



## WILLAMETTE VALLEY WINE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Willamette Valley Chardonnay Earns Historic Perfect Score from *Decanter*

PORTLAND, Ore. (August 14, 2025)—Oregon has earned its first-ever perfect 100-point score from [Decanter](#), one of the world’s most influential wine publications, awarded to the 2023 Bethel Heights The High Wire Chardonnay from the Willamette Valley’s nested Eola-Amity Hills AVA. Crafted by Bethel Heights co-owner and winemaker Ben Casteel, it is, to date, the only 2023-vintage Chardonnay in the world to receive a perfect score from *Decanter*, with the review written by esteemed North American Editor Clive Pursehouse.

“I’m of the opinion that perhaps the 100-point score is too freely given, and frankly, I wasn’t sure that I’d ever be on the delivering end of the triple-digit number in my role at *Decanter*,” said Pursehouse. “I had given three 99pt scores, all to Oregon Pinot Noirs, from Abbott Claim, most recently Martin Woods and a 2018 from White Rose Estate. These were three incredible wines—among the best I’ve ever tasted. The High Wire was my last wine to taste on the day. I know that Ben Casteel is one of the Valley’s top winemakers (making him one of the country’s top winemakers) and certainly have given his wines high scores. As I tasted this wine, it seemed like the complexity never stopped. There are some great Chardonnays being made right now in Oregon, and many of them have some fairly heavy reduction, which I do love. This wine, though, had a clarity that some of those wines don’t have right out of the gate, in their youth. The layered complexity and nuance were allowed to shine; maybe it’s the Wente clone. Ben did a brilliant job layering fruit, minerality, and savoury depth, and the texture stole the show. I haven’t tasted a better wine.”

Long recognized for its world-class Pinot noir, the Willamette Valley is now seeing its Chardonnay capture the attention of critics and collectors alike—and for good reason. The region’s cool-climate growing conditions, with long daylight hours, crisp nights, and a gradual ripening curve, yield Chardonnays of exceptional freshness, layered texture, and age-worthy structure. Over the past

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decade, Willamette Valley Chardonnays have steadily earned top scores from leading critics, gained placements on prestigious wine lists, and secured recognition among the world's great Chardonnay regions.

“My family is overwhelmed and deeply grateful to *Decanter* and to Clive Pursehouse for this tremendous honor,” said Casteel. “It feels like a fitting and bittersweet bookend for our Wente Chardonnay clone, planted in 1977 and soon to be replanted this fall. When my family purchased the property in 1978, these vines were just a year old—fragile sticks in the ground. Ripening them was a challenge every vintage, spanning my late father’s entire career and the first eight years of mine. Over the years, they had every chance to replant with an earlier-ripening variety, but they chose patience. That patience is what brought us to this moment, 47 years later.”

While some wine drinkers still associate Chardonnay with a narrow set of styles—often shaped by other regions—the Willamette Valley is redefining perceptions. Known for its cool-climate elegance, the region produces Chardonnays with vibrant acidity, layered complexity, and a distinct sense of place. Interest is growing rapidly: since 2014, Chardonnay plantings in the Willamette Valley have more than doubled, reflecting both the variety’s potential here and the enthusiasm of winemakers committed to its expression.

Pursehouse added, “The story of this bottle, wrapped up in the name, the old vines, the work that Ben’s parents, his aunt and uncle did to establish both the Valley and the Eola-Amity Hills—that’s all a part of the beauty of this wine, in my opinion. It’s a wine that speaks to that family’s legacy and importance. The challenges of the Wente clone early on, and the sweet spot that it is clearly sitting in now, all of that background context—it all came together to make what is, in my opinion, a perfect bottle of Oregon Chardonnay. And if you know what I think about the Willamette Valley and its Chardonnay, then you know it doesn’t get much better than that where I’m concerned.”

The wine will be available to the general public beginning September 1, 2025, and can be purchased directly through the Bethel Heights website: [www.bethelheights.com](http://www.bethelheights.com). For more information on the Willamette Valley, its Chardonnay, and its world-class wine producers, visit [www.willamettewines.com](http://www.willamettewines.com).

**About Bethel Heights Vineyard** Established in 1977, Bethel Heights Vineyard is a pioneering, family-owned winery in Oregon’s Willamette Valley, in the nested Eola-Amity Hills AVA. Known for its cooling Pacific Ocean breezes funneled through the Van Duzer Corridor, the AVA produces wines with bright acidity, purity of fruit, and distinctive structure—hallmarks of Bethel Heights’ style. The winery is celebrated for its sustainably farmed estate vineyards, commitment to stewardship, and nearly five decades of crafting expressive, cool-climate wines. To learn more, visit [www.bethelheights.com](http://www.bethelheights.com).

**About Willamette Valley Wineries Association** The Willamette Valley Wineries Association (WVWA) is a nonprofit industry association dedicated to achieving recognition for Oregon’s acclaimed Willamette Valley as a premier Pinot noir-producing region. Currently, the WVWA has 375 members representing wineries, vineyards, industry, and hospitality businesses throughout the Willamette Valley region. To learn more about the Willamette Valley Wineries Association, visit [willamettewines.com](http://willamettewines.com).

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