

À Bloc

2016 | COLUMBIA VALLEY



47% Olsen Ranch Vineyard Malbec

40% Champoux Vineyard Malbec

13% Les Collines Vineyard Malbec

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

pH: 3.82

TA: 5.41 g/liter

RS: < 0.1 g/liter

14.5 % Alcohol

364 cases produced



Harvest and Winemaking

2016 was a continuation of very warm vintages that Washington has experienced since 2013. We experienced brilliant sunny and hot weather during the summer and fall except for a few days of rain in mid-October. Washington's climate is remarkable for consistent and excellent vintages.

Our philosophy for dealing with the warm vintage was to strictly pick on flavors in the grapes and ignore all other considerations. This change resulted in picking very early to maintain acidity while keeping pH and brix at harvest at reasonable levels.

The À Bloc is comprised of 100% Malbec (47% Olsen Ranch Vineyard, 40% Champoux Vineyard, and 13% Les Collines Vineyard). We are very excited to work with Champoux vineyard, recognized as Washington's best vineyard. All the grapes were hand-harvested, hand-sorted, and destemmed without crushing. To concentrate the resulting wine, we bled off 8% of the juice before the native yeasts started the fermentation.

All the Malbec lots were aged in 100% French oak, only 20% new. My focus in 2016 was using less new oak and using lighter toasted barrels. Light toasted barrels increase freshness and heighten the feeling of acidity in the Malbec.

Tasting

Ultra-dark black-purple hue with the characteristic blackberry purple-red rim. Aromas of blackberry, loose leaf tobacco, and wet forest undergrowth leap out of the glass with hints of coconut, brown spices, and vanilla underneath.

The À Bloc has flavors of blackberries, red plums, vanilla, and a hint of sweet butterscotch. The Malbec is very fresh and lively with acidity. The tannins are "present" on the finish but in a refreshing way that makes the À Bloc perfect with sauce-driven cuisines.

Thoughts on Malbec

Argentina is the world leader of Malbec but Cahors in Southwestern France is its ancestral home. Cahors tends to be less rich and more tannic than Argentina's fruity and powerful Malbec's. The À Bloc runs a line between Cahors and Argentina. It is fruity but not overpowering; has elegance but not excessive earthy or wet bark character.

À Bloc is a cycling term that means "to go all out, even beyond the point of recovery" (do not forget the diacritical mark above the À, it sounds like "ahhh"). It is also a metaphor for the winemaking at Isenhower Cellars.

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