



GROWING SEASON

What we look for in a great vintage is a growing season without extremes—ample rainfall in winter, no frost in spring and no heat spikes in summer—and 2016 was one of our more moderate growing seasons of the past 10 years. Sonoma County received plenty of rain during the winter—the banks of Jordan’s lower lake swelled to the edge of our road. These rains were well received by our growers because the depleted water table and the local reservoirs were restored. After an unseasonably warm February, bud break occurred a tad early—only a week later than the very early 2015. “Uniform” was how we described bud break in the Chardonnay vineyards in 2016—all the leaves were bursting at the same time, so they could progressively grow in concert—which is ideal because Jordan Chardonnay’s harmony is achieved by uniformity in the vineyard. Flowering commenced in early May (typical timing), and despite some rainy days and a little wind, the flowers pollinated well, and fruit set revealed an average-sized crop for all of our Chardonnay growers—down only about 15% of a typical vintage. Moderate weather prevailed throughout June and July without unwanted heat spikes and then a massive cooling trend hung over Sonoma County most of August, with foggy mornings that lingered into the afternoon and temperatures 10 degrees below average. The cool weather allowed our Chardonnay grapes to continue slowly ripening without the threat of excessive heat, which can sunburn their delicate skins. The freshness of fruit and the vibrant acidity in our Chardonnay are also better retained in the clusters when peak temperatures in the summer are less severe. Moderate weather, ideal for fruit maturation, prevailed throughout harvest, allowing us to pick Russian River Valley Chardonnay grapes in the coldest hours of the night to preserve their bright acidity and crisp fruit flavors.

VINEYARDS

The 2016 Jordan Chardonnay was blended from a dozen different vineyard blocks from five sites on the east side of the Russian River. Two factors are critical in how we select these long-term growers: vineyard sites with moderately cool temperatures that allow for bright fruit flavors and crisp acidity and well-drained, gravelly soils that provide both physiologically mature grapes and minerality to the finish of the wine. It is this necessary combination of climate and soil that shares a common thread with the White Burgundies that inspire our style of winemaking at Jordan.

VITICULTURE

Due to the early bud break, we took additional measures to avoid frost damage by mowing flowering cover crops earlier than normal, ensuring that the cold air wouldn’t get trapped in the vineyard rows of actively growing vines. Moderate weather in summer made 2016 a more relaxing vintage for farmers, due to the lack of extreme weather events. As the uniform crop began to grow in summer, leaves were thinned from the eastern morning-sun side of the grapevines to encourage ripening, while the leaves covering the fruiting zone were left untouched on the western afternoon-sun side to prevent sunburn. During the unusually cool August, mildew pressures were high, but our vineyard teams mitigated any threats with organic fungicide treatments. Veraison thinning, sacrificing about 10% of the overall clusters, was employed to ensure that the fruit on the vine ripened evenly. Additional leaves were removed in August to open up the canopy and allow air movement to the clusters—a practice to prevent bunch rot. Overall, it was a vintage that mirrored a lack of stress for the fruit and for the growers, and for that, we were very grateful.

HARVEST

In 2016, harvest began on September 1 with Russian River Valley Chardonnay—all fruit was handpicked in the coolness of the night and early morning hours before sunrise. Picking continued under ideal weather through September 22, with sugar levels averaging 23.4 Brix. Fruit arrived at the crushpad very pristine without sunburn and with phenomenal fruit flavors. What I look for in a great harvest is intensity of fruit flavors, and when we transferred the fruit from the grower’s bins to our hopper, our senses were overwhelmed with gorgeous aromas. Joy turned to pure elation. Compared to vintages like 2012 where the tons harvested exceeded our estimates, 2016 was right on par. Both 2016 Jordan wines are a fitting way to celebrate the 40th anniversary of our first vintage, the 1976 Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon.

-Rob Davis, winemaker