

# TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer  
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## Harvest Report

Despite late spring frosts, shatter during flowering, weeks of smoky weather from Monterey County forest fires, a heat spike in August, an unusual early October freeze, and rain at the end of October, we are encouraged by the wines in the cellar, and are surprisingly positive about the vintage's prospects. The 2008 harvest, completed on October 30, was more challenging than most. Our yields were well below average, but slightly higher than in 2007, as higher yields on most white varietals balanced declines in most red varietals. We brought in a total of 262 tons, 145 of which were red and 117 which were white.

Harvest began with Viognier, as usual, on September 3 and ended with Mourvèdre on October 30. After a hot stretch in late August and the first few days of September caused several varietals to race towards ripeness simultaneously, the beginning of harvest saw more moderate temperatures and a slower harvest pace. In the first few weeks, we brought in most of our Viognier, as well as all of the Vermentino and Chardonnay. Both were affected by the frosts this spring, and came in light in yield – just under two tons of Chardonnay and about 2.75 tons of Vermentino.

Cool temperatures in mid-September allowed us to pause harvesting, as we watched the grapes gradually accumulate sugars. By the end of September, though, much of the vineyard was ready to be picked: the Grenache Blanc, the Picpoul Blanc, most of the Syrah, a good chunk of Grenache Noir, and our first Mourvèdre, Counoise, Marsanne and Roussanne. By October 10th we had completed about half our harvest.

See **HARVEST**, page 3



## Recent Press

Tablas Creek has been the recipient of quite a bit of positive press in the past few months. Robert Parker, in his annual review of California Rhone wines in the June 2008 Wine Advocate, gave Tablas Creek great reviews: 92-94 for the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, 91-94 for the 2006 *Panoplie*, and 91-93 for the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. Parker also named the “exceptional” 2005 *Cotes de Tablas* (91 points, in Business Week) as one of the fifteen best California wines under \$25, hailing its “beautiful purity, fruit, and depth”.

More recently, we received another excellent review in the November 2008 issue of Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, with fourteen wines receiving scores of 90 or higher from this notoriously tough reviewer, including a 94 for the 2006 *Panoplie*, a 93 for the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, and a 92 for the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. Some of our small-production wine club wines came in for praise from Tanzer as well, including our 2006 *Vin de Paille Quintessence* (94 points), our 2006 *Grenache* (91 points), and our 2006 *Mourvèdre* (91 points).

We were also thrilled to have the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* named as one of the top 100 wines of 2008 by Wine & Spirits magazine (Winter 2008) and one of the 10 best wines of 2008 by 7x7 Magazine (September 2008). And the December 2008 issue of Gourmet picked the 2006

See **PRESS**, page 3

**Featured Wine:**  
**2006 VIN DE PAILLE**  
**Details on page 6**

# Focus Varietal: Marsanne

**Marsanne** is one of the classic white Rhône varieties, and it produces wines with distinct melon and mineral flavors, and rich mouthfeel. When blended, its rich melon characteristics complement more aromatic varieties like Viognier. It comprises about one third of our *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*.

## Early History

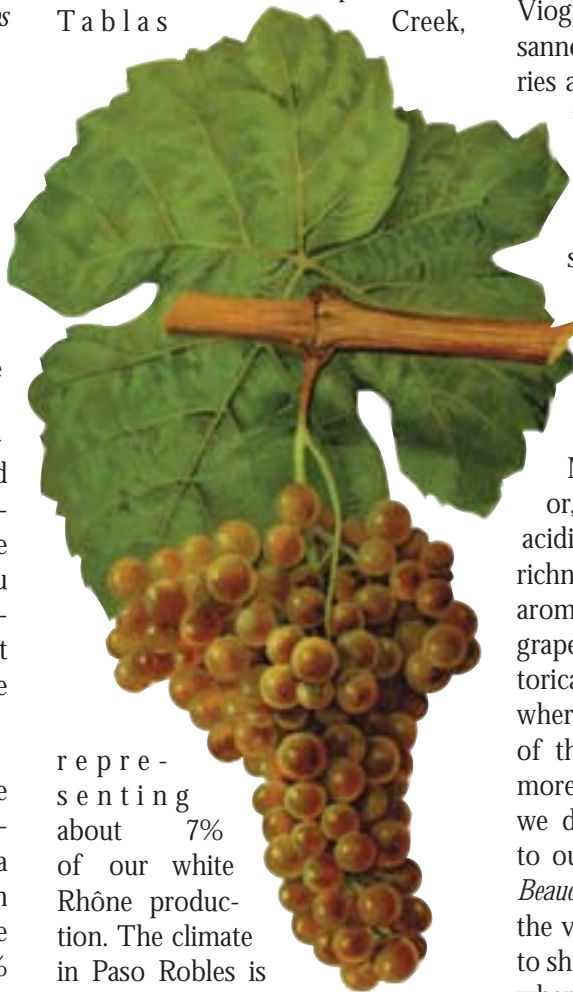
Marsanne is believed to have originated in the town of Marsanne, near Montélimar in the northern Rhône Valley. The white wines of St-Joseph, Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage, and St-Péray are made predominantly from Marsanne, often blended with Roussanne. Although Marsanne is not permitted in the wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, it is one of the eight white grapes permitted in the *Côtes du Rhône* appellation. As such, Marsanne is a significant component (usually 30%) of the Coudoulet de Beaucastel white blend.

The grape arrived in Australia in the late 1860s, and has been grown successfully in the vineyards of Victoria ever since. Australia has proved an even more hospitable home for the varietal than its native France – 80% of the world's Marsanne is grown in Australia. It arrived in California in the 1980s, and, although it is not often seen bottled as a single varietal, it is becoming an increasingly important component of white Rhône-style blends. Qupe Wine Cellars, which has been making a single-varietal Marsanne since 1987,

is one of the leading producers. As of 2005, there were 69 acres planted in California.

## Marsanne at Tablas Creek

There are approximately three acres of Marsanne planted at Tablas Creek,



representing about 7% of our white Rhône production. The climate in Paso Robles is slightly hotter than Marsanne's native northern Rhône Valley, and the varietal here is an aggressive producer with no significant growing problems, though it is sensitive to water levels. Careful monitoring throughout the growing season is often necessary. Marsanne vines produce a relatively heavy crop

of loosely clustered berries, and require a secondary fruit pruning (of green or unpollinated clusters) six to eight weeks after the initial pruning. This practice, coupled with conscientious leaf pulling, encourages uniform ripening. Marsanne ripens right in the middle of the picking season – later than Viognier, but not as late as Roussanne or Mourvèdre – and its berries are golden and medium-sized when ripe. The varietal has a proclivity for absorbing the mineral flavors of the soils in which it is grown, and we showcase these qualities by fermenting it in stainless steel tanks.

## Flavors and Aromas

Marsanne is a light straw color, almost green, with moderate acidity and excellent mid-palate richness. Its mineral flavors and aromas make it an ideal blending grape. The varietal has been historically blended with Roussanne, where it tones down the viscosity of the Roussanne and provides a more complex flavor. Although we do sometimes add Marsanne to our Roussanne-based *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* (as we did in 2001), the varietal is truly given a chance to shine in our *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*, where it contributes rich mouthfeel and melon and honeysuckle flavors that balance the aromatics of the Viognier. 🍷

## HARVEST, from page 1

An Arctic air mass settled over California the next few days and gave us three consecutive nights below freezing on the nights of October 11th, 12th and 13th. Frosts during harvest are rarer than those during flowering, and are damaging in different ways. Spring frosts typically hit the earliest-sprouting varieties hardest and cause uneven ripening and low, erratic yields. Harvest frosts



*Cellar Assistant Chelsea Magnusson crushes Mourvèdre by foot.*

tend to affect the later-ripening varieties more and arrest an affected vine's photosynthesis. After a fall frost, grapes only accumulate additional sugar through dehydration. Luckily, the frosts only hit the coolest sections of the vineyard nearest Tablas Creek, mostly in areas where the grapes were ready to harvest anyway. The cold weather did slow the ripening throughout the vineyard, but temperatures warmed, and the last three weeks of October were perfect, with days in the 80s and nights in the 40s. Over this period, we brought in the rest of the crop, including the remaining portion of our Grenache Noir and most of our Mourvèdre, Roussanne, and Counoise.

Despite the challenges, the 2008 vintage has the potential to be great, and one where Paso Robles can set itself apart from Napa and Sonoma. Yields were low but had good concentration. We were largely unharmed by the spring frosts that caused 20%-30% crop loss in Santa Barbara County and throughout the North Coast, we didn't have any smoke damage this summer (the nearest forest fires were more than fifty miles away) and a major early October rainstorm that dumped two inches of rain on the North Coast sent only a few clouds down as far south as Paso Robles. Finally, we escaped significant damage from the harvest frosts that afflicted most of California, and the warm sunny weather during the last half of October allowed the vines time to recover from the earlier cold snap and ripen fully.

One impact of the October frost was to produce completely lignified stems in our Mourvèdre. Lignification occurs when stems turn from green to brown, and is one sign of physiological ripeness. In Paso Robles, grapes generally achieve ripeness while the stems are still green. As a result, we de-stem our reds, because we feel that fermenting in whole clusters is likely to transfer some green-tasting tannins from the stems into the wine. However, it is traditional in Bandol – the home of Mourvèdre in France – to ferment Mourvèdre in whole clusters. We've been unwilling to do so until now, but decided that the unexpected lignification would allow us to give it a try. We dumped the grapes into an open-top fermenter and have been crushing them by foot. We split this Mourvèdre lot in half, and did the other half in the traditional de-stemmed method. We'll keep the lots separate and hopefully be able to isolate the contributions of the whole clusters.

One impact of the lower yields is that we will not be making any Vin de Paille dessert wines this year, and will likely be cutting quantities on our non-core wines. There will not be enough Vermentino or Chardonnay to send out in our wine club shipments, but we will offer these wines through our tasting room. We did get a good crop of Viognier, and hope to make a varietal Viognier to send out to our wine club. 🍷

## PRESS, from page 1

*Esprit* and the 2006 *Côtes de Tablas* as "perfect" wine gifts for the holidays.

And finally, the Tablas Creek blog (tablas-creek.typepad.com) was the subject of a very nice review by Linda Murphy on winereviewonline.com ("An Exemplary Wine Blog"), in which she says it contains, "some of the most insightful blogging on wine." She concludes by calling Tablas Creek's blog, "the most adept I've seen at addressing the most important wine issues of the day."

A complete list of recent press can be found at [www.tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html](http://www.tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html) 🍷

## 2006 *Esprit* Released

We're thrilled to announce the national release of our 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. This wine, our signature Mourvèdre-based red blend, is currently available in most states, just in time for the holidays. It is also available from the Tablas Creek online wine shop at [www.tablascreek.com](http://www.tablascreek.com). The wine received a 93 from Stephen Tanzer and a 91-93 from Robert Parker. 🍷



## Tablas Creek: The Next Generation

Eli Haas, age 3½, and Sebastian Haas, 15 months, help with packing and quality control in the stock room.

## Tablas Creek Vineyard Vintage Chart, 2000-2007 Vintages

WHITES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc								
Côtes de Tablas Blanc								
Roussanne								
Grenache Blanc								
Vermentino								
Viognier								
Picpoul Blanc								
Antithesis Chardonnay								
ROSÉ	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Rosé								
DESSERT WINES	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Vin de Paille								
Vin de Paille Quintessence								
Vin de Paille Sacrérouge								

REDS	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Esprit de Beaucastel								
Côtes de Tablas								
Syrah								
Mourvèdre								
Grenache								
Counoise								
Tannat								
Panoplie								

Vintage Chart Key			
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Hold - Too Young	<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	Hold - Closed Phase
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	Early Maturity	<span style="color: pink;">■</span>	Past its prime
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	Peak Maturity	<span style="color: gray;">■</span>	Not made
<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	Late Maturity	<span style="background-color: white; border: 1px solid black;">■</span>	Not yet bottled

### Tablas Creek Holiday Gifts

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 a special holiday gift pack (which we will ship for free), Tablas Creek gift cards, gift VINsider memberships and more.

The 2008 **Tablas Creek holiday gift pack** includes a bottle each of our two signature wines: the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel* and the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* in a special decorative gift box. In addition, we're including shipping at no extra charge on the gift packs to any address in any of the 28 states we can ship to. These special holiday packs will only be available for pickup or shipment until the end of December. For gift orders, we are happy to enclose a holiday message. We can also arrange for larger number of gift packs, customized with your personal or corporate information. Contact us for more information.

Know that your special someone is a wine lover, but unsure what wines to choose? Give a **Tablas Creek Vineyard gift card**, available in any denomination. This can be delivered with a holiday message of your choice, and is valid for purchases in person, online, and over the phone. Look for the "Gift Cards" section on the Tablas Creek online order form.

**VINsider Wine Club memberships** make wonderful gifts. Choose a 6-month or 12-month duration, and your recipient will receive all the benefits of membership, including semi-annual wine shipments, discounts and free tastings at the winery, and free admission to educational and recreational events. You can order a gift membership online, or contact Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x39.

For ideas on other great gifts, we encourage you to come visit our tasting room, where we have a holiday selection of linens, local artisan pottery, Rebecca Haas jewelry, wine books, glasses, gourmet salts, Tablas Creek olive oil and more.





# WINE ORDER FORM

## DECEMBER 2008

**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.  
 Non-VINsiders receive a 10% discount on orders of 12 bottles or more.

**SHIPPING**  
 CA\*  
 1-6 bottles: \$15.00  
 7-12 bottles: \$25.00  
 CO, ID\*, NM, NV\*, OR, WA\*, WY  
 1-6 bottles: \$25.00  
 7-12 bottles: \$35.00  
 AK, DC, FL, GA, IA, IL, MI\*, MN, MO, NC\*, NE\*, NH, NY\*, OH\*, SC\*, TX\*, VA\*, VT\*, WI, WV\*  
 1-6 bottles: \$30.00  
 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	VINSIDER PRICE	TOTAL
<b>FEATURED WINE [15% DISCOUNT IS REFLECTED IN PRICE]</b>				
VIN DE PAILLE 2006	_____	\$55.25	\$42.25	_____
<b>WHITE WINES</b>				
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2007	_____	\$40.00	\$32.00	_____
VERMENTINO 2007	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
GRENACHE BLANC 2006	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2006	_____	\$40.00	\$32.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2007	_____	\$25.00	\$20.00	_____
<b>RED WINES</b>				
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2006	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2006 (Screwcap)	_____	\$25.00	\$20.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2006 (Cork)	_____	\$25.00	\$20.00	_____
MOURVÈDRE 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
SYRAH 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
COUNOISE 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
TANNAT 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
SYRAH 2005	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2005	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2004	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____

SUBTOTAL \_\_\_\_\_  
 DISCOUNT \_\_\_\_\_  
 7.25% TAX (CA ONLY) \_\_\_\_\_  
 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**

<b>BILL TO:</b>	<b>SHIP TO:</b>	<b>CREDIT CARD:</b>
Name: _____	Name: _____	MC/Visa #: _____
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 vinsider@tablascreek.com :: **order online** at www.tablascreek.com

## FEATURED WINE: 2006 VIN DE PAILLE

Wines are organic products and, as such, have their own life cycles. At the vineyard, we taste through our cellar every month and see which wines are showing particularly well given the season and the wines' own inherent evolution. As a way of sharing these observations with you, we will periodically spotlight one of our wines. To encourage you to try these great wines, we are offering the featured wine, for the designated time only, at a 15% discount. This discount is granted above and beyond any other discounts that might apply, such as for case purchases or wine club membership.



**The Featured Wine program continues with the 2006 *Vin de Paille*, featured from December 1 through December 31, 2008.**

**Tasting Notes:** The 2006 *Vin de Paille* is Tablas Creek's fourth bottling of this traditional Mediterranean technique for producing dessert wines. Ripe grape bunches are carefully laid down on straw-covered benches in our greenhouses, and allowed to dehydrate in the sun. When the grapes reach the desired concentration, they are pressed and the juice is moved to oak barrels for fermentation. The 2006 *Vin de Paille* is a blend of four white Rhone grapes: Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, and Marsanne. It was awarded 92 points from both Robert Parker's Wine Advocate (June 2008) and Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar (November 2008).

**Suggested Food Pairings:** The 2006 *Vin de Paille* is a wonderful dessert wine. It is particularly good with fruit, such as baked apples or pears, or berry tarts, and is also delicious with dessert souffles and tiramisu. The richness of the wine also provides a fabulous counterpoint to blue cheeses.

### *Wine Pairing: Carrot, Leek and Potato Soup*

With winter upon us, a good soup recipe is always welcome. This Haas family favorite is a good match for the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. The richness of the Roussanne in the *Esprit Blanc* nicely complements the combination of earthiness and creaminess of the root vegetables. Serve it with a simple green salad and crusty bread for a perfect comforting winter meal.

*Serves 4*

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 lb. potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 3 large carrots, chopped
- 2 large leeks, finely sliced
- 3 tbsp. butter
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups chicken broth
- salt to taste
- cream (for garnish)
- 3 tbsp finely chopped parsley (for garnish)

Melt the butter in a stock pot, add the leeks and carrots over medium-low heat. Stir to thoroughly coat vegetables with butter, and saute for about 5 minutes. Do not let leeks brown.

Add the potatoes, the chicken stock, the water, and salt.

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20-25 minutes, until vegetables are soft.

Remove from heat, and use an immersion blender to puree. Correct seasonings.

Ladle into bowls, and serve with a swirl of cream and a sprinkling of parsley.

## Tablas at Home: Coming Events at the Vineyard and in Paso Robles

**Sunday, December 7** **1:00 PM**  
**En Primeur Tasting and Futures Offering**

VINsiders are invited to join Tablas Creek's winemakers for the fifth annual barrel tasting and sale *en primeur* of Tablas Creek's remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2007 vintage. Offering wine *en primeur* is a time-honored French tradition most often associated with first-growth Bordeaux estates. In outstanding vintages, valued customers are offered the opportunity to secure a limited quantity of sought-after wines at a special price in advance of bottling and subsequent general release. VINsiders should have received an invitation and reservation form in the mail in early November.

**February 13-16** **10:00 AM - 5:00 PM**  
**Presidents' Day Passport Weekend**  
**Far Out Wineries**

Join the 16 Far Out Wineries of Paso Robles, in partnership with the Central Coast Wellness Community, for a fund raiser to help find "Hope and Support" for people with cancer and their families. For a \$25 donation, you will receive a VIP Far Out Wineries passport, which will admit you to complimentary wine tastings at each winery, special barrel tastings and winery tours, new releases, food pairings, and much more. In addition, all the Far Out Wineries will be donating 5% of their weekend's sales to the Central Coast Wellness Community. At each Far Out Winery, you can get your passport stamped. After you collect eight stamps, you will be entered into a final drawing for some terrific prizes. For discounted advance passport purchases, contact Judy at Norman Vineyards at 805-237-0138 before February 6. More information is available at [www.faroutwineries.com](http://www.faroutwineries.com)

**Sunday, February 15**  
**Paso Robles Rhone Ranger Experience**  
**Seminar and Lunch** **11:00 AM**  
**Walk-around Tasting** **1:30 PM**

Join the 30+ members of the Paso Robles Rhone Rangers chapter for a fun and educational seminar and lunch on Rhônes. The seminar will provide a guided tasting of the region's principal Rhône varietals and blends. The lunch will be paired with different Paso Robles Rhône wines, and the walk-around tasting will feature wines from all Paso Robles Rhone Rangers. The day's events will take place at Robert Hall Winery. Tickets for the full slate of activities, including the seminar and lunch, are \$75, and tickets for tasting alone are available for just \$25. Qualified trade will be admitted free to the walk-around tasting. For more information or reservations, visit [rhoneangers.org](http://rhoneangers.org) or call Robert Hall Winery at 805-239-1616 x17.

**Saturday, February 28** **Noon to 2:00 PM**  
**Artisan and Farmstead Cheese Seminar**

Join Tablas Creek and master chef Jeff Scott for a tasting of artisan and farmstead cheeses, produced in small batches and made exclusively by American producers. Cheeses from small farms in Vermont, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Louisiana and California will be featured, and Winemaker Neil Collins will discuss the wine pairing possibilities. Don't miss this rare opportunity to taste some of the country's best cheeses paired with Tablas Creek wines. Seating is limited and reservations are required. The cost is \$40 for VINsiders and \$50 for guests.

**Saturday, March 21** **10:00 AM - 1:00 PM**  
**ZIN Summit VII**  
**Far Out Wineries**

No, we don't make a Zinfandel, but we won't let that prevent us from enjoying the Zinfandel Festival! We'll be pouring at the seventh annual "Zinfandel and More" seminar, organized by the Far Out Wineries. The event will include a walk-around tasting in the caves at JUSTIN winery, seminars with the winemakers, and an opportunity to meet the winemakers of the 16 Far Out Wineries. The event will be held at JUSTIN winery, and the cost is \$55 per person. Tickets will be available beginning January 1; the event always sells out quickly, so get your tickets soon. Call 805.237.0138 for reservations or more information.

**Saturday, April 11** **10:00 AM**  
**Blending Seminar**

If you love Rhone varietals, join us for our annual blending seminar. Jason Haas and winemaker Neil Collins will lead a barrel tasting of the individual varietals (both reds and whites), and then will set you loose with graduated cylinders to produce your own blend. This event is extremely popular and sells out quickly. The cost is \$30 for VINsiders and \$40 for guests.

To make reservations or get more information about any of these events, please contact Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x39, or [events@tablascreek.com](mailto:events@tablascreek.com).

## Tablas on Tour: National Events

### December 2-4 2008

Yosemite Vintners' Holidays  
Ahwahnee Hotel  
Yosemite Park, CA  
www.yosemitepark.com  
559.252.4848

### January 15, 2009

Winemaker Dinner at Simon Pearce  
Quechee, Vermont  
www.simonpearce.com  
802.295.1470

### March 20 - 22, 2009

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

### March 21-22, 2009

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

### March 26-28, 2009

High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction  
Atlanta, Georgia  
www.atlanta-wineauction.org  
404.733.4424

### April 4, 2009

Malibu Wine Classic  
Malibu, California  
www.malibuwineclassic.com  
310.451.7600

### April 30-May 2, 2009

Hospice du Rhone  
Paso Robles, California  
www.hospicedurhone.org  
805.784.9543

### May 15-17, 2009

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

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