



## YOUNGBERG HILL

*You Can Take the Farm Boy Off the Farm...*

**Wayne Bailey** grew up on an Iowa farm helping his father grow corn, soy beans, and hogs. Though his career path in mechanical engineering and food & beverage consulting took him out of the cornrows and around the world, he stayed a farm boy at heart, constantly seeking out work that brought him back to the land. A lengthy consulting assignment in Burgundy brought him face to face with two inescapable truths: (1) he absolutely loved cool-climate Pinot Noir, and (2) his destiny lay as a Burgundy-style *vigneron*, committed to **holistic and respectful stewardship of the land**, and making wine by putting **farming first**.

Wayne spent time with Burgundy vigneronns to learn their methods of sustainable grape growing, then set out to find his own plot of cool-climate Pinot Noir. He found it waiting for him in the Willamette Valley: a 50-acre hillside estate with 11 acres of mature, **own-rooted Pinot Noir vines**, a community of grape growers committed to sustainability, and a legacy of family farming stretching back more than 150 years.

### *A Tale of Five Farmers*

In the 1850s, a young Swedish immigrant named **Youngberg** had ventured west to the Willamette Valley and established a huge, 1600-acre homestead southwest of McMinnville. Youngberg's family farmed and lived off this land for the next 130 years. In 1987, his descendants sold off 700 acres to **Norman Barnett**, a Boston financier seeking a new life as a gentleman farmer, B&B host, and sheep owner. **Ken Wright** worked with Barnett to plant 11 acres of Pinot Noir vines on the hill to source fruit for Wright's Panther Creek label. The first wine labeled with the Youngberg Hill name was the 1996 vintage.

**In 2003, Nicolette Nickolaou bought the property after she and her partner Wayne Bailey learned about it from the late great viticulturist Jimi Brooks** Brooks told Nickolauo and Bailey the hill had a "good vein" going through it, and helped the couple set up an organic farming regimen at Youngberg Hill before his tragic early death the next year. (See the "Seriously Organic" section) Today, Nicolette and Wayne continue the farming legacy under an even more intense biodynamic approach, with the conviction that winemaking starts and stops in the vineyard.

## Timeline of Youngberg Hill's Farming Legacy

- 1850s Youngberg establishes a 1600-acre homestead encompassing the current estate
- 1989 Ken Wright plants 11 acres of own-rooted **Pinot Noir** on the property
- 1996 **First vintage** labeled specifically as Youngberg Hill
- 2003 **Nickolaou** purchases the property and along with Bailey, begin farming **organically**
- 2006-2008 5 acres of **Pinot Gris** (Aspen Block) and 3 additional acres of **Pinot Noir** (Bailey Block) were planted on Youngberg Hill
- 2011 Youngberg Hill moves to a practical approach to **biodynamic growing**
- 2012 Youngberg Hill moves winemaking operations to Brittan winery in McMinnville
- 2014 Half the Aspen Block (2 ½ acres) is grafted over to Dijon clones of **Chardonnay**
- 2017 Release of first estate-grown Chardonnay from Aspen Block (2015 vintage)
- 2019 The final block of Pinot Noir (Clones 667 and 115) are planted at Youngberg Hill

### SERIOUSLY ORGANIC

#### *Wayne Bailey's Pragmatic Obsession*

When you walk through Youngberg Hill's vineyards with Wayne Bailey, you see immediately how serious he is about his farming. Every few minutes he excuses himself, wandering down a row of vines to scrutinize a new shoot, inspect the clusters, or pick up a stray golf ball. Bailey is seriously committed to keeping his 23-acre vineyard as pristine and healthy as possible. For his family, and the land itself, he wants to ensure the vineyard and vines are healthier 50 years from now than they are today. "That's sustainability," he says.

He pushes sustainable organic farming to a new level—what he calls "**seriously organic**," a holistic approach that maintains natural balance in the vineyard and promotes healthier vines and higher quality fruit. "Organic tells you what *not* to do," he says. "But **biodynamics** practices help you do what will make the soil even healthier." Rather than following certification checklists, Bailey focuses on what is best for the soil, the vines, and the wine.

His obsession with natural processes has its limits, though. "I look at it pragmatically, not prescriptively," he insists. "I may not prune on the exact day prescribed, but—as we did back in Iowa, planting potatoes according to the *Farmer's Almanac*—I do generally farm in conjunction with the moon cycles. And that is biodynamic farming."

## Winemaking Philosophy

Bailey is a fervent **non-interventionist**. “We try to do everything we can do to stay out of the way,” he says. “If you grow the best grapes, and bring them into a healthy winery environment, the wine will take care of itself. You can’t do anything in the winery to make poor, under-ripe, or diseased grapes into a great wine.”

Wayne’s biggest challenge as a winemaker is keeping his hands off, though, particularly when there is something going on. “Experience tells you that the sooner you respond, the better chance of saving the wine. However, experience also tells you that in many, if not most cases, having patience for the wine to evolve usually is the best non-action.”

His goal is to make the best wine possible that reflects where the grapes were grown, and the weather of the season in which they were grown. Each of Youngberg Hill’s wines is crafted in a way that honors its unique origin on the property, without imposing a certain style or characteristic. His goal is only to aid it in being the best it can be.

“It’s like raising children,” he says. “You can’t make a rocket scientist out of a child who’s born to be a musician.”

Bailey believes that the more he improves the soil, the better and healthier his grapes will be, and the better his wines can express their unique terroir.

As Bailey loves to tell everyone, “Our wines are made in the vineyard, not the winery. ™”

## Personalities of the Vineyard Blocks

Wayne honored the estate’s rich history as a family farm by naming vineyard blocks after his own family. The **Bailey** block was planted in 2008 to the Dijon clone 777, in order to round out the estate’s already planted Pommard and Wadenswil clones. This section of the vineyard rests on a huge shelf of shale just 18 inches below the surface, which imparts a wonderful mineral characteristic.

Wayne and Nicolette’s oldest daughter, **Natasha**, gave her name to the biggest and one of the oldest blocks of Pinot Noir—both the oldest vines, and the oldest soil (marine sediment). Here, the Wadenswil clone produces bright fruit and spice-driven characteristics.

The **Jordan** block, also one of the oldest blocks on the vineyard, named for the spirited middle daughter, shares her intense and expressive nature. Located higher on the hill in volcanic rock, this block has shallow rocky soil that produces complex, more Burgundian-style Pinot Noir from the Pommard clone.

The **Aspen** block grows the estate’s relatively new white grapes and is named for the Bailey’s relatively new youngest daughter. Wayne planted this block in a prime spot to show how good Chardonnay and Pinot Gris can be when planted in areas typically reserved for Pinot Noir. Like its namesake, this block is already showing maturity beyond its years.

“I am tending the land and the vines for my children,” Wayne says with a smile. “I want to leave this farm for them—and better than I found it.”



*The Bailey children (left to right): Natasha, Aspen, and Jordan with their namesake wines*

# Youngberg Hill Wines

## Estate Overview

The Youngberg Hill Vineyards estate is located in the coastal foothills only 25 miles from the Pacific Ocean, and is believed to be one of the two westernmost vineyard sites in Willamette Valley. The microclimate is heavily influenced by marine weather patterns coming up the Van Duzer Pass from the coast. There is less precipitation here than most of the valley, more sunny days, cooler temperatures both day and night, and cool coastal winds in the late afternoon and early evening. This facilitates Bailey's dry farming, as well as intense fruit expression. The estate has been organically farmed since 2003, and is LIVE certified and Salmon Safe. Wayne continues to do the right thing for the soil, while not seeking biodynamic certification, as vineyards always dictate what is needed given current growing conditions.

Eleven of the estate's 15 acres of Pinot Noir were planted in 1989, on southeast-facing slopes. Divided into two distinct blocks, the vines are own-rooted, 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil clones. The Natasha Block is the larger of the two original blocks, situated at 600 feet elevation on Willakenzie soils. The Jordan block is on a steeper section of the hillside at 800 feet of elevation, on Steiwer soils.

In 2008, they planted the Bailey Block: three more acres of Pinot Noir located between the two original blocks, using 777 clones on 10114 rootstock in mixed Steiwer/shale soils. These grapes are vinified into a block-specific wine, as well as blended in small amounts (2-3%) with the Natasha and Jordan wines.

The Baileys also planted the Aspen Block to Pinot Gris in 2006, using 148 and 152 clones on 3309 rootstock. In 2014, they grafted over 2.5 acres of the Pinot Gris with Chardonnay, with Dijon clones 75, 76, 95, and 548.

## The Wines

The estate produces three distinct **Pinot Noirs** each year from the estate's 15 acres of Pinot Noir—one each from the **Natasha**, **Jordan**, and Bailey Family Wines, an estate blend which provides a reflection of the best grapes grown on the property and best barrels of wine produced each year. The winery also produces a **Cuvee Pinot Noir**, blended with estate and sourced fruit from the McMinnville AVAs.

Youngberg Hill also produces estate **Pinot Gris** and, starting with the 2015 vintage, **Chardonnay** from the five-acre Aspen block. More recently the Bailey Family Wine Chardonnay has been produced to share the best quality Chardonnay grown and produced each year. Periodically, there is also a **Pinot Blanc** and Grenache produced from sourced fruit. The winery began producing **sparkling wine** in 2016 and successfully began releasing their first vintage in 2020.

## Pinot Noir

### Natasha Block

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Uplifted Marine Sedimentary (Willakenzie)

Clones: 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil

Age of Vines: planted 1989

Acreage Total: 6.5

### **Jordan Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Steiwer

Clones: 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil

Age of Vines: planted 1989

Acreage Total: 4.5

### **Bailey Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA

Soil Type: Steiwer with shale

Clones: 777

Age of Vines: planted in 2008

Acreage Total: 3

Wayne's World Block

AVA: McMinnville AVA

Soil Type: Uplifted Marine Sedimentary (Willakenzie)

Clones: 667; 115

Age of Vines: planted in 2019

Acreage Total: 2

### **Cuvee of Pinot Noir**

*A blend of estate and sourced Pinot Noir*

AVA: Willamette Valley AVA blend from the McMinnville AVA, and Amity-Eola Hills AVA

Soil Type: Varies

Clones: Pommard, Wadenswil, 667 and 777

Age of Vines: 9-10 years

## **Pinot Gris**

### **Aspen Block Pinot Gris**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Uplifted Marine Sedimentary (Willakenzie)

Clones: 148 and 152 Clones on 3309 root stock

Age of Vines: planted in 2006

Acreage Total: 2.5

## **Chardonnay**

### **Aspen Block Chardonnay**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley

Soil Type: Uplifted Marine Sedimentary (Willakenzie)

Clones: Dijon clones 75, 76, 95, and 548

Age of Vines: planted in 2006; grafted in 2014

Acreage Total: 2.5

## The Estate Tasting Room

Youngberg Hill's tasting room is located within its nine-room inn, surrounded by the estate's 23 acres of grapevines and one of the best views in the Willamette Valley.

An expansive deck looks out over the Cascade Mountains. To the northeast is Mt. Hood, the east is Mt. Jefferson, and further to the southeast is Sisters. Guests can walk-in with "**No Reservations**", and encouraged to walk around the site or relax into an easy chair, as they wish.

A \$20 tasting fee includes five Youngberg Hill current releases and a \$40 fee allows patrons to explore the Bailey Family Wines reserve label. Visitors taste through the wines, as the experienced wine stewards explain the organic and biodynamic farming practices. Sometimes they are even able to meet the winemaker and winegrower, Wayne.

*The estate tasting room is open to the public seven days a week from 10 am to 4 pm.*

**No Reservations Required!** *Groups of eight or more are urged to make an appointment to ensure availability. Vineyard tours and barrel tastings are also available by appointment.*