

# 2017 Division-Villages “l’Avoiron” Rosé of Gamay Noir

## Willard Vineyard

### Columbia Valley

One of the fastest growing and 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 a is the Yakima Valley, which is home to our nearly 6-acre block of Gamay Noir at Willard Farms, which we farm exclusively to make our Gamay Rosé and Gamay Nouveau wines. The Gamay was planted in 2006 on the advice of Yakima based vigneron originally from Beaujolais that missed his native varietal. While we came looking for Chenin Blanc, this Gamay was too good to pass up. We love this particular site for its mineral intense soils formed from volcanic Miocene uplift against basalt bedrock that is layered with a primary topsoil being made up of quartz and lime- silica, overlaid with the mixed glacial runoff of Missoula floods that makes the soils in the region so dynamic, unique, and in this case, perfect for making crisp and focused rosé!

We believe the best wines will be made by picking before overly ripe characteristics dominate the wine and balance and finesse suffer. Therefore, especially with rosé, which we seek more white wine-like vibrancy than red wine-like richness or intensity, we pick this site relatively early with more acid driven grapes and lighter red fruit. To achieve this profile, we crop and keep the canopy managed in a way to provide a lot of shading to slow sugar production, while keeping acidity high.

The 2018 growing season turned out to be one of the best yet in Columbia Valley. After some very hot stretches in July and early August, things cooled off quickly and by September, the days were in the 70s and evenings in the high 30s. The huge diurnal swing allowed for acid preservation and a long hang time to develop phenolic flavors without a large pickup in sugars - a real treat vintage for acid hounds like us!

In order to lighten up the color just a bit more than the past two vintages and our desire to make our rosé a pale hint of copper and pink, we decided this year for the first time to destem all 100% of the grapes and quickly pressed them into juice. For the fermentations, we kept the amazing tasting lees from 2017 vintage aiming to reactivate some dormant yeasts for one 2018 ferment, built up a pied de cuve from the vineyard for the 2nd ferment, let a third ferment begin spontaneously and trialed a new organic yeast culture on a 4th smaller ferment. All the methods worked well and the four stainless tank ferments began relatively quickly (the spontaneous one taking the longest to start) and we kept them on the cooling jackets at around 15 –17C. A quick month to month and a half long ferment to dryness ensued, before allowing the wines to finish the malolactic fermentation and ageing in tank for 4 months. 2018 is our palest vintage of this wine yet, likely because we pressed the entire harvest just after picking.

2018 L’Avoiron is super pretty in the glass, a rose-tinged, pale copper hue. The primary aromatics are quite elegant with white floral tones, white peach skin, and secondary notes of pale strawberry and watermelon flesh close to the rind. The wine has excellent length and balance, near perfect acid/alcohol/weight, and structure. Our favorite vintage of this wine to date, the wine lingers on with fantastic acidity highlighted by hints of strawberries, crushed flowers, and chalky minerality.

**Alc 12.8%, 823 cases produced**

