



2014 *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 1,125 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:** 2014 delivered abundant spring heat, leading to early budbreak and flowering. To address the heat, which continued through summer, we tailored our irrigation, crop size and shading to the needs of each vineyard. In the run up to harvest, Mother Nature delivered ideal temperate weather, which allowed us to pick exactly when we wished. One of our earliest harvests ever, we picked our merlot from Conner Lee on September 17th at 25.0° Brix. We harvested our cabernet franc from the 1991 Block on September 30th at 25.1°, and picked a small block of clone 332 cabernet franc (that was planted specifically for Buty) on Sept 25th at 25.0°.

**Winemaking:** We hand-sorted and destemmed the fruit. To preserve aromatics, the cabernet franc was gravity transferred to small fermenters and fermented for 11-14 days, while the merlot was fermented in a wood tank for 15 days. Both were aerated during fermentation. The wines were aged 15 months in Taransaud and Bel Air French Château barrels and 500-liter puncheons, with 30% total new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in January 2016, with an alcohol of 14.7%.

**Tasting Notes:** Reflecting our belief that cool sites produce spectacular wines in warm years, the 2014 growing season yielded one of the most exciting vintages of this wine that we have ever made. Combining a lush and juicy merlot-driven core of black cherry and boysenberry, with lovely cabernet franc layers of flowers, blueberry and baking spices, this is a rich and compelling wine. Beautifully integrated new oak added to the complexity of this blend, while imparting hints of vanilla, nutmeg and mocha. The finish is long and has a supple texture, with natural acidity adding precision and focus to the berry and spice flavors.

Three hundred and twenty-five cases were bottled including magnums and large-format bottles. This wine is released on March 1st.