



## 2015 MALBEC

Columbia Valley, Washington

### THE VINTAGE

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

### THE WINE

The inaugural release of our single-vineyard Malbec comes entirely from the Northridge Vineyard which is the highest elevation spot in the Wahluke Slope. We co-fermented a little Cabernet Sauvignon with the Malbec to add some complexity & structure, something that I have experimented with in Argentina over the years & loved the results of. The wine was fermented with native yeast, with limited punch downs & remained on the skins for 50 days. We aged the wine a full 24 months in barrel on its original lees in a mix of 1-3 year old medium toast French oak. We bottled the wine without fining or filtration, leaving the richness & intensity of the wine to speak for itself. With this reductive type of winemaking, when you pull the cork on this wine, it will be encountering oxygen for the first time since it was put in the fermenter late October 2015. This incredibly focused Malbec leads with oodles of black fruit & spice layered over a present yet supple structure & a lingering thread of barrel toast & mocha. The blend this year is 77% Malbec & 23% Cabernet Sauvignon.

### THE VINEYARD

The Northridge vineyard, perched at the very highest point in the Wahluke slope is a magical spot. It has consistently delivered many of the highest scoring wines in Washington. The vines are of course planted to their own roots in fine alluvial sand that rests over ancient volcanic soils. A relatively high elevation (1200 ft.), cool temperatures in the spring & fall, & a good bit of snow in winter, combine to make the vineyard (and the wine) reminiscent of Mendoza, Argentina. Cabernet Sauvignon generally ripens a bit later than Malbec, so to ensure that they ripen at the same time we reduced the Cabernet Sauvignon crop to a tiny 1 ton/acre to advance it a bit.

### THE TERROIR

About 15,000 years ago the Columbia Valley was flooded by a series of ice age floods that deposited silt & sand over the entire area. The sediments deposited by the floods now make up the area's present-day sandy & gravelly soils. These conditions are ideal for grapevines & fruit development & allow all our vineyards to be planted on their own roots. The northerly latitude means more sunlight during the growing months, which allows extended phenolic development, embodying unusual texture & naturally soft tannins. Large diurnal swings (30+ degrees on average between high & low temperatures).

### THE BUZZ: CHARLES & CHARLES MALBEC

James Suckling 96 pts (2015 vintage)

### THE PROJECT

A collaboration founded in 2008 between Wine Enthusiast Magazine 2014 Winemaker of the year, Charles Smith (K Vintners, Charles Smith Wines) & Charles Bieler (Three Thieves, Bieler Père et Fils, & Gotham Project). We make just six wines together: a single-vineyard Malbec, the Rosé, a Cabernet Sauvignon & Syrah Blend, a Merlot, a Chardonnay, & a single-vineyard Riesling.



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