



2017 *Conner Lee Vineyard*

74% MERLOT & 26% 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:** Following several early harvests, 2017 offered a return to a more classic Columbia Valley growing season. After a nice wet spring that made for healthy and happy vines, we enjoyed relatively temperate mid-season weather (by Eastern Washington standards) that slowed down ripening. This allowed the grapes to develop beautifully articulated flavors at lower sugars with high natural acidity—all of which we love! Mild weather during harvest let us pick at our leisure, resulting in pristine clusters. We harvested our merlot on September 31st at 23.7° Brix. Our cabernet franc from Conner Lee's renowned 1991 Block was harvested on October 11th 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 15 days, and the cabernet franc for 14 days, with both receiving aeration during fermentation. The wines were aged 15 months in Bel Air French Château barrels, with 26% total new oak and minimal racking. The final wine was blended just prior to bottling in January of 2019, with an alcohol of 13.4%.

**Tasting Notes:** This lush and complex wine displays opulent red fruit aromas of cranberry, raspberry and strawberry, layers of holiday spice, and oak-inspired notes of coffee and toffee. On the palate, the fruit takes on a deeper richness, revealing flavors of currant and brambly black raspberry, as well as hints of cooling blueberry and violet. Firm youthful tannins and bright underlying acidity provide depth and nuance, while carrying the flavors to a long, energetic finish.

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