



FOUNDERS RESERVE CHARDONNAY

VINTAGE 2016 • SONOMA COAST • ESTATE BOTTLED

OBSERVATIONS ON A NEW VINTAGE

Although 2016 saw seasonal rainfall closer to average, California officially marked its fifth year of continued drought. As in year's past, we used deficit irrigation concepts and soil and plant moisture data to carefully manage our water resources.

This year brought another classic California spring and summer without any weather extremes and, throughout most of the growing season, we paced about two weeks earlier than our average. Fog and cooler conditions returned in August slowing the pace of ripening closer to a normal harvest start. Our Chardonnay harvest began with fruit from Les Pierres on August 26th.

Throughout September, the weather was picture perfect. Like clockwork, each weekend brought a small warm push followed by cooling during the week. The weather variations gave us a steady stream of perfectly ripe fruit over the course of the total six-week harvest. With the long hang time, the fruit developed beautiful depth of flavors and held its bright, natural acidity. The last of the fruit arrived at our Chardonnay winery on October 7th.

ON THE VINEYARD

Founders Reserve is always the most intriguing wine of the vintage and normally crafted from select fruit of single vineyard blocks. As we planned for this vintage, we concentrated on our vineyards that are planted to the traditional, high density spacing found in the famous Chardonnay vineyards of Burgundy, France. Of our six estate vineyards, Les Pierres, Vine Hill Ranch and Cutrer each have a Chardonnay block where the vines are planted one meter apart and rows are only one meter wide. The close spacing promotes competition between vines resulting in lower yields per vine. The fruit from these blocks was selected for this wine.

ON THE WINE

Grapes were hand-harvested starting in the early mornings and then cooled down to preserve the fruit's fresh flavors and natural acidity. After hand-sorting, the grapes were gently whole-cluster pressed to avoid bitter tannins from the skins and grape seeds. The cool, golden-green, free-run juice was then settled naturally in tanks for a few days before heading to French oak barrels for fermentation. Each of the contributing blocks were fermented separately sur-lies in a mix of new and one-year old barrels. After ten months, the final blend was assembled and returned to barrel for an additional six months of aging.

On the nose, you will find earthy aromas and mineral notes that mingle with scents of baked apple, hazelnut, baking spices, pie crust, Asian pear and lemon curd. The texture is rich and elegant with a full creamy mid-palate. Flavors of layered bright pear, peach and honey round out to a lingering Honeycrisp apple finish with underlying hints of baking spice and roasted nuts. Fans will appreciate the beautiful depth and complexity that they have come to expect from each vintage of this exceptional wine. This is a wine to cellar as it will continue to age very well in the bottle for the next several years.

Alcohol % • TA: 6.65 gms/L • pH: 3.2 • RS: 0.4 gms/L (dry) • 100% Chardonnay
100% Malolactic Fermentation • Fermentation: 100% Oak
Oak aged for a total of 16 months: 85% 1-year old
15% New Vineyard: 47% Les Pierres (H South) 42% Vine Hill (X North) • 11% Cutrer (A Burgundy)



SONOMA=CUTRER

Please enjoy our wines responsibly.

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