

NICOLAS-JAY ESTATE 2021 SPIRIT HILL VINEYARD CHARDONNAY, EOLA-AMITY

The Wine

Spirit Hill Vineyard Chardonnay is a very unique site that captures the pure essence of what Eola-Amity is all about. An older planting at a high-elevation, the fruit from this site is consistently small-berried with high levels of natural acidity and tension that has been of great interest to our Winemaking team at Nicolas-Jay for many years. So spectacular is this fruit, we were compelled to elevate the wine to a single vineyard bottling to show off its magnificence.



Harvest

The beautiful 2021 vintage began with a warm dry winter followed by a wet and cool late Spring. Despite rain during bloom, yields were high and the vines soaked up the nourishing moisture early in the season. June also brought a heat dome with temperatures breaking 115 degrees in the Willamette Valley. Luckily this unprecedented heat came at a time before the grapes were susceptible to damage and the growing season continued warm but without issue. A cooler August was a sigh of relief as we neared harvest. Grape ripening slowed down and the very healthy and abundant fruit began showing signs of ripeness in early September. We began picking on September 4th with 2 separate chardonnay vineyards and finished on September 27th with our latest and highest elevation chardonnay site – Spirit Hill. Our latest Pinot Noir site, Temperance Hill came off the vine on September 26th. Harvest was beautiful and dry with only one small rain event toward the end, ideal for a successful vintage. The fruit was pristine and yields were abundant, leading to moderate alcohol levels and bright acidity. 2021 certainly felt like a gift after the devastation of the wildfires in 2020. Our first real vintage made here at the Nicolas-Jay estate, the wines are showing purity of fruit, beautiful texture and tension and are sure to continue to evolve for years in bottle.

Harvested: Sept 28

Harvest Brix: 22.1

Alcohol: 13.0%

TA: 7.0g/L

pH: 3.1

Winemaking: Spontaneous native yeast

Cooperage: 40% new French oak, 14 mo.

Date Bottled: March 25, 2023

Production: 4 barrels

Winemaker Tasting Notes

2021 is Nicolas-Jay's first release from this iconic site in Eola-Amity. A spectacular showing for this vintage, the wine opens with a lavishness on the nose, boasting crème brûlée, jasmine and apricots. At second pass, there's an integration of fresh shaved coconut, wet river rock and tightly grained new French oak staves. It's juicy upon entry with expressive white peach blossom and tropical elements of papaya essence while demonstrating a high level of concentration that further tightens on your palate. While the density holds firm there's a level of remarkable tension within the wine, characterizing the beautiful acidity of Eola-Amity chardonnay and this unique site. It slowly broadens toward the tail-end at mid-pallet with a butter scotch and ripe apricot texture. The wine lingers with an impressively long finish, unfolding slowly in the mouth and carrying on well after the final taste. It's limitless and energetic and maintains a level of complexity that is sure to amaze the most critical Willamette Valley Blanc fans.

96 Points

The Spirit Hill 2021 Chardonnay is the first release from this site in the Eola-Amity Hills. It's aged in 40% new French oak and displays a very light, glistening lemon core with a watery rim in the glass. The nose pops with aromas of fresh apricot flesh, jasmine flower, white nectarine, sea breeze, and dried thyme. The palate is more concentrated and complex than the nose and really makes this wine come alive. Impeccably balanced with grilled citrus and spice notes and a lengthy finish that goes on for minutes. Only 100 cases were made. Highly recommended.

94 Points

A rich, redolent Chardonnay from one of the Argyle winery's vineyards shows tremendous depth in the hands of Nicolas Jay winemaker Tracy Kendall. Lemon verbena and gardenia aromas announce a wildly elegant wine, followed by grapefruit pith and petrichor notes. The palate balances delicate white peach skin, fresh-cut pear and savoury notes of grass, sweet hay and honeyed ginger. It's a beauty.

The Wine Report

Decanter