



GROWING SEASON

The quality of the 2017 vintage was a testament to the resilience and hardiness of the grapevines, and to the determination and skill of the vineyard and winemaking teams working together to make the best of a difficult situation.

Following record rainfall in the winter of 2016 that refilled local reservoirs and replenished the water table, 2017 was a return to normalcy—mainly due to cooler temperatures. Days remained cool to cold from late winter into early spring, which prevented an early bud break and allowed the vines to continue their slumber until mid-March. Cool temperatures stretched into April, but by mid-May the sun shone on the vines and flowering began about three weeks later than the last few vintages. Bloom conditions were normal with some light wind, allowing an average-sized crop to form. Grape clusters grew evenly into June, when fruit set began.

Then, three heat spikes slammed Sonoma County in June and July, bringing temperatures from the mid-90s to well above 100 degrees. Due to the intense heat, the vines couldn't focus energy on growing their fruit, so clusters remained small without much increase in berry weight. Leafing to open up the grapevine canopy and provide filtered light to the clusters, which typically happens in June, had to be delayed. August days were blessedly cool, with ideal foggy mornings and night temperatures that dipped into the mid-50s. Over Labor Day weekend, just after harvest began, another heat wave hit and temperatures reached well into the triple digits—a dramatic finish to a season that kept us on our toes all year.

VINEYARDS

The 2017 Jordan Chardonnay was blended from a dozen vineyard blocks in the Russian River Valley, cultivated by six different growers. When selecting fruit sources for each vintage, Jordan seeks out vineyard sites with moderately cool temperatures that allow for bright fruit flavors and crisp acidity, along with well-drained, gravelly soils that provide both physiologically mature grapes and minerality. This combination of climate and soil shares a common thread with the White Burgundies that inspire Jordan's winemaking style.

VITICULTURE

Due to the successive heat waves, Jordan's vineyard team took several measures to assure high-quality fruit. Delaying the leafing of the canopy provided additional shade to help cool the grapes and prevent sunburn. During the Labor Day heat spike that stressed the vines, irrigation was used to cool the fruit and prevent dehydration. There was no guarantee that this tactic would work: There is a limit to what a grapevine can endure, and if the heat continues day after day, the vine aborts the fruit in a last ditch effort to survive. Fortunately, Jordan's irrigation efforts were successful and minimal fruit was lost. Grapes tested just after the heat spell showed very high sugar readings, but two days later, sugar levels dropped back to their normal rate of maturation.

HARVEST

Jordan's Russian River Valley Chardonnay harvest kicked off on August 30, just before the Labor Day heat wave. While this didn't impact fruit quality, we did have a smaller yield than expected—a reminder that quality winemaking requires sacrifice. In order to retain our high standards of quality and flavor, we bottled about one-third less Jordan Chardonnay in 2017 than in a typical vintage. The clusters were small, about 25 percent below normal weight, and additional clusters were lost when the stressed vines aborted some of the fruit during the Labor Day heat wave. Juice yields were about 10 percent below normal. Additionally, in order to focus on Jordan Chardonnay's signature, bright-fruit character, most of the hard-press juice—the main source of potential bitter flavor components—was declassified and sold, helping to ensure the preservation of the crisp flavors of apple, pear and peach.

-Rob Davis, winemaker