

Gary Farrell Vineyard: Outstanding New Releases from Winemaker Theresa Heredia



Winemaker Theresa Heredia

We've been tasting and reviewing Gary Farrell Vineyard wines since before Theresa Heredia joined as winemaker in 2012, and we've been tasting Theresa's wines since her time at Joseph Phelps' Freestone Vineyards on the Sonoma Coast. We've consistently admired Theresa's winemaking, and we try to visit her at the winery and taste her newest releases whenever we're in Sonoma County. In this article we review releases from 2017 and 2018 vintages. As we've found in our earlier reviews of the Gary Farrell portfolio, the Pinot Noirs are very, very good, and the Chardonnays are, too.

The year 2017 was a vintage of extremes. It began with historically high rainfall early in the growing season, followed by several extreme heat events in the middle and late parts of the season, culminating in a record breaking heat wave reaching 110° in Santa Rosa and 112° in Healdsburg on September 1. Fortunately, Gary Farrell's Chardonnay grapes were harvested prior to the worst of the heat. It also helps that traditionally Theresa picks her Pinot Noir early, so realizing the severity of the predicted heat wave, Theresa picked up the phone and called all her growers. Within a week 60 percent of the crop was harvested. As a consequence, the wines retained their acidity and freshness and avoided over-ripeness.

The 2017 Gary Farrell wines we tasted are all single vineyard bottlings [see vineyard map below]. The wines exhibit the elegance and refinement in winemaking we expect from Theresa Heredia. Likewise, they revealed the characteristics of the vineyards from which they are sourced. It is noteworthy that Theresa is among several California winemakers who use whole clusters in fermenting their wines. Theresa has long had an interest in whole cluster fermentation and generally uses around 30% whole clusters, depending upon the vineyard and vintage. She believes, as we do, that whole clusters contribute to the overall flavor complexity in the wines as well balancing acidity and softening tannins.

In contrast to 2017, the 2018 vintage was almost perfect, about 3-4 weeks later than recent vintages with cool weather until budbreak in mid-March, little rain or wind during flowering in May, a cool foggy August, and mild weather during ripening. We review Gary Farrell's 2018 Chardonnay and Pinot Noir vineyard blends below, and we very much look forward to the 2018 single vineyard bottlings.



Hallberg Vineyard

The Wines

Gary Farrell 2017 Chardonnay Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$45) 93 Light yellow straw. The Olivet Lane Chardonnay begins with a lively perfume of pear, stone fruit, lemon oil, and a hint of sweet barrel spice. The attack shows stunning purity and the mouth feel is refined with optimally ripened yellow fruit and juicy acidity. The finish is tangy with a lingering stony mineral character. Sourced from Pelligrini's Olivet Lane Vineyard planted in 1975 to Wente Selection and located on the Santa Rosa plain. Fermented and matured 9 months in 35% new French oak. 13.8% alc.

Gary Farrell 2018 Chardonnay Russian River Selection Russian River Valley (\$35) 91 Lively bouquet of lemon oil with nuances of just-picked orchard fruit. Clean and fresh on the attack with a refined richness on the palate. There's excellent concentration and length with nice lemony acidity and a lingering stone-

like minerality. A beautiful wine. A blend of fruit from several Russian River vineyards, co-fermented and aged 8 months in 30% new French oak. 13.3% alc.

Gary Farrell 2017 Pinot Noir Hallberg Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley (\$55) 92 Deep ruby red. Nicely perfumed with scents of dark cherry interwoven with wild red berries and savory herbs. It's supple and juicy on the attack with a core of dense fruit on a silky palate with nuances of toasted oak. Sourced from the diverse clones of the 100 acre Hallberg Vineyard located in cool, foggy Green Valley and planted by Brice Cutrer-Jones in 1999. Cold soaked and fermented in open top tanks with some whole cluster, then pressed and racked to 40% new French oak for 15 months. 13.8% alc.

Gary Farrell 2018 Pinot Noir Russian River Selection Russian River Valley (\$45) 90 Medium red ruby. Made from a blend of several Russian River vineyards, this wine reveals dark cherry and berry on the nose. It's a somewhat reticent, youthful wine on the palate revealing red and black fruits and lively acidity accompanied by nuances of dark soil and spice. Sourced from vineyards located in diverse parts of the Russian River; fermented in small, open top tanks with 7-10 days of extended maceration and aged 10 months in 35% new French oak. 13.9% alc.