

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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Harvest Report

The 2006 harvest is complete, 315 tons (182 tons of red grapes; 133 tons of white) and 50 days after the first grapes came in. In mid-October, we would have thought you were crazy if you'd told us that we would look back on the 2006 harvest with excitement. The first half of October was cool and cloudy, with several days of rain. With only about 30% of the grapes picked, we were worried that this would be the first disappointing harvest since 2001. However, the three weeks at the end of October and early November turned the vintage from a potential disappointment to one of the best we've seen. Perfect fall weather, with daytime highs in the 70s and 80s, nights in the 30s, and consistent light breezes gave us the opportunity to leave grapes on the vine until the last moment.

We brought in the first lots of grapes on September 14, about two weeks later than normal. After our relatively late spring (we saw flowering about four weeks later than usual), our warm summer accelerated the ripening somewhat, but didn't entirely make up for our late start. Chardonnay for our *Antithesis* was the first to come in, followed closely by Viognier, traditionally the earliest-ripening Rhône varietal. Roussanne earmarked for our *Bergeron* wine (a citrusy, higher-acid version of Roussanne traditional to cooler climates) was brought in the following weeks, as was Syrah, as usual our earliest-ripening red Rhône varietal.

Several days of cool wet weather at the beginning of October put the harvesting on hold. The picking resumed the week of October 20th, after a full week of sun and warm temperatures allowed the grapes to dry out; we brought in over 100 tons of Gre-



Wine 101: Tartrates

We occasionally hear comments in the tasting room about deposits at the bottom of a wine bottle or on the cork. These clear crystal-like granules are tartrates, a harmless (though often curious) by-product of the winemaking process.

Tartrates are the salts of tartaric acid, one of the principle acids found naturally in grapes. Grapes vary in the concentration of tartaric acid they contain, and in general white wines and wines grown in cooler climates have higher concentrations than those grown in warmer regions. Tartaric acid plays an important role in both the winemaking process, where it helps lower the pH of the fermenting juice to a level at which undesirable bacteria cannot live, and in the finished wine, where it provides tartness on the palate.

Potassium tartrate is only partially soluble in alcoholic solutions. Thus, while they are completely soluble in both plain water and grape juice, tartrates begin to precipitate out of solution as soon as the juice begins to ferment and turn alcoholic.

Some of those tartrates precipitate out during fermentation, and the crystals adhere to the sides of the barrels and tanks where fermentation occurs. Those crystals, which are pure potassium tartrate, are often sold commercially as cream of tartar (a component of baking powder and an ingredient which helps stabilize beaten

See **TARTRATES** on page 3

Featured Wine:

2003 CÔTES DE TABLAS

Details on page 6.

Focus Varietal: Syrah

Syrah, also known as Shiraz in Australia, is one of the most noble grapes of the Rhône Valley. It is a key component of our *Esprit de Beaucastel* and, depending on the vintage, forms 20-35% of the final blend.

Early History

Syrah is one of the oldest established grape varieties in the Côtes du Rhône region of southern France, and competing stories abound about its origin. One legend attributes its arrival in France to the Phocaeans of Asia Minor, who brought the grape from Shiraz, Persia when they established Marseilles around 600 BC. Another story claims that Romans brought the varietal from Syracuse, in Sicily, to the Rhône in the 3rd century AD. It seems most likely, however, that Syrah is a native French grape, the chance offspring of two grapes (Dureza and Mondeuse) from southeastern France. Whatever its origin, Syrah was well established in the vineyards surrounding the Rhône village of Tain-l'Hermitage by the 13th century.

Syrah Around the World

Syrah is most closely associated with the Northern Rhône appellations of Hermitage and Côte-Rotie, where it produces wines of phenomenal elegance and longevity. It is tremendously flexible, and can make elegant and restrained wines as well as wines bursting with fruit and oak, in locations as diverse as France, California, South Africa, and Australia. In the 1650s, South Africa was the first country outside France to plant Syrah, but it has never been more than a minor variety there. In Australia, however, where it arrived at the end of the 18th Century, it has become one of the most widely planted grapes in that country.

The first records of Syrah in the United States show it arriving in California in

1878, but it remained scarce until quite recently, with only 1,200 tons harvested in 1992. As California winemakers recognize its potential, the acreage has increased nearly one hundredfold in the past ten years, and 101,500 tons of Syrah were harvested in California in 2002. Syrah is now the most widely planted Rhône varietal in California. Although it is occasionally confused with the California varietal Petite Sirah, they are



separate varieties (many experts believe most of what is called Petite Sirah is a cross of the varieties Peloursin and Durif).

Syrah at Tablas Creek

Syrah is quite vigorous and thrives when given warm days, poor soils, and sun. Because it is so vigorous, it requires extra canopy management (to expose the fruit to the sun for ripening) and aggressive crop thinning. Unlike most other varieties, its canes extend down toward the ground rather than up toward the sun, and therefore it is the one varietal permitted to be

trellised instead of head-pruned in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It ripens earlier than any of the other red southern Rhône varieties, and its small clusters and small berries produce juice with concentrated flavors and significant tannin.

During vinification, we ferment Syrah in large open-top tanks, a process that exposes the juice to more oxygen and thereby softens the tannins and compensates for Syrah's tendency toward reduction. Currently, we have approximately 11 acres of Syrah planted at Tablas Creek, which represents about 30% of our red Rhône production.

Flavors and Aromas

The Syrah grape itself is thick-skinned and dark, almost black. Its wines are intense with a dark purple-black color. The wines taste of blackberry and currant fruit, smoke, tar and black pepper, and have a smooth supple texture. Syrah reflects minerality well, and the chalky character of the tannins provides a wonderful backbone to softer, fruitier varieties such as Grenache and Crounise.

In our blends, Syrah provides structure, a deep blackish-purple color, minerality, and longevity. It can give mid-palate richness to our Mourvèdre based blends (the *Esprit de Beaucastel*), and structure and tannin to Grenache-based wines such as our *Côtes de Tablas*. In 2002 we bottled Syrah as a single varietal for our VINSider wine club; we released the wine nationally beginning with the 2003 vintage. 🍷

A Contest!

How closely have you been reading your Tablas Creek Newsletter? Identify the Rhône grape varietal pictured on page 4 for a chance to win Tablas Creek prizes!

TARTRATES, from page 1

egg whites). However, not all of the tartrates are removed during fermentation, and some remain in solution in the wine after it is bottled.

As wine ages in bottle, tartrates crystallize and settle to the bottom of the bottle. In white wines, which do not contain any pigment from the grape skins, the tartrates are clear, perfectly shaped crystalline structures that are often mistaken for shards of glass. In red wines, the tartrates also include pigment that has precipitated out of solution, which makes the crystals reddish brown and irregularly shaped.

Whether tartrates appear in finished wine is typically dependent upon two factors – the temperature at which the



Tartrate crystals on the end of a cork

wine has been stored and how long the wine has been in bottle. Cold temperatures make tartrates less soluble in alcoholic solutions, so bottled wines that have been refrigerated or otherwise chilled for more than a few hours are more likely to precipitate tartrates. Winemakers who wish to remove tartrates before bottling can take advantage of this phenomenon by lowering the temperature of a fermented wine to close to freezing for up to several weeks. During this process of cold

stabilization, tartrates crystallize and fall out of solution. The wine can then be bottled with little risk of additional tartrates forming in the bottle. But, because tartaric acid forms a component of the wine's flavor, some wineries (including Tablas Creek) tend not to stabilize away all the tartrates, and instead chill the wines only for a shorter period, if at all. At Tablas Creek, we typically cold stabilize the wines we expect to be served chilled: our *Rosé* and our aromatic whites, and those only lightly.



Tartrate crystals in a bottle of Rosé.

Even if a wine has not been chilled, wines can precipitate tartrates over time. Old wines, in fact, are more likely to produce sediment of all kinds because the compounds have more time to form and precipitate out. Red wines, which are more likely to be aged, include tartrates as one component of their sediment. During fermentation, pigments in the skins of grapes combine with acids and other compounds in the wine to form larger, more complex molecules known as pigmented tannins. As red wines age, the pigmented tannins form larger and larger polymers, and eventually fall out of solution, sinking to the bottom of the bottle. The older a red wine, generally speaking, the more pigmented tannins will have sunk to the bottom, often combining with tartrate crystals. Decanting an old red wine helps ensure that the sediment that has fallen out of solution does not end up in the drinker's glass. 🍷

Happy Holidays!

Celebrate the holiday season in style, with Tablas Creek wine! We have put together a specially-priced two-bottle holiday wine package, with wines specifically chosen by our winemakers to be perfect for your Christmas feast, or as holiday gifts. Included in this limited holiday package is one bottle each of the 2002 *Las Tablas Estates Glenrose Vineyard* and the 2003 *Roussanne*. Both wines have a balance of fruit, spice and richness, making them the perfect foils to pair with your holiday menu. We're offering the package at a special price -- just \$49.00 (\$39.20 for VINSiders), plus tax and shipping. These special holiday packs will be available for pickup or shipment until January 15, and we are happy to enclose a holiday gift card for gift orders.



Eli Haas, 19 months, kicks off the Holiday season in a pumpkin patch.



Grapes dry on straw, for the preparation of vin de paille

HARVEST, from page 1

nache, Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Marsanne that week. We took advantage of the continuing good weather, and let the Mourvèdre fully ripen; it was the last major varietal to be harvested and came in just after Halloween.

Throughout harvest we continued the production of our vin de paille dessert wines. In this traditional method for producing sweet wines in climates that are neither susceptible to botrytis nor consistently cold enough to produce ice wine, grapes are laid out on beds of straw in our greenhouses. As the grapes dry, the sugars and juice are concentrated. We pressed the last grapes (Mourvèdre, for our *Sacrérouge*) the

second week of November and the resulting juice will age in barrels, producing our sweet dessert vin de paille wines.

The quality of the grapes was high across the board. We saw smaller berries than normal on the clusters, with more concentrated juice and good acid levels. So far, so good... excellent depth of flavors, good intensity, and good concentration at slightly lower sugar levels than past years. 🍇

In the News

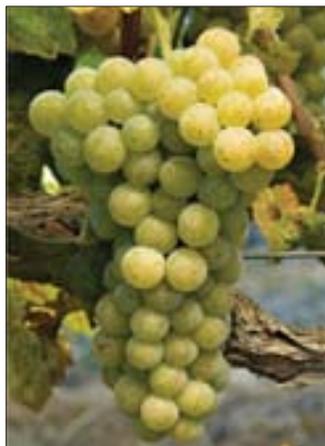
Tablas Creek has been the recipient of quite a bit of positive press in the past several months. Robert Parker, in his annual review of California Rhône wines, gave Tablas Creek terrific reviews in his *Wine Advocate*: 95 for the 2004 *Panoplie*, 91-93 for the 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, and 92 for the 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. We also received glowing reviews in the September/October issue of Stephen Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, with a 94 for the 2004 *Panoplie* and a 92 for the 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. The 2005 *Rosé* was singled out for praise in several publications, including the November 2006 issue of the *Wine Enthusiast*, where it received 90 points and the June 26, 2006 issue of *Business Week*, where it received a 90 from Robert Parker. And finally, in a *Wine Spectator* online blog (October 26), James Suckling singled out the 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel* as an "outstanding" example of California Rhône. A complete list of recent press can be found at www.tablascreek.com/news.html

Can you identify this varietal?

How well do you know Rhône varietals? Identify the varietal pictured, and win a Tablas Creek logo clock! Some hints:

- * It is one of four white varietals permitted in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.
- * At Tablas Creek, it is usually one of the latest-ripening white varietals.

Send your answer to newsletter@tablascreek.com by January 7. Five winners will be selected from a random drawing of all correct answers. Good luck!



VINsider's Corner

March Wine Club Shipment

We're really excited about the upcoming wine club shipment. It includes a bottle of the much anticipated 2004 *Panoplie* (rated 95 points from Robert Parker), our fourth vintage of this elite Mourvèdre-based wine. The shipment will also feature four terrific single varietal white wines: one bottle each of the 2005 *Antithesis* (our limited availability Chardonnay, which received 91-93 from Robert Parker); the rich and nuanced 2005 *Roussanne*; the 2005 *Bergeron*, a bright lemony interpretation of the Roussanne grape; and the smoky, powerful 2004 *Tannat*. One bottle of the terrific Grenache-based 2004 *Côtes de Tablas* will complete the shipment.

The shipment will leave the winery on Tuesday, March 20. Local VINsiders and those who plan to be in town for the Zinfandel Festival can pick up their shipments at the winery starting Friday, March 16. Now is the time to make any changes that are needed to your VINsider record (e.g., credit card number or expiration date, shipping address, etc.). If you have record changes, please let Nikki Getty know as soon as possible at ngetty@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39.

Spring VINsider Tasting

Mark your calendar now for our shipment tasting party here at the vineyard on March 24 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Pick up your Spring 2007 shipment while you join us for a tasting of the wines in the Spring offering. Wines from the shipment will be available for an additional 5% off that night only. The event is free for VINsiders and \$15 for their guests; please RSVP by March 16 to events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x 39.



WINE ORDER FORM

DECEMBER 2006

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: \$14.00
7-12 bottles: \$20.00

CO, ID, NM, NV, OR, WA, WY

1-6 bottles: \$20.00
7-12 bottles: \$30.00

AK, FL, IA, IL, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NY, OH, SC, TX, VA, VT, 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.

An adult signature is required at delivery for all shipped wine orders.

WINE	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
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FEATURED WINE [*15% DISCOUNT WILL BE REFLECTED IN FINAL CHARGE]

CÔTES DE TABLAS 2003	_____	\$22.00*	_____
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WHITE WINES

CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2005	_____	\$22.00	_____
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PICPOUL 2005	_____	\$27.00	_____
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ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2004 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$35.00	_____
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ROUSSANNE 2003	_____	\$27.00	_____
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GRENACHE BLANC 2004	_____	\$27.00	_____
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ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2003	_____	\$35.00	_____
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RED WINES

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2004 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$45.00	_____
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CÔTES DE TABLAS 2004	_____	\$22.00	_____
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ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2003 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$40.00	_____
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MOURVÈDRE 2004	_____	\$35.00	_____
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SYRAH 2004	_____	\$35.00	_____
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LAS TABLAS ESTATES GLENROSE VINEYARD 2002	_____	\$32.50	_____
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DESSERT WINES (375 mL)

VIN DE PAILLE SACREROUGE 2003 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$45.00	_____
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VIN DE PAILLE 2004 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$65.00	_____
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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: _____

SUBTOTAL _____

DISCOUNT _____

7.25% TAX (CA ONLY) _____

SHIPPING _____

ORDER TOTAL _____

CREDIT CARD:

MC/Visa #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

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: 2003 CÔTES DE TABLAS

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 offer the featured wine, for the designated time, at a 15% discount. This discount is granted above and beyond any other discounts that apply, such as for case purchases or wine club membership.



The Featured Wine program continues with the 2003 Côtes de Tablas, featured from December 1 through December 31, 2006.

Tasting Notes: The 2003 *Côtes de Tablas* is our fourth release of the *Côtes de Tablas* red blend, made in the style of a full-throttle Côtes du Rhone wine. It is a rich, spicy wine, with a juicy, meaty nose of rare steak, pepper and blueberry. The flavors are juicy and rich, with ripe tannins and a finish laced with licorice.

Suggested Food Pairings: The 2003 *Côtes de Tablas* is a wonderful food wine. It is particularly good with red meats, such as grilled steaks and rich beef stews, but is also delicious when paired with spicy sausages or pasta with meat sauce, and is a natural fit with Provençal stews like the Chicken Provençale recipe below.

Wine Pairing: Chicken Provençale

This recipe was provided by Barbara Kafka, a longtime friend of the Haas family. She was the former food editor for Vogue, a frequent contributor to the New York Times and is the author of numerous award-winning cookbooks. The recipe below is from her 1984 Food for Friends cookbook and makes a wonderful pairing with the 2003 Côtes de Tablas. Learn more at <http://www.bkafka.com>



Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 chicken, cut into serving pieces (approx. 2 1/2 pounds)
- 1 tbsp. flour
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup dry red wine
- 1/2 to 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1 sprig fresh thyme or oregano
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and cubed
- 1 tsp. tomato paste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 strip lemon zest
- 1 strip orange zest
- kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup Niçoise olives
- large handful of freshly chopped parsley

In a large saute pan, heat the butter and oil until hot. Add the chicken pieces, skin side down. Cook until golden brown on the bottom.

Turn the pieces over and cook until golden brown on the other side. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.

Discard all but 1 tablespoon of the fat. Stir in the flour and cook over moderate heat for 1 to 2 minutes.

Add 1/3 cup wine and 1/2 cup stock to the pan and deglaze, scraping the bottom with a wooden spoon.

Add the garlic, thyme or oregano, cubed tomatoes, tomato paste, bay leaf, and zests. Stir until roughly blended.

Return the chicken to the pan and partially cover it. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, or until chicken juices run clear when chicken is pricked with a knife. If the sauces seems too thick, add the remaining wine and stock.

Taste the sauce and add salt and pepper to taste.

Add the lemon juice and olives, and cook for 5 more minutes with pan partially covered.

Remove the bay leaf and sprinkle with parsley. Serve hot, with new potatoes.

Tablas at Home: Coming Events at the Vineyard

Saturday, December 9

5:30 PM

En Primeur Tasting and Futures Offering

VINsiders are invited to join Tablas Creek's winemakers for the third annual barrel tasting and sale *en primeur* of Tablas Creek's remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2005 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.

Saturday, February 3

9:00 AM

Planting and Vineyard Development Seminar

In 2006, we began planting the remaining 30 acres we have available to us at Tablas Creek, at a pace of roughly five acres per year. This year we will continue planting the section we call "Scruffy Hill" with head-pruned, dry-farmed Grenache, Mourvedre and Counoise. Join us and help put the vines in the ground! Neil Collins, Winemaker and Vineyard Manager, will lead attendees in some hands-on planting, as well as a discussion of vineyard development issues including irrigation, vine spacing, rootstock selection, and more. We'll finish the morning with a field lunch. The event is free for VINsiders and \$20 for guests.

Saturday, March 3

10:00 AM

Blending Seminar: WHITES

We are again splitting our popular blending seminar and barrel tasting into two events -- one for white wines and one for red. In the white wine seminar, Jason Haas and winemaker Neil Collins will lead a barrel tasting of our white varietals (including perennial favorites Picpoul and Grenache Blanc), and will then set you loose with graduated cylinders to produce your own blend. This event is extremely popular and sells out quickly -- reserve your spot now! The cost is \$30 for VINsiders and \$40 for guests.

Saturday, April 7

10:00 AM

Blending Seminar: REDS

In the second part of our annual blending seminar and barrel tasting, we will focus on the red varietals. Jason Haas and winemaker Neil Collins will lead a barrel tasting of our red varietals and will then set you loose with graduated cylinders to produce your own blend. Again, this event is extremely popular and sells out quickly -- reserve your spot now! 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 x 39, or ngetty@tablascreek.com

Tablas in the Community: Coming Events in Paso Robles

February 16-19

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Follow Your Heart through the Far Out Countryside Far Out Wineries

The fifteen Far Out Wineries will again be partnering with the American Heart Association to raise awareness about American Heart Month. This year, we will be participating in a passport program. Start at any Far Out Winery and receive your weekend passport. Then map your own route around the Far Out countryside sampling great wines and enjoying complimentary heart-healthy appetizers. For every \$2 donation at a Far Out tasting room, you will receive a stamp on your passport. After visiting eight tasting rooms, you will be entered into the final drawing for some terrific prizes! Prizes include a one night stay and dinner for two at the Dunning Bed & Breakfast, a VIP tour and tasting including lunch for four at Tablas Creek Vineyard, and much more! All monies will be matched dollar for dollar by the Far Out Wineries and donated to the American Heart Association.

Saturday, March 17

10:00 AM to Noon

ZIN Summit VI 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 sixth annual "Zinfandel and More" (we're the "and more"!) seminar, organized by the Far Out Wineries. The seminar will include tastings of current releases and barrel samples produced by the fifteen members of the Far Out Wineries. Don't miss this excellent opportunity to experience the wines of the west side! The event will be held in the caves 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. Contact Judy for reservations or more information at 805.237.0138.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

December 14, 2006

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

January 25, 2007

Winemaker Dinner at Boston Harbor Hotel
Boston, Massachusetts
ww.bhh.com
617.439.3995

February 28, 2007

Dinner and Cooking Class at Ramekins
Sonoma, California
www.ramekins.com
707.933.0450

March 1-4, 2007

Charleston Food and Wine Festival
Charleston, South Carolina
www.charlestonfoodandwine.com
843.722.5547

March 16-18, 2007

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

March 18, 2007

Rhone Rangers Tasting
San Francisco, California
www.rhonerangers.org
707.462.5943

March 22-24, 2007

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

May 3-5, 2007

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

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