

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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Harvest Report

On Wednesday, October 15th we picked the last batch of Roussanne off our estate, ending the 2014 harvest. Given that we're in a three-year drought, we're thrilled with the results: very high quality, and quantity only a little below average.

To our surprise, most varieties saw slightly increased yields from 2013. Two exceptions were Mourvèdre and Roussanne, our two latest-ripening varieties, and also the two grapes most susceptible to late-season stress-related devigoration. But even there, the lower yields weren't catastrophic. Viognier showed a sharper decline, but from a discrete cause: we had several nights of break-ins by wild pigs toward the beginning of harvest, and they went straight for Viognier, the ripest (read: earliest-ripening) grape.

We brought in a total of 309 tons – 123 tons of white grapes and 186 tons of red grapes. Overall yields ended up at 2.78 tons per acre, which is still just below our ten-year average of 2.9 tons per acre. Other years in which we've seen yields between 2.5 and 3 tons per acre have included 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, and 2013, all of which have produced excellent wines that have been aging very well.

In character, we see similarities to both 2007 and 2013, with the characteristic dark color and intense flavors both low-yielding vintages shared, a little more overt fruit than the more savory 2013s, and a little firmer backbone than the lush 2007s. Clusters and berries were very small, which meant that skin-to-juice ratios were high on our red grapes.

See **HARVEST**, page 3



Making Vin de Paille

by Jason Haas

This year we are making our first Vin de Paille *Sacrérouge* since 2010. We don't make our vin de paille dessert wines every year. First, the grapes need to be in great shape before they're put on the straw, or they rot rather than drying, making some vintages unsuitable for the technique. Second, Americans don't buy large quantities of sweet wines, so we don't need to make that much. (Perhaps I should more accurately say that while many Americans like their dry wines with some sweetness they don't buy large quantities of truly sweet wines.) And third, given that the setup and winemaking are pretty labor-intensive and that the wines age effortlessly, making more Vin de Paille less often gives us efficiency.

The grapes (Mourvèdre, in the case of this year's *Sacrérouge*) are harvested into picking baskets, but are not then dumped into half-ton bins for transport as grapes for traditional wines are; the weight of the grapes on top is enough to bruise the grapes on the bottom and encourage rot. Instead, the baskets are carried by hand -- or loaded onto the back of a flatbed and driven -- down to our greenhouse where they are laid out on the straw (vin de paille means "wine of straw" in French). The clusters have to be carefully chosen, with no imperfections or rot, because rot can spread quickly to other clusters, and broken or bruised berries start attracting bees and insects. The greenhouse benches and the straw allow air to circulate under the clusters as well as on top, which promotes even drying.

See **VIN DE PAILLE**, page 3

Focus Varietal: Counoise

Perhaps the grape question we hear most frequently at wine events and in our tasting room is “Counoise? What’s Counoise?” Even the Wall Street Journal joked a few years ago about Counoise’s obscurity in an article about blends. Yet the grape is a component of many Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines, and comprises about 10% of the Beaucastel rouge. Its moderate alcohol and tannins, combined with good fruit and aromatics, balance the characteristic intense spice, strong tannins, and high alcohol of Syrah. In Provence, it is also renowned for its use in rosés.

Early History

The precise origin of Counoise (pronounced “Coon-wahz”) is unknown. According to the great Provençal poet Frederic Mistral, it was introduced into Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Spain by a papal officer, who offered it to Pope Urban V when the papacy was based in Avignon in the mid-14th century. Counoise was planted in the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and was given a prominent place in the wines of the celebrated Château la Nerthe estate of Commandant Ducos in the late 19th century. When the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée laws regulating (among other things) the permitted grape varieties were passed in the 1930s, the varieties planted by Ducos (including Counoise) comprised 11 of the 13 allowed Châteauneuf-du-Pape varieties. The varietal saw a similar rebirth at Château de Beaucastel when Jacques Perrin increased the planting of Counoise as a complement for Syrah.

Prior to the development of seedless grapes, Counoise was also valued as a table grape for its large berries and juicy acidity.

At Beaucastel, the Perrins have been increasing their plantings of Counoise over the last two decades. They believe that Counoise’s later ripening produces

wines with intense spice and bright acidity -- a welcome complement to the lushness of Grenache and the structure of Mourvèdre.

Counoise at Tablas Creek

We brought Counoise cuttings from Château de Beaucastel in 1990 and they spent three years in USDA inspection.

Once the vines

cleared quarantine, we began the process of multiplying and grafting, and we currently have 5 acres planted.

The grape is particularly suited to the geography of Tablas Creek, as it produces most reliably in stony hillside soils and intense sun. It is easy to graft, is moderately vigorous, with large berries and relatively thin

France prefer Cinsault and Carignan, both of which ripen earlier in the ripening cycle.

In the cellar, Counoise is prone to oxidation, and we are careful to ferment it in closed fermenters, and to age it only in foudre. This oxidative character makes a useful complement to Mourvèdre and -- particularly -- Syrah, which are prone to reduction. It also has the highest acidity of our Rhône reds, and adding it in small amounts to a blend is akin to squeezing lemon onto a dish of food: you may not taste the Counoise, but the heightened acidity will bring out the flavors of the other components of the wine.

Flavors and Aromas

Counoise makes a light purple-red wine, and has a briary, spicy character with flavors of anise, strawberries, and blueberries. In our *Esprit de Tablas*, Counoise comprises 5-10% of the blend, and helps open up the more closed varieties of Mourvèdre and Syrah. Its soft tannins and forward fruit round out the blend and provide an element of finesse to the final product, particularly when the wine is young. At slightly higher percentages (10-20%) in our *Côtes de Tablas*, Counoise’s fruitiness, acidity and spice combine with the fruit and spice of Grenache and the structure of Syrah to make a wine with vibrant fruit that retains freshness. We also include 10-15% Counoise in our *Dianthus* rosé, where it contributes its signature bright acids and intense raspberry flavors.

In years of noteworthy intensity, Counoise also makes a delicious single-

varietal wine with the character of a Cru Beaujolais: earth, spice, intense floral fruit, light body, vibrant acidity and soft tannins, ideal for drinking in the first 2-4 years. We’ve bottled it as a varietal wine in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2010. 🍷



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skins, and ripens fairly late in the cycle, after Grenache and before Mourvèdre. At Tablas Creek, we typically harvest Counoise in the middle of October. This late harvest date is one factor that has discouraged greater adoption of the grape; many producers in the south of

Looking at average sugars and pH at harvest provides a quick way of measuring a year's ripeness. We picked at an average Brix level of 23.18, our highest average sugars since 2009, but with very good acids as well: the 3.59 average pH was our lowest in the last decade, other than the historically cool years of 2010 and 2011. That the level of lushness was counterbalanced by good acids is an indication that we were able to keep up in mid-September, when it seemed like half the vineyard was ready to pick, and that we got fruit off the vine while it still maintained natural freshness.

At 53 days between its August 23rd beginning and its October 15th conclusion, this harvest clocks in a bit shorter than average (our 10-year average is 56 days) and our

finish was one of our earliest on record, preceded this century only by last year's October 7th end.



Guard donkey Dottie enjoys a post-harvest snack among the vines.

Now that we're done with picking, we moved our animal herd back into the vineyard. They cleaned up any second crop clusters we left behind, and started getting some natural fertilizer into the soil in advance of what we're hoping will be a wet winter. We have also applied compost throughout the vineyard, so that as the rains come this winter, it will be absorbed into the soil and provide next year's nutrition.

And as for that rain, we are hopeful that

the 1.2 inches we got on Halloween bodes well for a vineyard (and a region) struggling under three years of drought. 🌱



Mourvèdre grapes laid out on beds of straw

The grapes spent two or three weeks on the straw, dehydrating gradually in the greenhouse heat, until they were semi-raisined, at which point we picked them back up and transported them to the winery for foot-crushing (they're too dense at this point to run through a destemmer or to get a punch-down tool through) and fermentation. If you're wondering why these wines are usually expensive, this makes three times that they have to be handled, plus some pretty labor-intensive daily cellar work. But the reward is worth it: a sweet wine that has freshness, isn't overly alcoholic (reds typically in the 13% range, whites in the 9%-10% range), and has concentrated minerality and varietal character, not just sweetness.

Look for the 2014 Vin de Paille *Sacrérouge* in the fall of 2015! 🌱

December is must! Month at Tablas Creek

Once again, Tablas Creek will donate \$1 to must! charities for each bottle purchased directly from us (in our tasting room, online or by phone) during the month of December. We invite you to visit us through the end of the year to enjoy Tablas Creek wines, check out our new holiday gift packs, and support local children in need. 100% of the funds generated will go directly to ensure kids in our community have access to healthy food. For more information about the great work must! is doing, visit mustcharities.org

At right, Jason Haas and must! Executive Director Becky Grey present the Boys and Girls Club of Paso Robles with last December's donation.



2014 HOLIDAY GIFT PACKS

SHIPPING INCLUDED



At Tablas Creek, we want to help you celebrate in style! We have several ways in which you can give the gift of Tablas Creek, including five special holiday gift packs. We are including shipping, and a special decorative gift box, at no extra charge to any address in any of the 34 states we can ship to, and are excited to introduce our Epicurean (non-wine) package that we can ship to all 50 states! For gift orders, we are happy to enclose a holiday message. These special holiday packs will only be available for pickup or shipment until the end of December. To order, visit tablascreek.com or call 805.237.1231.

Esprit de Tablas Gift Pack (2 bottles)

A bottle each of the newest vintage of our signature wines:

- 2012 *Esprit de Tablas*
- 2012 *Esprit de Tablas Blanc*

\$100 per pack, and \$80 per pack for VINsiders.

Library Vertical of Esprit Gift Pack (3 bottles)

A bottle each of three vintages of our flagship red wine:

- 2009 *Esprit de Beaucastel*
- 2010 *Esprit de Beaucastel*
- 2011 *Esprit de Tablas*

\$170 per pack, and \$136 per pack for VINsiders.

Great Whites Gift Pack (3 bottles)

A bottle each of our most popular white wines:

- 2012 *Esprit de Tablas Blanc*
- 2013 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*
- 2013 *Patelin de Tablas Blanc*

\$92 per pack, and \$73.60 per pack for VINsiders.

Small Production Collectibles Gift Pack (4 bottles)

A bottle each of four limited production wines:

- 2013 *Marsanne*
- 2013 *Viognier*
- 2012 *Grenache*
- 2011 *Full Circle Pinot Noir*

\$145 per pack, and \$116 per pack for VINsiders.

Epicurean Gift Pack

A food lover's holiday package:

- 2 bottles of Tablas Creek organically grown extra-virgin olive oil
- The fantastic *New Wine Country Cookbook*
- Tablas Creek hat
- Tablas Creek apron

\$104 per pack, and \$83.20 per pack for VINsiders.

Reserve Tasting Certificates

Our new Reserve Tasting offers guests an intimate tasting of our most exclusive wines as well as selections from our library. Give the gift of a reserve tasting at Tablas Creek, and the gift recipient will enjoy a seated tasting in our private room, with rare wines we've aged in our cellars since their release. Space is limited to 8 seats per session, and reservations are available Sunday-Friday at 11:30am and 3pm and Saturdays at 10am. Certificates are available for \$40 per person (\$25 for club members). To purchase, find the "reserve tasting certificates" section at the bottom of our online order form or call 805.237.1231 x39.



TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



WINE ORDER FORM WINTER 2014 -2015

DISCOUNTS
Wine Club members receive a discount of 25% on orders of 12 bottles or more and 20% on orders of fewer than 12 bottles. VINdependents receive a discount of 20% on orders of a case or more and 10% on orders of fewer than 12 bottles. Non-VINsiders receive a 10% discount on orders of 12 bottles or more.

SHIPPING
Shipping included on orders that include 6 or more bottles of *Esprit* and/or *Esprit Blanc*.

CA*
1-2 bottles: \$10.00
3- 6 bottles: \$20.00
7-12 bottles: \$30.00

CO, ID*,MT, NM, NV*,OR, WA*,WY
1-2 bottles: \$15.00
3-6 bottles: \$30.00
7-12 bottles: \$40.00

AK, DC, FL, GA*,HI, IA, IL, KS*, MD*, ME*, MI*, MN, MO, NC*, NE*, NH*, NY*, OH*, SC*, TN*, TX*, VA*, VT*, WI, WV*
1-2 bottles: \$20.00
3- 6 bottles: \$35.00
7-12 bottles: \$45.00

**State and local taxes apply*

LEGAL
Due to federal and state laws, we are permitted to ship to addresses in the above states only. Wines may only be shipped to and received by adults at least 21 years of age. **An adult signature is required at delivery for all shipped wine orders.**

WINE	QUANTITY	LIST PRICE	VINDEPENDENT PRICE	VINSIDER PRICE	TOTAL
SPECIAL PACKAGES [SHIPPING INCLUDED; DETAILS ON P. 4]					
ESPRIT DE TABLAS GIFT PACK (2 bottles)	_____	\$100.00	\$90.00	\$80.00	_____
LIBRARY VERTICAL GIFT PACK(3 bottles)	_____	\$170.00	\$153.00	\$136.00	_____
GREAT WHITES GIFT PACK (3 bottles)	_____	\$92.00	\$82.80	\$73.60	_____
SMALL PRODUCTION COLLECTIBLES					
GIFT PACK (4 bottles)	_____	\$145.00	\$130.50	\$116.00	_____
EPIPUREAN GIFT PACK	_____	\$104.00	\$93.60	\$83.20	_____
WHITE WINES					
ESPRIT DE TABLAS BLANC 2012	_____	\$45.00	\$40.50	\$36.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2013	_____	\$27.00	\$24.30	\$21.60	_____
PATELIN DE TABLAS BLANC 2013	_____	\$20.00	\$18.00	\$16.00	_____
VIIGNIER 2013	_____	\$30.00	\$27.00	\$24.00	_____
MARSANNE 2013	_____	\$30.00	\$27.00	\$24.00	_____
RED WINES					
ESPRIT DE TABLAS 2012	_____	\$55.00	\$49.50	\$44.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2012	_____	\$35.00	\$31.50	\$28.00	_____
PATELIN DE TABLAS 2012	_____	\$20.00	\$18.00	\$16.00	_____
FULL CIRCLE PINOT NOIR 2012	_____	\$45.00	\$40.50	\$36.00	_____
TANNAT 2012	_____	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$32.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2010	_____	\$55.00	\$49.50	\$44.00	_____
GRENACHE 2012	_____	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$32.00	_____

SUBTOTAL _____

CASE DISCOUNT (IF APPLICABLE) _____

STATE AND LOCAL TAXES WILL BE APPLIED

SHIPPING _____

ORDER TOTAL _____

I certify that I am 21 years or older.

BILLING & SHIPMENT: EITHER

VINsider Name: _____

VINsider Number: _____

Signature: _____

Bill to my credit card on file Ship to my address on file

OR

BILL TO:	SHIP TO:	CREDIT CARD:
Name: _____	Name: _____	MC/Visa/AmEx #: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Exp. Date: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____	Name on Card: _____
Email: _____	Phone: _____	Signature: _____

To order: return form to Tablas Creek Vineyard, 9339 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446 or fax 805.237.1314 :: email orders@tablascreek.com :: order online at www.tablascreek.com

Then and Now

We celebrated 47 years of partnership between the Perrin and Haas families during a recent visit from Jean Pierre and Francois Perrin. Happy holidays, from our families to yours!



Beaucastel patriarch Jacques Perrin with Jason Haas (above) and Bob Haas (below) Beaucastel, 1973



Francois Perrin, Danny Haas, Jason Haas, Bob Haas and Jean Pierre Perrin Tablas Creek, 2014



Jean Pierre and Francois Perrin with Bob Haas



Sebastian (7) and Eli (9) Haas, Tablas Creek 2014

Upcoming Events

February 15, 2015 Paso Robles Rhone Rangers Experience

10:00 AM

February 28, 2015 Horizontal Tasting of 2005 Reds

2:00 PM

Tablas Creek will join the 50 members of the Paso Robles Rhone Rangers at Broken Earth Winery for a celebration of the vibrant local Rhône community. This fun-filled and information-rich day will include a “Rhône Essentials” seminar moderated by Matt Kettmann, Contributing Editor for *Wine Enthusiast*, a Vintners’ Lunch, and the Grand Tasting and Silent Auction. Tickets for the seminar and lunch are just \$85, and seminar/lunch attendees will receive free entry into the Grand Tasting. Tickets for the Grand Tasting are just \$35, and free to qualified trade and media (advance registration required). For tickets or more information visit rhonerangers.org.

May 2, 2015 Blending Seminar

10:00 AM

Join us for our annual blending seminar! Jason Haas and wine-maker Neil Collins will lead a barrel tasting of the individual varietals (both reds and whites), and then set you loose with graduated cylinders to produce your own blend. This event is extremely popular and sells out quickly. The cost is \$45 for wine club members and \$60 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required; contact us at events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x30.

Last year, we began what we hope will be an annual tradition of looking back a decade later at how a broad range of wines have developed. This year, we turn our attention on the 2005 vintage, which was an unusual combination of wet winter (our first after three years of drought), warm summer, and exceptionally long growing season. It produced wines with substantial tannins and lots of fruit: a big, personality-filled vintage which has proven to age in a fascinating way. At this horizontal tasting (horizontal referring to tasting several wines from a single estate made in a single year, as opposed to vertical, which would imply a tasting of the same wine across several vintages) you can join us as we look back at 2005 with the perspective of ten years’ time.

The cost is \$45 for wine club members and \$60 for guests and non-members (2 guest maximum). This event is sure to fill up early. To reserve, email events@tablascreek.com or call 805.237.1231 x30.

Meet the Tablas Creek Team! Questions for Levi Glenn

Levi has served as the Viticulturist at Tablas Creek since 2011.

How did you come to live in the Central Coast?

I came to Cal Poly out of high school and lived in San Luis Obispo from 1999 to 2004 while earning my Viticulture and Enology degree. Upon graduation I returned to Northern California, growing grapes in both Sonoma and Napa. In 2011, I humbly accepted a position at Tablas, and felt very fortunate to work for a winery that I admired so much. My wife and I moved back to the Central Coast and wished we had never left.

What is your favorite part of being the Tablas Creek Viticulturist?

My position affords me a unique, all encompassing view of the wine production process. I help coax along the grapevines throughout the year to produce the highest quality grapes possible. In the fall the grapes are picked and I have the privilege of helping out in the winery during processing and fermentation. In the spring following harvest I get to sit in on the blending sessions. The most rewarding part is being able to taste and follow these wines as they age and progress. Each year is unique and hopefully that's captured in the bottle.

Which Tablas Creek wine is your go-to on a cold winter's night?

I would probably have to go with our 2011 *Mourvèdre* paired with a bowl of Creamy Roasted Mushroom Soup. I think the earthy and fresh herb character of that wine would definitely complement the umami rich, forest floor elements of the mushrooms.

What part of the Tablas Creek project are you most excited about?

In 2015 we're starting the first phase of planting on the new property. The parcel is just on the other side of Tablas Creek itself. In total there is 160 acres, of which only 50 are plantable. We're going to start with 5-10 acres and it's all going to be head-trained and dry-farmed. The site is stunning, both aesthetically and viticulturally. It's steep and rocky with many different slopes and aspects. It will be difficult to farm, but the fruit will be great. The hilltop views to the west provide unmatched sunsets.

If you had to choose a different career, what would you be?

Plant Ecology. I've always been fascinated by how and where and why plants grow.



Rhône River Cruise with Tablas Creek August 2-9, 2015

We're excited to offer a return to the Mediterranean in the summer of 2015. Winemaker Neil Collins and founders Robert and Barbara Haas will lead a cruise group on an intimate river cruise up the Rhône Valley from Avignon to Lyon aboard Uniworld Boutique River Cruises' new ship, the SS Catherine. The daily shore tours include a behind-the-scenes visit to Châteauneuf de Beaucastel culminating in a gourmet lunch prepared by Beaucastel's Michelin-starred chef Laurent Deconick. Cabins start at \$4234 per person. For all the details, and to book, visit our travel partners' Web site at foodandwinetrails.com/tablas-creek-2015 or call Food & Wine Trails at (800) 367-5348. We hope you will join us!



Tablas on Tour: National Events

January 9-11, 2015

Gasparilla Food and Wine Weekend
Gasparilla Inn & Club
Boca Grande, Florida
www.the-gasparilla-inn.com
877.403.0599

January 24, 2015

Santa Barbara Winter Wine Classic
Fess Parker Doubletree Resort
Santa Barbara, California
www.californiawinefestival.com

March 15, 2015

Family Winemakers of California Tasting
Los Angeles, California
www.familywinemakers.org
916.498.7500

March 20-22, 2015

Vintage Paso: Zinfandel and Other Wild Wines
Paso Robles, California
www.pasowine.com
805.239.8463

March 27-28, 2015

Rhone Rangers Northern California Tasting
San Francisco, California
www.rhonerangers.org
800.467.0163

April 8-11, 2015

Taste of Vail
Vail, Colorado
www.tasteofvail.com
970.401.3320

April 17-19, 2015

Earth Day Food and Wine Weekend
Paso Robles, California
www.earthdayfoodandwine.com
805.466.2288

April 22, 2015

Heart's Delight Wine Tasting & Auction
Washington, DC
www.heartsdelightwineauction.org
703.248.1720

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