

2020 JORDAN ALEXANDER VALLEY

Vintage Report



The 2020 vintage brought unprecedented challenges for West Coast winemakers, as wildfires, smoke and COVID-19 safety guidelines sent stress levels through the roof. However, now that the 2020 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is safely bottled and ready for release, we realize how lucky we were at Jordan. Although many grape growers tragically lost their crops and flames destroyed some Napa Valley wineries, we were able to emerge relatively unscathed.

– Maggie Kruse, winemaker

GROWING SEASON

Vineyards awoke from winter dormancy in mid- to late March and bud break happened right on time. The vines enjoyed a warm, sunny spring, with no real threat of frost. While some light rainfall interrupted flowering, reducing the crop, fruit set was even. A warm summer brought only two significant heat spikes, and the vines looked healthy and balanced, with little-to-no sunburn. Apart from the logistical challenges presented by pandemic precautions, everything appeared to be progressing smoothly. Then, on August 17, thousands of lightning strikes sparked wildfires across California. This included the slow-burning Walbridge Fire, located in a remote, forested area west of Healdsburg. Fortunately, most vineyards for our Bordeaux varieties are located northeast of the winery, so smoke drift was not an issue. The vintage had more surprises in store, including a Labor Day heatwave that stressed the grapes still ripening on the vines.

VINEYARDS

The final blend for the 2020 Jordan Cabernet Sauvignon began with 50 vineyard blocks from Jordan Estate and 14 family growers. We select our vineyard sites for their well-drained, gravelly soils in the warmer Alexander Valley, which allow the grapes to gain physiological maturity without sacrificing pure varietal character, bright acidity and moderate sugar levels. It is this necessary combination of climate, soil and husbandry that shares a common thread with the grand cru classé Bordeaux that inspire our style of winemaking.

VITICULTURE

In a typical year, wineries hire international interns to come and work harvest. It's an essential, seasonal workforce that we rely on each year. Due to pandemic travel restrictions, wineries had to cancel their intern programs in 2020. Jordan sales department employees quickly learned to pump the must and crushed grapes into presses or tanks, and maintenance employees learned to operate the hopper, while the winemaking team received grapes. Jordan's staff worked together as a small team, while following protocols to keep everyone safe.

HARVEST

We began picking cabernet sauvignon on September 11. During the peak of harvest in late September, the Glass Fire broke out in neighboring Napa Valley. We still had about 60 percent of our red grapes left to pick, and fresh smoke was heading toward us. We had to get the fruit off the vines before too much smoke drifted into Alexander Valley, so we sprang into action tasting the unpicked fruit. While we would have liked more concentration in the grapes, the flavors, sugars and acids were all there. It was time to pick—and fast. Growers' picking schedules were booking up as fast as our tanks were filling up. Since we didn't have enough tank space at the winery to immediately crush the grapes, we stored the gondolas of fruit—covered in dry ice—overnight in the winery's vineyard shop. There, the doors could be tightly closed to protect the fruit from smoke until pressing. We picked the final grapes on October 4, with yields down 15 to 20 percent—mainly due to the Labor Day heat spike. After testing and tasting the pressed wines, we were thrilled to realize that the 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon would be an incredible wine. We at Jordan feel so grateful to have weathered the relentless storm that was 2020 to shepherd another classic vintage into barrel.

Jordan[®]