

Beaux Frères Vineyard & Winery

By Josh Raynolds

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Mike Etzel told me that when he got started here, back in the late 1980's, he'd use "anything available to make the biggest, richest, inkiest and most kick-your-ass wine possible: enzymes, heavily toasted new oak, ridiculously low yields, whatever. But people change, and I've evolved, and so have our customers. We want to showcase what makes pinot unique, and that's power without massiveness, red fruit and not black, delicate and not inky. Basically, finesse." Etzel describes 2008 as a cross between 2007 and 2006, "with really good density but also freshness. The clusters and grapes were tiny so there's real structure, which will make them age really well." Etzel has immersed himself in biodynamic practices but believes that the most important move he has made in recent years is to move the wines as little as possible. "They sit for about 11 months in barrel on their gross lees and we move them with a Bulldog Pup [a gas pressure device that is the most gentle tool available for transferring wine from vessel to vessel] to preserve freshness. Because there's so little movement of the wines before bottling they really need a lot of air if you open them young." If you plan on drinking any of these '08s any time soon, Etzel advises opening them, pouring off a touch (to drink, of course) and recorking them to drink the following day, a regimen that I can vouch for here.

2008 Beaux Freres Vineyard & Winery Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 91

(\$50) Vivid medium red. Lively aromas of wild strawberry, raspberry, Asian spices and rose. Fresh and focused, with zesty red fruit and spice flavors and a supple, seamless texture. The finish repeats the tangy strawberry note and clings with impressive spicy tenacity. I really like this wine's purity. These grapes were sourced from the Zena Crown (49%), Shea (33%) and Amalie Roberts (18%) Vineyards.

2008 Beaux Freres Vineyard & Winery Pinot Noir The Beaux Freres 94 Vineyard Ribbon Ridge

(\$80) Bright red. Highly perfumed, seductive bouquet of black raspberry, cherry-cola, incense and dried rose, with a slow-mounting mineral element. Lively but strikingly concentrated as well, offering incisive red fruit and floral pastille flavors underscored by intense spice and mineral qualities. Really stains the palate and finishes with superb clarity and juicy, spicy raspberry and cherry notes. Etzel told me that a tiny bit of stems were used in this year's wine.

2008 Beaux Freres Vineyard & Winery Pinot Noir The Upper Terrace 92(+?) Ribbon Ridge

(\$90) Deep red with a bright rim. Deeper and darker in aroma and flavor than the other 2008s here, offering powerful cherry and black raspberry flavors, a hint of licorice and a chewy texture. The weightiest of this set and the most tannic as well, picking up sexy violet pastille and cola notes with aeration. This one will need the most patience of this year's releases but holds excellent promise. The Upper Terrace is planted to all Dijon clones, according to Etzel.