

# PRESS & AWARDS

*“The most delicate Oregon Pinot Noirs are like watercolors in a world of oil painting. Ethereal and fragile, they seem feather-brushed onto the canvas of flavor. Cristom’s five Pinot Noirs are all like this...”*

- Karen McNeil, author of ‘The Wine Bible’

*Wine & Spirits, Top 100 Wineries of the Year: 2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2012, 2011*

*VinePair, 30 Best Chardonnays for 2024: 2022 EOLA-AMITY HILLS CHARDONNAY*

*VinePair, 18 Best Pinot Grigios for 2024: 2023 LOUISE VINEYARD PINOT GRIS*

*Jeb Dunnuck, Top 100 Wines of 2023: 2021 EILEEN VINEYARD PINOT NOIR*

*Wine Enthusiast, Top 100 Cellar Selections of the Year: 2021 LOUISE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY*

*Decanter, One of the Top 5 Chardonnays of Willamette Valley’s 2021 Vintage: 2021 SEVEN SPRINGS VINEYARD CHARDONNAY*

*Robert Parker Wine Advocate, Extraordinary Winery of the Year Nominee, 2020*

*Wine & Spirits, Top 50 Pinot Noirs, 2022*

*Wine Spectator, Top 100 Wines of 2019, MT. JEFFERSON CUVÉE PINOT NOIR*

*Wine & Spirits, Year’s Best Chardonnay, 2020*

*Wine & Spirits, #1 OREGON PINOT NOIR IN AMERICA’S TOP RESTAURANTS: 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016*

*Wine & Spirits, Top 50 Wine Brands in America’s Top Restaurants: 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015*



# 11x WINE & SPIRITS TOP 100 WINERY

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Harvest 2024

**M**Y PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AS A writer probably began when I was a "scribe" in Boy Scouts. No, I wasn't getting paid, but I was writing for my peers rather than for a teacher in school. My role was recording our meetings and the more eventful moments of campouts.

I still like taking minutes. As our tastings, I keep a record of how our panelists are reacting to wines—and it's more than simply tallying yeas or nays. In fact, we do not train our critics to run tastings as stenographers, more as referees, interpreting reactions from the panelists, weighing them, deciding which wines and what commentary to pass through the filter to you. What did they appreciate? What did they love? What made them smile? As tasting reporters, we record our own responses to each wine, then interview our panelists about theirs. We filter the reactions of our tasters even as they influence how we consider our own reactions to a wine.

This may be an antique notion, in an age of social media, when everyone gets their unfiltered say.

Tasting this way, we are no less bound by our own subjective likes or the confines of our own egos. We can't help that, but can acknowledge it, by a tasting process that encourages us and the people who taste with us to confront our subjectivities and our egos. By participating, we have to allow ourselves to be embarrassed by falling in love with a wine that our friends and fellow tasters don't particularly like. You might be surprised by how many talented tasters won't tolerate that form of embarrassment, whether during the tasting, or, once the identities are revealed, in relation to their work as wine buyers.

This kind of research is fraught with random occurrences—bottles that may suffer in shipping or storage, below-threshold flaws, a falling barometer



one day, a rising barometer the next. But, as you will find in this compilation of a year's worth of tastings, presented in these pages, the results are not random. Sometimes, a wine producer will be mystified that we review their inexpensive wine more highly than their own preferred selection. In fact, when our results do not align with the wine-maker's intention or the market overall, we take it as a signal. More often than not, it leads us to a discovery, the kind that may be the most valuable insight and information we can share with you.

You'll find some obvious picks in the pages that follow—from wineries that have aligned their current releases to their well-established reputations. But consider the surprises—prominently featured here under names you may not know well, or, perhaps, whose wines you have never tasted. You'll find them among the *Top 100 Best Buys*, some remarkably affordable for what they bring to the table. Or in the diversity of our *Top 100 Wines of the Year*. And, if you find names that surprise you among our *Top 100 Wineries*, know that they have earned their place through remarkable performances across a range of wines. We encourage you to try them, if not blind, then with an open mind. Tastes can be revelatory, and we find it fascinating when wines open a back door to taste, past our egos and whatever framework of limitations they might comfortably impose.

There's plenty of comfort in the wines we present here, our favorites from a year of tastings, and many that took us out of our comfort zones, to pleasures and insights we may not have found before. Welcome to our harvest report at *Wine & Spirits*.

*Joshua Greene*  
JOSHUA GREENE

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY COBBARD



Since 1992, Cristom has crafted benchmark Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grown in the volcanic hillsides of our east-facing Eola-Amity Hills estate.



Wine & Spirits  
**TOP 100**  
2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019,  
2018, 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013, 2012

CRISTOMVINEYARDS.COM  
LAND | STEWARDSHIP | CRAFTSMANSHIP

## Top 100 Wineries

OREGON | WILLAMETTE VALLEY

### Cristom

A viticulture and winemaking transition that began a decade ago is now manifest in the exceptional 2021s from Cristom.



DANIEL ESTRIN

WHEN TOM GERRIE, THE SON OF CRISTOM founder Paul Gerrie, took the reins of this venerable winery in 2011, he did so after travels to a range of pinot noir properties. One of his more indelible visits was to Littorai, on California's Sonoma Coast, where Ted Lemon had transformed the home vineyard (called The Pivot) into a small paradise of biodiversity and soil health. Tom began to convert Cristom's viticulture using the principles of biodynamics (not yet certified) and lured Littorai assistant winemaker Daniel Estrin to Oregon to transpire viticultural lessons learned in California, "throwing up farming and cellar practices. It's a big ask—the Cristom property is eight times the size of the Pivot, with a wide variety of aspects and soil types—but already they're seeing results, with more robust fruit and better canopies on what Tom calls his "skinny," basalt-strewn hillsides. The Paul Gerrie block is the largest and youngest of those, planted in 2014, and has served as a biodynamic playground for the team, where they experiment and track their viticultural efforts. With his '21 pinots, Estrin's goals offshorer wines at slightly lower alcohols are in his sights. —P.J.C.



**2021 Eola-Amity Hills Louise Vineyard Chardonnay (\$40, 94 points)** Crystalline and pure, this chardonnay is from a small southwest-facing block, planted in 1993 with two distinct sections that are harvested separately, which lends complexity. It smells like sea air, and tastes like eating lemon tart on a beach, its lemon-curd flavors salty, stony and lifted, a modest cushion of citrus and peach fruit to soften the minerality.

**2021 Eola-Amity Hills Mt. Jefferson Cuvée Pinot Noir (\$40, 92 points)** Warm and generous, Mt. Jeff is Cristom's appellation wine drawing largely from the five estate vineyards, as well as a few partners lying within the AVA. A great expression of the vintage, this is youthfully forward, with notes of plum skin, black cherry and clove. Nearly half the wine ferments as whole clusters, adding to the forest floor scent. Its flavors are succulent, pristine and lifted.

**2021 Eola-Amity Hills Louise Vineyard Pinot Gris (\$30, 92 points)** The lowest elevation blocks of Louise are planted to gris, rooted in marine sediment rather than basalt. This wine is viscous and bright, with lemon-lime scents, lean and dry with a phenolic, watermelon juiciness and a mineral-citrusy finish. For scallop crudo.

**FOUNDED:** 1992  
**WINEMAKER:** Daniel Estrin  
**VITICULTURISTS:** Tom Gerrie, Daniel Estrin  
**OWNER:** The Gerrie family  
**ACRES OWNED:** 240; 99 under vine  
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION:** 20,000 cases  
**ESTATE GROWN:** 70%  
**FARMING PRACTICE:** LIVE Certified Sustainable

The Insider's Guide to  
Artisanal, Sustainable,  
Extraordinary Wines  
to Drink Now

# THE WORLD IN A WINEGLASS



RAY ISLE

Executive Wine Editor,  
*Food & Wine*

# PROFILED IN RAY ISLE'S NEW BOOK

## CRISTOM VINEYARDS • EOLA-AMITY HILLS

[organic / biodynamic]

"Everything about Cristom's beginning was about looking for a good piece of soil," Tom Gerrie says. His parents, Paul and Eileen, were Pittsburgh-based wine lovers, and wanted to start the next chapter of their lives growing grapes and making wine. In 1991, at the International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC) in McMinnville, Oregon, they were introduced to Mike Etzel of Beaux Frères (now owned by billionaire François Pinault's Artémis Domaines); they became friends, and soon Etzel found them the piece of land that became Cristom. Gerrie says his father's background was "petroleum engineering, he worked with geologists; there was something about that ground that spoke to him."

Cristom was founded in 1992, at the start of the second wave of wineries in the Willamette Valley, in company with Domaine Drouhin, Argyle, Beaux Frères, Chehalem, and others. "We were about the seventy-fifth winery in the state," Gerrie says. "Now there are more than a thousand."

Tom Gerrie was eight when his

family moved west. "Some of my early memories are watering baby vines with a long, long hose hauled over from a tank truck." Initially, the elder Gerries farmed conventionally, but working in 2004 with Etzel, who farmed biodynamically, changed their son's views about viticulture. "I just had this tremendously profound connection to the way Mike farmed," Tom says. "Building compost piles, turning them the next year, getting the compost into the vines, seeing the richness of that, how it was filled with life—that was like, yes, *this* is what needs to be feeding back into the soil, not just for the vines but for this entire property. I wasn't really able to put it into words, but I knew I wanted Cristom to be in a place where it would be a healthier, more vibrant, more ecologically diverse, more sustainable ecosystem for whoever came after me."

Cristom has been biodynamic for several years now, but is not certified. "We're renegade biodynamicists and intentionally so," Gerrie says. "We're trying to pull together different

farming paradigms, whether it's permaculture or organic principles or biodynamics; I'm looking for that Venn diagram place where they all meet."

Has this full-on dedication to renegade biodynamics—if that's what to call it—made a difference? Gerrie gives one personal example: "There's a pear tree down by the vineyard house, and I didn't even know it was a pear tree. It hadn't fruited once

in my life. But now it has this crazy abundance of fruit, because there are chickens and sheep around it, working their manure back into the soil. We're putting life back into our soil every single day. Everything here will be healthier for it. And it's not just one pear tree; it's ninety acres of vines, and another one hundred and fifty of forests and fields. A place. A whole ecosystem."

Cristom focuses on seven wines, five of which are solely from the estate. The other two, the **Cristom Vineyards Eola-Amity Chardonnay (ss)** and the **Mt. Jefferson Cuvée Pinot Noir (ss)** also use fruit from other growers. "We try to work with people who believe what we believe, or at least are willing to shift or make changes toward working organically," Gerrie says.

The single-vineyard wines come from the ninety acres of estate vines. The **Louise Vineyard Chardonnay (sss)** balances between citrus and tropical fruit, rich but lifted by fresh acidity. The **Louise Vineyard Pinot Noir (sss)**—all of the vineyards on the property are named for family matri-

archs, except for the Paul Gerrie Vineyard—comes from the oldest vines on the property. The **Eileen Vineyard Pinot Noir (sss)**, from a higher elevation, tends to be more delicate and floral, with vibrant red fruit. The **Marjorie Vineyard Pinot Noir (sss)**, from what were the original vines on the site (since mostly replanted due to phylloxera) has more blue fruit and spice. Finally, the **Jessie Vineyard Pinot Noir (sss)**, from an extremely steep, volcanic soil site, is more concentrated and intense, though still remarkably elegant. There are a number of other small-production wines, but they are mostly available only through the tasting room or Cristom's wine club.



Your new go-to wine for any day and any occasion. Above, assistant winemaker Julie East leading sheep to Creston's headquarterly farm vineyard. (Photo by John Vail.)

You know your go-to wine? The ones that you pull out when you're tired and you need something that always starts out right? There are the ones that you know. It's relatively clear because you know them - you know the vintage, you know the grape, you know the occasion - an occasion you know.

One of the wines on this list is Creston's Cuvée Mt Jefferson Pinot Noir. It's a wine that I used to sell when I worked retail and on the floor of restaurants in Portland. It was my go-to for people who wanted an affordable but Pinot Noir. Check out the video of Creston's Pinot Noir. No matter what the occasion, this wine can handle it. Over the years it's gone up in price a touch - but it's also gotten even more impressive.



And in addition to being impressive, it's a wine that Willamette Valley's wine industry is built on. The Creston story began in 1991 when Paul Geste decided that he'd attend Oregon's International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC). Geste was interested with the people in line with Willamette Valley and Cabernet wine, and had a dream of growing world-class Pinot Noir.

At the IPNC, he met Michael Hoad, a winemaker at David Vineyards who was starting a little project called Beaux Freres. Geste asked Hoad if he could hire him to find a few properties that were on the market. Hoad hired Geste - the one that would become Creston's Creston Pinot Noir vineyard. The choice was made for two reasons - the quality of the wine being made in a nearby property called Beaux Freres and the fact that Geste was intrigued by the vine.

Both properties were predominantly oak facing and had divisions just below their own's historic vineyard. The choice was made for two reasons - the quality of the wine being made in a nearby property called Beaux Freres and the fact that Geste was intrigued by the vine.



In 1991, Geste and his wife Ellen bought what is now Creston from Beaux Freres. They retained the original 1982 plantings and began to plant more vines. And to make wine they hired Steve Denton, Cabernet's winemaker of 14 years. Denton had a wealth of knowledge from his years at Cabernet and the wine he made at Creston continued there as a part of the Willamette Valley's history of winemaking to take up residence in Oregon. Denton advanced the use of whole clusters and ambient fermentation, and he found that craft would be a key to the quality of Creston's winemaking responsibility to David Easton (winemaker of L'Oratoire) in 2015.



As only the second head winemaker in the history of the estate, Easton has already proved himself up to the task. With the support of the Geste's son, Tom, who took over estate management in 2011 and began transitioning the estate to full-time winemaking in 2017, Easton has completed the transition to biodynamics and pulled all health in the vineyard. He has also considerably increased the focus of the white wine program.

The approach to the red wine program, Creston's strength for 30 years, has remained much the same. And the 2021 Mt Jefferson Cuvée, the flagship wine, is as good as ever (though the 2022 vintage, already available in the US, tops it - keep your eyes peeled for when it becomes available on export markets). As prices have soared throughout the Willamette Valley, Mt Jeff has retained its affordability and outclasses many wines double, and even triple, its price point.

The 2021 Mt Jefferson is light and fresh with the vibrant, slightly acidic acidity that is characteristic of the vintage alongside sweetly perfumed red and black fruit and a beguiling hint of white flowers. Creston's estate vineyard provided 100% of the fruit, the remainder came from grapes harvested throughout the Eola-Amity Hills. The fruit was all hand-harvested and hand-sorted, pressed into tanks with whole clusters, and was allowed to ferment spontaneously. After pressing, the wine was aged in 200 new oak for 12 months, resulting in a light spirit that marries seamlessly with the fruit. It was then bottled unfiltered and unfined.



Owing to this producer's relatively long history and outstanding quality, the wine are well represented internationally. As well as being widely available across the US, this particular wine can be found in the UK (from VINUK, Somers Wine, The Good Wine Shop, The Cognac and Pilsner & Swigart), Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Australia.

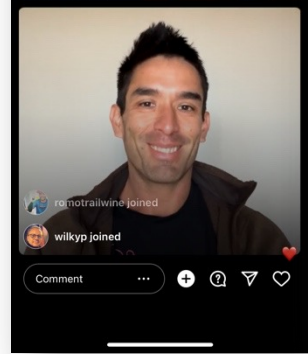
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# Jancis Robinson.com

## FEATURED WINE OF THE WEEK

December 8, 2023

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Instagram post for jancisrobinson featuring the wine of the week article and a link to JANCISROBINSON.COM.

### Wines of the week

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WINES OF THE WEEK  
Cristom, Mt Jefferson Cuvée Pinot Noir 2021 Eola-Amity Hills

Your new go-to wine for any day and any occasion. Above, assistant...

8 Dec 2023 Samantha Cole-Johnson

View Article

# FEATURED PINOT NOIR RIEDEL PERFORMANCE GLASSWARE

*VinExpo Asia Masterclass March 21, 2024*

Mr. Maximilian Riedel, the 11th generation owner of Riedel hosted a 'Riedel Wine Glass Experience' Masterclass featuring the Performance Glassware at VineExpo Asia in March 2024.

Cristom's Mt. Jefferson Cuvée Pinot Noir was selected to showcase the performance of the Pinot Noir varietal specific glassware and how it enhances the optics, complex aromas, and subtle nuances of the wine more than a traditional glass.





# 30 BEST CHARDONNAYS FOR 2024

VINEPAIR

VINEPAIR

## The 30 Best Chardonnays for 2024

We tasted crowd-pleasers and case-buys as well as splurges and special-occasion finds. We basically have you covered across the entire spectrum. These are 30 of the best Chardonnays to drink in 2024.

### Cristom Vineyards Eola-Amity Hills Chardonnay 2022



Cristom Vineyards was established in 1992 by Paul and Eileen Gerrie — the name Cristom is a combination of their children's names, Christine and Tom (who's now the head winemaker). A family-owned winery for over 30 years, Cristom is dedicated to sustainability and organic farming in the Eola-Amity Hills subregion of Oregon's Willamette Valley. This bottling, sourced from several vineyard sites in the region, offers soft stone fruit and minerals on the nose. The palate is engaging with a textured mouthfeel, and perfectly balanced fruit and acidity.



## The 18 Best Pinot Grigios for 2024

Pinot Grigio wears many hats. It's most commonly known as a crisp, citrus-driven white wine from northern Italy, but it can also be found in eastern France as Pinot Gris, where it's revered for producing unctuous and waxy wines. And due to the grape's unique pink skins it's also used to make savory and complex skin-contact wines, referred to as Ramato (meaning copper) in some Italian regions.

More recently, the grape has found a home in Oregon, where it's typically made in a richer style and is referred to as Pinot Gris. There are also great examples coming from the Finger Lakes, California, Germany, and even New Zealand.

### Cristom Vineyards Louise Vineyard Pinot Gris 2023



The roughly one-and-a-half-acre Louise Vineyard was first established in 1993 in the Willamette Valley's Eola-Amity Hills region. The gently sloping Pinot Gris vines rest on a combination of Missoula Flood silts and ancient marine sedimentary soils that lend a distinct minerality. There are some subtle pear notes, but this wine is driven by texture. There's an unctuous mouthfeel on the palate, balanced by crisp acidity.



# 18 BEST PINOT GRIGIOS FOR 2024



# TOP 100 MOST EXCITING WINES OF 2023 JEB DUNNUCK



## JEB DUNNUCK

Dear Subscribers -

We've just published our Top 100 Wines of 2023!

The selection is based on a combination of **quality, value, availability, and a little bit of Wow Factor**. It was made by scrolling through thousands of reviews at [JebDunnuck.com](http://JebDunnuck.com) and painstakingly cutting the list to these 100 wines.

The list is led by Bordeaux's incredible 2020s as well as California's stunning 2021s from the Central Coast but includes wines from throughout the world including Napa, Sonoma, Oregon, Washington, the Rhône Valley, Champagne, Piedmont, and Tuscany.

As I say in the article, every producer on this list is worth your time and money!

RANK	WINE	PRICE	SCORE
88	<a href="#">2021 Cristom Vineyards Pinot Noir Eileen Vineyard</a>	+ \$80	96
	A deep saturated ruby, the 2021 Pinot Noir Eileen Vineyard is more aromatically reserved initially but opens in the glass to emerging notes of rocky earth, ripe black and blue fruit, and wild herbs. It already displays a tension aromatically that carries over to the palate, where the wine is full-bodied, with a weightless feel, ripe, well-structured tannins, and a tension-packed, ripe core. It has a nervous energy at this stage that bodes well for significant aging potential over the next 15 to 20 years. It's a remarkable wine that demands aging time. The wines for this report were tasted at the winery, where I toured the vineyards with winemaker Daniel Estrin in the Eola-Amity Hills. Daniel joined the team in 2019, following his work with Ted Lemon at Littorai, where he began as an intern and worked his way up to assistant winemaker. Although he has certainly taken a page from Ted's farming and biodynamic practices, the estate is not certified, and they prefer not to work within the proscriptive confines for certification.		