

Goodfellow Family Cellars

Willamette Valley

(California Sales Only)



Marcus Goodfellow's Chardonnays, like his Pinot Noirs, are low-octane, elegant takes on the variety, with imperceptible oak influence. One might be tempted to call them Old World in style, which makes sense on account of their balance, but there's a distinctly Oregon character to the expressive fruit profiles that makes the wines extremely easy to drink soon after release. Don't hesitate to hold onto these Chardonnays for a few years, though, as they age gracefully.

—Josh Reynolds, Vinous Media, September 2020

Marcus Goodfellow grew up on a Douglas Fir tree farm in Oregon. He got the wine bug in college while working in restaurants, first in Los Angeles and later in Portland, and it was very much influenced by the old world. His wine education began in 2002 when he worked the harvest at Evesham Wood and made his first wines in the old Westrey Wine Company building, next door to Eyrie's old building, in McMinnville's granary district. He subsequently made three more vintages there, and he credits Westrey founders Amy Wesselman and David Autrey with encouraging and enabling him to begin his own production (then labeled exclusively as Matello Wines).

He also credits Cristom's Steve Doerner with inspiring him, above all with his openness and honesty. His relationship with Doerner cemented his decision to work with stems, or whole cluster fermentations, and Doerner helped guide him down the path of trusting mother nature to handle fermentations just fine with a minimum of interference.

His most important vineyard site is Whistling Ridge, a 14-acre site on a ridge rising just above the Beaux Frères vineyard (they're adjacent, now separated by a fence). The vineyard was established in 1990 by Richard and Patricia Alvord, who did their own grafting, which proved better than nursery grafting; and planted without irrigation, which led to a Darwinian result of survival of the fittest vines. Marcus met the couple in 1994, did some work in the vines and helped during a harvest, and in 2004 purchased his first batch of Pinot Noir grapes. In subsequent years, this grew to include Pinot Gris, and then Chardonnay in 2010 (when a winery bowed out of its commitment just before harvest because the vintage was deemed too cold). The last two of the five blocks followed in 2013, and now the vineyard is a monopole of Goodfellow Cellars.

Marcus, and his partner in crime at Goodfellow, Megan Joy, make the farming decisions. They have been restricting canopy growth for years now, plus farming no-till, and the result has been pHs averaging a comparatively low 3.4 (ie, good acidity) with alcohols ranging from 11.9 to 12.6 for whites and 12.1 to 13.5 for Pinot Noir. Whistling Ridge is organic, but not certified. Soils are shallow marine sediments, and the site is relatively flat, undulating ridgetop ground that faces mostly southeast.

As of 2021, the other Goodfellow sources are four acres in the Temperance Hill Vineyard in Eola-Amity and three acres from Durant Vineyard in the Dundee Hills. Previously, Marcus has sourced Lewman Vineyard in Eola-Amity and Fir Crest in Yamhill-Carlton, among others.

These days, he likes to do his Pinot Noir fermentations with 30, 50, or 100% whole cluster, depending on the vine- yard source and the vintage conditions (grapes from deep, rich volcanic soils, for example, respond well to a higher percentage of whole cluster, while hotter vintages typically take less whole cluster). He lets them go through long, cool extractions and doesn't add yeast. There's no temperature control, no use of enzymes, no pump overs, no cold soaks, no oak chips, minimal sulfur, and no fining. The end results are Pinot Noirs with striking aromatics and dense, savory flavors. They ask for a couple of years in bottle. They demand a proper meal.

His whites are a varied bunch, but all are intense, transparent wines--and quite rich without being heavy or clumsy. They display excellent acidities and minerality (he prefers sedimentary soils for his white grapes because the top soil tends to be merely a shallow layer above the bedrock).

Marcus works only with farmers he likes and trusts, and who tend their vineyards personally rather than relying on vineyard management companies. For him, wine is a deeply personal matter. He's a stickler about dry-farmed vineyards. He prefers windy cool sites with good airflow and drainage. He likes ground watched over by a faithful grower which in turn translates into wine with distinct personality.

In 2014 Marcus had his first child. Maybe it was this that motivated him to launch a new label, Goodfellow Family Cellars, a more serious and somber label that he originally dedicated to his production of Oregon's traditional varieties, primarily from single sites. These days Marcus bottles everything under the Goodfellow label; Matello has been retired. Marcus is shifting things in his cellar too by raising his wines more and more in large, mostly neutral 500-liter and 820-liter barrels in place of the standard 225/228-liter Burgundian barrels. This kind of aging is another step toward emphasizing purity of fruit and transparency of site.

He works with vines from some 21 acres and makes an average of 4,000 cases annually.

<https://goodfellowfamilycellars.com/>