

PRESSING MATTERS

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD

Newsletter, Winter 2020-2021



HARVEST 2020: WE MADE IT!

PG. 12

Despite pandemic, fires, and our hottest-ever fall, the 2020 harvest looks strong

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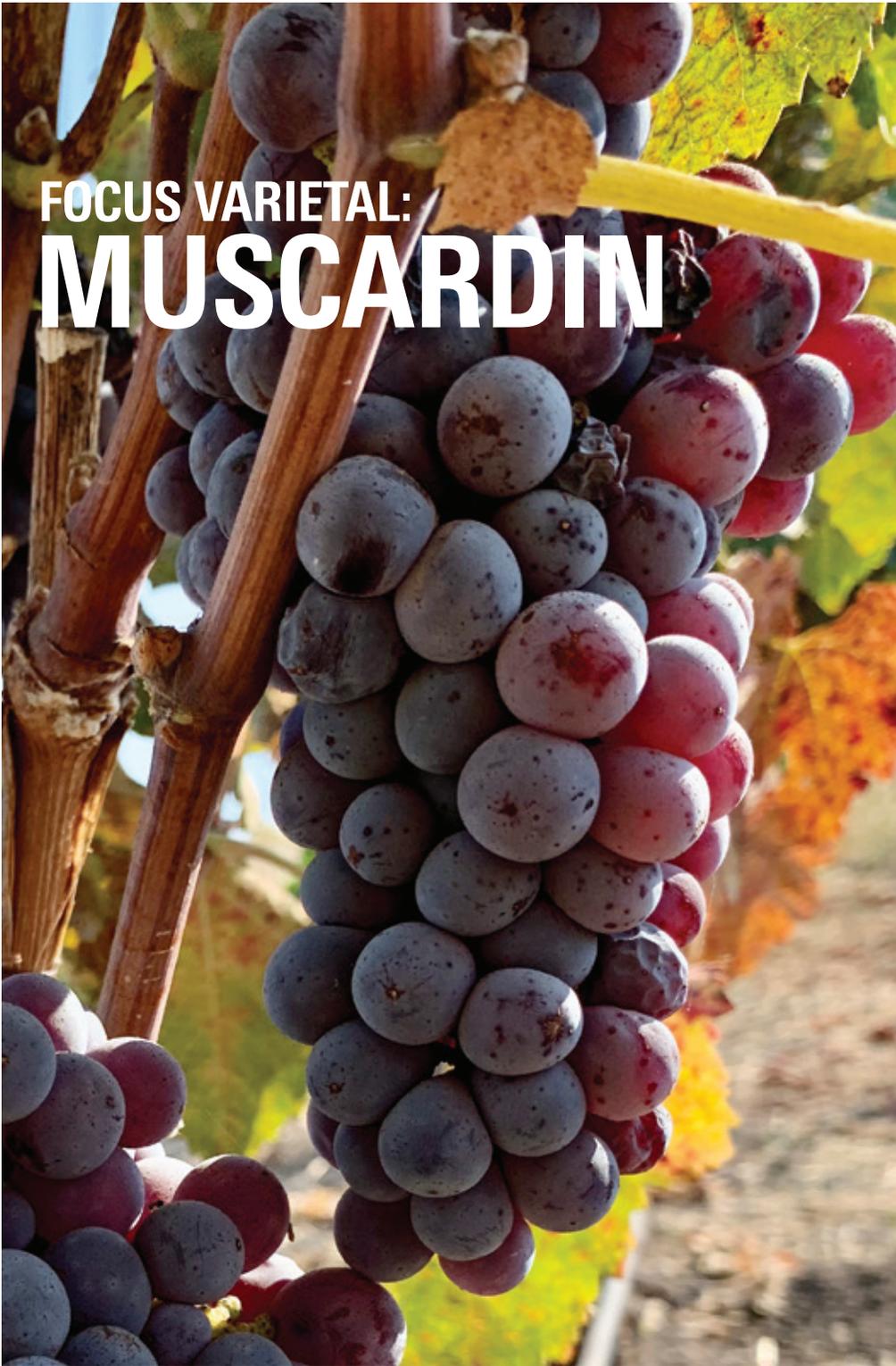
The 14th & final grape in the Beaucastel Collection arrives

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FOCUS VARIETAL: MUSCARDIN

With the October 8th arrival in the cellar of our first-ever harvest of Muscardin, just 130 pounds in all, we've finally achieved our goal of having the complete collection of Beaucastel Chateauneuf-du-Pape grapes in the cellar here at Tablas Creek. But what is Muscardin like? We're happy to share what we've learned. Historical and planting information are summarized from Jancis Robinson's "Wine Grapes" (Harper Collins, 2012) and Harry Karis's "The Chateauneuf-du-Pape Wine Book" (Kavino, 2009).

HISTORY

Muscardin is rare nowadays, and it appears never to have been very common, or found anywhere outside the Rhone. Its first mention in the historical record from 1895 talks about it being one of the "old southern grape varieties", along with Grenache, Piquepoul, Tinto, Terret, Counoise, Vaccarese, Clairette, and Picardan. Its combination of relatively low vigor, pale color, and sprawling growth appears to have been three strikes against it in the period after Phylloxera, and in 2009 there were just 11 hectares (27 acres) in Chateauneuf du Pape, and less than that in the rest of France. Nevertheless, the Perrins have been one of its advocates, valuing the wine for its freshness and floral lift. When we decided that we wanted the complete collection of Chateauneuf-du-Pape varieties in 2003, our Muscardin cuttings came from the Beaucastel estate.

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The origin of Muscardin's name is obscure, but the one thing that practically everyone agrees with is that it has nothing to do with Muscat or Muscadet.

The grape did not have an easy time getting to us in California. We took cuttings of seven varieties from Beaucastel in 2003. But while the other grapes were released to us after one, two, or three rounds of virus cleanup, Muscardin took four separate rounds and wasn't released to us until 2017. We grafted 250 buds into the vineyard in 2019, and 700 more in 2020.

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MUSCARDIN IN THE VINEYARD AND CELLAR

There is a great quote from Baron Le Roi of Chateau Fortia that John Livingstone-Learmonth recounts in his 1992 book *The Wines of the Rhone*: "You know, we would be better off here if we replaced the Cinsault with Muscardin. The Muscardin doesn't produce a lot, makes wine of low degree and spreads out over the soil, preventing tractors from passing freely between the vines, all of which combine to put people off it. But I believe that it gives a freshness on the palate and helps the wine to achieve elegance."

Although the literature suggests Muscardin is supposed to both emerge from dormancy and ripen early, more or less in sync with Syrah, it was one of the last grapes we picked this year, at roughly average sugars and above-average acids for 2020. The freshness and floral character it is supposed to bring to the table suggest that ultimately it will become a part of our blends, and serve perhaps a similar role to Counoise. That said, we plan to vinify the first few vintages on their own, so that we can wrap our heads around them and so we can show them to other people and get their feedback.

FLAVORS AND AROMAS

At Beaucastel, because it is so scarce, Muscardin is typically co-fermented with Vaccaresse and Terret Noir, all floral, herb-scented, translucent varieties. The trio together produce a delicious, pale red, with aromas of rose petals, fresh acids, and flavors of spicy yellow plum and strawberry fruit. We will know more soon about how it does on its own.

As for aging, Muscardin is reputed to be prone to oxidation, like Counoise, so it may well be something best drunk young. We look forward to sharing our discoveries with you.

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TABLAS CREEK IS A TOP 100 WINERY FOR 2020



We are proud to share that we were named to *Wine & Spirits Magazine's* "Top 100 Wineries" list for 2020. Our 2018 *Esprit de Tablas Blanc* (93 points) was also named to their "Top 100 Wines of 2020" list as the year's top California white blend.



REGENERATIVE ORGANIC

BY JORDAN LONBORG, VITICULTURIST, TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD

In February of 2019, Tablas Creek was invited by the Regenerative Organic Alliance to take part in a pilot program of a new approach to farming called Regenerative Organic. It was clear from the organizations behind this effort, including the Rodale Institute, Patagonia, and Dr. Bronner's, that this was going to be appealing, both inclusive of and yet more comprehensive than organic and biodynamic. I'll let their Web site explain:

*“Regenerative Organic Certified™ was established in 2017 by a group of farmers, business leaders, and experts in soil health, animal welfare, and social fairness. Collectively called the **Regenerative Organic Alliance (ROA)**, our mission is to promote regenerative organic farming as the highest standard for agriculture around the world.”*

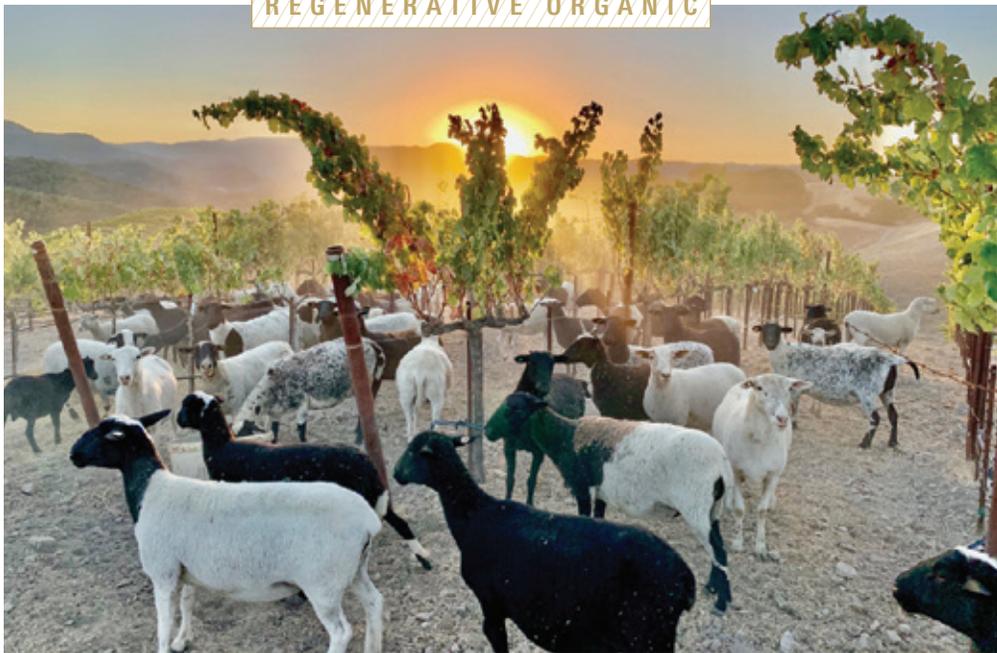
We couldn't accept fast enough. It builds on what we began with our organic and biodynamic certifications, and seeks to use agriculture to help address some of the world's most pressing environmental and resource challenges. Being Regenerative Organic Certified™ (ROC) requires that you satisfy the three pillars of ROC: soil health, animal welfare, and social fairness, all while working to reduce your use of scarce resources like water and nonrenewable energy.

The heart of Regenerative Organics is the **Soil Health Pillar**. The property must be certified organic. Farms must move toward no-till farming, cover cropping, incorporating biodiversity, and creating habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects. Composting on-site is encouraged. Comprehensive soil tests showing that you're maintaining or building the carbon content of your soils are a requirement, because one of the fundamental tenets of ROC is that farming can be and must be an agent for fighting climate change and reducing the use of nonrenewable resources.

Because of the work we've been doing with biodynamics, we'd already started most of these practices. But the testing showed that what we'd been doing was building carbon in our soils, on par with the highest national and international standards.



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The **Animal Welfare Pillar** requires humane treatment of any livestock (in our case, our flock of sheep, alpacas, and donkey) in all aspects of their work on your farm, including health, nutrition, shelter, protection, herding methods, handling methods, transport, and slaughter. It's based on the "Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare," which dictate that whether kept for work or raised for food, animals need to be free from hunger and thirst, free from discomfort, free from pain, injury, or disease, free to express normal behavior, and free from fear and distress. Now, not only is the herd certified by CCOF, Demeter-USA, and Regenerative Organic, they are also certified by Animal Welfare Approved. I can assure you, this highly decorated flock is extremely proud of themselves.

What separates ROC from most other certifications is its **Social Fairness Pillar**. The dark side of agriculture in today's world is how farmworkers are treated. This certification addresses that situation head on. It ensures that the farmworkers, whether employed or subcontracted, receive a living wage, that they understand their rights, and that their working conditions are clean and safe. Beyond that, as a part of our audit, we spent a week of intensive training with our vineyard crew. These sessions lasted all day long and consisted of physical activities, team building, communication skills (both with each other and management), problem solving skills, and education sessions in which they and

we together explored in detail their rights as farmworkers both individually and as a group. It was an extremely powerful week.

Tablas Creek Vineyard has always been extremely proud of our organic and biodynamic certifications. That said, we have never felt that the certifications were ends in and of themselves. And there are pieces of both of those protocols that we think could be improved. Anyway, we farm the way we do because we feel that it is the right thing to do for the land and the people that work here, and it makes the best possible grapes and therefore wines. But this certification is different. It sends a powerful message to the wine industry, consumers, and our local community. It shows them that Tablas Creek is not willing to accept anything less than the very highest standard for our soils, our animals, and the welfare of the people who work here.

We are beyond proud to be the first vineyard in the world to be Regenerative Organic Certified and we fully believe that this certification can and will be the gold standard of farming in all forms of agriculture.

We offer our sincere thanks to the folks at the Rodale Institute, Patagonia, and Dr. Bronner's for spearheading this movement. As the Regenerative Organic Alliance says, "Farm like the world depends on it!" Because it does.

For more information, and especially if you are another winery or farmer and are interested in pursuing ROC certification, we encourage you to check out the Regenerative Organic Alliance. They've been an amazing resource and help as we've embarked on this new quest. Learn more at www.regenorganic.org.



TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD VINTAGE CHART

2000-2019 Vintages (UPDATED NOVEMBER 2020)

- More Aging Recommended
- Drinking Well: Youthful
- Drinking Well: Mature
- Late Maturity (drink up)
- Hold - Closed Phase
- Past Its Prime
- Not Made
- Not Yet Bottled
- Decanting Recommended

WHITES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Esprit de Beaucastel/Tablas Blanc						**		**	**	**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	
Côtes de Tablas Blanc																					
Patelin de Tablas Blanc																					
Roussanne																					
Grenache Blanc																					
Vermentino																					
Viognier																				**	
Picpoul Blanc																					
Marsanne															**	**		**	**	**	
Clairette Blanche																					
Picardan																					
Bourboulenc																					
Antithesis Chardonnay												**									
Bergeron																					
ROSÉ	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Rosé/Dianthus																					
Patelin de Tablas Rosé																					
REDS	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Esprit de Beaucastel/Tablas	**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Côtes de Tablas	**					**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Patelin de Tablas																					
Syrah					**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Mourvèdre						**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Grenache								**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Counoise																		**	**	**	**
Terret Noir																					
Tannat				**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Pinot Noir								**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
"Full Circle" Pinot Noir											**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Cabernet											**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
En Gobelet								**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Le Complice																		**	**	**	**
Founders Reserve																					
Panoplie	**		**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
SWEET WINES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Petit Manseng											**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Vin de Paille																				**	**
Vin de Paille Quintessence																				**	**
Vine de Paille Sacrérouge															**	**	**	**	**	**	**



HARVEST REPORT

On Friday, October 9th, a bin of Tannat completed the 2020 harvest. This capped a 45-day sprint: among our shorter harvests and earliest finishes in our history, a function of our warmest-ever harvest season. But for all the unusual conditions and unrelenting pace, we're happy with the quality of what's in the cellar. And that, in 2020, is reason to celebrate.

Yields were solid, up about 7% from 2019, and at 3.35 tons per acres squarely in the range that we see in many of our favorite vintages. This is somewhat of a surprise. We were expecting yields at or below last year even before the record heat waves impacted yields on sensitive grapes like Mourvedre and Roussanne. And those two grapes did suffer a bit. But other grapes, particularly the Grenaches, which were up about 50% after not suffering from the shatter (incomplete fertilization during flowering) that they saw in 2019, made up the difference.

But for all the unusual conditions and unrelenting pace, we're happy with the quality of what's in the cellar.

Our average sugars (22.14° Brix) and acids (3.62 pH) are very similar to last year's. Given how much we love the 2019's, that's a good thing. It also suggests that, as much as we know that the late-ripening grapes did suffer in the heat, our multiple picks allowed us to get the riper clusters off the healthier vines early enough to maintain solid acids.

The summer of 2020 had two distinct weather patterns: a mild period that lasted into the first week of August, after which things turned very warm, with three separate heat spikes in mid-August, early September, and early October that broke all-time records. But even the days that weren't noteworthy were mostly warmer than normal. Between August 10th and October 9th (our last day of harvest), we saw just 15 days below seasonal averages, versus 46 days above, often significantly so. Looking at that information another way, our August degree day totals were 25% above the average of what is already a very hot month. September was 21% above average. And the first nine days of October (we finished picking October 9th) were 55% above our 20-year averages. No wonder harvest was short!

In character, it's early to tell what things will be like, but Winemaker Neil Collins is enthusiastic, noting that all the lots showed intense character, better acids than he'd been expecting, and savory, spicy personalities. We've been tasting lots to try to find any that might have even a hint of smoke taint from the California wildfires earlier in the season, but haven't found even one. That's a relief. As for the vintage's personality, we'll know more in coming weeks.

In the vineyard, we've been preparing for the rainy season, seeding cover crop and getting the animals out into the vineyard to eat any second crop clusters before they rot, spread their manure and jump start the winter soil microbial activity. Although we hadn't seen any rain when we went to press in late October, November was looking promising.

Despite all the challenges, in this craziest year that any of us have experienced, we're feeling cautiously optimistic that the 2020 wines might provide something we want to remember.



MEET THE TEAM

QUESTIONS FOR MONICA O'CONNOR



Twelve-year veteran Monica O'Connor is our Direct Sales Manager. You may know her as the voice on the other end of the phone when you call but she's also an accomplished home cook and designer.

You have a degree in Fashion and Merchandising.

How did you transition into the wine industry?

I earned my fashion design degree in 1988 and worked for a time in the industry. I was raising my son at the time and I wanted to spend more time with him, so I went into my family's business. I became interested in wine through my

brother and attended the Paso Robles Wine University, where I discovered Tablas Creek. I ventured out here, took the tour and joined the wine club! After my wine course through UC Davis, I decided to make the move here.

What's your biggest challenge as Direct Sales Manager?

My biggest challenge is probably making it all move like a waltz! We have many members and I want to know them, what they like and expect. Fine-tuning this and making sure we keep improving our communication with members is my most important goal.

How do you like to spend your days off?

I love to run on the beach, hike, design and make clothes and create new recipes. I recently made preserved lemons – amazingly simple – you should try it!

What would people be surprised to know about you?

People might be surprised to know that I'm a yoga teacher. I have helped people with yoga therapy, and though I haven't taught a group class in a while, I love yoga (who doesn't??)!

What is one of your favorite memories at Tablas?

One of my favorite memories is hearing Robert Haas's stories. The way he distilled his experiences and communicated them was really special. I am very fortunate to have had these impromptu interactions with Bob.

How do you define success?

Success to me is living creatively. Not just working on creative projects, but acting from my creative center, always. Those I admire most live this way at every age, and I hope I will too.

STAYING IN TOUCH: VIRTUAL & VIDEO

Although in-person events are on hold at least until the second half of 2021, stay connected via YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook!

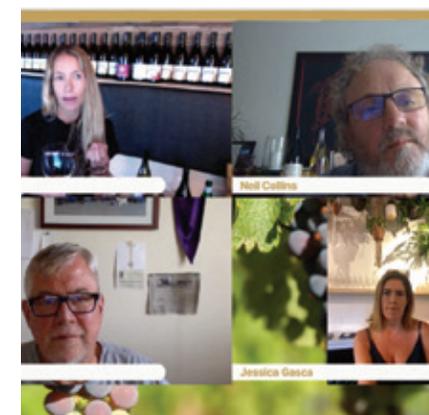
Chelsea and the Shepherd on YouTube

In our Chelsea and the Shepherd YouTube series, Senior Assistant Winemaker Chelsea Franchi and Shepherd Nathan Stuart take you behind our wines as only they can. Visit youtube.com/TablasCreek for all of Season 1 and look for a new Season 2 release each week!



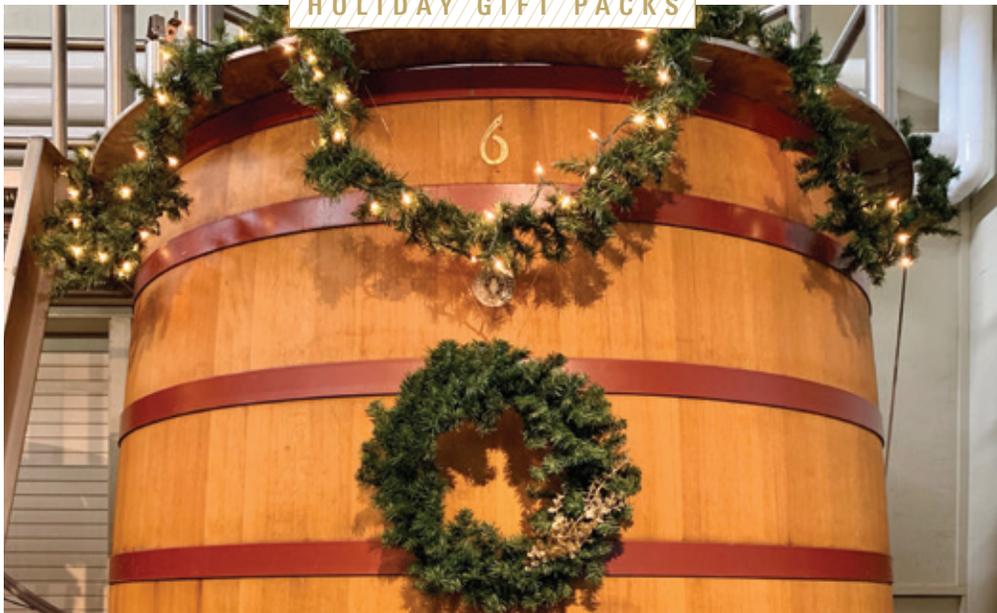
Instagram Live Conversations with Jason

Join Proprietor Jason Haas for conversations with some of the wine community's most interesting people. **Wednesdays, noon Pacific.**



Facebook Live Tastings with Neil

Join Winemaker Neil Collins as he tastes with guest winemakers from around California and around the world. **Fridays, 5pm Pacific.**



HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

At Tablas Creek, we want to help you celebrate the holiday season in style. We have several ways in which you can give the gift of Tablas Creek, including five special holiday gift packages (on which we include no-charge shipping to any of the states we can ship to), Tablas Creek gift cards, gift VINsider memberships and more. Holiday gift packs are only available through December 31st. (For pre-Christmas delivery, please place orders by Friday, December 18.)



Esprit Duo Holiday Gift Package (2 bottles)

The *Esprit Duo* holiday package is a great way to introduce friends and family to Tablas Creek and includes a bottle each of the newest release of our two signature wines:

- 2018 *Esprit de Tablas*
- 2018 *Esprit de Tablas Blanc*

\$105 per pack, and \$84 for VINsiders.



Great Whites Holiday Gift Package (4 bottles)

This white wine lovers holiday gift package includes two of our top white Rhone-style blends, and a single varietal bottling of the lead grape in each:

- 2018 *Esprit de Tablas Blanc*
- 2018 *Cotes de Tablas Blanc*
- 2018 *Roussanne*
- 2019 *Viognier*

\$150 per pack, and \$120 for VINsiders.



Unusual Varietals Holiday Gift Package (4 bottles)

For the budding sommelier, or the lover of the next new thing, this *Unusual Varietals* holiday gift package includes a bottle each of four limited-production wines, all difficult or impossible to find in stores:

- 2017 *Tannat*
- 2018 *Mourvedre*
- 2019 *Picpoul Blanc*
- 2018 *Marsanne*

\$150 per pack, and \$120 for VINsiders.



Great Reds Holiday Gift Package (4 bottles)

This red wine lovers holiday gift package includes two of our top red Rhone-style blends, and a single varietal bottling of the lead grape in each:

- 2018 *Esprit de Tablas*
- 2018 *Cotes de Tablas*
- 2018 *Mourvedre*
- 2018 *Grenache*

\$175 per pack, and \$140 for VINsiders.



"Library Esprit Vertical" Holiday Gift Package (3 bottles)

For the collector in your life, this limited edition *Library Esprit Vertical* gift package includes a bottle each of three highly rated library vintages of our flagship *Esprit de Tablas* wine:

- 2011 *Esprit de Tablas*
- 2012 *Esprit de Tablas*
- 2013 *Esprit de Tablas*

\$240 per pack, and \$192 for VINsiders.



RECIPE: CHICKEN WITH FORTY CLOVES OF GARLIC

This traditional Provençal dish is a family favorite. The garlic and fennel require a wine that is both rich and aromatic, and the Esprit Blanc makes a perfect complement.

Serves: 5

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken, in pieces (about 4lbs)
- 6 tbsps olive oil
- 40 cloves of garlic, unpeeled
- 1 head fennel, cut into slices
- 1 sprig fresh tarragon
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 1 tsp sea salt
- ground black pepper
- ¼ cup brandy

Mix olive oil, garlic cloves, fennel slices, and herbs in large mixing bowl.

Add chicken pieces, and toss so that chicken is completely coated with oil. Cover with brandy and add salt and pepper over the top.

Transfer entire mixture into a heavy casserole dish with tight-fitting lid, making sure chicken pieces are tightly packed.

Cover, and cook for 1 hour at 375 degrees.

Suggested sides: Crusty bread to eat with the roasted garlic

2020 WINE ORDER FORM

Wine	Quantity	List Price	VINdependent Price	VINsider Price	Total
Special Package (Shipping included; details on pg. 16)					
Esprit Duo Gift Pack (2 bottles)	_____	\$105.00	\$94.50	\$84.00	_____
Great Whites Gift Pack (4 bottles)	_____	\$150.00	\$135.00	\$120.00	_____
Great Reds Gift Pack (4 bottles)	_____	\$175.00	\$157.50	\$140.00	_____
Unusual Varietals Gift Pack (4 bottles)	_____	\$150.00	\$135.00	\$120.00	_____
Library Esprit Vertical Gift Pack (3 bottles)	_____	\$240.00	\$216.00	\$192.00	_____
White Wines					
Esprit de Tablas Blanc 2018 (12 btl limit)	_____	\$45.00	\$40.50	\$36.00	_____
Esprit de Tablas Blanc 2017	_____	\$45.00	\$40.50	\$36.00	_____
Roussanne 2018	_____	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$32.00	_____
Cotes de Tablas Blanc 2019	_____	\$30.00	\$27.00	\$24.00	_____
Grenache Blanc 2019	_____	\$30.00	\$27.00	\$24.00	_____
Picpoul Blanc 2019 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$30.00	\$27.00	\$24.00	_____
Patelin de Tablas Blanc 2018	_____	\$25.00	\$22.50	\$20.00	_____
Red Wines					
Esprit de Tablas 2018 (12 bottle limit)	_____	\$60.00	\$54.00	\$48.00	_____
Esprit de Tablas 2017 (12 bottle limit)	_____	\$60.00	\$54.00	\$48.00	_____
Esprit de Tablas 2016 (12 bottle limit)	_____	\$65.00	\$58.50	\$52.00	_____
En Gobelet 2018 (4 bottle limit)	_____	\$55.00	\$49.50	\$44.00	_____
Mourvedre 2018 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$45.00	\$40.50	\$36.00	_____
Syrah 2017 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$40.00	\$36.00	\$32.00	_____
Cotes de Tablas 2018	_____	\$35.00	\$31.50	\$28.00	_____
Patelin de Tablas 2018	_____	\$25.00	\$22.50	\$20.00	_____

Subtotal _____ **Case Discount** (if applicable) _____ **Shipping** _____ **Order Total** _____

BILLING & SHIPMENT: EITHER

VINsider Name: _____ VINsider Number: _____

Signature: _____

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

BILL TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

SHIP TO:

Name _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Credit Card:

MC/Visa/AmEx# _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature: _____

I certify that I am 21 years old or older.

For shipping and discount details, visit tablascreek.com/shop



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