

# TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



*The VINformer*  
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## State of the Vineyard

The vineyard is now well out of dormancy, and the nursery is in full swing grafting and raising young vines for ourselves and for the other vineyards that placed orders with us.

The winter did an excellent job of replenishing ground water, with several large storms in November and December, and another batch in late February. January and early February were so warm that we were worried the vines would start budding out by early March. The return of cold temperatures (several nights in a row below freezing), clouds, and rain later in March put us back on target for a normal April bud break.

Last year we left a couple of long “kicker” canes on each pruned vine and we continued that practice this season. These long canes sprout first and delay the sprouting of the true fruiting canes which produce the desired eight to twelve bunches per vine at harvest. When the danger of frost has passed, we will prune off the long canes. In general, keeping the long canes on the vine delays bud break by about 2 weeks... a crucial period if we want to avoid spring frosts.

The other technique we’re using to protect us from spring frosts is the installation of frost-prevention fans, a technique first developed in Uruguay. We’re the first vineyard in California to try them, and others are eagerly tracking our progress to see how the fans work. The



*See VINEYARD on page 3*

## Tablas Creek Open for Tours and Tasting

Summer hours are here at the tasting room! We are now open daily from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, with tours offered at 10:30 and 2:00. Come visit the vineyard and nursery complex before tasting current releases! Special tours and tastings are always available – call for more information.

## Wine 101: Calcium in Viticulture

The “Got Milk?” campaign has ensured that everyone knows that calcium builds healthy bones for humans, but did you know it also contributes to healthy grapevines? It has long been recognized that great wine regions such as Burgundy and the Rhône and Loire valleys are planted in limestone, but scientific studies demonstrating how the soil influences the wines have only come to light recently.

When the Perrins and Bob Haas were searching for a site on which to plant the vineyard, calcareous soil, similar to that of Château de Beaucastel, was a primary criterion. The west side of Paso Robles, with its limestone clay soils, proved to be a perfect location.

*See CALCIUM on page 4*

# *Focus Varietal: Grenache Blanc*

**G**renache Blanc is the newest arrival into the Tablas Creek Vineyard varietal pantheon. It produces rich, full wines with bright flavors and crisp acidity and is a key element in our *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. As the name suggests, it is related to the more widely known Grenache Noir. Many grape varieties have both red and white variants; the best known is Pinot, which has Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris variations. Grenache Blanc, like Grenache Noir, is drought-resistant, vigorous, easy to graft and ripens fairly early in the cycle.

Since we brought Grenache Blanc into our nursery, we have sold budwood and grafted vines to a number of other Rhône-producing vineyards in California. The California climate of hot days and cool nights seems to be perfect for the varietal and encourages its two prime qualities: richness with crisp acids.

## *Early History*

Grenache Blanc originated in Spain, and still plays a role in the wines of Rioja and Navarre. From Spain, it spread to France, and has thrived in the vineyards of the Rhône valley and Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It is the fourth most commonly planted white grape varietal in France, comprising over 37,000 acres in Roussillon alone. In Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the crisp acidity of Grenache Blanc is used to balance the honeyed richness of Roussanne, and white *Château de Beaucastel* is roughly 80% Roussanne and 20% Grenache Blanc.

## *Grenache Blanc at Tablas Creek*

We imported cuttings of Grenache Blanc from Beaucastel in 1992, and the vines spent three years in quarantine at the USDA station in Geneva, New York. In 1995, the cuttings were declared virus free and released to Tablas Creek Vineyard. These vines were received into our nursery and the first grafted vines went into the ground



in 1996. The first significant harvest of the varietal was 1999. For the next three years (up to and including the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*), we could only refer to the varietal as Grenache on our label because Grenache Blanc was not yet recognized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Not surprisingly, many people found this nomenclature confusing and we were regularly asked why we added a red varietal into our white blend; in 2002 we petitioned the BATF to recognize Grenache Blanc as a separate varietal.

## *Grenache Blanc and the BATF*

We went through the varietal approval process with Cunoise in 2000, so we knew what we had to do. We compiled literature on Grenache Blanc to show that it was a recognized varietal in other countries, and we compiled descriptions of its characteristics to show that it had positive value as a wine grape in the United States. In February 2003, our petition was provisionally approved (pending an open review process that could take 18 months). Look for Grenache Blanc on the front labels of the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and the 2002 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*.

## *Aromas and Flavors*

Grenache Blanc is straw-colored and produces wines that are high in alcohol, with crisp acids. The nose has bright green apple and mandarin orange aromas, with clean flavors of more green apples, mineral and a touch of peach. It has a long, lingering finish. Although it can stand confidently on its own, its crispness and long finish make it a tremendous blending component.

The crispness of Grenache Blanc shows well at low temperatures, whereas many white Rhône varieties shut down when served too cold. In our *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, the Grenache Blanc allows the wine to show well, even highly chilled (as many restaurants often serve all white wines). As the wine warms up in the glass, the other varieties unfold, and the full richness of the wine is displayed.

If you're interested in Grenache Blanc, we're bottling a few hundred cases from the 2002 vintage. Bottles will be distributed to our Wine Club members as part of the February 2004 shipment. ☺

## Recent Events

### ⑥ Joint Winemaker Dinner

In January, we hosted a joint winemaker dinner with Windward Vineyard at Tablas Creek. Fifty-five people were treated to 1981 *Château de Beaucastel* and 1976 *Pernand-Vergelesses, Ile des Vergelesses* wines, in addition to Tablas Creek and Windward wines. More winemaker dinners are coming up – visit [tablascreek.com](http://tablascreek.com) for more information.



### ⑥ Pruning and Grafting Seminar

Two recent events gave people a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes at our vineyard. The first was a pruning and grafting seminar, held on January 26, which demonstrated some of our nursery and vine care techniques. People from all over California came to learn about field pruning from Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins and about bench grafting from Nursery Manager Laura Wulff. The participants had the opportunity to prune their own rootstock and vinifera, and to graft several of their own vines. We've been taking care of the vines for the past three months, and the thriving sprouted vines can be picked up at the Planting Seminar and reception on June 7 (see page 7 for more information about this event).



Neil Collins demonstrates field pruning



### ⑥ Barrel Tasting and Blending Seminar

When we began blending the 2002 vintages in March, we held a barrel tasting and blending seminar for people interested in learning about the various facets of winemaking. Each of the 50 participants tasted the individual varietals, both red and white, from the 2002 harvest straight from the barrel. Jason Haas and Neil Collins discussed blending strategies and the characteristics of each varietal before setting everyone loose with graduated cylinders to try their hands at creating their own ideal blends.



Peter Smith experiments with red blends



### ⑥ Organic Viticulture Seminar

In celebration of our organic certification, we co-hosted a two-day organic viticulture seminar with Turley Vineyards and Fetzer Vineyards on February 25 and 26. Representatives from 75 vineyards and wineries throughout California joined organic guru "Amigo" Bob Cantisano for a seminar on cover cropping, compost tea, beneficial insect habitat creation, vine nutrition management, erosion control, irrigation for insect and disease resistance and strategies for transitioning from conventional to organic vineyards.



Amigo Bob Cantisano at the Organic Viticulture Seminar

If you are interested in learning more about organic viticulture, join us on May 10 for an organic farming seminar. See page 7 for more information. ⑥

### VINEYARD, from Page 1

chief meteorological dangers in Paso Robles are late-winter radiation frosts, during which a narrow layer of cold air settles in low-lying areas. During those periods of inversion, temperatures can be as much as 10 degrees warmer just a few dozen feet higher (which is why hill-tops are much less susceptible to frosts than valleys). Our new frost-protection system relies on large fans with horizontal blades parallel to the ground to propel cold air several hundred feet in the air; the cold air is then replaced by the warmer air just above the surface. We've installed one series to protect our north-facing valley; if it works this year, we'll expand the system to cover the rest of the vineyard.

The vineyard looks vibrantly healthy, still green from the winter's rain, and we're getting ready to till under our cover crop to return some nutrients to the soil. The blend of peas, oats, and vetch kept erosion to a minimum even in the heaviest rains of the season, and the peas (legumes which fix nitrogen in the soil) provided nutrients to the vines.

In the nursery, we're just finishing our grafting season. We pruned the vines (both rootstock and vinifera) in January and brought the cuttings into cold storage to await grafting. Beginning in March, we started grafting new vines, some for ourselves and many more for other vineyards. The greenhouses are now full of these vines, which will be moved outside after the danger of frost has passed.

Meanwhile, in the winery, we just completed blending the 2002 vintage. We are ecstatic about what we see, and believe that 2002 will be remembered as one of the best vintages yet for Paso Robles. The red wines are now resting comfortably in foudres, while the whites await bottling later in April. We're making a *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* (a Viognier-based blend) for the first time in 2002, and we're also expanding our production of Roussanne to support a general release. Look for them soon in your area! ⑥

Unlike cereals and other annual crops that have shallow root systems, grape vines have deep root systems, which allow them to express the nature of the land and the soil more truly. Calcium in the soil is a big contributor to the elusive French concept of *terroir*, or the character that a given locale gives to the grapes grown there. Calcium-based soils allow for good water retention and help maintain an optimal balance of nutrients.


Calcium-based soils have excellent water-retention properties that are ideal for growing grapevines. While vines need some water to thrive, waterlogged soils increase the propensity for disease. The molecular structure of the soil determines its water-retention properties. Calcium clay soils have a chemical structure composed of sheets of molecules held together in layers by ionic attractions. This structure permits the soil to retain moisture in periods of dry weather but allows for good drainage during heavy rains. In long periods of dry weather, the clays dry out and crack, allowing roots to penetrate deeper into the soil, where more residual moisture can be found. At Tablas Creek this means we can dry farm, even though it almost never rains between April and November.

Calcium-based soils also facilitate the uptake of nutrients from the soil. The nutrients a grapevine needs to thrive (magnesium, potassium, calcium, and sodium) are taken up at certain specific sites on the root hairs (called *cation exchange capacity sites*). Since there are a finite number of available sites on the root hairs, nutrients are in competition with each other; one nutrient can monopolize all of the sites, leading to a deficiency in other nutrients even when they are present in the soil. The presence of calcium in the soil, however, increases the number of available sites on the root hairs, thereby reducing the likelihood that all of the sites will be taken by one nutrient to the exclusion of others.



*Limestone rocks uncovered when we cleared the vineyard for planting were made into a dry-built wall behind the winery.*

The calcium-based soils at Tablas Creek also maintain an optimum pH level for vine growth. The limestone breaks down into calcium carbonate, which then acts as a buffer to prevent the soils from becoming overly acidic and maintains a pH level at which nutrient availability is at its most beneficial.

The interaction between soil type and the wines produced from grapes grown there is complex and largely mysterious. The French have recognized for centuries that soil type is a crucial component in winemaking, but science has only recently begun to focus on it. While further research is still necessary, it is exciting to have some empirical support for the anecdotal evidence that influenced our choice of location. 

*Adapted from "Calcium in Viticulture: Unravelling the Mystique of French Terroir", by Valerie Saxton. Wine Business Online, Dec 2002.*

### **Panoplie 2000 Released!**

We're thrilled to be making a small amount of *Panoplie 2000* available to general release. This wine, made in the model of Beaucastel's *Hommage à Jacques Perrin*, is a predominantly Mourvèdre blend of the best lots of 2000. A total of 70 cases was produced, and orders are first-come, first-served, and limited to 6 bottles per person.



# WINE ORDER FORM

**DISCOUNTS**  
 Non-Wine Club members receive a 10% discount on orders of 12 bottles or more.

Wine Club members receive a discount of 20% on orders of any size.

**SHIPPING**  
 For best results, we recommend having your wine shipped to a business address. All shipping is done via FedEx 2nd Day Air.

CA  
 1-6 bottles: \$14.00  
 7-12 bottles: \$20.00

CO, ID, NM, OR, WA  
 1-6 bottles: \$20.00  
 7-12 bottles: \$30.00

IA, IL, MN, MO, WI, WV  
 1-6 bottles: \$25.00  
 7-12 bottles: \$40.00

**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. Adult signature is required for receipt of wine orders.

WINE	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
<b>FULL BOTTLES (750 ML)</b>			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$35.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$25.00	_____
ANTITHESIS 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROSÉ 2002 (Available May 15)	_____	\$27.00	_____
PANOPLIE 2000 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$80.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROUGE 1998	_____	\$32.50	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2000	_____	\$22.00	_____
PETITE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$22.00	_____
<b>HALF BOTTLES (375 ML)</b>			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$18.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$18.00	_____
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	_____
MasterCard/Visa Number _____		<b>DISCOUNT</b>	_____
Expiration Date _____		<b>7.25% TAX (CA ONLY)</b>	_____
Name on Card _____		<b>SHIPPING</b>	_____
		<b>ORDER TOTAL</b>	_____

**BILL TO:**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TCV Wine Club Member number: \_\_\_\_\_

**SHIP TO:**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Return form to Tablas Creek Vineyard, 9339 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446 or fax to 805.237.1314

## Wine Pairings

Chef Laurent Grangien of Paso Robles' *Bistro Laurent* contributed these terrific summer recipes to pair with Tablas Creek wines. Enjoy!

### Crispy Crab Risotto with Tomato and Tarragon Coulis

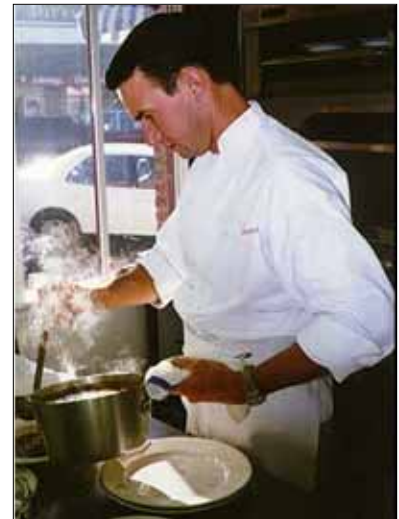
Makes 6 appetizer-size portions

#### RISOTTO

##### Ingredients:

- 10 oz. Arborio rice
- 2 oz. onion, chopped
- 14 oz. fish stock
- 3 oz. dry white wine
- 1 lb. cooked Dungeness crab meat
- 3 oz. butter
- 2 tbsp. parmesan cheese
- salt and pepper to taste

- ☺ Sauté onion in butter over medium heat until golden brown.
- ☺ Add rice and stir, making sure rice is coated in butter.
- ☺ Add white wine and cook 2 or 3 minutes, until liquid is reduced by half
- ☺ Add the fish stock and cook 15 minutes until there is no more liquid, stirring constantly.
- ☺ Add crab meat, butter, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper.
- ☺ Shape risotto into a disc about 1.5 inches thick
- ☺ Refrigerate for 2 hours
- ☺ Before serving, fry the risotto cake with butter, approximately 2-3 minutes per side, until crispy.
- ☺ Serve on a bed of Tomato **COULIS**, and pair with the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*.



*Chef Grangien in his kitchen*

#### COULIS

##### Ingredients

- 1 lb tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 cup fish stock
- 2 oz. onion, chopped
- 1 bunch tarragon
- 2 oz. butter
- ☺ Combine chopped tomatoes, tomato paste, and 14 oz. of the fish stock in a sauce pan and cook slowly for 1 hour.
- ☺ Blend cooked mixture, strain, and add 3 oz. of butter.

### Warm Goat Cheese and Potato Salad with Roasted Pinenuts

Serves 6

##### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds potatoes
- 10 oz. goat cheese
- 1 bunch chives
- 3 oz. pinenuts
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard

- ☺ Cook the potatoes (with skins on) in water with a pinch of salt until they begin to soften (15 to 20 minutes).
- ☺ In a salad bowl, combine mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper. Add oil slowly.
- ☺ Peel and dice cooked potatoes.
- ☺ Toss potatoes with chives and 3/4 of the dressing
- ☺ Transfer dressed potatoes into an ovenproof dish, cover with goat cheese, and broil for 5 minutes.
- ☺ Toast pinenuts in oven until browned, and scatter on top of potatoes before serving.
- ☺ Toss remaining dressing with lettuce, and serve with potato salad.
- ☺ Pair with 2001 *Rose* or 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*.

*Bistro Laurent is located at  
1202 Pine Street, Paso Robles, California  
(805) 226-8191*

## Tablas on Tour -- Wine Festivals around the Country

### ⑥ April 26, 2003

Rhône Rangers Tasting  
San Francisco, California  
www.rhonerangers.org  
415.345.7575

### ⑥ May 16-18, 2003

Paso Robles Wine Festival  
Paso Robles, California  
www.pasowine.com  
805.239.8463

### ⑥ May 21-25, 2003

New Orleans Wine and Food Experience  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
www.nowfe.com

### ⑥ May 29-31, 2003

Hospice du Rhône  
Paso Robles, California  
www.hospicedurhone.com  
805.784.9543

### ⑥ June 22, 2003

Asia Pacific Fusion Food and Wine Festival  
Los Angeles, California  
www.asiasociety.org  
213.624.0945

### ⑥ June 27-28, 2003

Atascadero Wine Festival  
Atascadero, California  
www.atascaderowinefest.org  
805.461.WINE

### ⑥ July 8-13, 2003

KCBX Central Coast Wine Classic  
Avila Beach, California  
www.wineclassic.org  
805.781.3026

## Tablas at Home -- Coming Events at the Vineyard

**May 10, 2003**

### **Organic Farming Seminar**

**10:30AM**

Join Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins and Nursery Manager Laura Wulff for a seminar on organic farming. We'll walk participants through the processes of composting, compost tea development, beneficial insect habitat creation, cover cropping, and more. We'll discuss the techniques we use in the vineyard, and discuss what you can do at home in your own gardens. We'll finish with a field lunch in the vineyard. Space is limited for this event, and reservations are required. The cost is \$30 for Wine Club members, and \$40 for guests. Call 805.237.1231 for reservations.

**June 7, 2003**

### **Planting Seminar (and Grafted Vine Pickup)**

**10:30AM**

In this continuation of the Pruning and Grafting Seminar, participants will learn the basics of vine planting and young vine care. Nursery Manager Laura Wulff will teach how to plant vines and care for them as they mature. We're planning to plant a small section of head-pruned Grenache Noir in the vineyard, and (nursery schedule permitting) participants may have a chance to join in. A lunch with wine will wind up the morning. You do not need to have attended the January Pruning and Grafting Seminar to participate. Space is limited and reservations are required. The cost is \$40 for Wine Club members, and \$50 for guests, and all participants will receive two vines to take home after the seminar. Call 805.237.1231 for reservations.

## Our Nursery is Growing!

The newest additions to our tasting room are the potted vines lining the walk. If you're interested in planting some vines at your home, what could be better than our selected Rhône varietals, including Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Counoise, Roussanne, and Grenache Blanc? These are cuttings from the vines we brought over from Beaucastel,



were certified virus free, and are grafted onto multi-purpose rootstocks. If you have questions on how and when to plant, we're happy to help.

Of course, we still produce grafted-to-order vines for vineyards, so let us know if you're interested in quantities over 500 vines. We produce both green-growing and dormant vines from a wide range of clones and rootstocks. Contact Laura Wulff at 805.237.1231 for details or more information.

lavender, and tarragon) and olive trees. As the spring weather lures you into yardwork, let us know if we can help. We have detailed information about our nursery on-line, at <http://www.tablascreek.com/nursery.html>.

In keeping with our French connections, we are also selling Mediterranean herbs (rosemary,

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