

OO Wine proprietors Christopher  
and Kathryn Hermann.

GOING  
*Full  
Circle*

WITH NEW PROJECTS  
EMERGING FROM FRANCE,  
THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY'S  
**OO WINES** SEEKS TO "PUSH  
CHARDONNAY TO ITS CAPACITY"



Chardonnay grapes for  
OO Wines grow in the  
Willamette Valley.



# first press

by Michelle Metter



*As part of its Chardonnay-focused production, 00 Wines oversees projects in Oregon, the Côte-d'Or, and Le Mesnil-sur-Oger that follow the same winemaking methods and philosophies.*

Oregon's Willamette Valley is arguably one of the world's most prolific producers of Pinot Noir. For the better part of 60 years, growers have taken advantage of the region's

maritime climate with mild winters and long springs to nurture this remarkable variety—which comprises 70% of the valley's vines—as well as other cool-climate grapes like Chardonnay and Pinot Gris.

Thanks to the efforts of winemaker Wynne Peterson-Nedry and 00 (Double Zero) Wine proprietors Christopher and Kathryn Hermann, the Willamette Valley may very well be rising further in the ranks. Their shared passion for Pinot Noir has led this relatively new company to rack up an impressive list of accolades as it establishes itself among the top producers of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in both Oregon and France.

In naming the winery that they co-

founded in 2015, Christopher and his father, world-renowned plant geneticist Dr. Richard Hermann, were inspired by numerology. Seeing zero as “the number of potential,” they decided to double up, using one to symbolize the potential of Chardonnay and the other of Pinot Noir. Their family-owned venture had simple and somewhat secretive beginnings, sourcing a small allocation of grapes to produce an amphora-fermented Willamette Valley Pinot Noir in partnership with Beaux Frères winemaker Mike Etzel. The result was nothing short of spectacular, yielding a soft but structured wine that set the team on a course to produce Old World-style Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with traditional techniques.

To master the latter grape, they recruited famed Burgundian winemaker Pierre Millemann of Millemann Consulting in Nuits-Saint-Georges. Millemann introduced the family to a rare method known as Black-Chardonnay production, and with the

subsequent release of the 2016 vintage, the winery's VGW (Very Good White), EGW (Extremely Good White), and Single Vineyard Bunker Hill Chardonnays garnered acclaim from critics and collectors alike and soon became cult favorites.

Christopher believes that their approach in the winery is perhaps one of the region's most assertive, with a goal of yielding wines with structure and ageworthiness. To produce what's known as Black Chardonnay, he says, “we extract the maximum phenolics out of the skins to imprint the essence of terroir and vintage on each lot. Our team stomps the fruit as soon as it arrives at the winery, and we leave the juice on the skins overnight.” A “heavy press cycle” follows the next day, with no sulfur dioxide added to the pressed juice before it ferments with native yeast in a combination of traditional Damy, Chassin, and François Frères French oak barrels (228 liters) and 500-liter puncheons. (“Adding sulfur dioxide at this stage would significantly mask



Famed Burgundian winemaker Pierre Millemann consults for OO Wines.

the unique flavors and aromas of the fruit that our growers work so hard to create in the vineyard," Christopher explains). Then, after resting for a year; the wine is racked into large tanks to finish on the lees for an additional six months.

"It's an incredible dance between human ideas and nature's gifts," Christopher says. "For us, this is about pushing Chardonnay to its capacity [and] producing distinctively textured and aromatic wines in a relentless pursuit of the extraordinary."

While Peterson-Nedry—a second-generation winemaker from one of the Willamette Valley's pioneering wine families—oversees day-to-day operations in Oregon, her French counterparts are ushering in OO Wines' newest slate of projects, which are set for release this year.

In collaboration with Millemann, OO Wines will soon unveil 25 cases of its 2017 Corton-Charlemagne; the winery's first release from the region, it exhibits its bright acidity, concentrated flavors,

considerable structure, and a long finish. Another revolutionary French vigneron, Julien Launois, has also teamed up with OO Wines for a special release of the winery's debut Le Mesnil-sur-Oger Blanc de Blancs Grower Champagne, produced from a single barrel of vin clair. (OO Wines also makes 25 cases annually of Extra Brut NV Grower Champagne.)

What unfolds in the winery may be serious business, but Kathryn Hermann has taken a lighter approach with OO Wines' marketing through her catchy label monikers as she steers the branding into more approachable territory. But that doesn't mean that OO is finished with breaking boundaries; in that respect, they're well aware that they're in good company in the Willamette Valley. "Since the time of the first pioneers, Oregon has always been a place where people are free to pursue their dreams," Christopher says. And for this five-year-old winery, it seems no dream is too lofty to chase. *SJ*

## Tasting Notes by Editor-in-Chief

*Meredith May*

**OO Wines 2017 VGW Chardonnay, Willamette Valley (\$75)** A true luxury, with aromas of lemon oil, pineapple, and salted melon. Floral notes join honey on a palate saturated with lemon-lime, making a delicate impression on the tongue. A melted-caramel effect surpasses expectations on the finish. **95**

**OO Wines 2017 Shea Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton (\$95)** Fermented in clay amphorae, this petal-soft Pinot Noir blooms in the glass with rose, jasmine, and cranberry. Woodsy heather, cherry pie filling, and cinnamon take hold on the generous mouthfeel before sea-salt caramel dissolves on the finish. It's a complex wine without an edge. **96**

**OO Wines 2017 EGW Chardonnay, Willamette Valley (\$95)** Grapes from old vines aged 12 months in 20% new French oak followed by six months on the lees in stainless steel. The perfumed nose comprises white tea, honey nougat, chamomile, and lemongrass. Unctuous and round-bodied, lithe and luxurious, the wine has a rich nature balanced by a streak of acidity that clings to lively notes of linen and lemon. **96**

*An amphora sits atop a hill with a view of the Willamette Valley.*

