



2015 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

CHARDONNAY

COLUMBIA VALLEY

Vineyard: We have made a Conner Lee Vineyard Chardonnay since our debut 2000 vintage. Originally planted in the early 1980s, this acclaimed vineyard is located at 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. We work with Conner Lee's prized 1989 block and its 2005 'clone #95' block. Both are planted with ungrafted vines in well-drained sandy-silt soils. To achieve a pure, complex style, we prune for optimum fruit positions in February, shoot thin in May and cluster thin at veraison—all to promote concentration early in the year.

Vintage & Harvest: 2015 began with a very warm February and March, followed by abundant heat from mid-May to late June. To address the early season heat, which spurred the vines to a very early start, we tailored our irrigation, crop size and shading to the needs of the vineyard. From July on, the weather returned to seasonal averages, allowing us to fine-tune our viticulture in the run-up to harvest. Though harvest was our earliest ever, thanks to knowledge gained from other warm vintages, the quality of the fruit was exceptional. With an eye toward acid levels (as opposed to sugars) we picked our 1989 block chardonnay on August 28th and Sept 7th at 22.5° Brix/3.3 pH, and 23.0° Brix/3.3 pH respectively, with our clone #95 grapes arriving on September 1st at 22.3° and 3.65 pH.

Winemaking: This wine was 100% whole-cluster pressed. 55% was fermented in predominantly mature Burgundy barrels, with a total of 11% new French oak. To enhance texture and richness, we fermented the other 45% in concrete. To maintain Conner Lee's bright, fresh character, only 40% of the wine went through malolactic fermentation. 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: The 2015 vintage has yielded a lush and intensely aromatic wine, with beautiful aromas of white flowers, tangerine, beeswax and tropical fruit. Though full and rich on the palate, Conner Lee's signature cool-climate acidity keeps things bright and energetic, adding complex layers of minerality to vivid flavors of orange and tropical fruit. Offering equal measures power and grace, this Chardonnay shows how wonderfully this cool vineyard can excel in warmer vintages. Alcohol 13.9%.

Three hundred and thirty cases were produced. Released September 1, 2016.