

2015 Division-Villages “l’Isle Verte”

Chenin Blanc

Columbia Valley AVA

Willard Vineyard

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 portions of the north central region to help insulate the vines from year to year climate variation, mostly intense heat! We love this particular site, originally planted in the late 70s, as it’s quite unique being one of the last old vine Chenin Blanc sites around and is farmed by an excellent multigenerational farming family with a deep understanding of the soils and 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 completed multiple picking passes (two in the year) to pick both vibrant and lively earlier acid driven grapes and the more fruit concentrated and complex flavored later picked grapes. The first pass was completed very early on September 5th, with fruit quality that was very healthy and with some variability in ripeness, but still fairly ripe. As ripe as the first pick came in, we hustled with the second picking on September 10th, which was very healthy and very ripe with some rows with early Noble Rot (we separated that component for a separate skin contact ferment). 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 one puncheon, four neutral white Burgundy barrels and a 75-gallon stainless barrels. The barrel ferment took off quickly and we moved the barrels into a cool area where the ferment lasted until mid to early March, depending on the barrel. In years past, we would arrest the fermentation in some of the barrels from fully finishing the primary ferment to provide natural balance with the wine’s natural vibrant acidity, but in this vintage, the extreme heat reduced the acidity enough naturally to not warrant any sweetness for balance.

The result of our 2015 “l’Isle Verte” Chenin Blanc is a richer, but balanced and has an incredibly dense fruit core and distinct waxy Chenin quality. We are reminded of the more leesy Chenin wines from warmer years with aromatics that range from bees wax, Creme caramel and ripe stone fruit. The palate is bright and mineral rich with honeycomb, smoked black tea, toasted almonds and some green apple. The wine is full to medium bodied and vibrant (especially for the vintage), complex and somewhat more savory. This is a wine drinking very well at the moment in it’s early youth, but will be very interesting to taste over the next few years.

Alc 13.6%, R/S – 125 cases produced