

2015 Division-Villages “Méthode Carbonique” Pinot Noir

Methven Family Vineyards - Eola Amity Hills AVA
(85%) & Johan Vineyards –Willamette Valley
(15%)

Willamette Valley AVA

The Willamette Valley is typically one of the coolest and wettest major wine growing regions in the U.S, which clearly favors the delicate, but seemingly boundless potential of the Pinot Noir grape that seems to show its best on the fringes of suitable grape farming. 2015 was a record setting warm vintage throughout the Pacific Northwest, but was especially noticeable in the Willamette Valley. In a hot and dry year like 2015, we worked very hard to contain vigor and slow down maturity to develop the desired complex phenolic maturity without taking on too much sugar and a corresponding decrease in natural acidity.

We fell hard for the carbonic maceration fermentation technique while learning about and making wine in the Beaujolais region and began experimenting with the technique with Pinot Noir from Methven Family Vineyards in 2012. Carbonic Maceration involves fermenting the wines fully on the stems in a closed vessel that is initially inundated with carbon dioxide that macerates the grape skins by mostly using the CO₂ to extract color, phenolics and flavors (think what happens to your skin when soaked in warm water for long periods) versus the traditional red fermentation practices involving pulverization and recirculation.

As such, with a desire for a fresh Pinot Noir with vibrancy, we farmed this specific block more like a crisp white varietal and picked the Pinot Noir block quite early in 2015. For the carbonic fermentation, we created a pied de cuve (early native ferment) with a small amount of Methven grapes to build a strong yeast population from hopefully the native flora, which was added after a few days of carbon dioxide enrichment to one of our concrete closed top vats. As is usual with our carbonic fermentations in concrete, the temperature is slow to rise and the must takes a bit time to warm up and get going. Ultimately the ferment lasted about 25 days and the ferment was pressed off in early October to be returned to the concrete vat for ageing. As the tank is not completely full with the mass of the skins and stems gone, we used wine from our whole cluster Johan Vineyards ferment to top up the tank.

The result of our “Méthode Carbonique” Pinot Noir was a deliciously fruity and vibrant wine with mineral intensity that mellows and refines the intense fruity tones. Compared to years past, this 2015 wine has a bit more punch a clearly demonstrates strawberries and licorice on nose. The palate is balanced at 12.5% alcohol and mineral rich with calcium chalkiness from the concrete ageing against a fruit smorgasbord of freeze dried strawberries and thyme. The wine is medium bodied and very smooth (especially for the vintage), and has a beautiful garnet color. This wine is drinking very well at the moment in it's early youth, but likely continue to evolve over the coming months and hopefully even years.

Alc 12.3%, 250 cases produced

