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WALLA WALLA VALLEY

2012 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

CHARDONNAY

COLUMBIA VALLEY

Vineyard: We have made a vineyard-designate Conner Lee Vineyard 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 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. 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. To achieve the clean and complex style this wine is known for, we prune for optimum fruit positions in February, shoot thin in May and cluster thin at veraison—all to promote concentration in the fruit early in the year.

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° to 70° range, allowing us to pick exactly when we wanted with a perfect balance of sugars and acids. Our 1989 block came in at 21.9° Brix on September 19th, with our clone #95 grapes arriving on October 8th at 21.2°.

Winemaking: To preserve the bright, high-toned tropical character of the fruit, we whole cluster pressed 65% of the grapes. For the other 35%, we allowed a short 48-hour skin contact to build richness and body. In keeping with our belief in minimal new oak influence for this wine, 60% was fermented in predominantly mature Burgundy barrels, with the remainder fermented in concrete, with a total new French oak component of just 6% (one barrel). While the majority of the wine went through malolactic fermentation, to maintain acidity and freshness, 20% did not. In keeping with our gentle winemaking approach, and a belief in preserving nuance and complexity, this wine was not cold stabilized. As a result, if stored exceedingly cold, it may shed natural tartaric crystals.

Tasting Notes: From its lovely stone fruit aromas of apricot and white peach to its tropical notes and layers of wild chamomile, minerals, marzipan and spice, this is a pure and polished expression of Conner Lee Vineyard Chardonnay. Though rich and silky on the palate, balanced acids give the wine lovely poise and structure while accentuating the vibrant fruit. Youthful upon release, it will evolve over the next three years. Alcohol 13.4%.

Three hundred and ninety cases were produced. Released September 1, 2013. Retail for \$40.