



Clones Matter

What is a clone? At its most basic, a clone is a separate organism genetically identical to its predecessor. Viticulturally, a clone is a plant that has been reproduced without a seed, directly from a bud or a shoot. This asexual method guarantees the offspring will be biologically identical to the parent with the same characteristics.

Why do clones matter? Aside from terroir—the indisputably unique sense of place expressed in well-made wines clonal selection can be one of the most expressive elements in Pinot Noir. Experts in the wine industry have always believed and have since demonstrated that clonal diversity is the right approach for winegrowers, as each clone contributes a different element to wine complexity. Creating wines that explore and reflect the specific qualities of the clones from which they are made also lies at the heart of WillaKenzie Estate’s philosophy.

PINOT NOIR CLONES IN OREGON

The Early Days

When Oregonians planted Pinot Noir in the mid 1960s, their selection was limited to two traditional clones: Wädenswil and Pommard. Over the years, new clones were developed in France and at UC Davis to address disease problems and later to isolate vineyard characteristics such as early ripening, open clusters, and small berries. The major efforts were led by Dr. Raymond Bernard at the University of Dijon in France. His first selections were simply known by their numbers, i.e. “115” or “777,” and eventually became known as “New” or “Dijon” clones. These clones tend to ripen earlier and have smaller berries with a higher skin-to-juice ratio, which results in more intense flavors in the wines (see Clones Matter.pdf).

Reaching for Diversity

WillaKenzie Estate was one of the first Oregon wineries to embark on a systematic program to plant not only the traditional, but also all the new Dijon clones of Pinot Noir. There are more than 11 different clones of Pinot Noir in our vineyards. As a result, we have achieved an unprecedented level of diversity and complexity in our wines. In addition, we have planted more than 9 clones for the other varieties planted across our estate. These include true clones of Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc from the Alsace region of France, Gamay Noir clones from Beaujolais, and Chardonnay Dijon Clones 76 and 96.

What We Learned from Clones

Each clone has something different to contribute and is affected differently by the vineyard site. Together, clonal diversity combined with our variety of terroirs allows us to create wines that are unique in flavor and character.

General Characteristics of each Clone

Dijon Clone 113: Naturally high yielding, very fruitful, not much shattering, early ripening. Classic blend of plum, cherry, and raspberry fruits with a cedar and pepper finish. Known for elegant aromatics.



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Clones Matter Cont.

Dijon Clone 114: Lower yielding, vigor and vegetative growth can vary greatly from year to year, early ripening. Floral notes and berry, cherry, and dark plum, fruit-driven spicy pinot.

Dijon Clone 115: Naturally high yielding, significantly more shattering, early ripening. Dusty nose with primarily red and dried fruits, earthy notes, and a butterscotch and black pepper finish.

Pommard UCD 4: Consistent from year to year, balanced vigor, would produce high yields if not managed, very fruitful, later ripening. Capable of being used alone (see Alette Pinot Noir) or as a component of a blend. Known for spice and velvety texture.

Pommard Erath: More vigor variation from year to year, smaller clusters, ripens earlier.

Wädenswil UCD 2A: High yielding if not managed, slow and later ripening, almost always the last picked, resistant to botrytis and powdery mildew, best grapes in wet years. High-toned fruit and aromatics make it a good component for adding elegance to blends.

Wädenswil Lett: Lower yields than UDC 2A, much earlier ripening.

Dijon Clone 667: Lower yielding, smaller clusters, harder to position the shoots, later ripening. In Oregon takes many years (7+) to produce very high quality fruit

Dijon Clone 777: Most site dependent. The vegetative growth, yields, cluster size are deeply influenced by the location, early ripening. Noted for fleshy, black-fruited wines with tropical notes.

Dijon Clone 828: Straight, upright shoots, larger clusters. Although the clusters are larger they are loose and weigh less. Tends to ripen later.

Swan Clone: The origin of this clone is clouded in mystery; some think it came from the Romanée-Conti vineyards. It was brought to the United States by Joseph Swan and originally planted in the Russian River Valley. It produces bright and rich Pinot Noir.

To find more information on WillaKenzie Estate, please visit the Trade Toolkit section of our website at: www.willakenzie.com/trade/toolkit