

# FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST

*Dedicated farming, Masterful Winemaking, Profound Wines*

## 2017 CHARDONNAY · FORT ROSS VINEYARD · FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW · SONOMA COAST



From our mountain vineyard that overlooks the Sonoma Coast in the Fort Ross-Seaview American Viticultural Area, Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery produces limited quantities of single vineyard, Estate grown, cool-climate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage. With spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean less than one mile away, the vineyard is divided into 32 separate blocks, one-half to two acres in size, that range in elevation from 1700 down to 1200 feet above sea level. Owners, Lester and Linda Schwartz with their small crew began preparing the 52 acre vineyard in 1994. It took them 4 years of preparation before they could begin planting. The year 2000 marked the first vintage from the Fort Ross Vineyard.

**VINTAGE:** The 2017 growing season welcomed generous rainfall for the first several months of the year. After five drought years the soils were hydrated and our irrigation pond was brimming. Bud-break occurred in mid-March followed by a warmer than usual spring which brought an early fruit-set, fortunately, by then the rains had subsided. The summer enjoyed mild to average, 80-85° temperatures, allowing the grapes to develop ideal complexity and flavors with optimal development. During the first week of September, all of California experienced a heat spike, with this the first few blocks were harvested. Temperatures then mellowed during the remainder of harvest, allowing each variety to be picked at the ideal time. Pinot Noir was unhurriedly harvested between August 31–September 19, one of the many advantages of growing grapes overlooking the cool Pacific Ocean. Chardonnay was picked September 10–14 and finally the slower ripening Pinotage on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Fortunately, all of our fruit was picked prior to the heartbreaking 2017 Sonoma fires. The vintage brought in lower yields, producing wines with great depth and concentration, while the hydrated soils delivered vibrant aromatics and acidity.

**WINEMAKING:** The grapes were handpicked during the cool hours of the night in small two-gallon picking trays then hand sorted in the vineyard and gently whole cluster pressed at the winery. After pressing, the juice was put into barrels and underwent primary and malolactic fermentation in a combination of 25% new and 75% neutral French oak. This discrete use of new oak allowed the fruit to shine. This wine is comprised of small berried old Hyde field selection chosen for its richness and sleek structure and low-yielding Wente for its luscious fruit and grace. These heritage field selections have full, complex flavors that are intensified by the small size of both the bunches and the berries.

**TASTING NOTES:** Aromas of apricots, honeysuckle and almonds reveal themselves in each swirl. The smooth, silky texture surrounds multifaceted flavors of lemon curd, autumnal pears, hazelnuts and brioche, which are enlivened by both balanced acidity and the minerality characteristic of the Fort Ross Vineyard. The bold finish of this golden wine lingers with finesse and elegance, as the intense flavors continue through the palate. This well-integrated and finely-structured Chardonnay will continue to evolve for many years.

**COMPOSITION:** 100% Chardonnay  
**APPELLATION:** Fort Ross-Seaview, Sonoma Coast  
**ESTATE GROWN:** Fort Ross Vineyard  
**SELECTIONS:** Hyde & Old Wente field selections  
**AGING:** 10 months in French oak; 25% new  
**HARVESTED:** September 10–14, 2017  
**BOTTLING:** August, 2018, Unfined & Unfiltered  
**CASES PRODUCED:** 316 cases, 750ml  
**WINEMAKER:** Jeff Pisoni