



2012 RYO-FU CHARDONNAY

WINE NOTES

VINEYARDS

48% Keefer Ranch
48% Heintz Ranch
4% Black Emerald

FERMENTATION & BARREL AGING

Fermented and aged 14 months sur lies

- 100% French oak
 - 20% new
 - 80% one-, two-, three- and four-year-old barrels

BOTTLING

December 2013

PRODUCTION

750 ml = 565 cases

2012 was the “return to normal” vintage in the Russian River Valley, not only for Pinot Noir, but also for Chardonnay. A gorgeous spring promised us a large crop with full clusters of Chardonnay in all three of the vineyards from which Ryo-fu is sourced. The summer and fall followed with perfect weather, and although it ended up being another late harvest all around, the fruit came in wonderfully ripe and healthy.

The largest components of the 2012 Ryo-fu Chardonnay come from Keefer Ranch and Heintz Ranch. Freeman has purchased both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Marcy Keefer since 2004, and it’s the only vineyard from which we receive both varieties. The Chardonnay from Keefer provides the backbone of acidity to the Ryo-fu, as well some of the subtle fruits found in the nose of the wine. Keefer is located in the Green Valley sub appellation of the Russian River Valley.

Heintz Ranch is located just southeast of the town of Occidental, on the western edge of the Russian River Valley appellation. Since 2003, Freeman has purchased the same block of Chardonnay from Charlie which he planted in 1982. They’re the oldest vines we work with at Freeman. The Chardonnay that comes from Heintz gives the Ryo-fu its elegant, stone fruit and old world character. It could easily stand alone as a vineyard designate, as it did for Freeman in 2003, but we love how it works in the Ryo-fu blend.

Dennis and Mary Black’s Chardonnay from their Black Emerald Vineyard makes up the rest of the 2012 Ryo-fu. It’s always the last fruit we harvest at Freeman, even though it’s located in the heart of the Russian River Valley, a slightly warmer area than Heintz and Keefer. These old Chardonnay vines take their time, but patience pays off in great years like 2012, and the Black Emerald achieved full ripeness. Duff Beville is the vineyard manager of Black Emerald, and he has been doing excellent work there. Freeman has been sourcing Black Emerald since 2004.

The 2012 Freeman Ryo-fu Chardonnay has a light straw color and greenish hues. It shows a subtle fruity nose with hints of Calvados, pears, vanilla and anise. The palate begins with a softer mouthfeel than the previous several vintages, but the acidity does come through from the mid palate well through the finish. The flavors are very complex and combine the apple and pears from the nose with lemons, hazelnuts and almonds. In its early life, there’s not a drop of new oak to be found in this wine. Expect it to start hitting its stride in mid 2014 and continue drinking well through 2019.

