



2012 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

63% MERLOT & 37% CABERNET FRANC

COLUMBIA VALLEY

**Vineyard:** This vintage was sourced exclusively from the sloping, sandy soils of the famed Conner Lee Vineyard. 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 by Jerry Bookwalter and Tom Thorsen, it is 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 summer months of July and August ripen the fruit, while cooler fall temperatures keep the acids high and the pH low. Buty has bottled a blend of merlot & cabernet franc since 2000, our inaugural vintage.

**Vintage & Harvest:** 2012 was an exceptional vintage, providing ideal weather at every stage of development. Spring was cool to temperate with almost all of the rain falling in May and June. July and August were dry, with beautiful weather and no extreme heat events. In the run-up to harvest we had temperatures in the 65<sup>o</sup> to 70<sup>o</sup> range, allowing us to pick exactly when we wanted with a perfect balance of sugar and acid. We harvested our merlot from Conner Lee on September 28th and our cabernet franc a month later, on October 29th.

**Winemaking:** We hand-sorted and destemmed the fruit. To preserve aromatics, the merlot was gravity transferred to small fermenters and fermented for 17 days. The cabernet franc was fermented in wood tanks for 15 days. Both were aerated during fermentation, and only free-run wine was selected for the blend. The wines were aged 15 months in Taransaud and Bel Air French Château barrels and 500-liter puncheons, with 40% new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in January 2014, with an alcohol of 14.5%.

**Tasting Notes:** Bringing together everything we love about great merlot and cabernet franc, this is a gorgeous expression of what can be achieved in an iconic vineyard in a great vintage. A deep, rich core of spiced cherry from the merlot is surrounded by layers of rose and sage from the cabernet franc, which also contributes excellent acidity and beautiful fine-grained tannins. Oak aging has subtly imparted hints of cinnamon, smoke and cobbler, underscoring the merlot's body and richness. The finish is long and lingering with pure red berry and spice notes.

Three hundred and fifteen cases were bottled including magnums and large-format bottles. This wine is released on March 1st, and retails for \$45.