



# THE EYRIE VINEYARDS

**Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon USA**

David and Diana Lett founded The Eyrie Vineyards in 1966, and David produced wines through 35 vintages. In 2005, he proudly turned over the winemaking to son Jason Lett, who is continuing to earn praise for Eyrie wines.



David Lett

“Every vital winegrowing culture in the world has what might be called ‘zealot heroes.’ Oregon has David Lett, who single-handedly pioneered Oregon’s pinot noir culture and his Dundee vineyard in 1966. Lett’s contribution is indisputable, and his role - including his forthright assertions about how a ‘true’ pinot noir should taste - is simply invaluable.”

“Eyrie wines are now made by Lett’s son, Jason, who appears to have no quarrel with his father’s aesthetic convictions. Eyrie wines have always been exemplars of finesse and nuance rather than inky-dark power, bullying fruitiness and heavy-handed oakiness. The Letts, father and son, have remained true to their school — and it’s a fine, high-minded academy indeed” Matt Kramer,



Jason Lett

Quality winegrowing in America was in its infancy in the 1970’s. The Spurrier tasting in Paris in 1976 gave the first international credibility to California Cabernet and Chardonnay. Three years later, again in Paris, and the following year in Beaune, The Eyrie Vineyards 1975 Pinot noir brought international attention to Oregon, a wine region unfamiliar to almost anyone except a handful of hardy pioneers. With these two tastings, Oregon won its first recognition as the New World home for Pinot noir.

In January 1965, after earning a degree in viticulture and enology from UC/Davis, and research in Europe, 25-year old David Lett moved to Oregon “with 3,000 grape cuttings and a theory”. He planted the cuttings in a rented nursery plot, and went looking for the perfect vineyard site. It was the first planting of Pinot noir, Chardonnay, and related varieties in the Willamette Valley, and the first Pinot gris in America.

The Eyrie Vineyards, founded by David and Diana Lett in 1966, is located in the Red Hills of Dundee, about 30 miles SW of Portland. It was named for the red-tailed hawks who make their home (EYE-ree) in the fir trees at the top of the first vineyard plantings. The winery is in nearby McMinnville.

In 1975, The Eyrie Vineyards produced the first American Pinot noir to compete successfully with the renowned Pinot noirs of Burgundy. (Paris, 1979; Beaune, 1980).

In 2005, Jason Lett took over from his father as winemaker and vineyard manager at The Eyrie Vineyards, and continues his family’s pioneering legacy.

The philosophy of The Eyrie Vineyards, in the vineyards and in the winery, is to interfere as little as possible with the processes of Nature. From the beginning, the wines have been made exclusively from grapes grown without the use of insecticides, herbicides or systemic fungicides. The vines are grown on their own roots, and are not irrigated. While we are hands-on in the vineyard, winery manipulations are restrained, to preserve the varietal flavors and expression of terroir we work so hard to achieve in the vineyards.

Carrying Eyrie’s “gentle touch” vineyard philosophy into the winery seems only natural. The “style” is based on picking grapes at that elusive point of maturity where true varietal characteristics are at their peak, before they become over-ripe, and in the winery we take great care not to compromise these flavors. This means minimal racking, extended lees contact, complete and spontaneous malolactic fermentation, no fining, minimal filtration, etc. This gentle treatment creates wines which are very approachable when young, and legendary for their age-ability.

