the type of vintage to satisfy winemakers AND accountants, with yields in the 2.5–3 tons/acre average this year, compared to 2–2.5 in normal years, and with high quality demanding only patience awaiting flavor development. Fruitfulness caused some problems early on, with large berries and full clusters pushing off berries in the cluster, allowing early-harvested blocks to develop botrytis and require sorting. Later blocks were pristine and, assuming patience (and if nothing else, we're patient!) to await flavor development rather than picking on simple analytical numbers like TA and brix, will be as good as any wines we've made, especially for Pinot Noir.

STATS

Harvest Data:	Harvested 10/9–10/12/2009 @ 24.3-25.6 brix, 3.27-3.39 pH, and 5.4-6.1 g/L TA, from 1.4–2.3 tons per acre cropload.
Fermentation:	15-18 days total fermentation with 9-11 days pre-maceration, all native ferments, with an average of 33% whole cluster
Cooperage/Aging:	Aged for 11 months in French oak barrels with 52% new, 36% one-year prior use, and 12% 2-year prior use
Clonal Selection:	Pommard (64%) and Wadenswil (36%)
Bottling:	Crossflow filtered; bottled 9/21/2010
Bottling Analyses:	12.9% Alcohol, 3.62 pH, 5.9 g/L TA
Cases Produced:	577 cases
Suggested Retail:	\$48
Release Date:	October 2011

• Winemaker's Comments

This wine has spice and intensity across the board. Anywhere from licorice, saffron and rootbeer aromas to allspice, clove, cracked black pepper and juniper berry. Fruit and acid are abundant, encompassing pie cherries and black currants, dusty blackberry, a core of fruit sweetness, and racy acid. The color is deep black-red and brooding, very tight-knit and complex tannins, surely able to age for another 25 years in bottle to commemorate this 25th harvest anniversary wine from a very special vineyard.