



2018 ORR Chardonnay
BLEND: 100% Chardonnay
CLONES: estate suitcase clone, Dijon clones 76, 96
VINEYARD: White Salmon
AVA: Columbia Gorge
PLANTED: 1992
AGING: 11 months in old French oak barrels, then 5 months in stainless steel drums
CHEMISTRY: RS dry, full malo, pH 3.54
BOTTLING: unfinned and unfiltered
ALCOHOL: 13.6%
WINERY RETAIL: \$30
CASE PRODUCTION: 95 cases

The Columbia Gorge is the best climate in Washington for the style of chardonnay I like – mineral driven and fresh with that tension between bright, clean and acidic and round, rich and savory.

A couple years ago I tasted a delicious chardonnay from The Walls winery and wanted to learn more about where those grapes came from. Turns out that vineyard, called “White Salmon” on Underwood Mountain, just down the hill from Celilo, had fruit available to sell in 2018. Planted by the owner Peter Brehm in 1992 with a mix of different own-rooted Chardonnay clones, as well as Riesling, Sauv Blanc, Pinot Noir and some other red grapes, it’s really a beautiful site, surrounded by forest and, when it’s clear, a stunning view of Mt. Hood.

Typically, I pay a trucker with a Commercial Driver’s License to haul my chenin blanc or grenache from the vineyard back to the winery. White Salmon vineyard is too remote for my regular truckers. I have winemaking friends who also source Columbia Gorge fruit but my grapes weren’t able to “carpool” because their grapes weren’t ready to pick at the same time that I wanted to harvest my chardonnay. So, I rented a 16ft flatbed truck and DIY’ed it. I helped pick my grapes in the morning on September 15, 2018 and then I hauled my own fruit back up to Woodinville driving in the slow lane and swearing all the way north on I-5. Pulling into the truck side of the rest stop parking with 1.6 tons of chardonnay strapped down to the flatbed was a new experience for this Honda civic driver. Upshot = I have a lot more compassion for truck drivers now. When I finally got to the winery, Jerry from Guardian helped me whole cluster press it, then we settled the juice in tank overnight and then filled five old French oak barrels for native fermentation.

After a couple months of battonage, I stopped stirring the lees and let the wine clear by gravity. After 11 months in barrel, we moved the wine into stainless steel drums which is a technique I had read about but never done before. This is how it is said that Dominique Lafon makes his white Burgundy, apparently Roulot follows this protocol as well, shifting the wine from the oxidative environment of the barrels into an anoxic reductive world of stainless steel for a couple months for the wine to “drop the baby fat”, “chisel the cheekbones” and tighten it up a bit.

I felt strongly that the mouthfeel I’d been building for 16 nervewracking months would be destroyed by filtration and I was ok with the clarity of the wine as it is. So we went to bottle without fining or filtering in January of 2020.

After all that, just 95 damn cases were produced. Cheers!