

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



*The VINformer
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Fall 2003*

Harvest Report

As this newsletter goes to press, we've reached the end of the 2003 harvest, and it appears to have been a great one for both reds and whites. After a warm summer and a brief cool period in the end of August, most of September was quite hot (upper 90s), followed by an October with temperatures in the lower 90s balanced by cool nights in the 40s. The heat concentrated the juices, and the aromas from the newly-pressed juice are wonderful. At this stage, the wines appear to be even a bit more intense than the deliciously rich 2002s.

We brought in the first lots of grapes on Monday, September 15th. Grenache Blanc was the first to come in, and was quickly followed by some lots of Viognier. Towards the end of the week, we brought in some of the Roussanne and some Syrah.

Harvest continued at a moderate pace through September, until a slightly cooler spell in the first week of October allowed us to finish the pressing and testing of some of the first lots harvested. By that point we had completed the harvest of most of our whites (everything but a bit of the Roussanne) as well as most of our Syrah.

Starting the second week of October, we harvested the Grenache, Counoise, and the last lots of our whites. The Mourvèdre began to be harvested in mid-October, and we picked the last Mourvèdre grapes on October 29, marking the end of harvest for this year. And just in time, too! Two days after all of the grapes were safely in the winery, the first of the winter rains arrived.

At this point, we've pressed most of the Syrah we harvested in September. After the Syrah has fermented for two to three weeks on its skins in open top fermenters, we press the berries to prevent the wine from becoming overly tannic. The berries are dumped into the press, and, after pressing, the juice is transferred into tanks to complete its fermentation. We test the wines

*See **HARVEST** on page 4*



Syrah is hand harvested by our picking crew

Free Shipping for the Holidays!

In celebration of the holiday season, Tablas Creek is offering free shipping on all orders of 6 bottles or more from November 15 to December 31. Don't miss this chance to get a head start on your holiday shopping!

Wine 101: Fermentation Part 1 of 2: Primary Fermentation

If you visit the winery during harvest, you'll smell the characteristic yeasty, slightly sharp smell of fermenting grapes. Fermentation, of course, is the key chemical process of wine making – the process by which yeast converts sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide.

Fermentation begins when yeasts start consuming the sugars in newly harvested grapes and ends when all of the sugar has been converted into alcohol. The process varies slightly for red and white grapes, since red grapes ferment on their skins whereas white grapes are pressed prior to fermenting. When our red grapes are brought into the winery, they are generally destemmed before being put in tanks to ferment (with their skins still on). When our white grapes come into the winery,

*See **FERMENTATION** on page 3*

Focus Varietal: Syrah

Syrach, 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

Syrach 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 variety 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.

Syrach Around the World

Syrach 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 hundred-fold 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 variety in California. Although it is occasionally confused with the California variety Petite Sirah, they are separate varieties (many experts believe most of what is called Petite Sirah is genetically identical to the variety Durif).

Syrach at Tablas Creek

Syrach 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 variety permitted to be trellised in Châteauneuf-du-Pape instead of head-pruned. 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 Cunoise. 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*. ☺



Winemaker Neil Collins monitors the progress of fermentation in the 2003 whites

grapes (often called “native” or “wild” yeast). When commercial yeasts are used (a process called inoculation) they are often selected for the specific flavor characteristics they bring to the wines, and are added in such quantities that they overwhelm whatever native yeasts are present. The subtle flavors contributed by the native yeasts add complexity to the wines. Using native yeasts is another facet in our effort to ensure that our wines maintain their connection to the Tablas Creek site.

The alcohol that is created during fermentation can, in high enough levels, kill off yeasts. Therefore, if sugars are unusually high when the grapes are harvested, fermentation can stop while there is still sugar (called residual sugar). Many dessert wines are made in this fashion.

Winemakers closely monitor fermentation. By regularly tasting the fermenting juice, winemakers are able to get a preliminary idea of what the finished product will taste like. Fermentation is also monitored with scientific techniques. Sugar dissolved in water is denser than water, and ethyl alcohol (and therefore wine) is less dense than water. By measuring density, we can track the progress of fermentation. At Tablas Creek, we measure density with a hydrometer, a calibrated glass tube weighted at the bottom with a ball of lead. When the hydrometer is put in a graduated cylinder of fermenting juice, the level to which it floats in that juice will provide a reading of its density. The higher the density of the liquid, the more the hydrometer will float. When fermentation has just begun, the density readings are usually about 1100 grams per milliliter; by the time fermentation is completed, the density readings are usually about 992 grams per milliliter. ☺

they are transferred to a bladder press, where the juice is squeezed from the berries and pumped into barrels or tanks to ferment. For red grapes, the pressing stage doesn't happen until most of primary fermentation is completed.

Once the juice (for white) and grapes (for reds) are in the tanks or barrels, the fermentation process begins. The critical ingredient in fermentation is yeast; without it, sugar will not be converted into alcohol. At Tablas Creek, we do not add yeast to the grape musts, but instead rely on the naturally occurring yeasts that are found on the skins of



A hydrometer

Recent Press

Our wines have attracted a great deal of media attention, and the past several months have seen an abundance of positive press, both about the Paso Robles area in general, and Tablas Creek specifically. Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*, in an issue dedicated to Rhône varietals, gave the vineyard a glowing review, calling Tablas Creek “a star in the making”. The 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel* received a 92, the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* received a 90 and the future looks bright with a 92-95 for the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel* and a 92 for the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*.

We've also received terrific reviews from *Wine & Spirits* (94 for 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and 90 for the 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel*) in the August 2003 issue. The 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* garnered accolades in *Decanter* (September 2003) as Steven Spurrier's choice for Best New World White and in the *Los Angeles Times* (September 17, 2003) as the Wine of the Week. In addition to our signature wines, our 2002 *Rosé* has been holding its own in the national press and has received rave reviews in *Gourmet* (August 2003), *Saveur* (August 2003), and Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate* (August 23, 2003). We've received advance notice of great reviews in the upcoming December issue of *Wine Enthusiast* (94 for 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and 91 for 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel*).

The Paso Robles area and its wineries have gained the national media spotlight with profiles in *Saveur* magazine (August 2003), *O, The Oprah Magazine* (September 2003), and *San Francisco Magazine* (October 2003).

Finally, we've even attracted international attention, as the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* was the only American wine to be named one of the Top Ten Wines at Bordeaux's prestigious Vinexpo in September.

A complete list of articles and reviews featuring Tablas Creek is available on our website at www.tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html. ☺

Coming in February 2004: **Part 2 of 2: Malolactic Fermentation**

HARVEST, Continued from Page 1

daily to track their fermentation [see related story, page 1] and to ensure that everything is proceeding as we want.

Our white varietals have all been pressed, and the resulting juice pumped into stainless steel tanks or French oak barrels to begin fermentation. The Viognier, Marsanne, and Grenache Blanc ferment in stainless steel, to preserve their crispness and brightness, whereas our Roussanne ferments half in stainless steel (to emphasize the pear and citrus characteristics) and half in barrel (to emphasize the rich, honeyed characteristics). At this point, most of the whites are nearly dry, and they are tasting great.

For the first time in 2003, we are also experimenting with carbonic maceration on one tank of our Counoise. In carbonic maceration, which we believe will highlight the fruit and spice character of the Counoise, we lay the whole clusters gently into a tank, and then seal the tank to ferment each berry individually. This method is traditional to the Gamay grape in the Beaujolais region. ☺

Recent Events

The past few months have been busy ones for us. We've been thrilled to see so many Tablas Creek supporters at local events, including the Santa Barbara International Wine Auction in August and the Taste of San Luis Obispo in September.

For the third year in a row, we participated in the annual Santa Fe Wine and Chile Fiesta in New Mexico, which has become one of our favorite wine festivals. In addition to pouring at three tastings, we were the featured wine at a lunch at Rancho de las Golandrinas and a winemaker's dinner at Cafe Pasqual's downtown.

Closer to home, we celebrated the release of our new *Côtes de Tablas* wines with an outdoor party in September, and welcomed almost 500 visitors to the tasting room during the Paso Robles Harvest Festival October 17-19. We also conducted a Harvest and Winemaking Seminar on October 11. The seminar was a part of our ongoing seminar series, and provided the 30 attendees with a unique opportunity to participate in the harvest, including picking, lab analysis, crush, and vinification. We will be holding additional seminars throughout the year as part of our Seasons in the Cellar and Seasons in the Vineyard series. For more information, see page 7 of this newsletter. ☺



Mike DeWitt picks Syrah at the Harvest and Winemaking Seminar

Tasting Room Now Open until 5:00 PM!

We are open daily from 10:00 am to 5:00 PM, with tours offered at 10:30 and 2:00. Come visit the vineyard and nursery complex, then taste current releases! Special tours and tastings are always available - call 805.237.1231 or visit www.tablascreek.com for more information.

VINsiders' Corner

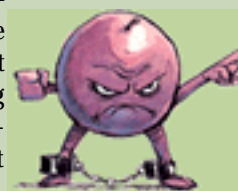
☺ Additional VINsider Discount

To reward the loyalty of our VINsiders, we are offering an additional 5% (on top of your 20% VINsider discount) off any purchases of 12 or more bottles of wine, whether you purchase them in the tasting room or place an order with us for shipment. The 25% discount applies to mixed cases as well, so feel free to mix and match.

☺ AK, NV, VT and VA eligible for direct shipments

Wineries throughout the country have been keeping a close eye on developments regarding direct shipments to consumers. Various lawsuits are making their way through the court system, and we've been updating our shipping policies accordingly. We are happy to announce that we've added four new states to our shipping list: Alaska, Nevada, Vermont, and Virginia.

We're monitoring the court proceedings closely to make sure that we are operating within the law. If you live in one of the states to which we are currently forbidden to ship, please contact us. We will keep you informed of proceedings, and let you know when it will be legal for us to ship to you. For more information, visit the informative Free the Grapes website at freethegrapes.org or the Wine Institute website at wineinstitute.org.



☺ VINsider News Online

We have added a page on our website dedicated to VINsider-specific news, so check www.tablascreek.com/wineclub_news.html regularly for updates. We also send out email reminders and invitations for upcoming events. If you'd like to be notified via email and haven't already provided us your email address, please contact Catherine Faris at cfaris@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231.



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 25% on orders of 12 bottles or more and 20% on orders of fewer than 12 bottles.

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, NV, OR, WA
 1-6 bottles: \$20.00
 7-12 bottles: \$30.00

AK, IA, IL, MN, MO, 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. **Adult signature is required for receipt of wine orders.**

WINE	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
FULL BOTTLES (750 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$35.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2002	_____	\$22.00	_____
ROUSSANNE 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
VERMENTINO 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
FOUNDERS' RESERVE 2001	_____	\$45.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2001	_____	\$22.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$35.00	_____
PETITE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$22.00	_____
ROUGE 1998	_____	\$25.00	_____
HALF BOTTLES (375 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$18.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$18.00	_____
		SUBTOTAL	_____
MasterCard/Visa Number _____		DISCOUNT	_____
Expiration Date _____		7.25% TAX (CA ONLY)	_____
Name on Card _____		SHIPPING	_____
Signature _____		ORDER TOTAL	_____

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 Pairing: Fusilli con Salsa di Pomodoro, Funghi e Salsiccia
(Fusilli with Creamy Tomato, Mushroom and Sausage Sauce)

Catherine Faris, Tablas Creek's Director of Hospitality and Retail Sales and former chef/owner of Trattoria Primizia Restaurant in Capitola, California, contributed this richly flavored pasta recipe. The spicy depth of mushrooms, fennel and tomatoes makes it a perfect late fall entrée to serve with our *Côtes de Tablas* 2001.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

½ lb. mushrooms (Shiitake mushrooms work well)
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
2-3 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 large carrot, diced
2 tbsp. fresh Italian parsley, chopped
1 tsp. fennel seeds, chopped (optional if using sausage made with fennel)
½ lb. sweet Italian sausage meat, crumbled (remove from casings)
2 tbsp. tomato paste
½ cup water
½ cup red wine (*Côtes de Tablas* 2001)
2 cups fresh or canned Italian plum tomatoes, pureéd (if fresh, peel and seed tomatoes first)
¾ cup heavy whipping cream
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 lb. fusilli
Freshly grated Parmigiano cheese



- ⑥ Remove any dirt from the mushrooms with a soft brush or cloth. Trim the stems (discard if they are tough or woody). If the mushrooms are large, cut them into halves or quarters. Slice thinly.
- ⑥ Warm the olive oil in a large pan. Add the shallots, garlic, carrot and parsley and stir well. Sauté the mixture over medium-low heat until the vegetables soften, about ten minutes (take care not to let them brown).
- ⑥ Add mushrooms, fennel seeds and sausage meat to the pan, using a wooden spoon to break up the sausage. Sauté gently until the sausage loses most of its pink color and the mushrooms begin to sweat, about 5 minutes. Don't overcook the sausage or it will toughen.
- ⑥ Stir in the tomato paste and water. Let the mixture come to a simmer, then add the wine, tomatoes, salt and pepper to taste.
- ⑥ Simmer the sauce over low heat, partially covered, for about 20 minutes. Remove the cover, add the cream and raise the heat to medium. Cook uncovered for another 15 to 20 minutes, or until the sauce is a little reduced and creamy.
- ⑥ While sauce is cooking, bring at least 4 quarts of water to a boil and add the fusilli and 2 tbsp. of salt. Cook the pasta until *al dente* (still very slightly firm at the center), stirring frequently to prevent sticking.
- ⑥ Drain some of the pasta water into the bowl in which you plan to serve the finished pasta to warm the bowl. Drain the rest of the pasta into a colander. Drain all but about ½ cup of the pasta water from the serving bowl and transfer the drained pasta from the colander to the serving bowl. Be sure not to skip this step! Italian cooks know that the addition of a little starch-enhanced pasta water renders the finished dish smooth and creamy, amalgamating all of the sauce elements and binding them to the pasta.
- ⑥ Working quickly, add the finished sauce (make sure it's not still simmering), toss well and serve, passing grated Parmigiano at the table.

Tablas at Home -- Local Coming Events

Saturday, December 6 **VINsider Barrel Tasting and En Primeur Offering**

1:00 - 4:00PM

Join us for our first annual barrel tasting and *en primeur* offering of Tablas Creek Vineyard's two remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2002 vintage: *Esprit de Beaucaستel* and *Panoplie*. 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. Join Jason Haas and Winemaker Neil Collins to taste these wines in barrel, and enjoy a buffet lunch at the winery. The event is free to VINsiders, but space is limited and reservations are required. Call 805.237.1231 for information or reservations.

Saturday, December 13 **Holiday Party**

3:30-5:30 PM

Celebrate the holidays with the Haas family and Tablas Creek winemakers! We'll be serving hors d'oeuvres and pouring some treats both old and new, including our first wine from the Glenrose Vineyard. This is an excellent chance to taste the impact of this remarkable site on the same clones we plant here at our estate vineyard. We will have gift baskets available, and can assist you with other gift ideas for your holiday shopping. The event is free to VINsiders and \$15 for guests. Reservations are requested; call 805.237.1231 for reservations or more information.



Introducing the Seasons Seminar Series

Vineyards and wineries observe time-honored rituals that revolve around the rhythm of the seasons. Farming and cellaring activities don't always occur on the same date every year, but they do take place in harmony with the cycles of the sun, moon, and the vagaries of the weather. At Tablas Creek, we invite our friends to join us as we engage in the seasonal activities that result in the wines we produce.

We gather small groups of interested individuals together to learn more about the seasons of the vineyard and the cellar by participating alongside our winemaker, vineyard manager, cellar and field crew. These hands-on seminars encourage active participation and provide a receptive format for questions and comments. Seminars always conclude with an informal lunch or reception, often prepared by our vineyard crew and served on our trellised patio (weather permitting).

Because these seminars are so popular, we encourage you to sign up early. To make reservations or for more information, contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com.

Seasons of the Vineyard

Pruning and Grafting Seminar **January 24, 2004**

Get an inside glimpse into the pruning, grafting and growing of vines at Tablas Creek's nursery! Participants will receive lessons on field pruning and bench grafting, followed by the opportunity to prune vinifera and rootstock, and to graft the pruned vines.

Organic Farming Seminar **May 1, 2004**

Come learn about 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.

Harvest and Winemaking Seminar

Harvest marks the culmination of the vineyard season and the commencement of the cellar season. Learn how to assess grape ripeness in the field, then harvest a separate lot of grapes to be vinified separately. The early stages of winemaking (destemming, pressing, and native yeast fermentation) will be discussed, and participants will have a chance to see the cellar crew in action.

Seasons of the Cellar

Bottling Seminar **February 28, 2004**

A continuation of the Harvest Seminar. Bottle the wine made from the grapes picked the previous October and learn about the various issues surrounding bottling, corks, and labeling. Each participant will be able to take home some of their own wine, and have the chance to buy more!

Blending Seminar **April 10, 2004**

If you love Rhône varieties, join us for our second annual barrel tasting and blending seminar! Taste the individual varieties, and then be set loose with the varieties and graduated cylinders to produce your own blend.

September/October 2004

Tablas on Tour: Wine Festivals and Dinners around the Country

🕒 November 19-20

Yosemite Vintners' Holiday
Ahwahnee Hotel
Yosemite National Park, California
www.yosemitepark.com
559.252.4848

🕒 January 22, 2004

Winemaker's Dinner at Viognier Restaurant
San Mateo, California
viognierrestaurant.com
650.685.3727

🕒 January 31, 2004

Cambria Art and Wine Festival
Cambria, California
805.927.3624

🕒 February 2, 2004

Winemaker's Dinner at Arterra Restaurant
San Diego, California
arterrarestaurant.com
858.369.6032

🕒 February 18-22, 2004

Masters of Food and Wine
Carmel, California
www.mfandw.com
800.401.1009

🕒 March 17-20, 2004

Vancouver Playhouse Wine Festival
Vancouver, BC, Canada
www.playhousewinefest.com
604.873.3311

🕒 March 20, 2004

Rhone Rangers Tasting
San Francisco, California
www.rhonerangers.org
707.939.8014

🕒 April 1-4, 2004

Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival
Austin, Texas
www.texaswineandfood.org
512.542.WINE

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