



Background—Esteemed in Collio and Alto Adige, tolerated in Alsace, abused in California, Pinot blanc has found an important home in Oregon. Our climate and soils, which have made Oregon Pinot noir and Pinot gris famous, also work well for Pinot blanc, giving us wines that are racy yet bold in character. And certainly, authentic Pinot blanc probably wouldn't exist in the U.S. at all if David Adelsheim hadn't facilitated the importation of true clones of this variety from Alsace in 1976. Thus, Adelsheim Vineyard got in on this particular game early – our 1989 Pinot blanc was Oregon's second. A score of Oregon wineries have followed.

Growing Season— Even in March of 2003, we saw some signs that it would be an early year. Although winter was as rainy as usual, spring was warm enough that bud-break occurred around Easter, and bloom occurred in mid-June. The beautiful weather at that time gave us a third year in a row with an abundant crop, so it took two passes to thin the crop level enough that we were assured an intense wine. Then the last two months of summer were very warm indeed, so everything seemed to happen at once at harvest. We picked the 11 tons of Pinot blanc on October 1st, a good two weeks earlier than usual.

Vineyards—With each year, we get more and more entranced by the Pinot blanc block which we planted in 1993 in our estate Bryan Creek Vineyard. Across the road from our original Quarter Mile Lane site, this section has a relatively high elevation (700-800 feet above sea level) but there is some compensation to be found in its steep slope and southwest exposure. It has deep clay-loam soils of basaltic origin, which insure that the vine roots find water even in dry years.

Winemaking—In a cool climate, production of the finest white wines requires not only optimum grape ripeness but gentle, minimal handling of the fruit during the winemaking process as well. Following a light, whole-cluster pressing in our computer-controlled, membrane press to separate the juice from the skins as quickly as possible, the juice was settled for approximately 24 hours to achieve greater clarity. Inoculated with a cultured yeast from Bordeaux to enhance natural varietal aromas, the wine underwent a slow, cool fermentation in stainless steel tanks (and 19% in older neutral casks) to preserve its bright, nuanced fruit. Winemaker Dave Paige also allowed ½ the wine to go through malo-lactic fermentation to gain roundness and body. Having decided to not use any of the press wine in this vintage's blend, he then employed a light filtration, and bottled the wine in mid-March 2004.

The Wine—This 2003 bottling is a worthy member of our line of vivacious white wines. It shows lovely mineral, lemon and casaba melon fruit, bright acidity and a rich, almost sweet mouth feel (though there's no residual sugar). Wonderful on its own as an apéritif, it is also an ideal accompaniment to shellfish and quiches, and might be the perfect antidote to humidity.

The Label—We've given a new look to our 15th bottling of this variety. As part of our "intriguing white wines" program, we've decided to feature the same label drawing as we have previously presented on our Tocai Friulano and our Deglacé dessert-style Pinot noir, to help tie the category together. It was drawn by Bob Bredemeyer. Additionally, we've switched to an elegant flute-shaped bottle to emphasize the idea that one should revel in the wine's exciting aromatics as well as its superlative flavors.

Production — In 2003, we produced 474 cases of our Oregon Pinot Blanc.