

Scott and Lisa Neal started Coeur de Terre Vineyard in the Spring of 1998

Scott is a salt of the earth, seat of the pants entrepreneur who went from zero production in 1998, to selling a dozen cases a week to some of the finest restaurants in California, like George's at the Cove. His single block wines have reached cult status and he sells out every year.



He's a do-it-your-selfer, and he's learned how to make spectacular Pinot Noirs since he and Lisa planted their own grapevines in the pouring rain over a decade ago. His secret is maximizing the effect of the varied terroir, which in Oregon is usually metamorphic, volcanic substrate, or ancient marine sediment. The rolling hills offer a wide variety of slopes, exposures, and elevations, and the mixed geology makes for many possible combinations of soil and sun for a maestro like Scott to plant different Pinot clones.

He planted familiar clones like 777, Pommard, and Wadensville, with a few other varieties thrown in for flavor. He and Lisa concentrated clones on different blocks to create specific flavors and textures than can be blended at harvest, or bottled by themselves. He grafts grapevines they think taste best to older vines. His vineyards are organic and mostly dry farmed, and are protected by Jack and Blue. Scott says you are tasting the block, not the clone, when you taste his wines, and that his wines reflect the place and the year they were grown more than anything else. He is a self-admitted control freak and oversees all aspects of the wine making. He tastes the grapes before doing any scientific tests, so the tests don't influence his opinion. He cold soaks the extraction for better color and flavor, and carefully monitors temperatures through the process.

I was impressed by how small the whole operation is, and how few people work there. Not counting Jack and Blue, they have five crew members working the vineyard. Lisa runs the business, Scott runs the winemaking, and they make magic with their Pinot Noirs.