

# Phelps Creek

## V I N E Y A R D S

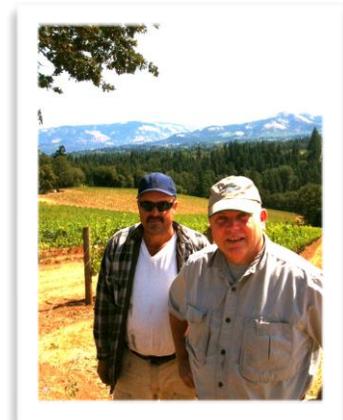
### A Philosophy from Vine to Wine



The team of Phelps Creek led by Founder/Winegrower Robert Morus and Winemaker Alexandrine Roy of Gevrey-Chambertin, shares a joint commitment to produce food friendly wines clearly reflective of our unique site. The key component to our approach combines low yield and restrained ripeness in the field, with a minimalist, yet attentive approach in the winery.

The target yield for our vines typically produces under two tons per acre. The natural fruit-set could be as much as four tons per acre. Through pruning, shoot removal, cluster removal and "green-harvest" we reduce plant load. The aim is to balance the vines in individual seasons, adjusting for the early and projected heat accumulation of a vintage. Some years we crop a little higher in order to extend the "hang time" on the vine. Experience teaches that greater flavor character develops by stretching the season. Unlike Burgundy, Oregon does not restrict the ripeness of the grapes. Therefore it takes a commitment to balance, in many years, to achieve ripe fruit while retaining natural acidity.

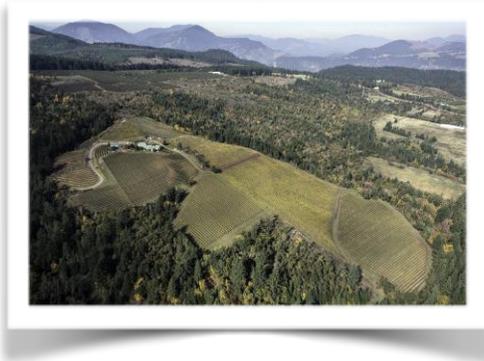
Our 30 acres of estate vines are maintained with utmost dedication by a crew led by Phelps Creek's Foreman of over 20 years, Irineo Magana. We take a sustainable approach in combating vineyard disease and incorporate Integrated Pest Management to control spider mites with predator mites and wasps. As an aid to this end, we alternate rows mowed in order to keep a flowering cover crop growing underneath the vines--an environment conducive to "good bug" populations. The plants are trellised using the Vertical Shoot Positioning method. Our fruit wire is typically set at 36" above the soil. A drip line is set 6" above the ground, but plants are generally not irrigated beyond the initial first three establishment years.



Pruning for the season begins in December. Our Foreman leads a team of three as they remove the last season's previous canes, including the growth tied to the wire after the previous season. Thus canned pruned, the coming Spring shoots will begin from buds spread along canes tied to the wire. Each year the fruiting canes are replaced. As the season progresses, suckering, shoot removal, tucking, leaf removal, hedging and harvest are all done by hand. In any given season, each plant is tended by a worker's fingers at least twelve times. We thin the shoots in the Spring to 20 per plant. Older plants could send off 15 shoots just in the head area alone! Later the crew makes another pass through the vineyard snipping infant clusters down to 20-30 per plant depending on the age of the vine, vigor of the

section and heat of the season. The two steps of shoot removal and cluster removal hold the greatest impact on yield per acre. Our goal is to dramatically reduce yield in order to increase fruit quality, within the constraints of economic viability.

## The Land, Soil and Climate



The Phelps Creek estate site is located on the west hills of the Hood River Valley, Oregon, as part of the Columbia Gorge American Viticultural Area (AVA). The Columbia Gorge AVA is distinctive in that it encompasses both the states of Washington and Oregon along the Columbia River. Only seven wine districts within the USA extend their boundaries over multiple states. Situated on the eastern side of the Cascade Range of mountains, the Columbia Gorge AVA witnesses a dramatic change in climate as one proceeds from its western boundary to the east. On the estate annual rain is typically 36 inches.

Rainfall diminishes and heat units rise rapidly as one proceeds eastward. The Phelps Creek estate is the western vineyard on the Oregon side of the district. The Hood River Valley is perfectly suited for cool weather varieties as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Whereas only 20 miles to the east, still within the district, growers raise beautiful Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel. Hence, one unifying characteristic of the Columbia Gorge AVA is the diversity of micro-climates and appropriate plantings.

In spite of Oregon's damp reputation, the state is virtually dry between the months of July and October. This holds in great contrast to the weather in Burgundy where a significant portion of their annual rain comes in the form of Summer thunderstorms with the potential for devastating hail. This difference between the two great Pinot Noir regions holds significance beyond nice conditions for farming. Every harvest the Burgundian faces the reality that their clusters were at some point damaged during the season and could be rotting within. Collectively they accommodate this issue by restricting harvest dates and potential alcohol development. It is safer for the Burgundian to harvest earlier and modify winemaking technique.

In the new world, winegrowers do not face regulatory restrictions on fruit ripeness. The temptation therefore is to extend the time on the vine in order to achieve greater seed ripeness and manage tannins in the subsequent fermentation. Dark brown seeds give greater resistant to tannin extraction when confronting alcohol in fermentation. Our commitment to balanced wine restraints any desire to let the fruit hang to maximum ripeness.

The estate holds steep aspects of east through south. The original, oldest Pinot Noir planting were to the Pommard Clone and sited in a North/South orientation with significant eastern side slope. These vines were spaced 10 feet between rows and four feet between plants. The "wide" spacing was designed to accommodate tractor operation and slippage on the side slope. Later plantings of Pinot Noir incorporated Dijon



115 and Dijon 777 clones grafted to rootstock 3304. The newer blocks of Pinot Noir run truer up and down the hillside, allowing a tighter spacing of 8 feet between rows and 4 feet between plant. Oldest planting were therefore 1089 plants per acre, while newer blocks are over 1300 plants per acre.

The Phelps Creek estate specifically lays at roughly 900-1200 feet elevation in the rain shadow of Mt. Defiance, an ancient extinct cinder cone within the Cascade Range. The soils of the estate are officially listed by the United States Geological Survey as Oak Grove Loam. The soil is comprised of aging of lava flow from vents of Mt. Defiance. Deep and rock free, the soil is modest in vigor and significant in clay structure. A tiny layer of loess, dust remnants of the Missoula Floods, coats the upper crust of the underlying loam. The prehistoric floods, greatest known in geological history, cut the Columbia River through the Cascade Range to the Pacific Ocean.

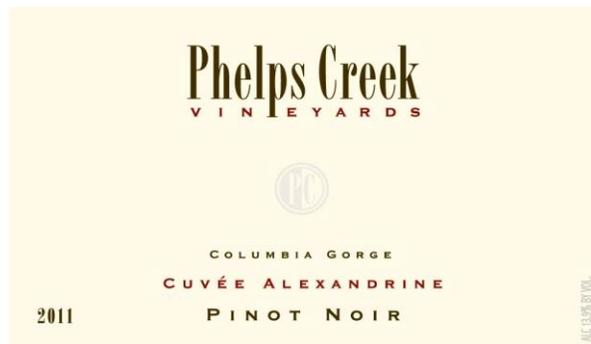
## Winemaking Technique



In the winery, Alexandrine advocates a minimalist approach. She insists on spontaneous fermentation with native yeast emanating from the grapes or winery. The goal is to provide a maximum expression of the terroir. We ferment in vats holding 3000 pounds. Typically all the clusters undergo de-stemming. However, we often experiment with several fermenters incorporating 20% whole cluster fruit. Punch down or pump over regimen depends on the vintage. In cooler years the must is saignee for concentration.

The Pinot Noir is racked and returned to barrel once in March. Bottling is typically in September which leads to a total period in

barrel of 10 month. Barrel selection is 100% French, with the predominate choice Cadus Medium Plus toast from Allier or Tronçais. The "Cuvee Alexandrine" is a barrel selection from the annual production of approximately 80 barrels of estate Pinot Noir. In July our winemaking team samples all barrels within the cellar. Alexandrine then makes her final selection of 10 barrels which she considers the finest assemblage. In most vintages the final blend results in approximately 25% new barrels, dominantly Pommard clone with some Dijon 115 and 777 clones as components. The barrels not selected for the Cuvee Alexandrine comprise our "Columbia Gorge" bottling. Typical harvest occurs during the second week in October. Target numbers: Brix 23.5-24.0, total acidity .65+ pH 3.23-3.35 Beyond flavor development, we look for ripe, brown seeds and suppleness in skins.



## Recent Vintages

**2009** The warmest growing season in Oregon's modern wine growing history. Deep, lush wines provided immediate crowd appeal, yet initially minimized site characteristics. With time in bottle the layers of the land have emerged.

**2010** Coolest season in Oregon since 2007. Beautiful October weather reassured nervous growers. Wines display classic varietal character and influence of estate's volcanic soil. Drinking beautifully in the present.

**2011** The cool season record established in 2010 was smashed in 2011. The wines are refreshing in vitality, and vivid in the fruit aromatics. The limited heat drove us to clip off the underripe shoulders of individual clusters. We expect these wines to cellar nicely for another decade.

**2012** The season began wet and cool severely affecting fruit set. But after limiting the yield, nature provided a perfect growing season with an abundance of moderate summer heat and lingering dry weather in the Fall. Lush, voluptuous wines, loved by all for their immediate pleasures. Some question the age-ability of the vintage, without denying the sultry temptation of each bottle today. New Release.

**2013** An early, dry Spring evolved into an endless Summer of moderate heat. The vines raced to a harvest unusually early harvest in September. The remnants of a Pacific typhoon became an uninvited guest to Oregon's harvest party. PCV vines on the lee side of the Cascades "battered down the hatches" and emerged in fine condition. A beautifully balanced structure reveals itself in the glass. Unreleased.

