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CHARLES & CHARLES

2015 MERLOT BLEND
COLUMBIA VALLEY, WASHINGTON

THE VINTAGE

The 2015 vintage was the warmest year on record in Washington State, lapping the 2014 vintage as the prior record-holder. Perfect hot dry weather persisted throughout the growing season and extended all the way to harvest, with cooler temperatures coming just in time to extend ripening, made for an excellent vintage. The heat kept berries and clusters small, which resulted in highly concentrated and dense wines.

THE WINE

This wine is unmistakably from Washington State, though the varietal blend is inspired by the Right Bank of Bordeaux. There, the grapes on the Right Bank of the Dordogne River produce many of the world's greatest expressions of the Merlot variety. These wines are sometimes 100% Merlot, though more typically they are blended with some Cabernet Sauvignon for spice and Cabernet Franc for structure, which was exactly the approach we took with our Merlot Blend.

Like with our Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah Blend, grapes for this wine were fermented whole berry with native yeast and very slowly, with time on the skins lasting up to 40 days. The three varietals were fermented separately, blended afterward, and then 50% of the blend was aged in one-year-old French oak barrels.

Aromas explode with black cherry, dark chocolate and boysenberry, and then follows up with notes of vanilla, crushed gravel, wet earth and tar. The wine is both forceful and elegant, and finishes long and lush. To keep this rich yet energetic wine intact we decided to bottle it unfinned and unfiltered; this has its risks and, at times, means some sediment at the bottom of your glass, but the positive qualities make it worth it. Many of the best small production wines in the world are bottled without fining or filtration. The blend is 76% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Cabernet Franc.

THE VINEYARDS

Fruit is sourced three principal vineyards in the Columbia Valley: Goose Ridge, Hawk, and Upland. Rock stars. All of 'em! pH-3.88, RS-0.15%, Alc-14.1%.

THE LABEL

Charles Bieler & Charles Smith standing in front of the American Legion Post No. 35 building in Waitsburg, WA (north of Walla Walla). Charles Smith bought this building and painted it to create a conceptual art piece. Its intention is to provoke thought about the future while honoring the past. Strong, bold, true and now named for our American Legion Post No. 35 - this wine embodies traits we truly admire.