



2015 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

63% MERLOT & 37% CABERNET FRANC

COLUMBIA VALLEY

**Vineyard:** This wine is 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:** 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. We picked our merlot from Conner Lee on September 3th at 24.9° Brix. We harvested our cabernet franc from Conner Lee's renowned 1991 Block on September 22nd at 25.2°.

**Winemaking:** We hand-sorted and destemmed the fruit. The merlot and cabernet franc were fermented separately in wood tanks. Both were fermented for 15 days, with aeration during fermentation. The wines were aged 15 months in Taransaud and Bel Air French Château barrels, with 33% total new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in February 2017, with an alcohol of 14.7%.

**Tasting Notes:** Once again, the cool Conner Lee Vineyard yielded a dazzling wine from a warm growing season. Combining bold, rich character with silky tannins and lovely energy and complexity, this wine begins with layered aromas of ripe boysenberry, violet, chocolate-covered cherries, sage and sweet clove. On the palate, natural acidity and impeccably integrated tannins add nuance and poise to the juicy fruit flavors, while carrying the wines to a lingering berry and spice finish.

Three hundred and thirty cases were bottled including magnums and large-format bottles. This wine is released on March 1<sup>st</sup>.