

DONUM

The Gift of the Land

The Winside Vineyard was planted to all Pinot Noir in 1997 and 2008, but over the years we couldn't help but think that chardonnay might also thrive on this site. After a certain clone continued to fall short of our expectations over several years, we decided in 2015 to take the opportunity to t-bud some different clones onto the already existing root system to learn what might perform better on this site. In addition, we took a small section and budded over to chardonnay, finally giving us the chance to make a Russian River chardonnay. The 2016 marks the inaugural release of this wine, and if it is any indication, the site is certainly well-suited to chardonnay.

Our first vintage of Russian River Chardonnay shares some elements—lemon, key lime, and paraffin—with its sibling from Carneros, but introduces new elements as well, such as graham cracker, peach flower, and slate aromas. The palate is racy like our Carneros, but also richer, with flavors of Anjou pear and orange zest joined by stone fruit. The finish is bright and vibrant, yet rich at the same time, with backing spice and granny smith apple lingering.

FRUIT: 100% Old Wente clone Chardonnay from the Winside Vineyard

NEW OAK: 100% French oak, 50% new (Damy, Sirugue, Cadus)

HARVEST DATE: August 26 and September 3, 2016

ALCOHOL: 14.3%

BOTTLING DATE: January 31, 2018

PH: 3.25

CASE PRODUCTION: 321 cases

TA: 7.9 g/L

FERMENTATION & AGING DETAILS

For the first vintage of RRV chardonnay we decided to pick the block in two passes, first a fairly low sugar level, and then again eight days later at a higher level, as there is no "perfect" ripeness-level and it very valuable with a new block to see how it performs at different levels of ripeness. Once in the winery the fruit was treated identically, first whole-cluster pressed and then cold-settled overnight in tank, then finally barreled down to French oak for fermentation. The juice fermented in the coldest part of the cellar, with fermentation lasting just over four weeks. We then inhibited malolactic fermentation, and allowed the wine to age on the lees, with occasional stirring to round out the palate. After about a year in barrel, we tasted through and selected the best barrels for the final blend, which were then racked to tank in December of 2017 and bottled on January 31, 2018.

WEATHER ATTRIBUTES

The 2016 vintage was eerily reminiscent of 2014 and 2015; in fact, looking at a graph of growing degree days, 2016 is almost an exact replica of 2014. Thus, it was no surprise that bud-break was early for the third successive vintage, in some cases starting in early February, but certainly well underway by mid-March. This naturally results in an earlier harvest, and we once again began picking Pinot Noir in August and finished by the first week of October. However, looking merely at temperatures can be deceiving, as factors such as rainfall, diurnal temperature swings, and the timing and duration of heat spikes can greatly affect the development of the vines. While 2016 was the last of five straight drought years, we did receive average or slightly above average rain during the winter of 2015/16, so the soils were saturated, and water was not an issue, allowing for even vegetative growth.

The 2016 season was characterized by three heat waves in September, which makes for tricky picking decisions, as fruit that is just on the cusp of ripeness can quickly jump to over-ripeness during prolonged heat. We were fortunate that the timing of the heat was not problematic for our vineyards, and we picked ripe fruit just before each heatwave, leading to a harvest with three peaks of harvesting. The 2016 vintage was the fifth in a row with excellent growing conditions, a remarkable string of good fortune.

2016
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY
ESTATE GROWN
CHARDONNAY

