



BLEND: 80% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon

VINEYARD: Stillwater Creek

AGING: 20 months in 10% new, 90% neutral French oak barrels

WINERY RETAIL: \$25

CASE PRODUCTION: 240 cases

The Merlot vines growing at Stillwater Creek vineyard on the Royal Slope of the Columbia Valley are some of the best in the state. The vineyard is salmon-safe and sustainably farmed. It is obvious they are not using herbicides like Round-Up because there are weeds between the vines (this is a good sign). The site is south facing on a steep slope with the highest spot on the property (1600 ft in elevation) planted to clone 3 Merlot. This plant material originates from Bordeaux, it was brought over and propagated in Inglenook's vineyard nursery in Napa Valley in the 1950's before being cultivated up here in Washington state. The soils at Stillwater Creek are fractured basalt in volcanic ash, low in nutrients and poor water holding capacity. Our summer days are long and warm and sunny which means the fruit achieves full ripeness.

2018 is a truly fantastic vintage up here, a textbook perfect growing season without extreme weather events to disrupt the harvest. I was able to make my picking decisions entirely on the characteristics of the fruit, not because I had to preempt or mitigate a projected frosty night or forecasted heat spike. It was a luxury to have such viticultural agency – not every vintage is like this!

In September of 2018, the Merlot was hand picked, carefully destemmed and fermented in open-top bins with twice daily punchdowns. After ten days, when the fermentation was complete, we pressed off of the skins and barreled down into neutral French oak barrels for malolactic and aging. The Cabernet sauvignon was hand picked in October of 2018 and similarly processed and barreled down into a new Sylvain French oak barrel and neutral wood. In June of 2020, the Cab and the Merlot were blended together before bottling without fining or filtration under TCA-free DIAM corks in glass bottles made in the USA.

#### **Tasting notes:**

A gorgeous nose of roasted red pepper, plum and pomegranate, really classic Merlot hallmarks that balance ripe red fruit and savory characters. The palate is seamless with silky fine-grained tannins, you can feel that some of the structure and concentration is delivered by the Cabernet component of this blend.