



2013 *Conner Lee Vineyard*
61% MERLOT & 39% 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. 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: The season began with early springtime heat that yielded extremely small clusters of intensely concentrated fruit. Prior to a big cool down in the last several weeks of the growing season, 2013 was on track to be one of the hottest growing seasons in memory. Plenty of sunshine, and a lack of any significant rain events, allowed us complete control over irrigation, which in turn enabled us to fine tune crop size and fruit development. We harvested our merlot from Conner Lee on September 27th and our cabernet franc on October 19th.

Winemaking: We hand-sorted and destemmed the fruit. To preserve aromatics, the cabernet franc was gravity transferred to small fermenters and fermented for 17 days, while the merlot was fermented in wood tanks for 13 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 Ermitage puncheons, with 55% new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in January 2015, with an alcohol of 14.7%.

Tasting Notes: While this wine has gorgeous depth and ripeness, its phenomenal natural acidity adds poise and precision to the abundant layers of pure fruit. A rich and juicy cherry cobbler core of merlot is surrounded by layers of blueberry and spice from the cabernet franc, which also contributes to this wine's excellent acidity and lovely fine-grained tannins. Oak aging has subtly imparted hints of cinnamon, vanilla and nutmeg, underscoring the merlot's body and richness. The finish is long and lingering with vibrant red berry and spice notes.

Three hundred and ten cases were bottled including magnums and large-format bottles. This wine is released in March.