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CHARLES & CHARLES

2017 CABERNET SAUVIGNON BLEND

COLUMBIA VALLEY, WASHINGTON

THE VINTAGE

The 2017 vintage had an early start with some intense summer heat, but as soon as it hit September, temperatures plunged and stayed down. This translated in to the longest growing season and latest harvest in my time in Washington. The Cabernet Sauvignon harvest didn't even start until October and went right into early November frosts. This meant for exceptionally long hang time and gentle ripening, resulting in great flavor development at lower alcohol levels. In the moment, it's a little scary when there's so much fruit to pick so late in the season, but when it works out, as it did, the results are really complex and nuanced wines.

THE WINE

Since the 2012 vintage, all of our Syrah has been fermented whole cluster (with stems) in stainless tanks with fermentations started with native yeasts that come from the vineyards. The Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested and fermented separately, whole berry (stems removed) in stainless steel tanks also with native yeast for both primary and secondary fermentations. From beginning to end, the Cabernet and Syrah were on their skins for 35 days on average. Fermentations proceeded slowly and the wine sat on the skins post fermentation for a week or so for additional extraction. This sort of slow, small batch winemaking is almost unheard of at the scale that we produce. It brings an intensity and richness that belies the low level of alcohol (13.9%) and price point. The resulting wine is bold, rich and textured but not over the top – it remains wonderfully restrained and focused. Aromas of black cherry, blackberry, and earthy, savory notes of tobacco and herbs, vanilla, and cocoa. A full mouthfeel with a long and supple finish. It's an intense dark blue / purple in color with tremendous purity, depth, and focus. Tannins are elegant, and refined. The blend this year is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Syrah.

THE VINEYARDS

We are incredibly fortunate to work with a sensational group of farmers across the full reaches of Eastern Washington. This vintage we sourced from 17 amazing growers across the Columbia Valley with High River and Goose Ridge being the principal growers. TA-0.55%, pH-3.94, RS-0.30%, Alc-13.9%.

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.

THE TERROIR

About 15,000 years ago the Columbia Valley was flooded by a series of ice age floods that deposited silt and sand over the entire area. The sediments deposited by the floods now make up the area's present-day sandy and gravelly soils. These conditions are ideal for grapevines and fruit development and 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 and naturally soft tannins. Large diurnal swings (30+ degrees on average between high and low temperatures).