

GARY FARRELL

VINEYARDS & WINERY

2020 RITCHIE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Vineyards

Ritchie Vineyard is legendary in Russian River Valley, widely regarded as one of the best Chardonnay sites in all of California. The vineyard was first planted in 1972 to a handful of heritage selections, including Old Wente, and sits on a rolling northwest facing hillside in the heart of Russian River Valley, near the intersection of Trenton-Healdsburg and Eastside roads. The unique soil profile, comprised of Goldridge series sandy loam and a layer of volcanic ash deposits, creates wines with great intensity, which exude a rare purity and sense of place. For more than forty years, Kent Ritchie has farmed this vineyard with passion, precision, and a loving touch. He pays personal attention to the wishes of each winemaker working with his grapes because, like the best growers in the area, he understands that the relationship is as important as the quality of the finished product that bears his name.

Vintage

What an interesting year 2020 was around the world, and here in wine country as well. The growing season began with one of the driest winters in memory, and certainly the driest February in recorded history. The dry weather continued through the spring months and even into summer, leaving the vines with very little soil moisture to maintain a healthy canopy. Water stress can actually create beautifully concentrated wines, and that's precisely what we're observing. Budbreak and flowering began a couple of weeks ahead of the previous season, indicating an early onset of harvest. The summer weather was relatively mild, with very few heat spikes, so the vines soaked up the sun, producing a beautifully balanced crop with small to moderately sized clusters. Moving into late summer, veraison was early, but the weather and the crop were looking pretty close to ideal. In the middle of August, wildfires caused a number of interruptions and cut the harvest short by a great deal, but neither the winery nor the vineyards suffered damage.

Winemaking

The grapes were harvested in the cool morning hours at ~23° Brix. A quick pass was made through our rows a few days prior to harvest in order to drop fruit that did not express the optimal flavor and concentration. As anticipated, the grapes that were delivered to the winery were packed with delicious, vibrant, varietally expressive characteristics. After a very careful hand-sorting, we combined all the fruit in the press, and used a gentle program to extract only the most desirable solids and phenolics. The resulting juice was left in tank to cold-settle overnight before transferring to 35% new and 65% neutral French Oak Barrels and a 500-litre French Oak Puncheon for fermentation and aging, where it remained for 9 months on its primary lees until it was time to bottle in June. This small production wine was racked off the primary lees only once, and bottled unfiltered.

Tasting Notes

This pure, unfiltered Chardonnay presents notes of white peach, passion fruit, and decadent creme brulee. Elements of white flowers and Manuka honey are expressed in concert with a subtle waft of wet stone. Full and rich upon first taste, the palate abounds with a textural intrigue and silkiness that is balanced by lingering, tangy intensity.

Appellation

Russian River Valley

Vineyards

Ritchie Vineyard

Composition

100% Chardonnay

Fermentation & Aging

10 months in 35% new
French oak

Alcohol

14.1%

pH / T.A.

3.18 / 7.3 gm/L

Production

72 Cases

Bottling Date

July 22, 2021

Release Date

May 2023

Retail Price

\$65