

ANTHILL FARMS

2017 Peugh Vineyard Chardonnay — Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County

2017 Harvest: Two thousand seventeen was a year of extremes in the North Coast. Cool winter and spring led to a normal, even crop. This was the second year back to normal rainfall after a handful of drought years with most of the precipitation coming in winter and early spring, further enlivening the soils and ecosystems surrounding the vines. As the vintage moved into summer we began to see severe heat spikes starting in June and recurring until Labor Day weekend when temperatures reached well above the 100's. Summer and fall, sad to say, seem to have transformed into drier, warmer and unfortunately windier times in California. This trinity is ultimately the recipe for the devastating fires we saw in October. For Anthill, the grapes had been all harvested, and, aside from going extra-old-school on a couple of fermenting lots because of massive power outages, we weren't affected with what went to barrel. Overall, the resulting wines reflect a Classic character. Plenty of fruit and texture with general structure that reflects more of the Old World.

Vineyard: This head-trained vineyard sits smack dab in the middle of the Russian River Valley, spread out on the plains that make up the northwestern outskirts of Santa Rosa. The faded brown soils, known as Huichica loam, offer an excellent mix of low fertility and rapid drainage. Most notable about the site, however, is the age of the vines: we don't know it exactly, but the best indication is that they were planted in the early 1940s, making these some of the oldest producing Chardonnay in the state.

Winery: Our Chardonnay process is as simple as we can make it -- we pick based on a healthy amount of acid and as low as potential alcohol as possible. We press using a gentle, long Champagne-style program to retain the breadth of flavor without excessive extraction. We then put the juice immediately into neutral oak barrels and stand back, merely keeping the barrels cool to keep the spontaneous fermentation from moving too quickly. At the conclusion of primary, we allow the wine to go through an uninoculated secondary fermentation, often lasting until mid-spring. The Chardonnay is typically bottled after 14-15 months in barrel.

Tasting: This wine is a more louche character than the 2015; upon opening, it quickly uncoils to reveal layers of Asian pear skin, lanolin, and sweetgrass. With air and a little warmth, notes of pungent gooseberry and white pepper emerge, tempered by soft, talcum-like sweetness. The palate opens to reveal waves of cool lemon blossom, wet slate, and a core of precise, refreshing acidity. Drink now through 2025. Alcohol: 13.9%.

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