

2015 Heintz Ranch Chardonnay Cuvée Ma Belle

Harvest date: 9-17-15

Fermentation: Tumble pressed, heavy solids fermentation

Aging: 14 months in 100% used French oak

Bottling date: 12-17-16

Alcohol: 13.9%

Sandler's second Heintz Ranch Chardonnay Cuvée Ma Belle is the 2015. Charlie Heintz's old vine, clone 4 Chardonnay is some of the best in California. He planted this site in 1982, and 35 years later, it's still producing amazing fruit.

The 2014 version was such a success, I repeated the new method of pressing the fruit, which isn't really pressing at all. I load the press with the whole clusters of Chardonnay, but instead of starting the press, I just close the doors and let the fruit tumble. After a few minutes, the juice starts flowing. It takes about an hour to get most of the juice out of the grapes. The reason for doing this and not pressing is to imitate the old way of making Chardonnay, with more skin contact than is allowed today. The hope is that this will be a more age-worthy Chardonnay than if I had pressed gently with minimal skin contact. The nose is slightly reductive, and the palate is firm at this young stage. Give this through late 2017 to start softening and drink this through at least 2020, hopefully much longer too.

