



LE GRAND CLOS
SINGLE-VINEYARD

2020
PINOT NOIR

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

The Le Grand Clos Pinot Noir hails from the 'artistic' 2020 vintage, in which the warm, dry harvest conditions allowed for unhurried, considered choices that ultimately respected the transparency of the local terroir and character of the year. Both Le

Grand Clos Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blocks happen to come from parcels on the western side of the Le Clos Jordanne vineyard: a happenstance of aspect and geology.

TASTING NOTES

With the Le Grand Clos terroir, one first senses a great brooding tension of fruit and longevity under a mantle of fine perfume: simply profound. This wine still has much to teach us about a specific sense of place, and of the potential ageability of Pinot Noir from the Niagara Peninsula's most august benchland terroirs.

As always, a gloss of reticent delicacy permeates the Le Grand Clos Pinot Noir, highlighting raspberry liqueur, wild strawberries, pomegranate seeds, fresh plum, and cloves. My wife Mary Delaney conjured a striking image, 'Imagine tasting the first spoonful of just-made, warm, red raspberry jam.' The polish and elegance on the palate allow the wine to wear its considerable

weight quite lightly, and to finish with a taut and chalky, glycerine-laden finesse, so fine and long. The Le Grand Clos parcel defines itself in juxtaposition to the Claystone Terrace, only several hundred metres away. The reluctant purity here is unbelievable: the terroir wants to be chalky-lean, but carries the regal breadth and weight of a Grand Vin with poise.

A further word on the common traits of the Le Grand Clos terroir, evident in both red and white versions: both display a very fine chalkiness – quite apart from their bracing acidity – that weaves throughout and informs, and refreshes the considerable weight and unctuous texture of the wines. Drinking Prime: From 2024-2032. Thomas Bachelder, winemaker.

VINE MANAGEMENT

All of our vineyards are farmed sustainably in order to preserve the natural balance of the vines and respect their terroir. We use traditional practices in the vineyard, which we feel helps maintain the quality of the fruit and its aromatic identity. Each parcel is treated individually according to its terroir specifics, and each vine is cared for by hand from pruning through to harvest.

At the start of the season, we begin by pruning, using a single or double Guyot system (depending on the spacing and the vine's vigour). We then tie down the canes to the fruiting wire. Following bud-break, we position each shoot by hand, removing lateral and shoulder spurs for better ventilation and better concentration on every single cluster. Just before veraison, we strip the leaves on the eastern side of the vine, exposing the cluster to more sun and airflow, which promotes healthy ripening and prevents disease

development (in wetter, more humid years, we remove the leaves on both the east and west sides of the vine; in hotter years we may also leaf-pull on the western side, although later, to prevent 'sunburn' of the grapes). At mid-veraison, we green harvest if we feel our crop is too large or if disease pressure is present. After veraison, we net the vineyard parcels at risk to protect our grapes from bird damage until harvest.

In terms of soil management, our goal is to nurture and maintain a natural level of microbiological life. We cultivate every other row and leave a selected cover crop in the remaining rows, which creates competition within the root system and allows the topsoil to remain loose and aerobic. Each year, we also break up the soil (deep-ripping) of every second row, in order to aerate the soil structure, and to help avoid compaction.



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GROWING SEASON & HARVEST

The year 2020 was a rare artistic vintage, a year in which sugar accumulation was slow, acid retention was good, and there was no rot present. One could wait for the perfect moment to make ripe wines that had great technical and flavour maturity, and spot on sugar and acid levels. A miracle vintage! The great wines we taste from 2020 will more likely be the fruit of artistic choices, and not just worry, happenstance, and intelligent compromise. Many people love Niagara's warm years: 2007, 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2018 for instance, but in the case of defining terroir through early-maturing grapes (grapes of Burgundian origin, amongst others), those years can be a bit round, a bit broad, oftentimes with what I like to call 'stressy' tannins, in an otherwise lovely, juicy, just slightly overripe wine. Did 2020 escape this problem? "Yes, largely!" After the last frost in late spring, from budbreak to harvest, we had a gloriously dry and warm summer and fall. Rainfall events came just when the vine needed them to continue development, notably, after such a long, dry, hot summer, the fairly regular rains came to the vines' rescue, but not so often that we had disease problems.

Harvest Dates: In Niagara, it is normal to start to pick Pinot Noir and Chardonnay anywhere from September 10th to the end of September. After the summer that the northern hemisphere collectively experienced in 2020 (Burgundy, for instance, completed most of their harvest in the month of August!), we worried that we in Niagara would be forced to pick screamingly early, and risk making "jam:" dark, concentrated but ultimately monolithic wines. It didn't happen, as blessedly, the nights got cooler into September, harvest was delayed, sugar development was slow, and acids were retained (likely due to the vines at least partially "shutting down" their photosynthetic activity in the hottest part of the summer). In the end, we picked on typical dates! Aside from the young-vine sites (namely, low-yielding and thus precocious), Niagara picked the grapes for sparkling wines a little

VITICULTURE & PRODUCT INFO

Trellising System	Vertical Shoot Positioning: Single and Double Guyot
Planting Density	5299 vines/ha (2145 vines/Ac)
VQA Sub-Appellation	Twenty Mile Bench
Alcohol	13.5 % Vol
pH	3.55
Residual Sugar	1.5 g/L
Total Acidity	6.2 g/L (expressed as Tartaric Acid)
Racking	Once, after full barrel ageing term, from barrel to vat.

later (!) than we thought we would, and the Pinots and Chardonnays (for still wines) were picked pretty much at the usual time. Thus, the cool nights of September and the summer's waning heat "rescued" the vintage from becoming a potentially "fruit bomb" vintage, and instead 2020 became a nearly perfect vintage in terms of sugar, acid and pristine fruit condition. *Thomas Bachelder, Winemaker*

"Growing degree days for 2020 were 1584 GDD and, although it was one of the warmer recent years, the coolness of the nights in September and October helped us retain natural acidity, and made for an outstanding, ageable vintage." *Gerald Klose, Vineyard Manager*



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WINEMAKING & ÉLEVAGE OF THE GRAND CLOS PINOT NOIR 2020

Before we bring Le Grand Clos Pinot Noir into the winery, we make sure the flavours are 'there,' and that the skins are thick, ripe and in good condition. We want to harvest grapes when the seeds are almost completely brown.

When needed, the Pinot Noir bunches are manually sorted on the vibrating table and then completely destemmed. After a short, cold maceration, letting the tanks warm up, the naturally occurring yeasts from the vineyard slowly start the fermentation. We believe indigenous yeasts make the most complete, textured, and complex wines.

After the fermentation, when the wine is fully dry, we leave the young wine on the skins for several days up to a week longer to extract more fully, yet delicately, all the aromas, finesse and complexity appropriate to the vintage and Le Grand Clos terroir. The wine naturally goes through malolactic fermentation and is then patiently aged in selected French oak barrels (typically 25% new) for 20-22 months to integrate both the tannins and the fruit

and to help push terroir to the forefront.

We repeatedly taste barrel by barrel to select only those that are truly representative of the Le Grand Clos terroir. After bottling, the wines are aged about six months to let the aromatic bouquet and mouthfeel further develop and integrate.

We experiment tirelessly with coopers, toasts, and forests to find the barrels that express (not mask) terroir with verve and nuance. French barrels remain our choice. The oak comes uniquely from forests in the northeast of France, known for their especially tight grain and subtlety of perfume. Due to the trees' slow growth patterns and ability to deliver a 'sense of place' with complete transparency we source from the Allier, Tronçais, Jura, Bourgogne, and Vosges forests. These barrels, made of wood that has been airdried for three years, are made principally by the Burgundian cooperages of Damy (Meursault), Dargaud & Jaegle (Romaneche-Thorins), and Tonnellerie de Mercurey (Mercurey).