

# UTOPIA



## MEDIA KIT

# Utopia Vineyard & Winery

Sometimes 'utopia' is defined by the paradoxical phrase, "**The perfect place. And no place.**" Lingering in this space of the imagination, a utopia can be gestured to but never perceived directly. For Utopia Vineyards, this gesture rests in the ongoing process of bringing a dream to life, only to be sensed by the ephemeral experience of their unique wines that keep you coming back for more.

Utopia Vineyard and Winery is a family-owned producer of small-lot, handcrafted wines specializing in world-class Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Perfectly situated at an elevation of 500 feet in the heart of the Ribbon Ridge American Viticultural Area (AVA) in the Northern Willamette Valley, Oregon, Utopia consists of 16.8 acres of contiguous South-facing hillsides in one of the most prestigious wine growing regions in the U.S. To that end, Utopia Winery has been consistent over the last 20 years in avoiding all pretense and being "**an approachable safe haven for the wine interested.**"

## The Story of Utopia

Utopia Vineyard and Winery began in the dreams of Dan Warnshuis. While he was working in Silicon Valley, his proximity to Napa Valley sparked a deep love for good food and wine. Dan was introduced to Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs on a business trip to the Pacific Northwest and quickly became one of the region's early proponents. The raw beauty of the Willamette Valley wine country and his increasing love for Oregon Pinot Noirs ultimately drove Dan to go in search of *the perfect place* for his own wine making endeavors. He started his search in 1998 and two years later found what he was looking for in a horse pasture off Ribbon Ridge Road. As Dan puts it, "I knocked on the owner's door and he sold it to me. It wasn't on the market at all...[but] this place checked all my boxes." After the soil tests confirmed the plot's potential and the serendipitous sale went through, Utopia Estate Vineyard was born.

Dan produced Utopia's first commercial vintage in 2006 with 413 cases of Estate Pinot Noir. A year later, owner/winemaker Dan and his family moved to the vineyard estate, officially making the operation a **family enterprise**. Kathy Warnshuis handles operations and behind the scenes affairs. Dan and Kathy's oldest daughter Erin manages marketing and hospitality. You also might run into Duke and Duchess on the property, the Warnshuis' two English Springer Spaniels and the mascots of Utopia.

## Fast Facts

- ◆ **Founded** in 2000 by Dan Warnshuis
- ◆ **Produced first commercial vintage** in 2006 – 413 cases of Estate Pinot Noir
- ◆ **Annual production:** 2,000 to 3,000 cases
- ◆ **L.I.V.E. Certified** in 2008 which ensures sustainable viticulture
- ◆ **16.8 acres** of vineyard
- ◆ Honored by the **International Pinot Noir Celebration** in 2014
- ◆ All winemaking takes place **onsite**

# Winemaking Philosophy

*"You live on your vineyard and work on it. You do things right by farming organically and not using chemical inputs. You preserve the land for those who come after you."*

~ Dan Warnshuis, Owner/Winemaker ([The Wine Write](#))

Artisan winemaking underscores an unwavering commitment to making exception wines that are a true reflection of the vintage in which they are produced. Vineyard ownership by the winemaker remains key to maintaining consistent quality, preservation, and stewardship for future generations and neighbors of the land. At Utopia, Dan's method centers this **minimalist and sustainable approach to winemaking**.

Dan personally oversees management of the vineyard, the harvest, and the winemaking process. Over the course of the growing season, Dan is actively involved in monitoring the development and maturity of the grapes, and at harvest, he is intimately involved in processing Utopia's fruit. Given that Pinot Noir is notoriously one of the most challenging wines to make, in part because the grapes themselves are fragile and easily damaged, fruit at Utopia is always harvested by hand using only small hand tools to snip off the fruit one bunch at a time.

The fruit arrives at the winery in less than an hour and is placed in a temperature-controlled area that prevents any detrimental early-stage fermentation until it is processed by state-of-the-art equipment. Utopia's Pinot Noir is aged in a combination of new and used French oak barrels produced by a mixture of the world's finest Burgundian coopers for added complexity in the wine. Utopia generally ages their wines between 11 and 12 months in temperature and humidity-controlled barrel rooms.

All the practices that Dan oversees are designed to support sustainable farming which leads to high quality fruit production annually. Utopia was **L.I.V.E. certified in 2008 and therefore follows international standards of sustainable viticulture**. The vineyard is dry farmed which is a holistic method that ensures grape quality, complexity of flavor, and water conservation. Through dry farming, the deep growing plants interact with the microbes in the soil, absorbing nutrients and minerals that contribute to an increased complexity and structure in the finished product.



## The Vineyard

As any wine expert will tell you, location is the most important factor when it comes to wine. Utopia Vineyard sits at an elevation of 500 feet in the heart of the **Ribbon Ridge American Viticultural Area (AVA)** in the Northern Willamette Valley, Oregon, one of the most prestigious wine growing regions in the United States. The premier potential of this area rests in the combination of **location, climate, soil structure, and other factors** that influence the makeup of the grapes.

The 18.9 acres of slightly southeast facing slopes that make up the Utopia Vineyard are surrounded by the Chehalem Mountains, one factor that contributes to a near-perfect microclimate for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. The high mountains provide a rain curtain for the vineyard as they absorb a lot of the moisture coming from the ocean. The area has a dry and warm growing season while still being classified as a cool climate. The climate of the area further leads to a long growing season, although sometimes the winemaking team must race to beat the rains.



Several factors create Utopia Vineyard's ideal soil composition. The soil on Ribbon Ridge is a marine sedimentary type since the area was a seacoast some 50 million years ago. The rich and sandy volcanic soil contains two feet of topsoil with lots of minerals and fossils. The microclimate of the area, history of the soil, and the soil's exceptional drainage combine to produce fruit with unique and complex flavor annually. The next most important ingredient for interesting wines is intentionally selecting clones to plant in the soil. After three major plantings in 2002, 2005, and 2010, the vineyard is comprised of 12 different Pinot Noir clones and three low-yielding Dijon Chardonnay clones.

The first four-acre block to be planted was comprised of six different types of high-quality Pinot Noir grapes including Dijon 115, 667, and 777, Pommard, Wadensville, and Swan clones. Dan chose these clones because of their diverse and highly desirable flavors, earthy aromas, and interesting spice characteristics on the finish. Three years later, Dan added another five one-acre blocks that included five different Heirloom, or Old World, clones from old vine cuttings – the youngest clone being 37 years old. All these clones came from well-established vineyards in Oregon and California and were chosen for their blending potential. These acres provide Utopia with maximum clonal diversity, a key factor in producing wines that are complex and consistently flavorful.

In 2018, Utopia [announced its first major expansion](#) since its founding with the acquisition of an additional 36.5 acres in the Ribbon Ridge AVA. With the acquired land, Utopia plans to plant an additional 15 acres and some non-typical fruit varieties starting in Fall 2021.

## Meet the Family



**Dan Warnshuis** has always been driven by a competitive spirit. He grew up with five brothers, a sister, and many cousins and had a self-described “Huck-Finn kind of experience” in California’s San Joaquin Valley. He was an All-American swimmer in high school and attended Michigan State University on a full scholarship for swimming. His experience as a college athlete, for one, instilled in him the passion and determination needed to accomplish his goals.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in 1978, Dan relocated to Silicon Valley and began what would be a successful career in the technology sector.

However, it was living in the Napa Valley wine country that made him quickly realize his passion for great food and wine. Once the wine bug bit him, he could not help but dream of creating his own wine label. Ultimately, his love for Oregon Pinot Noir revealed to him his path forward.

Dan, founder, owner, and winemaker at Utopia, strives to produce world-class wine that will make Utopia one of the best wineries in the world. Beyond the competitive pursuit of wine making, Dan finds tranquility in Utopia being the fulfillment of his dreams.



**Erin Warnshuis** was just 12 years old when her parents purchased the horse pasture that would become Utopia Vineyard. Years later, she worked side by side with her dad on the 2005 inaugural harvest and crush. She grew up surrounded by vineyard, working part time at the winery on weekends, after school, and on summer breaks. In 2007 she worked the harvest and crush at the Dobbles Family Winery in Dundee, experiencing harvest in a large winery environment and enhancing her wine variety knowledge.

Erin graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in history in 2012 and set out to explore the corporate world. She worked as an insurance specialist in the medical industry for five years before realizing that her heart was in the winemaking industry. In 2017 she returned to Utopia to manage the tasting room and the marketing programs for the Winery. She credits her success at Utopia to her ability to research, archive, “learning on the fly,” and having enough energy to keep up with Dan and all the Winery’s “Fun & Games.”

Erin currently holds a Wine and Spirits Education Trust (WSET) Level 2 certification and is continuing her wine education while gaining practical experience working in all aspects of the family business.



**Kathy Warnshuis** is a self-described “pioneer” and the quiet inspiration behind the Utopia brand. Kathy manages her corporate client gift basket fulfillment business in her spare time, which is increasing very little. She takes a creative and fresh approach to both businesses, and in her now non-existent free time, she enjoys quilting and stitchery.

**Duke and Duchess** are the Warnshuis’ English Springer Spaniels. Do not worry, they are very friendly and like to personally welcome everyone who visits.

## The Wines

**Estate Pinot Noir** The Estate Pinot Noir is a blend of 12 different clones from Utopia's estate vineyard. This maximum clonal diversity sets this wine apart from most other Pinot Noirs and delivers the broadest interpretation of the vineyard. The Estate Pinot Noir exhibits ripe berry and cherry fruit mingled with rose petal and spicy aromas. It is elegantly textured with vibrant acidity, a juicy mid-palate, accents of toasty French oak, and flavors that soar on a long finish.

**Estate Chardonnay** Utopia's Estate Chardonnay is handcrafted with all the care and control that the delicate grapes require. Harvesting the grapes slightly under ripe preserves the natural acid in the fruit which give the wine its structure. Preserving the acid permits full MLF and produces a medium body and creamy, not buttery, texture in the wine. The Estate Chardonnay exhibits fresh notes of pineapple, banana, citrus, white peach, and hints of toasted vanilla (thanks to the light but focused influence of new Burgundian oak).

**Pinot Noir Rosé** Utopia's Pinot Noir Rosé is one of the most unique rosés in the U.S. Inspired by Bandol production methods and using Pinot Noir grapes in the place of traditional Rhone varieties used in the Bandol region, the grapes are cold soaked to extract more flavor and tannin. Then they are direct pressed and aged in neutral Burgundian oak. This combination produces a heartier style that is cellar worthy for several years and delivers soft, subtle aromas of cherries, strawberries, and watermelon with toasty, spicy notes.

**Pinot Noir Blanc - "Bliss"** Pinot Noir is a versatile grape as the grapes can produce red wine, rosé, and even white wine. The secret to this white Pinot Noir is getting the grapes to the cellar to press as quickly as possible. The wine is champagne like in color with a palate that bursts with bright citrus, white peach, and tropical notes with a toasty, creamy finish that lingers and lingers.

**Late Harvest Riesling** The Late Harvest Riesling is varietally pure and unoaked with apricot, peach, and citrus aromas and flavors as well. It has a high acidity that cuts through the sweetness and delivers multiple layers of complex flavor. This wine is produced from grapes that are harvested while still intact and then frozen artificially in cold storage.

**Estate Reserve Pinot Noir - "Paradise"** This unique wine is a barrel selection of our three best lots from our oldest vineyard blocks. The Paradise Reserve is a dark, polished ruby in a glass. It is bright and vibrant with dark cherry and red plum flavors complemented by savory herb and spicy notes which all lead into a juicy and mouthwatering finish that is long, spicy, and complex.

**Estate Reserve Pinot Noir - "Clone 777"** The Clone 777 is a single clonal bottling of Dijon 777, one of Utopia's important stand-alone clones. Dijon 777 is known for its savory fruit characteristics and is 100% whole cluster fermented. Exhibiting aromas of dark cherry and violets and a crisp, spicy, and savory finish, the Clone 777 is the ideal of balance of sophistication and structure which lends to its potential for extended cellaring.

**Estate Reserve Pinot Noir - "Eden"** Eden is a single clonal bottling of the most important and renowned Pommard clone from which many of Burgundy's Grande Cru Classe wines are produced. The Pommard clone is known for its massive fruit and spicy characteristics. Eden is our version of a power Pinot and is 100% Pommard, 100% whole cluster, and 100% new Burgundian oak. A hand selection of only the most uniform clusters comprised of only the two best barrels from the cellar creates an expressive, rich, and complex wine with black cherry, berry, vanilla, and savory notes.

## Experience Utopia

At the **Utopia Tasting Room** you can experience sweeping vineyard views with a hillside backdrop and breathtaking sunsets while sipping on Utopia's wine. The daily tasting flight is designed to be fun and educational by owner/winemaker Dan himself. Just 30 minutes outside of Portland, the Tasting Room is a great way to spend an afternoon learning about wine and participating in the **onsite fun and games** including corn-hole and bocce ball. If you want some food in your belly while sipping on delicious wine, you can bring your own picnic or enjoy one of Utopia's cheese plates. For a more intimate experience, Utopia offers private vineyard tours and tastings with Dan.



Additionally, the winery offers other wine country experiences including a cellar room available to rent for intimate gatherings and private dining experiences and [events](#) such as the OMSI Star Party, Opera á la Carte, and Shakespeare in the Vineyard. Utopia also offers a private log cabin to rent. The cabin is secluded on 37 acres of forested land surrounding the estate vineyard. There is a master suite with a king bed, private bath, a 43" flat screen TV, a queen size sleeper sofa, a large deck with a grill, and a full kitchen. Check out the [Airbnb listing](#) for more information.

Other opportunities to experience Utopia include a [virtual tour](#) on their website and joining the [Utopian Tasting Society](#), a perfect place for people who want to grow their knowledge and appreciation of wine.

*Utopia's tasting room is open daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. year-round including most major holidays. The fee is \$20 for non-members. Reservations are recommended for parties of six or more. For a more intimate experience, call or visit Utopia's website to schedule a private vineyard tour and wine tasting with Dan.*

**Contact Utopia Vineyard & Winery** 503-687-1671 • [info@utopiawine.com](mailto:info@utopiawine.com)

**Winery Assets** Wine tech sheets, photos, video, and audio available upon request.