



GROWING SEASON

The growing season began uneventfully. Vineyards awoke from winter dormancy in mid-to-late March, and bud break happened right on time. The vines enjoyed a warm, sunny spring, with no real threat of frost. While some light rainfall interrupted flowering, reducing the chardonnay crop, fruit set was even. A warm summer brought only two significant heat spikes, and the vines looked healthy and balanced, with little-to-no sunburn. Apart from the challenges presented by COVID-19 precautions, everything appeared to be going smoothly.

Then, on August 17, thousands of lightning strikes ignited wildfires across California. Fortunately, the slow-burning Walbridge Fire, located in a remote, forested area west of Healdsburg, was far enough away from our grower vineyards that smoke drift was not a significant issue. However, nearly half of our chardonnay—still maturing on the vines—was inaccessible in evacuation zones. As soon as fire officials lifted the orders for Russian River Valley, we immediately began testing for smoke impacts, trusting our palates to tell us what we needed to know. As we sampled grapes in each block, we could taste the freshness, acidity and fruit in the juice. We also performed “micro-ferments” in five-gallon buckets for each block, and not a trace of smoke was found.

VINEYARDS

We blended the 2020 Jordan Chardonnay from 17 vineyard blocks in the Russian River Valley, cultivated by six 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

In a typical year, winemakers hire international interns to come and work harvest. It’s an invaluable experience for these young apprentices and an essential, seasonal workforce that we rely on each year. Due to pandemic travel restrictions, wineries had to cancel their intern programs in 2020. Jordan sales department employees quickly pivoted to help plant grapevines on the estate during the summer, then learned to pump the must or crushed grapes into presses or tanks at harvest. Maintenance employees learned to operate the hopper while the winemaking team received grapes. Jordan’s staff worked together as a small team, while following protocols to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.

HARVEST

After our tests and sampling determined that the chardonnay showed no traces of smoke impacts, we began picking on August 26. As the harvest finished on September 12 and we filled the fermentation room with freshly crushed grapes, we breathed a sigh of relief knowing that the 2020 Jordan Chardonnay would be a beautiful wine. Though yields were down 20 to 30 percent—mainly due to the spring rains—the wine smells and tastes great, showing lively acidity and delicate aromas of Fuji apple, Asian pear, freshly cut persimmon and citrus blossom.

-Maggie Kruse, winemaker