

2017 Division Chenin Blanc “Inondé”

Willard Farms Vineyard

Columbia Valley AVA

One of the fastest growing and most diverse American wine growing regions of the past 40 years is the Columbia Valley, a wide swath of land that reaches from the northern border of Oregon to well into the northeastern parts of Washington State. Within this region is the Yakima Valley, home to our old vine Chenin Blanc at Willard Farms (planted between 1978 and 1980). The Willard Chenin vines are planted on soils formed from volcanic Miocene uplift against basalt bedrock with the primary top soil being made up of quartz and lime-silica, overlaid with the mixed sedimentary runoff of Missoula Floods that makes the soils in the region so dynamic and unique. The newly renamed Chenin Blanc “Inondé,” which means “flooded” in French, was named after the influence of these Missoula Floods on the soils and terroir in the Columbia Valley. We love this particular site. It is one of the last remaining old vine Chenin Blanc sites in the Pacific Northwest, and demonstrates a unique and interesting terroir influence on the wines. Willard is farmed by an excellent and quirky farmer named Jim Willard who has a deep understanding of the soils and region.



We believe the best wines will be made by picking before overly ripe characteristics dominate the wine and balance, freshness and finesse suffer. Therefore, like with some of the best domaines of the Loire Valley where Chenin Blanc hails from, we performed two passes of picking. We have utilized this technique since our first year with the vineyard in 2013 and clearly taste the added complexity and dimension that it brings.

In 2017 the Chenin harvest was later than in recent past vintages, with the first pass completed the first week of October, and rewarded us with healthy, ripe and mineral intense fruit. The second picking was completed approximately two weeks later and was delicious from the influence of some Noble Rot (pink Botrytis). For the second vintage in a row, we utilized a pressing technique most common to making high quality Champagne, which involves redirecting the heart of the press “coeur de cuvee” directly into barrel and hence, bypassing the settling with the rest of the pressing. This led to a wine of significant depth and character and something we believe shows the excellent promise of Chenin Blanc from the Northwest.

The 2017 Division Chenin Blanc “Inondé” is a brilliantly intense and balanced Chenin Blanc. The nose offers telltale notes of honeycomb and beeswax. The crux of this wine is the mid and back palate featuring lanolin, chalky minerality, and floral notes. The palate is ripe, dry and filled with tense acidity that brings the whole wine together. The wine is drinking very well at the moment, especially if opened an hour or two in advance, however, we believe this wine has a very long future ahead of it, perhaps even a few decades before peaking!

Alc - 14.3%, pH 3.41, 84 cases