

## ***Resonance Vineyard: Fabled Growers Release Their First Wine***

by Drew Stofflet, Time Out Wine Critic  
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For more than 20 years, Kevin and Carla Chambers have been growing pinot noir grapes on their Resonance Vineyard, just west of Carlton in the Yamhill-Carlton district of Oregon's famous Willamette Valley. Their vineyard gained a reputation as one of the best sites in Oregon and their fruit was highly sought after. I became familiar with Sineann's Resonance release, as well as Lemelson's: Oregon pinot noir big on flavors, complexity and richness, while maintaining the utmost in purity and cleanness.

I recently became more intimate with producers Andrew Rich and Scott Paul, vintners working at the unique Carlton Winemaker's Studio. Jessie Kipp, owner of Ella, managed the tasting room at the co-op, where the winemakers purchase their fruit from local growers and share all of the winemaking facilities. It's no surprise that most of the fruit for these rare and stunning wines came from the Chambers' Resonance Vineyard.

Kevin and Carla attended a biodynamic farming seminar in Grand Junction in April put together by Bill Musgnung, a longtime winemaker in the Willamette Valley who has recently relocated to Colorado to pursue the pinot noir craft. Through connections and friendship made through writing this column, we hosted the Chambers at our VinAspen table at this year's Aspen Food and Wine Classic. With them, they presented their first releases as farmers, growers and winemakers: the 2006 Yamhill-Carlton pinot noir and a beautiful white called G3, based on gewürztraminer.

The Chambers' reputation of having one of the best sites comes from the unique climate of the Carlton area, combining the Willamette's well-known maritime coolness and wetness with more continental aspects of sun, heat and dryness. This produces fruit of extraordinary richness, producing wines with great length and overall balance.

It is the Chambers' expertise of farming and knowledge of biodynamic farming practices that have set them apart from others and made them leaders in this "new" method of intensely working the land. The entire 32-acre farm, with about 20 acres of vines, has been Demeter-certified as biodynamic. For the Chambers, this means obvious features such as a wetland with ponds and a thriving biodiversity including wildlife and cover crops. They employ the lesser-known aspects of biodynamic farming, such as creating soil preps using valerian, oak bark, yarrow, horsetail, chamomile and stinging nettle - strong medicinal plants that aid in compost regulation and increased amounts of trace minerals in the soil, those that are often lacking or missing altogether in most soils. Compost is spread throughout the vineyards and contains another key element, horn silica, which is created by packing a cow's horn full of manure and burying it until it ferments, producing an enzymatic and microbially charged compost additive for the soil. Lastly, biodynamic farmers religiously follow a planting and harvesting calendar, which corresponds with celestial cycles.

It has become more widely accepted that biodynamic practices result in more vibrant fruit - both clean and pure. A huge determining factor in the purity of the Resonance fruit is that the Pommard vines are grown on their own rootstock. This is rare, because of the phylloxera louse, which has plagued California's vines and almost ruined the French wine industry. The louse gets into the roots and destroys the vines. As biodynamic farming uses no chemical pesticides, own-rooted vines seem risky. The Chambers have found that the strength of the plants which were grown and tended to biodynamically are sufficient to resist pests and diseases like phylloxera, and the resulting fruit is far superior to that of grafted vines, full of its original purity.

And it was clear to me that this wine displayed that to its core. The grapes were harvested on two days, according to the biodynamic harvesting calendar. A hot spell increased sugar and ripeness in the fruit, and in hindsight Kevin said he would have liked to harvest five days earlier. Purified and dynamically charged water was added to the fermentation tanks at the Carlton Winemaker's Studio to keep alcohol levels around 14 percent. A small amount of gewürztraminer was blended with the pinot noir to increase the aromatic quality of the wine, and it was aged in two-thirds new French oak from Beaune, with a medium to heavy toast.

The result is a wine that is both light and rich, delicate and full-bodied: aromatic on the top and long to finish, with flavors of sweet cherry, blackberry and notes of clove and cedar. The wine draws on new world presentations of richness and higher alcohol but crafty winemaking has created a wonderfully balanced and highly nuanced pinot noir that will please now and most likely age for 15 years. This should be a test for their chosen new bottle enclosure, a classy glass stopper that is both elegant and recyclable. Expect many more stunning releases from the Chambers in upcoming vintages. Cheers! Remember, wine reveals truth.

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