

2014 Division Chenin Blanc “Savant”

Willard Farms Vineyard

Yakima Valley AVA

The Yakima Valley is no stranger to warmth and fortunately for us, our old vine Chenin Blanc vines at Willard Farms have over 35 years of root development at the highest elevation northwest section of the region to help insulate the vines from year to year climate variation. We love this site so much - originally planted in the late 70s - it's quite unique and one of the last old vine Chenin Blanc sites around. The site is farmed by Jim Willard, an excellent multigenerational farmer whose family has deep understanding of the soils and climate of the region. The 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 is typical of the area.



We believe the best wines will be made by picking before overly ripe characteristics dominate the wine and balance and finesse suffer. Therefore, like in some of the best domaines of the Loire Valley, we performed two passes of picking. The first being the vibrant and lively early acid driven grapes and the latter being the more fruit concentrated, riper and noble Botrytis infected grapes. The first pass was completed on September 22nd, with fruit quality that was very healthy and with some variability in ripeness. The second picking completed on October 5th all showed fruit quality that was very healthy and quite ripe with some rows with early Noble Rot - we separated that component for a separate ferment, which is the primary portion the new Savant bottling. We created a pied de cuve (early native ferment) with a small amount of grapes to build a strong yeast population from the native flora, which was inoculated after settling into a puncheon and a stainless barrel for this cuvee. The barrel ferment took off quickly and we moved the barrels into a cool area where the ferment lasted until nearly April. Unlike the “l’Isle Verte” Chenin Blanc, we let these two ferments go all the way dry (or at least as far as they would go!). Our goal with this Chenin was to make a more Anjou-esque wine with deeper mineral intensity and dryness that would allow the wine to age and evolve with the Noble Rot influence.

The result of our first Division Chenin Blanc “Savant” is an intense, but still very balanced Chenin with vibrant acidity, a deep mid palate and a pleasing honey like influence from the Botrytis. The aromatics are all Chenin and remind us the riper Loire Chenins from warmer years with aromatics that range from honeycomb, Creme caramel and ripe peach. The palate is ripe, dry and bright with lots of mineral rich slate, and just a hint of barrel influence. This is a wine drinking very well at the moment in its early youth, but because of its fairly robust acidity, will likely cellar for several years.

Vineyards– Willard Farms Vineyard

Harvest: September 17th & September 29th, Brix 21.8 to 24.1

Fermentation - One neutral puncheon & one stainless barrel. Both were fermented to dryness and were neither fined, nor filtered