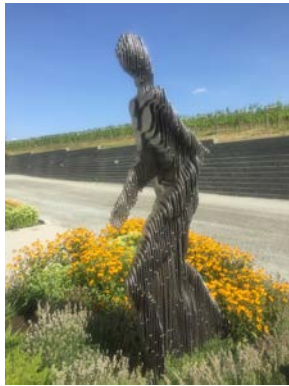


FROM THE CELLAR... TANTALUS VINEYARDS



YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“It’s the oldest continuously producing vineyard in British Columbia.” – Tantalus Vineyards



Tantalus Vineyards sculpture outside the winery and a map of the vineyard plots.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

July 24th, 2018

We knew of Tantalus Vineyards from having tasted their wines while visiting Vancouver, as well as from seeing them on some wine lists back home. What we didn’t know was Tantalus has the distinction of having the oldest continuously producing vineyards in the province, dating back to 1927.

As we would come to learn, the contemporary, minimalist style of the building and tasting room reflect the focus of the winery on the vines and wines.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Tantalus has deep roots on the eastern slopes of Lake Okanagan in Kelowna. Previously known as Pioneer Vineyards, the 1978-planted Riesling and 1985-planted Chardonnay would become a key part of Tantalus when Eric Savics acquired it in 2004.

From its first vintage in 2005, Tantalus would earn acclaims not only for its Riesling, but for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. These three varietals remain the core offerings of the winery, a perfect trio, so to speak.

The estate’s success fueled the need for a new winery building, which opened in 2010 and lays claim to being British Columbia’s first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified winery.

With a focus on the product, namely the vines and wines, the mask displayed on Tantalus’s wine labels, as well as throughout the winery itself, is an image of a mask by Dempsey Bob, an internationally-acclaimed Tahltan, Tlingit artist, whom Eric has known for over 25 years. The mask completes the clean, elegant labeling, at least in our view.



Tantalus Vineyards' tasting room

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Great grapes make great wines, not great winemakers, according to Tantalus Vineyards' winemaker, David Paterson. He believes winemakers definitely have a say in how a wine turns out but they can't craft something special without outstanding parent material.

The Tantalus winemaking team produces wine in the vineyard, so a lot of the winemaking decisions occur in the field, so to speak, before the grapes are harvested. David likes to help the grapes express their terroir and vintage, that is, the characteristics of any given growing season, and he only intervenes if something goes awry.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH DAVID PATERSON, WINEMAKER AND GENERAL MANAGER, TANTALUS VINEYARDS

Our impromptu visit to Tantalus meant neither Eric nor David were on site to answer our questions. But David was gracious enough to answer them afterwards...

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: I love the diversity. There are so many variables associated with wine and winemaking, which makes wine and the job itself very exciting. There is science behind wine, for sure, but there are too many variables to quantify scientifically. So, the artistry and the human palate play a huge factor, which I really enjoy.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: This is a tough one. The best wine I've ever tried was a Chateau Palmer 1983 (it beat out all the 1982 first growths in the same tasting.) However, consistently, I love Spätlese-level Riesling from Whelneer Sonnenhur vineyard made by Jos. Jos. Prumm.

[Author's note: Spätlese is one of six types of Prädikatswein, a German wine quality classification. Spätlese represents the second level of ripeness at harvest, so wines with this classification tend to be sweeter, roughly the equivalent of a light, late harvest wine.]

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: The variation. No two days are the same.

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: Being at the mercy of Mother Nature.

“There is science behind wine, for sure, but there are too many variables to quantify scientifically. So the artistry and the human palate play a huge factor.” – David Paterson

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: Spitting red wine all over my white shirt at my first tasting when I didn't know how to use a spittoon.

Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery that nobody else knows.

A: We are about to release a Spätlese-style Riesling of our own made from our oldest vines and fermented wild in old puncheons. This wine was made to commemorate Den Dulik, who planted the Old Blocks here at Tantalus. He passed away just after harvest in 2016, and we aptly named the wine Den's block.



Tantalus Wines

THE TASTING...

Though Eric and David weren't around, we enjoyed a fantastic tasting with Connor, who took his time answering our questions and guiding us through a few offerings. We started with the complimentary 2017 Juveniles Chardonnay (price: 19.13 CAD) and ended with the 2015 Old Vines Riesling (price: 30.43 CAD).

In between, we tasted the:

- 2017 Rosé (no longer available)
- 2016 Pinot Noir (price: 27.83 CAD)

Of these, the Juveniles Chardonnay emerged as our favourite to our pleasant surprise. But, don't let the name fool you, as it did us. The name Juveniles stems from the age of the vines, although at six years, they are no longer young.

Produced from a single vineyard block, this excellent Chardonnay is not only hand picked and small-lot fermented, it is created using wild fermentation and matured in both stainless steel and "neutral" oak barrels. This means the fruit dominates instead of the oak. The end result? A Chardonnay that would pair perfectly with an array of dishes, including our favourite winter Risotto dish!

In the Juveniles Chardonnay's nose, we detected butterscotch, jasmine, white peach, citrus (lemon and tangerine) rind, and chalky minerals. In the mouth, the light-to-medium bodied white offered high acidity, which felt both refreshing and crisp. We tasted lemon rind, minerals, green apple and vegetables (possibly, asparagus), and butterscotch. We would give this wine a solid 90/100, with excellent value for the money.

FINAL NOTES

The quality of the wines reflects Tantalus's effort and focus on key varietals. We look very much forward to tasting the new Spätlese-style Riesling, though, as a suggestion, we hope Tantalus changes the Juveniles wines' name to better reflect what's in the bottle.

Contact Tantalus Vineyards

1670 Dehart Road
Kelowna, British Columbia, V1W 4N6, Canada
info@tantalus.ca
+1 877.764.0078 or 250.764.0078
<https://tantalus.ca/>

Contact Us

Emilie Ryan 

36 Rialto Way
Ottawa, Ontario, K1T 4B3, Canada
emilie@emilieryan.com
+1 613.791.1247
<https://emilieryan.com/>