



2016 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

59% MERLOT & 41% 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:** 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—factors that resulted in particularly exceptional cabernet franc. While 2016 yielded our earliest harvest ever at Conner Lee, it was a near-perfect growing season, and every cluster was gorgeous. We picked the majority of our merlot on September 15th at 23.8° Brix, and the rest on September 22nd at 25. 8°. Our cabernet franc from Conner Lee's renowned 1991 Block was harvested on October 1st at 24.8°.

**Winemaking:** We hand-sorted and destemmed the fruit. The merlot and cabernet franc were fermented separately in wood tanks. The merlot was fermented for 13 days, and the cabernet franc for 16 days, with both receiving aeration during fermentation. The wines were aged 15 months in Taransaud and Bel Air French Château barrels, with 31% total new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in January 2018, with an alcohol of 14.2%.

**Tasting Notes:** Because 2016 yielded some of the most spectacular cabernet franc we have ever seen from Conner Lee, this gorgeous wine includes the highest percentage of cabernet franc in more than a decade. As a result, the nose displays alluring layers of red berries, cinnamon, ginger spice and sweet cream, along with undercurrents of dusty cocoa powder. On the palate, jammy red fruit and floral notes mingle with savory hints of roasted red pepper coulis, all underscored by firm, rich tannins and lovely energy.

Three hundred and fifteen cases were bottled including magnums and large-format bottles. This wine is released on March 1st, and retails for \$45.