



2014 MICHAEL FARADAY Michael Mara vineyard

100% Chardonnay from the Idell family's amazing vineyard at the foot of Sonoma Mountain. This vineyard was conceived, planted, and is farmed by Steve Matthiasson under the most difficult conditions. The vineyard is in the middle of the Carriger flood plain, nearly at sea level, and would be suffused with gallettes if only for that reason, but, in fact, its geology is much more complex

and interesting. The soil structure, including deep sub-soil, cascaded off the top of nearby Sonoma Mountain hundreds of thousands of years ago, shifting what would essentially be rocky, high mountain soil to the valley floor. Between this ancient origin and the more recent alluvial deposits, this is the rockiest, most challenging vineyard that we work with. The vines struggle for purchase in the soil and run into rocks and pebbles as they try to establish themselves. Yields are never generous, leaf cover is always scarce. The clusters are small, the berries tiny and toughened by sun and wind. There is tons of flavor and a fair amount of tannin packed into the skins by the rigorous growing conditions.

We make this wine in the following way, a strategy that we hit upon in 2012 to emphasize the rich and complex character of the skins:

We very gently convert about 80% of the fruit to juice through whole cluster pressing. We press this juice into small, open-top wooden fermenters and then sprinkle the remaining undisturbed clusters of grapes into the tops of the fermenters, where they float. Over the next few days, fermentation will start in the juice, and the natural turmoil of the fermentation stirs around the floating clusters. As the juice warms up from fermentation, carbonic fermentation begins in the clusters too, and soon, two fermentations are taking place simultaneously. The juice fermentation always finishes first, usually in 2-3 weeks. We then make a decision about how long to leave the clusters, with the skins and stems, in the wine. We are aiming for a subtle and undetectable presence of tannin to support the acidity of the grapes— not the sense of a skin-fermented wine. For this reason, we rarely macerate past dryness in the juice, and usually drain the wine away immediately. It goes into a combination of neutral 220 liter French oak barrels and once and twice used Kongsgaard barrels, with more of an oak presence. The fruit that floated in the juice, we pass very gently over a stainless steel screen and add to the juice wine. The fermentation finishes in barrel, undergoes malo-lactic fermentation, and remains in barrel, without topping, stirring, or SO₂, for about 2 years.

2014 was the third year of the drought year and for that reason, we could harvest early and with less exposure to sun and wind than in the earlier vintages. The Summer and early Fall were warm, but without harmful heat spikes. The fruit ripened easily and well, and we harvested very early— in the middle of August. The wine is ripe, but high in acid and low in alcohol. A flor usually forms in most of the barrels during the two years of undisturbed maceration, and for this reason, the wine is marked by the nutty, sherry-like notes of some other vintages. Highly reminiscent of the un-topped wines of the Jura.

TOTAL PRODUCTION:
about 50 cases