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### *Oak Knoll Winery's Renaissance in Willamette Valley*

Oak Knoll, the third oldest continuously operated winery in Willamette Valley, Oregon, is owned and managed by one of Oregon's pioneering wine families, Ron and Marj Vuylsteke. The Vuylstekes have dedicated over 30 years of their lives to fulfilling Oak Knoll's mission, described by Ron as, "To make a wine for every palate – not the highest end, not the lowest end." He adds, "I think the longevity of Oak Knoll has really spoken to that point."

The longevity of Oak Knoll can also be attributed to its ability to sustain the peaks and valleys of the winery's history. Oak Knoll's flagship varietal, Pinot Noir, achieved prominence in 1983 when its 1980 Vintage Select Pinot Noir won Best of Show and the Governor's Trophy at the Oregon State Fair Wine Competition. One of the judges was famed California winemaker and consultant Andre Tchelistcheff.

After hearing who made the Best of Show wine, Andre phoned Ron Vuylsteke and told him, ***"I have spent the past fifty years of my life searching for the world's finest Pinot Noirs, and yours is among the greatest I have tasted."***

Robert M. Parker, Jr. of *The Wine Advocate* echoed Tchelistcheff's sentiments by mentioning to the Vuylsteke family, ***"I must admit that I was quite astonished by the high quality of your pinot noirs and chardonnays. They exhibited balance and unadulterated purity of fruit, with an underlying complexity that seems to swell and improve in the glass as the***

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*wine sits. . .I think what you have accomplished in 1983 with pinot noir is the most exciting development in the domestic wine industry in more than a decade."*

After this peak moment, the Vuylsteke family began to settle into a valley of quietly and consistently producing good quality, food-friendly Oregon wines.

Recently, Oak Knoll has taken steps to climb to a higher peak than before. The winery has entered into a time of amazing Renaissance. A couple of years ago, the Vuylsteke family brought in Greg Lint to serve as President of the wine company. Greg has since brought a new level of style and elegance to Oak Knoll.

Marketing materials have had a facelift. Their tasting room has been modernized. The wines are once again being submitted for review, and entered into major U.S. wine competitions.

Oak Knoll is nationally distributed through San Francisco Wine Exchange, and is the first Oregon (and also the first Northwest) winery to become part of the organization's fine wine portfolio. Oak Knoll is stepping into the spotlight once again.

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