

Jeb Dunnuck's THE RHONE REPORT

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Tablas Creek

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2011 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas	Red	87-89
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One of the leading estates in Paso Robles, Tablas Creek continues to produce a staggering amount of outstanding wines in each vintage. 2010 is particularly strong here, and while the upper end cuvees are hard to come by, readers should not miss the more readily available Côtes de Tablas and Esprit de Beaucastel bottling. Both represent outstanding value. In addition, this tasting of the Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (going back to '03) has convinced me that these wines age beautifully, and in my opinion, can compete with anything coming out of the south of France today. Website: www.tablascreek.com

2010 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$27** A perennial overachiever and always a fantastic value, the 2010 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas Blanc is a stainless steel aged blend of 54% Viognier, 30% Grenache Blanc, 8% Marsanne, and 8% Roussanne. It displays a rich, yet very fresh profile with crisp stone and golden fruit qualities interspersed with honey blossom, mineral, and that wild herb/underbrush quality that Grenache Blanc brings to the blend. Medium bodied and classy, with excellent acidity and focus, this outstanding white is a candidate for a case purchase. It will shine for 2-3 years easily. **(91 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$40** Fermented all in foudre and always a step up in terms of richness, structure, and depth from the Côtes de Tablas Blanc, the 2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (60% Roussanne, 35% Grenache Blanc, 5% Picpoul Blanc) nevertheless shows the cooler side of the 2010 vintage and is incredibly elegant and seamless, even by this cuvees standards. It possesses gorgeous aromas of juicy pear and apple fruits, mineral, and hazelnut qualities that flow to medium+ bodied, classy plate that has fantastic purity, integrated acidity, and no shortage of length or richness on the finish. This impeccably balanced Rhône white will drink beautifully for a decade or longer. **(94 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$20** Meaning "Neighborhood" and made in a friendly, easy going style, the 2011 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas Blanc is a blend of 45% Grenache Blanc, 34% Viognier, 18% Roussanne, and 3% Marsanne that's fermented all in stainless steel. Very juicy and lively, with edgy citrus, green herbs, and underlying minerality, this medium bodied, very well put together white fleshes out on the palate, gaining richness and texture with air. In the same ball park as the Côtes de Tablas Blanc quality wise, yet with a slightly easier going, juicy feel, this delicious 2011 should be consumed over the coming 1-2 years. **(89 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Picpoul Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$27** A variety that's not often found on its own, the 100% Picpoul, 2011 Tablas Creek Picpoul Blanc is a varietal education and delivers an excellent mix of perfumed aromatics, racy acidity, and classy richness that comes through on the palate. Showing loads of citrus, tropical, and floral qualities on the nose, this medium-bodied white is very well done and impressively balanced on the palate and possesses the acidity to drink well on its own on a hot day, as well as enough richness and depth keep it versatile on the dinner table. Well worth checking out. **(88-90 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Marsanne (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$30** Textbook and classic Marsanne on both the nose and palate, the 2011 Tablas Creek Marsanne (100% Marsanne) is loaded with aromas of brioche, toasted hazelnuts, orange rind, and golden fruits that give way to a medium+ bodied, rich, full palate that shows outstanding length. While there's real depth and richness on the palate, it stays beautifully balanced and clean. Enjoy bottles over the coming 3-4 years. **(89-91 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$27** The 2011 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas Blanc, tasted as a barrel sample, is a blend of 27% Viognier, 26% Grenache Blanc, 25% Marsanne, and 22% Roussanne. Viognier normally contributes a larger component here, yet it was hit particularly hard by the April frosts. Bright and fresh, with a slightly lean edge, it exhibits more of a stone fruit, citrus, and mineral profile (no doubt due to the reduction in Viognier) on the nose. This is followed by a medium-bodied, racy white that has bright, clean acidity, and enough fruit to evolve for 1-2 years. Odds are this will gain additional flesh once in bottle. **(87-90 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Grenache Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$27** Zesty and racy, the 2011 Tablas Creek Grenache Blanc is an energetic white that boasts tart, mouthwatering notes of green apple, herbs, citrus, and wet stone on the nose. It's medium bodied

and lively on the palate, with racy acidity, yet there's solid fruit here as well. A perfect starter to a meal, it will shine for 2-3 years, if not longer. **(88-91 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Roussanne (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$30** Seeing the most wood of any of the cuvees, the 2011 Tablas Creek Roussanne (100% Roussanne) is aged all in puncheons and foudre. You wouldn't know it from tasting it however, and the wine delivers a classic, intense array of pear and peach fruit to go with brioche, mineral, and hints of honeysuckle on the nose. Medium to full-bodied and gorgeously textured, with integrated acidity, rich fruit, and notable length, this is all around impressive and worth tracking down. Given the acidity and balance, I see no reason it won't have a substantial drink window; nevertheless, it should also be superb on release. **(90-93 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$40** My favorite of the 2011 barrel samples, the spectacular looking 2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc is a blend of 64% Roussanne, 26% Grenache Blanc, and 10% Picpoul Blanc that's fermented and aged in a combination of stainless steel and oak barrels. Classy and elegant, it boasts knockout aromatics of mineral-drenched green herbs, crème, flowers, and stone fruits that lead to a medium to full-bodied, perfectly balanced, surprisingly structured palate. Up there with the best vintages of this cuvee, it will be superb on release, yet also age effortlessly for 10-15 years. **(92-95 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Rosé (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$27** A top-notch, dry rosé, the light ruby colored 2011 Tablas Creek Rosé delivers a perfumed array of strawberry, rhubarb, rose petal, and mineral to go with a classy, elegant, yet well concentrated and lengthy palate that has juicy acidity and a dry, clean feel and finish. This will stand toe to toe with the top roses from France, and should be enjoyed over the coming 1-2 years (although it will probably drink just fine even past that). **(91 pts.)**

2009 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$50** A final blend of 40% Mourvèdre, 28% Syrah, 27% Grenache, 5% Counoise that's aged all in larger foudre, the 2009 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel is a beautiful wine that offers up classic, almost Châteauneuf-du-Pape like aromas of meaty black cherry, licorice, loads of spiced meat, and mineral qualities on the nose. Full-bodied and youthfully structured and firm, with bright acidity, solid mid-palate concentration, and a chewy, tannic finish, this superb Paso Robles blend should be given 3-4 years of bottle age, and then consumed over the following 12-15 years. Like many southern Rhône blends, this will be approachable and delicious for a number of years after the vintage, yet won't hit prime drinking until 7-9 years after the vintage. **(94 pts.)**

2009 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$95** More deep, rich, and structured, yet also still holding onto a sense of balance and elegance, the knockout 2009 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie (65% Mourvèdre, 26% Grenache, 9% Syrah) shows a similar meatiness that can be found in the Esprit de Beaucastel, yet carries a darker fruit profile with loads of blackberry styled fruit, licorice, earth, and hints flowers all emerging from the glass. This is followed up by a powerful, rich wine that has an energetic, vibrant texture, fantastic concentration, and a chewy, structured finish. There's certainly loads of structure here, yet given the balance and overall harmony, it's still a brilliant drink now. Nevertheless, I would hide bottles in the cellar for 5-7 years, and then plan on drinking them over the following decade or more. **(96+ pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas (*USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles*) **\$20** Bright and juicy, with a freshly bottled Côtes du Rhône like feel, the 2010 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas (39% Syrah, 36% Grenache, 22% Mourvèdre, 3% Counoise) is loaded with raspberry, licorice, and bramble qualities to go with a medium-bodied, fresh, and wholly delicious profile. It should be consumed over the coming handful of years. **(89 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$30** Even better, with more depth and complexity, is the 2010 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas. A blend of 46% Grenache, 39% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre, and 5% Counoise, it boasts outstanding aromas of red and black fruits, lavender, peppercorn, and garrigue that flow seamlessly to a medium+ bodied, fresh, lively, and gorgeously textured palate. This upfront, classy red is delicious now, yet should evolve for 5-8 years, if not upwards of a decade. It's a brilliant value that should not be missed. **(92 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Counoise (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$35** Tasted as a barrel sample, the 2010 Tablas Creek Counoise is a medium-bodied, lively red that offers up aromas and flavors of cherry pit, Provencal herbs, pepper, and tar. Very fresh and lively, with juicy acidity and an overall elegance that comes through with air, this will be a perfect food wine that should be enjoyed in its first 4-6 years after bottling. **(87-89 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Grenache (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$40** Also tasted as a barrel sample, the 2010 Tablas Creek Grenache shows textbook Grenache flair and looks to be outstanding. Deep, mineral-driven, and loaded with spice, licorice, and floral notes, this beautiful 2010 shows the energy and freshness of the vintage, yet also has solid depth, beautiful fruit, and ripe tannin that frames the finish. It should benefit from a handful of years in the cellar, and drink well through 2018. **(89-91 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Mourvedre (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$40** Like the Grenache, the 2010 Tablas Creek Mourvedre has a textbook profile of crunchy red and black fruits, smoke, roasted meats, and underbrush that gives way to a tight, energetic palate that has fresh acidity, great texture, and enough structure to warrant a year or two in the cellar. It should have a decade or more of longevity. **(89-92 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Syrah (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$40** The 2010 Tablas Creek Syrah, also tasted as a barrel sample, has a cool-climate feel in its meaty, peppery profile. More roasted herb, licorice, and violet qualities emerge from the glass, and this medium+ bodied Syrah is fresh, focused, and shows polished, elegant tannin on the length finish. It too should have upwards of a decade of prime drinking. **(89-92 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek En Gobelet (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$45** One of the stars of the 2010 barrel samples, the smoking 2010 Tablas Creek En Gobelet, a blend of 37% Grenache, 28% Mourvèdre, 13% Syrah, 12% Counoise, 10% Tannat that comes all from head trained vines, delivers exotic, floral aromas of pit and spice-laced purple fruits, citrus, soy, and violets on the nose. Medium to full-bodied, with gorgeous precision, a dense, concentrated mid-palate, and fantastic length, this immensely promising blend should benefit from short to mid-term cellaring, and have 10-12 years or more of overall longevity. **(91-94 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$55** Firm, structured, and showing the coolness of the vintage beautifully, the 2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel (45% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, 21% Syrah, and 4% Counoise) is a fresh, focused, and balanced red that has loads of crushed berry like fruit, licorice, sappy underbrush, and floral nuances, as well as superb underlying minerality, all emerging from the glass. Quite tight and firm on the palate, with excellent purity, juicy acidity, and a youthful, energetic feel, this will most likely require 3-5 years of bottle age once released, and have 15+ years of total longevity. **(93-95 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$95** More rich and full, with additional roasted herb, licorice, and meaty aromas, the 2010 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie is a big, dense 2010 that has loads of fruit, yet still shows the vintage with a cool purity of fruit, integrated acidity, and firm tannin that frames the finish. A blend of 60% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, 10% Syrah that's aged all in foudre, this

full-bodied, powerful effort will require even more bottle time than the Esprit de Beaucastel, yet will have two decades or more of longevity. **(94-96+ pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$20** The 2011 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas, tasted out of barrel and a blend of 52% Syrah, 29% Grenache, 18% Mourvèdre, 1% Counoise, looks to be very good to possibly outstanding. It possesses a lively, supple, and soft profile, with aromas of bright cherry and raspberry, flowers, and sweet spice to go with a medium-bodied, elegant, and lightly textured palate. It will drink well on release and be a crowd pleaser for 3-5 years. **(87-89 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$35** Also showing the upfront fruit and charm of the vintage, the 2011 Tablas Creek Côtes de Tablas (49% Grenache, 28% Syrah, 15% Mourvèdre, and 8% Counoise) is perfumed and friendly, showing loads of bing cherry, licorice, tar, and toasted spice qualities on the nose, a medium-bodied, supple texture, and ripe tannin. As with the Patelin de Tablas, this will be ready to go on release, but also evolve gracefully for 4-6 years. **(87-89 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Mourvedre (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$40** Showing a touch more edge and cut, the 2011 Tablas Creek Mourvedre is a classic Mourvedre that delivers loads of herb laced black fruits, meat, candied flowers, and violet-like aromas and flavors. Medium to full-bodied and well focused and pure on the palate, this juicy, delicious 2011 will most likely gain weight and depth in bottle and have 5-8 years or more of longevity. **(89-91+ pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek En Gobelet (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$45** Even more impressive and up there with the estate's Esprit de Beaucastel in terms of quality, the 2011 Tablas Creek En Gobelet is a smoking blend of 33% Mourvèdre, 31% Grenache, 20% Syrah, and 16% Tannat that comes all from head trained vines. Gorgeously perfumed and loaded with red and black fruits, pastille, violets, and resinous, sappy, qualities, this medium to full-bodied blend has a core of sweet fruit, a vibrant, energetic texture, and solid length. It should be reasonably approachable on release, but should be given 2-3 years of bottle age, and have a decade of longevity. **(91-94 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$55** The 2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel, tasted out of barrel and a blend of 40% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, 20% Syrah, and 10% Counoise, was decidedly meaty and savory at the time of this tasting, with loads of meat juicy, pan drippings, and mole sauce qualities supporting more pit styled fruits, licorice, and herbs de Provence. Beautifully full-bodied and elegant on the palate, with a full, dense mid-palate, fine, polished tannin, and a savory, chewy finish, this is more approachable than the 2010, and will be drinkable at an earlier age. **(93-95 pts.)**

2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$95** Possessing the same meatiness that can be found in the Esprit de Beaucastel, the 2011 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie looks to be a stunning 2011! Inky colored, dense, and layered, this blend of 60% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, and 10% Syrah delivers top-notch aromas of roasted meats, crushed violets, spice, and beautifully pure blackberry styled fruits that lead to a full-bodied, structured, textured, and long wine. This has a rounded texture that keeps it approachable, yet there's a serious core of fruit and structure here. It will be interesting to see how this evolves in barrel, and then from bottle, but this was an impressive barrel sample! **(95-97 pts.)**

2007 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles) **\$NA** A solid showing by the 2007 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (68% Roussanne, 22% Grenache Blanc, 10% Picpoul Blanc) and it's still fresh and vibrant, with golden apple, pear, honeysuckle, and hazelnut aromas and nuances all emerging from the glass. Medium

to full-bodied on the palate and a fantastic mix of rich fruit, texture, and freshness, this is a classic Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc that will age effortlessly for another decade. **(93 pts.)**

2005 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso

Robles) **\$NA** Showing even better than the '07 and drinking brilliantly, the 2005 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc is a blend of 70% Roussanne, 25% Grenache Blanc, 5% Picpoul Blanc that had the Roussanne fermented and aged in oak, and everything else in stainless steel. As with the '07, this is still beautifully fresh and lively, with a Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc like array of mineral, green almonds, hints of flowers, and a core of rich, ripe stone and peach fruit. Classic Roussanne on the palate, this textured, elegant white has juicy acidity, medium to full-body, and a clean, dry finish. Enjoy bottles over the coming decade. **(94 pts.)**

2003 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso

Robles) **\$NA** Showing more fruit and floral overtones than the '05, the 2003 Tablas Creek Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc is drinking in the middle of its maturity window, yet still has plenty of years of prime drinking to go. A blend of 68% Roussanne, 27% Grenache Blanc, 5% Viognier, it's a rich, full white that has remarkable freshness and purity, with buttered pear, mineral, and nutty aromatics, a medium to full-bodied, textured mouth feel, and brilliant acidity that keeps this lively and oh so drinkable. This would easily pass undetected in a lineup of top whites from the south of France, and will continue to shine for another 5+ years. **(94 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille Quintessence (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso

Robles) **\$85** Possessing more than a passing resemblance to the Vin de Paille wines of Michel Chapoutier (even though those wines are made with Marsanne), the 2010 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille Quintessence is shockingly good and certainly one of the most profound dessert wines I've tasted from California! Made from 100% Roussanne that was picked during harvest and then dried on straw mats for 3-weeks prior to pressing and fermentation in oak barrels, this oozes honeyed peach, apricot, and orange blossom like aromas on the nose. This is followed up by an unctuous, thick, yet gorgeously fresh mouth feel that despite having motor oil like richness, is light, perfectly balanced, and incredibly long. If you're a dessert wine lover, don't miss this! **(97 pts.)**

2010 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille "SacreRouge" Paso Robles (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles)

\$45 A step down from the Vin de Paille Quintessence, yet still an outstanding, semi-sweet dessert wine, the 2010 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille "SacreRouge" Paso Robles is 100% Mourvèdre that sees the same straw aging as the white. It offers up a savory, yet sweet array of brown sugar laced meats, spice, and sweet Mourvedre fruit to go with a full-bodied, rich, and yet fresh mouth feel. Unique and very well done, enjoy bottles over the coming 5-7 years. **(92 pts.)**

2007 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille "SacreRouge" Paso Robles (USA, California, Central Coast, Paso Robles)

\$45 More evolved, the 2010 Tablas Creek Vin de Paille "SacreRouge" Paso Robles, made from 100% Mourvèdre grapes that were dried for 3-weeks on straw mats, is similarly styled to the 2010 and shows a plum and blackberry liqueur like profile, with underlying spice and sweetness coming through on the palate. It's rich, full-bodied, and beautifully balanced, and should be consumed over the coming 3-5 years. **(90 pts.)**