

For immediate release: Oregon's first LIVE certified sustainably grown wine released by Bethel Heights Vineyard

Salem, Oregon. June 1, 2001. Bethel Heights Vineyard announces its release this month of the first wine grown in the United States to be certified sustainably grown under international standards. After three years of probation and inspection to demonstrate compliance with certification requirements in the vineyard, the first certified grapes were harvested at Bethel Heights in 1999. Bottled after a year in barrel, Bethel Heights' 1999 Estate Grown Pinot Noir goes to market this month with LIVE certification on the label.

Certification for sustainably grown wines in Oregon is provided by the Low Input Viticulture and Enology program [LIVE], a voluntary organization established in 1997 by a group of Oregon winegrowers led by Ted Casteel, co-owner and vineyard manager of Bethel Heights Vineyard. Incorporated in 1999, LIVE recently received official endorsement from the International Organization for Biological Control and Promotion of Integrated Systems [IOBC], the official certifying agency in Europe for sustainable agriculture.

According to LIVE founder Ted Casteel, "In recent years the cutting edge of international viticulture in the premium wine category has been moving rapidly in the direction of sustainable agricultural practices. It is now widely believed that there is a direct correlation between wine quality and balanced, healthy soils and vines. The LIVE program was designed to achieve these results progressively on a wide scale in Oregon viticulture without having to go all the way to biodynamic or organic standards overnight."

The basic goals of LIVE are to minimize off-farm inputs such as agricultural chemicals and fertilizers, and to maximize biodiversity. It is a point-based program that provides growers with a list of vineyard practices that are either prohibited or required. In addition, the program requires that growers institute a number of ecological options. The requirements for LIVE

certification are sufficiently comprehensive that certified vineyards automatically receive the Pacific Rivers Council's Salmon Safe certification for farming practices that restore water purity to salmon habitats.

Casteel estimates that last year at Bethel Heights Vineyard about 40% of the points received towards LIVE certification were for practices he would have adopted anyway to improve wine quality. Casteel also believes that implementation of LIVE mandated viticultural practices may result in long-term cost savings because of less dependence on expensive chemicals and fertilizers, and less frequent mowing. For the time being he thinks it is cost neutral, especially when the added value of higher quality wine is factored in.

According to LIVE Director Al MacDonald, twenty-one Oregon vineyards are already LIVE certified, with another 41 enrolled in the three-year probation period awaiting certification. MacDonald estimates that the total acreage represented by participating vineyards is about 2,200 acres, almost one-quarter of Oregon's total vineyard acreage.

Bethel Heights produced 1600 cases of the 1999 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, the first wine in Oregon to carry the LIVE logo on its label. This wine will be sold in select markets around the country as well as in Oregon after July 1. In future all of Bethel Heights estate grown wines will carry the LIVE certification on their labels. The partners at Bethel Heights believe it will be recognized eventually as a symbol of quality as well as environmental responsibility, because sustainably grown food really does taste better.

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