



2015 RYO-FU CHARDONNAY

WINE NOTES

VINEYARDS

32% Keefer Ranch
29% Heintz Ranch
21% Black Emerald
14% Searby
4% Mill Station

FERMENTATION & BARREL AGING

Fermented and aged 15 months *sur lies*
in French oak:
12% new
88% used

BOTTLING

December 5, 2016

PRODUCTION

750 ml = 615 cases



Ryo-fu is Japanese for “cool breeze.” The cool, foggy breeze that comes off the Pacific Ocean allows the Russian River Valley to grow high quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The area’s sandy soil is crucial as well; but without the right temperatures, the fruit could ripen too soon or not at all. Thanks to our local *ryo-fu*, the growing seasons are perfectly timed for our vineyards. The 2015 vintage will go down as our earliest Chardonnay harvest on record at Freeman, and with a little help from that cool breeze, all of the fruit came in perfectly ripe.

As usual, the largest components in our 2015 Ryo-fu Chardonnay come from Keefer Ranch and Heintz Ranch. Heintz Ranch is located just southeast of the town of Occidental, on the western edge of the Russian River Valley appellation. Freeman has purchased the same block of Chardonnay there since 2003, planted by Charlie Heintz in 1982. They’re the oldest vines we work with at Freeman, and they give our Ryo-fu its elegant stone fruit and old world character. Wine from these grapes could easily stand alone as a vineyard designate, as it did for Freeman in 2003; but we especially love how it works in the Ryo-fu blend. Meanwhile Chardonnay from Keefer Ranch provides Ryo-fu with its backbone of acidity, as well some of the subtle fruit aromas found in the nose of the wine. Keefer is located in the Green Valley sub appellation of the Russian River Valley.

2015 saw the return of Black Emerald Vineyard fruit to the Ryo-fu blend. Dennis and Mary Black own this outstanding property on Vine Hill Road, where Freeman has sourced Chardonnay since 2004. And Searby, a new vineyard for Freeman, is located on Occidental Road, its old vines farmed by none other than Charlie Heintz (see above). Finally, one barrel of the Duttons’ Mill Station Vineyard rounds out our blend.

The wine shows medium straw color, with a throwback nose of matchstick, honey, ripe Gravenstein apples, and melon. The palate is tightly wound, combining strong acidity and a dense core of fruit. It will take a few years in bottle to reach its peak, but with enough aeration in the glass, everything comes together to reveal a vibrant, well-balanced Chardonnay. The drinking window should be 2018–2023.