

2017 Belle Pente Chardonnay Willamette Valley

Belle Pente Vineyards is a bucolic site that is farmed with both organic and biodynamic approaches. As the vineyard's name suggests, the "beautiful slope" is perfectly situated in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA, with a southwestern aspect that is truly complementary to Burgundian varieties. Our Chardonnay from Belle Pente is treated with fastidious yet gentle care. After gently pressing, the wine is barrel-fermented and allowed to finish, integrate, and soften over two vintages, without stirring the lees, to evoke a body and finish not unlike a traditional Chablis. The 2017 vintage is a chameleon. Initially, notes of orange peel citrus and spice suggest a decadent wine, but these quickly give way to cool and clean aromas of honeysuckle, wintergreen, and crushed oyster shell. It's reminiscent of a top-flight premier cru Chablis with bright, focused acidity supporting green apple and tangerine flavors. To our surprise, the wine is also showing a level of dissolved CO₂ that is high enough that the wine comes across spritzy. It's about the level of bubbles similar to a Basque txakoli. Fortunately, there is a lot of precedent in the history of wine for Chardonnay to have bubbles (we're looking at you Champagne) so we thought we would laud this happy accident!

Technical Information

Grape Varietals: 100% Chardonnay

Vineyard: Belle Pente Vineyards

Final pH: 3.49

Final TA: 6.0 g/L

Alc. By Vol.: 13%

Winemaking: Gently pressed and settled off gross lees, then racked into several neutral French oak barrels, and a once-used 500L puncheon.

There, the wine is barrel-fermented with native yeasts, and subsequently completes malolactic fermentation naturally. The Chardonnay is never stirred (i.e. batonnage), but remains on fine lees until time to bottle. This helps to avoid "creamy" notes while utilizing the lees to protect the wine's character. No sulfur is used at the crush pad; minimal sulfur is added at MLF completion, and just before bottling. This wine is allowed to age for 22 months. Unfined and unfiltered.

