



GROWING SEASON

Following three exceptional vintages, 2015 experienced more difficult weather conditions, but great vineyards prevail during these climatic challenges. Cold, damp weather in late spring, a September heat spike and smaller-than-normal berry and yield sizes all defined the size of the 2015 vintage and its more European character. Mild spring weather resulted in an early bud break, with grapevines emerging from dormancy three weeks ahead of a typical growing season. Temperatures remained warm, and the vines began to bloom in late April. When May arrived, the weather took a dramatic turn. Suddenly, it seemed more like February than the end of spring, and unusually cool, damp days lingered the first two weeks of the month when fertilization of the vines' flowers was occurring. This caused shatter in the forming clusters, which led to fewer flowers turning into berries and signaled a smaller yield for 2015.

The cool weather also led to uneven flowering and fruit set in some vineyards. Warm temperatures eventually returned and remained throughout the summer, helping the vines ripen their reduced crop. The growing season was free of major heat spikes until September, when temperatures climbed above 100 degrees and remained high through the middle of the month. The heat fluctuations, coupled with the cold weather during flowering, resulted in grape cluster weights being down 20-30% from normal. Fortunately, the reduction in quantity did not impact the overall quality of the grapes, which was superb.

VINEYARDS

The final blend of 2015 Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon began with different vineyard blocks from Jordan Estate and 12 growers, primarily situated in the benchlands and hillsides of Geyserville, east of the Russian River. Our vineyard sites are selected because of their well-drained, gravelly soils in the warmer Alexander Valley, which allow the grapes to gain physiological maturity without sacrificing pure varietal character, bright acidity and moderate sugar levels. We also maintain an operating philosophy where growers are paid by the acre, not the ton, and are further rewarded for quality farming decisions. It is this necessary combination of climate, soil and husbandry that shares a common thread with the grand cru classé Bordeaux that inspire our style of winemaking.

VITICULTURE

The weeks of cool weather in May required a meticulous response in the vineyard to bring the grapevines back into balance. To mitigate the unevenly growing clusters, all of Jordan's growers were instructed to drop any flower clusters still hanging while they completed hand-leaving of the canopies in June. Sacrificing a portion of the already smaller crop worked well, and the remaining clusters ripened under moderately temperate days throughout summer. Evapotranspiration sensors were used in the vineyards to ensure the vines only received the precise amount of irrigation needed, conserving as much water as possible while maintaining the health of the vines. With smaller and fewer clusters drawing vigor from the vines, the protective canopy helped allay any sunburn potential.

HARVEST

Due to the September heat spike that increased sugar levels in the fruit, harvest began early and ran at an accelerated pace. Harvest kicked off for Jordan Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon on September 3 and the last grapes made their way into the fermentation room on September 28. This made the 40th vintage at Jordan one of the earliest-finishing harvests in the winery's history. Despite low yields, the quality of the fruit was exceptional. Berries were small, but delicious, and the cabernet showed deep, rich, blackberry and cassis flavors with a concentration of tannin.

-Rob Davis, winemaker