

# NICOLAS JAY

## THE NICOLAS-JAY STORY

NICOLAS-JAY IS THE STORY OF A THREE-DECADE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN FAMED BURGUNDIAN WINEMAKER JEAN-NICOLAS MÉO AND VISIONARY MUSIC ENTREPRENEUR JAY BOBERG, AND THEIR SHARED LOVE OF OREGON PINOT NOIR. IT IS ALSO THE STORY OF THEIR DESIRE TO BUILD SOMETHING LASTING TOGETHER, WHILE CREATING A DISTINCTIVE EXPRESSION OF GREAT WILLAMETTE VALLEY PINOT NOIR. AT NICOLAS-JAY, THIS IS ACHIEVED BY APPLYING VITICULTURAL AND WINEMAKING EXPERIENCE GAINED FROM WORKING WITH THE GRANDS CRUS OF BURGUNDY TO THE FINEST GRAPES FROM OREGON. THIS INCLUDES FRUIT FROM THE OLDER VINES OF NICOLAS-JAY'S OWN ORGANICALLY FARMED BISHOP CREEK VINEYARD ON THE HILLSIDES OF THE YAMHILL-CARLTON APPELLATION, AS WELL AS GRAPES FROM OTHER TOP WILLAMETTE VALLEY VINEYARDS, INCLUDING NYSA, MONTAZI AND ZENITH. FROM THIS FRUIT, JEAN-NICOLAS, JAY AND TALENTED ASSOCIATE WINEMAKER TRACY KENDALL MAKE ALLURING AND EXPRESSIVE WINES THAT CONVEY THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF OREGON PINOT NOIR.

JEAN-NICOLAS AND JAY BECAME FRIENDS IN 1988, WHEN JEAN-NICOLAS WAS STUDYING ABROAD IN THE UNITED STATES. THE TWO FOUND THAT THEY SHARED SIMILAR PHILOSOPHIES ABOUT LIFE, MUSIC, WINE AND FRIENDSHIP. THOUGH JEAN-NICOLAS SOON IMMERSSED HIMSELF IN GUIDING HIS FAMILY'S RENOWNED DOMAINE MÉO-CAMUZET, AND JAY CONTINUED TO BUILD HIS OWN IRS RECORDS INTO A SEMINAL INDIE LABEL, THEY STAYED FRIENDS OVER THE NEXT QUARTER CENTURY. DURING THIS TIME, THEY ALSO DISCOVERED A SHARED INTEREST IN THE QUALITY AND POTENTIAL OF THE PINOT NOIRS FROM OREGON, WHICH JAY HAS BEEN ENJOYING SINCE 1983, AND JEAN-NICOLAS HAS BEEN EXPLORING SINCE ATTENDING THE INTERNATIONAL PINOT NOIR CELEBRATION IN WILLAMETTE VALLEY IN 1991.

IN 2011, A VISIT TO THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY REIGNITED JAY'S FASCINATION WITH THE REGION. IT ALSO INSPIRED HIM TO COMMIT HIMSELF FULLY TO HIS LIFELONG PASSION FOR WINE. HE APPROACHED JEAN-NICOLAS WITH THE IDEA OF STARTING A SMALL WINERY IN OREGON. AFTER NEARLY A QUARTER CENTURY OF MAKING WINE AT MÉO-CAMUZET, JEAN-NICOLAS WAS INTRIGUED AND EXCITED BY THE IDEA OF TAKING WHAT HE'D LEARNED FROM THE GRANDS AND PREMIERS CRUS OF BURGUNDY, AND APPLYING IT TO A NEW REGION, A NEW CLIMATE, NEW SOILS AND NEW VINEYARDS. HE WAS ALSO EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT OF COLLABORATING WITH JAY TO BUILD SOMETHING MEANINGFUL FROM SCRATCH.

KNOWING THAT THE WINES OF NICOLAS-JAY WOULD BE DEFINED BY THE QUALITY OF ITS VINEYARDS, JEAN-NICOLAS AND JAY BEGAN A LENGTHY EXPLORATION OF THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY, ITS APPELLATIONS, AND ITS TOP WINEGROWING SITES. THIS SEARCH TOOK THEM TO DOZENS OF VINEYARDS THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY, AS WELL AS WINERIES AND CELLARS, WHERE THEY TASTED NUMEROUS SINGLE-VINEYARD PINOT NOIRS AND BARREL SAMPLES. DURING ONE OF THESE BLIND BARREL TASTINGS, FEATURING 20 DIFFERENT VINEYARDS, JAY AND JEAN-NICOLAS WERE BOTH WOWED BY A WINE MADE FROM THE GRAPES OF BISHOP CREEK VINEYARD. IT WAS DISTINCTIVE, POWERFUL, COMPLEX AND ELEGANT, WITH A BEAUTIFULLY PERFUMED NOSE. IT WAS SO STRIKING THAT, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD NO INTENTION OF BUYING A VINEYARD AT THE TIME, WHEN THEY LATER LEARNED THAT BISHOP CREEK WAS FOR SALE, THEY KNEW THAT IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY THEY COULD NOT PASS UP.

TO COMPLEMENT THE EXCEPTIONAL ESTATE FRUIT FROM BISHOP CREEK, JEAN-NICOLAS, JAY AND TRACY HAVE ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS WITH A HANDFUL OF THE FINEST VINEYARDS IN THE

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REGION, AND WORK CLOSELY WITH THE TALENTED PEOPLE WHO FARM THESE SITES TO TAILOR VINEYARD PRACTICES TO NICOLAS-JAY'S SPECIFICATIONS. THIS OFTEN MEANS DOING MUCH LESS LEAF PULLING THAN OTHER VINEYARDS—AN APPROACH THAT SLOWS RIPENING, WHILE HELPING THE GRAPES TO RETAIN MORE NATURAL ACIDITY. NICOLAS-JAY ALSO THINS ITS FRUIT VERY DIFFERENTLY THAN ITS NEIGHBORS, REMOVING BIGGER CLUSTERS AND LARGER BERRIES—BOTH FROM THE VINES AND DURING SORTING—TO INCREASE OVERALL INTENSITY AND DEPTH. NICOLAS-JAY'S APPROACH TO HARVEST IS ALSO UNIQUE. WITH A FOCUS ON FRESHNESS AND BALANCE, NICOLAS-JAY IS OFTEN ONE OF THE FIRST WINERIES TO HARVEST THE VINEYARDS IT PARTNERS WITH. IN ADDITION, THE WINERY'S GRAPES ARE PICKED USING SMALL CHERRY BINS (AS OPPOSED TO STANDARD ¼-TON BINS), WHICH STOPS THE FRUIT FROM BEING BRUISED OR CRUSHED.

WITH THE GOAL OF MAKING PINOT NOIRS THAT ARE BOTH ELEGANT AND EXCITING, IN THE WINERY THE GRAPES ARE 100% DESTEMMED AND PRESSED VERY SLOWLY AND AT LOW PRESSURES TO ACCENTUATE PURE FRUIT AND A SILKY MOUTHFEEL IN THE FINAL WINE. TO FURTHER ACCENTUATE THE SUPPLE TEXTURE OF NICOLAS-JAY'S WINES, WHILE ALSO UNDERSCORING THE INHERENT FRESHNESS OF THE FRUIT, EXTENDED COLD SOAKS ARE APPLIED. TO MAINTAIN THE DIVERSITY OF THE FRUIT IN TERMS OF VINEYARD, CLONE AND VINE AGE, AS MANY AS 30 INDIVIDUAL FERMENTATIONS ARE DONE EACH VINTAGE, WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE SMALL LOTS BEING JUST 1.5 TO 2.0 TONS, AND WITH THE SMALLEST UNDER A TON. "IT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF EACH VINEYARD," SAYS JEAN-NICOLAS. "ONCE THIS CHARACTER IS UNDERSTOOD, THE GOAL IS TO FIND THE IDEAL BALANCE FOR THAT SITE. FOR A STRUCTURED WINE, THIS MAY MEAN BRINGING OUT A CERTAIN FINESSE IN THE WINE. FOR A MINERAL-DRIVEN WINE, IT MAY MEAN DRAWING OUT ITS SOFTER SIDE. FOR AN ELEGANT WINE, BALANCE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY ACCENTUATING STRUCTURE. ALL OF THIS IS DONE WITH RESPECT FOR THE INNATE CHARACTER OF THE VINEYARD."

TO DRAW OUT COLOR AND BODY, SOMEWHAT HIGHER TEMPERATURES ARE ALLOWED DURING FERMENTATION. IN ANOTHER RELATIVELY UNIQUE APPROACH, PUMP-OVERS ARE USED EARLY IN THE FERMENTATION PROCESS TO ACCENTUATE WEIGHT, BODY AND FLAVOR, WHILE KEEPING THE BERRIES INTACT, AND THEREBY REDUCING THE INFLUENCE OF SEED AND SKIN TANNINS. ONCE THE WINE IS CLOSE TO DRY, JEAN-NICOLAS, JAY AND TRACY SWITCH TO PUNCH-DOWNS TO BUILD TANNIC STRUCTURE. DURING AGING, 30% NEW OAK BARRELS ARE USED TO ADD COMPLEXITY, WITHOUT OVERWHELMING THE DESIRED VINEYARD CHARACTER, AND NICOLAS-JAY USES THE SAME COOPERS AND BARRELS THAT JEAN-NICOLAS SELECTS FOR HIS MÉO-CAMUZET WINES.

"WE MAKE THE KIND OF WINES WE LOVE TO DRINK," SAYS JAY. "ELEGANT WINES, WITH BEAUTIFUL, COMPLEX AROMATICS AND PURE, LOVELY FRUIT—WINES THAT EVOLVE IN THE GLASS, AND IN THE CELLAR. TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE START WITH THE BEST VINEYARDS, PRACTICE RESPECTFUL FARMING, AND STRIVE TO MAKE OUR WINES WITH SINCERITY. THIS MEANS HAVING GOOD INTENTIONS AS WINEMAKERS, AND RESPECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE WINE."