



Marginalia

2018 Light Red Wine

**67.4% Pinot Gris and
32.6% Pinot Noir from Breezy Slope Vineyard
Walla Walla Valley AVA
552 bottles produced**

**23.3° Brix
pH 3.31
TA 6.9 g/L
13.3% abv**

The 2018 Marginalia Light Red Wine was the proof of principle for the winery. My objective for the light red wine is to make a lively, bright, and refreshing wine. Something to drink cool and cut through strong flavors to refresh the palate. This stylistic goal drove the vineyard/variety selection as well as all the decisions in the cellar.

Breezy Slope Vineyard is a special place for growing grapes in Walla Walla. The overall effect of its spectacular air drainage, deeper soils, aspect, and relatively high altitude (over 1600 feet) make it a good place for varieties that we think of as thriving in cooler climates—varieties like Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir. Don't get me wrong, it still gets blazing hot at Breezy Slope in the Summer, but other factors like the air movement and deeper, wetter soils seem to keep the vines from acting like it's as hot as it is. Breezy Slope also seems to produce lower tannin fruit across the board, which means that earlier picking doesn't tend to result in overly astringent wines; this is key for the style of wine I'm trying to make from this fruit. For what I'm trying to do, I think Breezy Slope is the single most exciting vineyard in Walla Walla.

The light red wine from 2018 was picked early in September. The Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir were fermented together. Pure pinot gris fermented on the skins tends to have more obvious and angular tannin, but the Pinot Noir seems to round off the edges without adding a lot of pigment or weight.

At the winery I stomped on the fruit to break a few skins and get the juice flowing, but none of the fruit was destemmed. Extraction was pretty gentle because of all the whole clusters and whole berries, but also because the fermentation was cool and relatively slow. I pressed the fermenting wine after about a week of contact with the skins and stems to let the fermentation finish slowly in neutral (mostly American oak) barrels. The biggest decision in the cellar was when to press. My pattern so far with this wine is to press about 24 hours after I get the first hint of tannin that I think is too angular. Since the edges smooth over while the wine ages in the barrel, I want to end extraction just a little past the point of balance, so that after barrel aging there is just a tiny refreshing bitter twist in the finish of the wine.

To keep the lees in good condition and contribute to the rounding effect of barrel aging, I stirred the lees every couple of weeks until bottling. Since the wine is unfinned and unfiltered, it went into the bottle with a small quantity of light lees. At least for a few years these lees will protect the wine from the effects of oxygen, better, I believe, than a more conventional dose of sulfite. And unlike sulfite, the lees also taste good; I sometimes roll the bottle around before I open it so every glass gets a fair share.

This wine is versatile at the table because it has low tannin levels and higher acidity. It stands up to spicy and sour foods better than more traditional red wines, but it has enough structure to pair well with meats. The flavors have evolved over time since bottling. The wine had very clear citrus pith and juniper aromas at bottling and still has hints of those flavors. With a little bottle age, the wine is getting more overtly fruity with more strawberry and cherry fruit, but still with a notable stemmy/herbal core. I like to serve the wine pretty cool, but not fully fridge cold, as an aperitif and with lighter meals, pates, cheeses, vegetable salads, beans, and lighter grilled or roasted meats.

The 2018 Light Red Wine is not available through the winery, but may be available in limited quantities to wholesale customers through Odyssey Selections.