



## 2009 Belle Pente Chardonnay Belle Pente Vineyard

A Chardonnay Dry White Table wine from Dundee Hills, North Willamette Valley, Willamette Valley, Oregon, USA

Review by David Schildknecht  
*eRobertParker.com* # 209 (Oct 2013)  
Rating: 87  
Drink 2009 - 2015  
Cost: \$30

The Belle Pente 2009 Chardonnay offers a seamless, palpably lees-enriched palate featuring fresh apple tinged with cardamom and nutmeg but also with intriguingly mossy overtones. It finishes with understated bitterness of apple seed, but also persistent juiciness and intrigue of moss and iodine. The corresponding 2010 - only just about to be released when I tasted it this past July - was overly soft, seemingly from the effect of high lactic and with oak drying its finish. O'Donnell insisted, though, that "the 2009 was a bit clunky a year ago," so perhaps these need additional time in bottle even after their decidedly late-releases. That having been noted, I would be intuitively inclined to drink this 2009 by 2015. I wrote about Brian O'Donnell and his vineyard in issue 202 but not from direct experience of the latter, as we had staged our tasting in 2012 away from his estate east of Carlton (primarily south-facing and looking into Soter), which I visited for the first time this past July. The old, improvised presses, fermenters and crush pad as well as the general surroundings at Belle Pente Estate reflect a back-to-the-basics wine-made-in-the-vineyard approach. But attention to detail and astute self-reflection turn out to clearly pervade every aspect of this estate, not just its organic dry-farming. Rigorous sorting with a six-person team is the rule here, but O'Donnell opined that this aspect wasn't really especially challenging in 2011, the main concern being with under-ripe bunches that could easily be identified, rather than with rot, which he assessed as having been "at most 5%.". That said, he did four crop-drops in order for the fruit to get as he admitted "just ripe. No question it was a nail-biter," continues O'Donnell. "Overall, I think I prefer 2010 as a vintage, especially for the high-elevation sites. (But) an interesting thing with 2011s - we do 18 month elevage - is that (they) went through a transformation in the last six months that is pretty astounding." Certainly the 2010s here impressed me far more than had the corresponding 2009s tasted 13 months prior and reported on in Issue 202. Tel. (503) 852-9500

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