

## 2014 Heintz Ranch Chardonnay Cuvée Ma Belle

Harvest date: 10-7-14

Aging: 13 months in neutral French oak

Fermentation: whole cluster pressed, fermented in barrel, full malo lactic

Bottling date: 11-18-15

Alcohol: 14.1%

Cases produced: 90

I've been working with Charlie Heintz's Chardonnay since the 2003 vintage, at Freeman. That was the only year we bottled a Heintz Ranch vineyard designate for Freeman, since then, it has gone into Freeman's Ryo-fu blend. Charlie offered me Chardonnay starting with the 2014 vintage, so I jumped at the chance.

Heintz is among the oldest vineyards from which Sandler sources fruit. It was planted in 1982 to clone 4 of Chardonnay. Charlie is one of the greatest farmers I know, and he's a heck of a nice guy too. The vineyard lies at the western edge of the Russian River and Green Valley appellations, just above the town of Occidental. It's a cool, late ripening site that retains good acidity as the fruit reaches maturity.

The pressing of this 2014 Chardonnay was an experiment to incorporate some older techniques that have been forgotten about, for the most part. I wanted to increase the skin contact time for this juice, not by fermenting on the skins, but by rotating the grapes constantly in the press to allow the weight of the fruit to press the juice. Because of this extra skin contact, there's some grip to the texture of the wine. My hope was to add to the ageability of the wine, without sacrificing too much enjoyment for the wine in its youth. We'll see how the experiment plays out over the next 7 to 10 years.

