



2016 *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:** While the 2016 growing season delivered our fourth year in a row of early budbreak and flowering, a well-timed mid-summer cooldown extended the season. This provided the grapes with an ideal amount of hangtime, while preserving the natural acidity that is so integral to our style. While 2016 yielded our earliest harvest ever at Conner Lee, it was a near-perfect growing season, and every cluster was gorgeous. We picked our 1989 block chardonnay on August 23th and August 30th at 21.3° Brix/3.29 pH, and 23.2° Brix/3.37 pH respectively, with our clone #95 grapes arriving on September 8th at 21.4° and 3.60 pH.

**Winemaking:** This wine was 92% whole-cluster pressed, with 8% given skin contact for 48 hours to build body, tannin character and structure. 57% was fermented in predominantly mature Burgundy barrels, with a total of 7% new French oak. To enhance texture and richness, we fermented the other 43% in concrete. To maintain Conner Lee's bright, fresh character, only 50% of the wine went through malolactic fermentation. In keeping with our gentle winemaking approach, and a belief in preserving complexity, this wine was not cold stabilized. As a result, if stored exceedingly cold, it may shed natural tartaric crystals.

**Tasting Notes:** The exceptional 2016 vintage yielded an intensely aromatic wine, with great complexity and beautiful aromas of white flowers, nutmeg and Golden Delicious apple. Though full and rich on the palate, Conner Lee's signature cool-climate acidity keeps things bright and energetic, adding layers of minerality to vivid flavors of lime, Asian pear and summer melon. Offering equal measures power and grace, this wonderfully harmonious Chardonnay shows how well this cool vineyard excels in warmer vintages. Alcohol 13.7%.

Three hundred and twenty-five cases were produced. Released September 1, 2017.