

# JOE'S PICKS



## December, 2018

As I write this, another harvest—my 18th here at Bella!—has come and gone, and a new vintage of wines is aging in barrel. 2018 was the kind of growing season that makes a winemaker reach for the thesaurus in search of superlatives. Simply put, it was an exceptional harvest, and I am super-excited about our 2018 wines. From the time harvest started on September 13th until we picked our last batch of late harvest Zinfandel a month later, Mother Nature delivered perfect weather, with no heat events or rains worth noting. As a result, we



were able to harvest at our leisure at the exact right moment. While the true style of the vintage won't fully reveal itself for awhile yet, the wines are already gorgeous, with deep, rich colors, luxurious fruit flavors and lovely acidity. Though you won't be able to try our 2018's for a few years, I know they will be worth the wait!

## 2012 Big River Ranch syrah

**Growing:** The Big River Ranch is unique with the Russian River flowing around it, creating a peninsula. The river acts as a cooling current slowing the ripening of the grapes and allowing for wonderful long hang time. Allowing the grapes to ripen over an extended, slow period produces grapes that are extremely intense and flavorful. We use a combination of clones; the Syrah Noir and Estrella clones add to the complexity and nuance of the wine. The Syrah Noir adds dark fruits and the Estrella adds a smooth structure and backbone.



**Winemaking:** We used a closed top tank for the syrah which allows for an extended maceration over 25 days. Twice daily 45-minute pumpovers for the first 10 days was just the right amount of time for a gentle extraction of intense flavors and silky tannins. The wine was pressed-off into barrel (mainly French) with 20% new oak. It was aged in the cave for 14 months to produce an exceptional wine.

**Blending:** For the 2012 vintage, we were blessed with some outstanding fruit. We added 20% grenache which adds a wonderful brightness and lift to the wine. It blends extremely well with the darker plum and blueberry flavors of the syrah. This is a wonderful food wine that will age beautifully for many years to come.

## 2013 Hillside cuvée

**Growing:** The 2013 vintage was a remarkable vintage and was truly exciting in the abundance of high quality fruit we received. We sourced fruit for the cuvée from multiple

vineyards located in the Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys, including our own Big River and our friends down the road at Florence Vineyard. The wonderful growing conditions in 2013 allowed us to pick at optimum ripeness, insuring a plethora of blending options.



**Winemaking:** For the cuvée, our winemaking protocol was twice daily pumpovers, extended macerations, gentle pressing with our basket press and aging in primarily French oak barrels.



**Blending:** This is where the fun begins. As a winemaker, I love to put blends together. I enjoy how the different grape varieties add different layers of flavors and structure - the sum being greater than the parts.

The zinfandel adds flavors of blackberries and black cherries. The petite sirah adds a deep, dark color and wonderful tannins. The petit verdot, an underused varietal in my opinion, brings a deep, dark plum component. The carignan adds acidity that brightens and makes the wine lively. Last, but not least, is the syrah. That year, in and out, is proving to be a wonderful addition to the blend; it has a way of bringing everything together. The wine is delicious now and will continue to age for several years to come.

**Bella**  
VINEYARDS & WINE CAVES