



2011 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

CHARDONNAY

COLUMBIA VALLEY

**Vineyard:** At Buty, we have made this vineyard-designate Conner Lee Chardonnay since our debut 2000 vintage. Originally planted in the early 1980s, Conner Lee is located at an elevation of approximately 2,000 feet on the plateau of Radar Hill south of Othello, Washington. Farmed since 1989 by Washington's senior and leading viticulturists Jerry Bookwalter and Tom Thorsen, Conner Lee Vineyard is an ideal site for chardonnay, being a cool site in a warm, sunny region. In our Eastern Washington desert environment, the spring and fall nights can be 50 degrees cooler than the daytime temperatures. The hot 90-degree summer months of July and August ripen the fruit, while cooler fall temperatures keep the acids high and the pH low. We work with Conner Lee's prized 1989 block and 2005 'clone 95' block. Both are planted with ungrafted vines in well-drained sandy-silt soils. The vineyard has been certified Salmon Safe since 2008. To achieve the clean, complex and non-oaky style this wine is known for, we cane prune in February, shoot thin in May and cluster thin at veraison—all to promote concentration in the fruit early in the year. The shaded fruit and small crop support the elegance and ripe concentration that are hallmarks of this wine, even in a vintage like 2011, which was the coolest season in 35 years.

**Vintage & Harvest:** The June 25th flowering was late, as was veraison, which occurred on August 25th. While harvest came a month later than normal, our dry desert autumn afforded us clean ripe fruit. In turn, the cooler fall ripening helped to preserve more acid. Our 1989 block achieved classic ripeness of 21.5° Brix on October 7th. While light, insignificant rains delayed our clone 95 chardonnay slightly, it came in on October 24th in perfect condition at 22.5° Brix. The cool year produced pHs of 3.15 and organic acids of 11g/L. The skins were gold and green and the seeds all ripe brown. With patience, the harvest was an easy one. Unlike a cool year in Burgundy, rains did not spoil our vintage. Our dry desert weather allowed ripening to continue long into October.

**Winemaking:** After hand sorting the clusters, we whole-cluster pressed all of the fruit. The raw juice fermented in mature Burgundy barrels and was lees stirred. In February we blended to age finally in concrete and completed malolactic fermentation. Though this wine is normally dominated by the 1989 block, for the first time the rich, ripe toned clone 95 grapes comprise 40 percent of the blend. It provides surprising richness in this cooler vintage. We bottled on August 2, 2012. This wine is naturally heat and cold stable between 45°F to 90°F.

**Tasting Notes:** In 2011, the 1989 block brought a beautiful Champagne-like quality to this wine, with the clone 95 grapes providing plush ripeness. The enticing nose is reminiscent of a great Blanc de Blancs, with classic yeastiness and vivid fruit and flower

tones, alongside vibrant notes of lemony citrus. Though this wine is smooth and silky on the palate, crisp acids give it verve and focus, accentuating the pure, high-toned fruit, which is unobscured by oak. Young at release, it will evolve over the next three years. We believe this wine is ideally served at 55°F, where after it can warm up during the meal. Alcohol 13.8%.

Four hundred and twenty cases were produced. Released September 1, 2012.