

Wine Spectator

harvey steiman at large

Next Wave of Oregon Vineyards

Wineries finding more special sites for their Pinot Noirs

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For Pinot Noir, the vineyard defines the potential of any wine made from its grapes. As Oregon has established itself, every winery with ambition seems to compete for access to the same well-known independent vineyards—among them Shea, Guadalupe, Hyland, Meredith Mitchell, Momtazi, Stoller, Temperance Hill and Freedom Hill. In my own tastings and on visits in Oregon recently, unfamiliar names are starting to show their moxie. Two vintners, in particular, make a point of it.

For her new winery, ex-Evening Land winemaker Isabelle Meunier divided her sources for 2014 among the six Willamette Valley sub-AVAs. She wants to explore the differences among vineyards "with maturity and yet with more potential." Among them are [Tualatin Estate](#), originally planted in 1974, more recently with some Dijon clones. Others fermenting away for her first vintage were Saikonnen in Ribbon Ridge, on slopes that face [Bergström](#)'s vineyard (2001 plantings), and Lazy River, one of the few sites in Yamhill-Carlton on Jory soils (2001 plantings).

She also buys from Nysa in Dundee Hills, but only grapes from the familiar vineyard's 2006 vines. "Someday those original vines will have to be replaced, and these will be the old vines," she smiled. She also has some Elton in Eola-Amity Hills, planted in 1993 and 1994.

Many of these growers can expand their production or allot more to her winery. She also hopes to find somewhere to plant an estate vineyard and build a winery with her business partner, Greg Ralston, the former CEO of Evening Land. Meanwhile, she makes wine from a very personal selection of vineyards, "a little exploration of what Oregon has to say."