



YOUNGBERG HILL

In 2003, Nicolette Nickolaou took a bold leap of faith, leaving behind the familiar to pursue her passion in the Willamette Valley. When she set foot on Youngberg Hill, she knew she had discovered something extraordinary—where her dreams could take root and flourish.

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.

Nickolaou bought the property in 2003, after learning about it from the late, great viticulturalist **Jimi Brooks**. Brooks knew the hill had a "good vein" going through it and helped **Nickolaou** and her team set up an organic farming regimen at Youngberg Hill before his tragic early death the next year. (See the "Seriously Organic" section that follows) Today, Nickolaou continues 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 **Nicolette Nickolaou** purchased the property and begins farming **organically**
- 2006-2008 **Nickolaou** and her team plant 5 acres of **Pinot Gris** (Aspen Block) and 3 additional acres of **Pinot Noir** (Bailey Block)
- 2011 **Nickolaou** take a practical approach to **biodynamic growing**
- 2012 Youngberg Hill moves winemaking operations to Brittan winery
- 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)

SERIOUSLY ORGANIC

Wayne Bailey's Pragmatic Obsession

When you walk through Youngberg Hill's vineyards, you see immediately how serious they are about farming. The vines are scrutinized daily to look for new shoots, inspect the clusters, or remove anything that doesn't belong. Nicolaou is seriously committed to keeping the 20-acre vineyard as pristine and healthy as possible. For her family and the land itself, she wants to ensure the vineyard and vines are healthier 50 years from now than they are today. "That's sustainability," she says.

She pushes sustainable organic farming to a new level—what she refers to as "**seriously organic**," a holistic approach that maintains natural balance in the vineyard and promotes healthier vines and higher-quality fruit. She farms under the philosophy that biodynamic practices help make the soil even healthier for generations to come. Rather than following a set checklist, Nicolaou prefers that her vineyard manager focus on what is best for the soil, the vines, and, ultimately, the wine.

Winemaking Philosophy

Nickolaou is a fervent **non-interventionist**. “We try to do everything we can do to stay out of the way,” she 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.”

Nickolaou knows that the biggest challenge in winemaking is keeping hands off, even when it seems that something is going on. “Sometimes,” she says, “you need to just be patient and see how the wine evolves on its own and simply aid the wine to being the best it can be.”

Nickolaou wants Youngberg Hill wine to be the best possible wine and to reflect where and how the grapes were grown and the weather of the season in which they were harvested. Each wine that Youngberg Hill crafts honors its unique origin on the property without imposing any certain style of characteristics.

Nicolaou believes that the more the soil is improved, the better and healthier the grapes will be, and the better the wine will express the land's unique terroir.

Personalities of the Vineyard Blocks

The vineyard blocks are names for the three daughters of Nicolette. The **Bailey** block, her daughter's surname, 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.

Nicolette's oldest daughter, **Natasha**, gave her name to the biggest and oldest block 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, 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 Nicolette's youngest daughter. Nicolette 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 shows maturity beyond its years.

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



Nicolette’s three daughters (left to right): Natasha, Aspen, and Jordan with their namesake wines

Youngberg Hill Wines

Estate Overview

Youngberg Hill Vineyards Overview:

Youngberg Hill Vineyards, nestled in the coastal foothills just 25 miles from the Pacific Ocean, is one of the two westernmost vineyard sites in the Willamette Valley. This prime location benefits from a unique micro-climate shaped by marine weather patterns flowing through the Van Duzer Pass. The estate enjoys less precipitation, more sunny days, cooler temperatures, and refreshing coastal winds, particularly in the late afternoon and early evening. These ideal conditions support Youngberg Hill's dry farming practices, contributing to the intense fruit expression that characterizes its wines.

The estate has been organically farmed since 2003 and proudly holds LIVE and Salmon Safe certifications. Youngberg Hill has continued to advance its commitment to sustainability in recent years, implementing new practices and technologies that further its mission to preserve the environment for future generations. This dedication to doing what is best for the soil is balanced with a practical approach to vineyard management, letting the vineyard dictate what is needed, thus allowing for an adaptation to current growing conditions and applying biodynamic principles without pursuing a technical biodynamic certification. Youngberg Hill continues to do the right thing for the soil, not the checklist.

Vineyard Blocks and Expansion

Youngberg Hill's vineyard blocks reflect its deep connection to the land and commitment to quality. 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, with 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil clones. The Natasha Block, the larger of the two original blocks, is located at 600 feet elevation on Willakenzie soils. At the same time, the Jordan Block sits on a steeper hillside section at 800 feet elevation on Steiwer soils.

In 2008, the estate expanded by planting the Bailey Block, adding three more acres of Pinot Noir between the original blocks. This block, planted with 777 clones on 10114 rootstock in mixed Steiwer/shale soils, produces grapes vinified into a block-specific wine and occasionally blended in small amounts (2-3%) with the Natasha and Jordan wines.

In 2006, the Aspen Block was planted with Pinot Gris using 148 and 152 clones on 3309 rootstock. Recognizing the evolving market and the land's potential, 2.5 acres of the Pinot Gris were grafted over to Chardonnay in 2014, using Dijon clones 75, 76, 95, and 548.

Commitment to Sustainability and Innovation

Youngberg Hill remains at the forefront of sustainable viticulture. Recent advancements in vineyard management include the introduction of baby doll sheep, a chicken tractor, and other holistic methods that enhance wine quality and reinforce the estate's environmental stewardship. These innovations underscore the estate's role as a leader in sustainable farming, consistently producing wines that reflect the unique terroir of the Willamette Valley.

Community Involvement and Recognition

Youngberg Hill takes pride in its collaborative efforts within the local wine community. The estate actively partners with neighboring grape growers and winemakers, contributing to the rich viticultural heritage of the Willamette Valley. These partnerships and shared sustainability initiatives highlight the estate's commitment to quality and community.

The estate's dedication to excellence has not gone unnoticed. Youngberg Hill wines have garnered numerous accolades, including [list any recent awards or recognition], solidifying its reputation as a producer of some of the

finest wines in the region.

Looking Ahead: Vision for the Future

As Youngberg Hill continues to evolve, the estate remains committed to expanding its sustainable vineyard practices and exploring new ways to improve the farmland. Through innovation and a steadfast dedication to quality, Youngberg Hill aims to continue crafting wines embodying the Willamette Valley's essence while pushing the boundaries of what is possible in sustainable viticulture.

The Wines

Exploring Youngberg Hill's Exceptional Wines

Youngberg Hill produces a selection of distinct Pinot Noirs each year, crafted from the estate's 15 acres of Pinot Noir. These include single-block wines from the Natasha, Jordan, and Bailey blocks, each expressing the unique characteristics of their respective terroirs. Additionally, the winery creates a reserve label, an estate blend that exemplifies the refined and balanced flavors that have become a hallmark of Youngberg Hill.

Beyond Pinot Noir, the estate is known for producing estate-grown Pinot Gris and, beginning with the 2015 vintage, Chardonnay from the five-acre Aspen block. The Chardonnay, with its crisp acidity and elegant structure, has quickly become a standout. As such, the winery now offers a unique reserve label in addition to the traditional Chardonnay. The winery also periodically produces a limited Pinot Blanc and Grenache from carefully selected sourced fruit, adding another layer of variety.

In response to growing interest in sparkling wines, Youngberg Hill began producing sparkling wine with the 2016 vintage, with the first release anticipated in 2020. This addition to the winery's portfolio reflects its commitment to innovation and expanding its range of high-quality wines.

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

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

Nicolette's Select Pinot Noir

A blend of estate-grown Pinot Noir, according to Nicolette's preference each year
AVA: Willamette Valley AVA
Soil Type: Willakenzie, Steiwer, Steiwer with shale
Clones: Pommard, Wadeswil, 777
Age of Vines: Varies

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

Nestled within Youngberg Hill's nine-room inn, the estate tasting room offers an intimate setting surrounded by 20 acres of lush grapevines and boasting one of the most breathtaking views in the Willamette Valley. The expansive deck provides a panoramic vista of the Cascade Mountains, with Mt. Hood to the northeast, Mt. Jefferson to the east, and the Sisters to the southeast.

Guests are welcome to explore the estate at their leisure or relax in an easy chair, taking in the serene beauty of the surroundings. The tasting experience, which includes a fee, offers visitors the opportunity to sample five of the winery's current releases.

Often, visitors have the chance to taste the wines alongside the winemaker or grape grower, gaining firsthand insights into the estate's commitment to organic and biodynamic farming practices and non-interventionist winemaking philosophy. Occasionally, guests may even be treated to a special library wine, adding a unique touch to the experience.

The estate tasting room welcomes visitors from 10 am to 4 pm seven days a week. Groups of eight or more are encouraged to make an appointment. Additionally, vineyard tours and barrel tastings can be arranged by appointment, offering a deeper dive into the winemaking process and the unique terroir of Youngberg Hill.