

CHARLES  
**HEINTZ**  
VINEYARDS & WINERY



## **Charlie Heintz, Iconic Grower on the Sonoma Coast**

*Listening, learning and keeping an open mind defines Charlie Heintz's work with people and vines.*

The Ranch has been in the hands of Heintz family since 1912 and Charlie has spent most of his life at this idyllic place. He rode his bike to school Occidental and drove a tractor on the family ranch atop Harrison Grade from the age of 10 onwards. When his father passed away at an early age, Charlie worked beside his mother on the Ranch to keep the property in the family. Charlie Heintz is a true Sonoma native.

UC Davis extension course informed his early work in the vineyard. However, he credits much of his success as a winegrower to what he has learned from his peers. The turning point, more than 20 years ago, was meeting Ted Lemon. Heintz Ranch then began a shift from grape growing for volume to winegrowing for quality. He began to focus on canopy management, crop load vine by vine, and green thinning at a time when these practices were unknown to most growers. Heintz Vineyard has remained on the leading edge since then.

Soon top winemakers such as Bob Cabral at Williams Selyem and Andy Smith at DuMol began to call on Charlie Heintz as recognition of the fruit quality spread. Interest in coastal vineyards has grown dramatically over the past 20 years. Now Charlie is focused on his work as a custom grower. Now he spends time staying current with viticultural techniques from around the world. A long-term vineyard crew has come to know each row of vines as well as Charlie knows them and recognize the variations in the weather each season.

Vineyard Forman Victor Roman joined Heintz Ranch in the 1980's and has learned to read Charlie's mind. He helps keep the crew focused on individual vines. Charlie and Victor take the time to teach the team why they do what do and take pride in the quality of the fruit. This year they are planting new blocks of Pinot Noir clones (Calera, Mt. Eden and 667) in the vineyard as well as adding 5 acres of Cider apples. The Ranch has come full circle with its 1912 roots.

Charlie's mother Rachael loved the natural beauty of the Ranch; the ebb and flow of fog and sun, the wildlife traversing the landscape and watching her family grow. The wine world has come to recognize the world-class quality of the region. Planning for success and sustainability of the Ranch and the family business in the decades ahead crowd Charlie's time on the tractor. However, he will pause and listen to the wind, check the sunlight on the canopy and forge ahead.