

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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February 2004

State of the Vineyard

Winter normally brings a lull in vineyard and winery activities. Harvest is complete, the vines have entered dormancy, and the wines are happily fermenting in the winery. This winter, however, our normal routine was violently interrupted when a serious earthquake struck the central coast on the morning of Monday, December 22. Centered near San Simeon, the quake measured 6.5 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was approximately 10 miles from the vineyard.

Tablas Creek did see some damage, but we were very fortunate. Most importantly none of the Tablas Creek staff was hurt, and the office, winery, and nursery are intact. Our wine library, our already-bottled wines, and the vast majority of the wine in tank and barrel was unaffected. We did lose about 30 barrels of various sizes, including one large foudre, but our total loss is only about 5% of the 2002 and 2003 vintages.

The effects of the earthquake were impressive. Several of our full stainless steel tanks moved up to a few feet from their original positions and walked across the winery floor. The overhead catwalks prevented more extensive damage by holding the tops of the tanks, effectively linking the tanks and limiting the extent to which any individual tank could move. The central row of barrels in the winery, stacked three high, tipped over like a row of dominos. Only the barrels at the end of the line fell to the ground and cracked; the others were held up by the leaning barrels in front of them. Things were precarious, and Neil and Ryan racked the wine out of each barrel individually, pumped it into an empty barrel, put the barrel back into

See **VINEYARD** on page 3



Wine 101: Fermentation Part 2 of 2: Secondary Fermentation

The Fall 2003 newsletter covered Fermentation, Part I: Primary Fermentation. The article is available online at www.tablascreek.com/pdf/Tablas_Newsletter_Fall03.pdf.

Peek into a winery during the winter months when the bustle of harvest is finished, and it may seem that nothing is going on. Appearances are deceiving, however — fermentation is not yet complete. After all the sugar has been converted into alcohol and all the yeasts have been consumed in the primary fermentation process, the wine undergoes a secondary fermentation, called malolactic fermentation. In malolactic fermentation, malic acid (a tart acid found in apples) is converted into lactic acid (a smoother tasting acid found in milk) by lactic bacteria. The process occurs naturally, and stops

See **FERMENTATION** on page 4



The front gate was one of the casualties of the December 22 earthquake.



Assistant Vineyard Manager David Maduena and his crew reconstructed the gate

Focus Varietal: Marsanne

MARSANNE is one of the classic 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.

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 variety 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 variety, it is becoming an increasingly important component of white Rhône-style blends.

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 variety here is an aggressive producer with no significant growing problems, though it is sensitive to water levels. Careful monitoring through-



out 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 variety 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 variety 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*, the variety 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. ☺

Come try Marsanne!

If you would like to try Marsanne or any of the other Tablas Creek varieties individually, join us at the vineyard on Saturday, April 17 for our second annual variety tasting and blending seminar. More information is on page 7 or at www.tablascreek.com.



Thirty-two hardy VINsiders braved the overcast skies and intermittent rain to attend the Pruning and Grafting Seminar on January 24. They heard Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins explain proper vine pruning techniques before pruning vinifera and rootstock, and grafting the pruned vines.

Tablas Creek Cuttings

☺ *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* 2002 Released

The 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* was released nationwide on February 15! It is 70% Roussanne, 25% Grenache Blanc, and 5% Viognier. The 2002 vintage was tremendous, and the grapes are concentrated, rich and ripe, with good acidity to balance the richness. The wine displays a bright clean nose of pears, peaches and honeysuckle. In the mouth, it exhibits flavors of peach, apricot, honey, and anise balanced by crisp acidity and an exceptionally long finish. It pairs beautifully with crab and lobster, grilled vegetables, and rich fish dishes. Look for it in a retail store near you!

☺ *A Home Away from Rhône*

We are excited to report that we have just finalized an agreement with U.C. Davis to bring in and test the remaining trace varieties from Châteauneuf-du-Pape, including Muscardin, Vaccarèse, Cinsault and Picardin. The cuttings will come in from Château de Beaucastel, and will enable us to make a 13-varietal blend in the tradition of Beaucastel. Look for the first wines from these vines in 2008!

☺ *First Annual Paso Robles Wine University*

We have been active in the creation of the Paso Robles Wine University, a two-day event which will provide a hands-on, in-depth curriculum on viticulture, winemaking and wine tasting to consumers and tradespeople. Classes will be held at various wineries throughout Paso Robles, including Tablas Creek. The dates for this event are September 16-17 (trade) and September 18-19 (consumers). Registration will begin on May 17. For more information, contact the PRVGA at www.pasowine.com, or 805.239.8463.

its upright position, and then pumped the wine back into the barrel. It was a tedious process, but the winery is now back in full swing.

The tasting room was remarkably unaffected; most glasses remained on their shelves and the wine bottles remained upright. After a precautionary walk-through by a city engineer, we reopened the tasting room on December 23rd, and had a busy and successful holiday season. The essential cleanup and repair was completed by the end of December, but we will continue to work on structurally reinforcing the tanks and repairing barrels over the course of the next few months.

Now that the earthquake cleanup is complete, the vineyard and winery has returned to its normal winter activities. In the vineyard, we have begun weeding between the rows with the Tournesol tractor attachment. The early rains we had in November and early December gave the weeds an early start on germination. January was relatively warm and dry, and the ground is now dry enough to move the tractor through the rows and catch the weeds before they become overwhelming.

We began pruning the dormant vines the first week of February, and will continue for the rest of the month. In addition to setting the vines up to produce the desired yields the following year, pruning can reduce potential spring frost damage. For the past several years, we have left one long “kicker” cane on the end of each pruned vine to delay the sprouting of the fruiting canes. We also carefully select the order in which we prune the different varieties. The latest ripening varieties (such as Mourvèdre) are pruned first, whereas the earliest ripening varieties (such as Syrah and Viognier) are pruned at the very last minute. Because late pruning delays budding, the varieties most at risk for frost damage are pruned last.

In the winery, the 2003 harvest has completed primary fermentation, and malolactic fermentation is underway [see article on p. 1]. We’ve tasted everything in the cellar, and have started formulating preliminary ideas for the 2003 blends. The juice has amazing intensity, and we expect the wines to be fantastic. ☺

when all the malic acid has been converted – usually between one and three months.

The scientific underpinnings of malolactic fermentation were only recently understood, and it wasn't until the mid-1900s that winemakers understood the crucial role of temperature. Because the bacteria that facilitate the fermentation thrive in warm temperatures, wines underwent malolactic fermentation as if by magic when temperatures rose in the spring. Wine stored in cool cellars (such as those of Chablis), however, retained their original acidity. With the recent understanding of the underlying science winemakers are able to control whether their wines go through malolactic fermentation.

In addition to low temperatures, lactic bacteria are intolerant of high levels of sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Thus, winemakers can control whether a wine goes through malolactic fermentation by adding sulfur dioxide to the wine or by chilling it down. Sterile filtration, which filters out the lactic bacteria, can also prevent malolactic fermentation. If the winemaker wishes that the wines not undergo malolactic fermentation, the process must be intentionally stopped, either by sterile filtration, sulfur dioxide or cold temperatures. If the lactic bacteria are not killed off while the wine is still in the barrel, malolactic fermentation could occur after the wine is bottled. As carbon dioxide is one of the by-products of the chemical reaction, wines that undergo malolactic fermentation in the bottle will be fizzy and unpleasant.

The desired taste of the finished product is the primary determinant in a winemaker's choice to let a wine undergo malolactic fermentation. Since malic acid has a higher acidity than lactic acid, wines that undergo malolactic fermentation become softer and smoother than they were before. White wines that have not undergone malolactic fermentation tend to be crisper and livelier, whereas those that have undergone malolactic fermentation tend to be richer. Nearly all red wines undergo malolactic fermentation because red wines, with higher levels of tannic acid, do not generally benefit from the additional sharp acids of malic acid.

At Tablas Creek, all of our red varieties undergo malolactic fermentation, as do most of our whites. Occasionally, however, we will stop the malolactic fermentation (or prevent it from taking place at all) in some of our white varieties, most notably Grenache Blanc and Viognier. The tart acidity that these varieties naturally possess in the form of malic acid is a characteristic we often choose to preserve in the final blend as a counterpoint to the natural richness of Roussanne and Marsanne. ☺

We have partnered with NovaVine of Sonoma, California to enable customers to purchase grafted vines using Tablas Creek vinifera material. NovaVine was established in 1996 to fulfill the industry's need for high quality sources of both standard California selections and unique European clones. They use ecologically responsible growing practices, and produce vines of consistent high quality, health, and vigor. For more information, visit www.novavine.com, or call them at 707.539.5678.



Recent Press

In the last few months, we have seen an explosion of positive reviews, with a particular emphasis on the whites. Both *Wine & Spirits* and the *Wine Enthusiast* named the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* as one of the top 100 wines of 2003.

The new vintages were also recognized in the February 2004 issue of the *Wine Enthusiast*. The 2001 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* received a score of 91 and was an Editor's Choice; the 2002 *Roussanne* received a score of 90. Both wines were glowingly described in the reviews, and we were particularly thrilled to see the *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* described as being "at the top of the heap of California white Rhônes."

Columnist Norm Roby profiled Tablas Creek in the January 2004 issue of *Decanter*; he described the vineyard as "the new Rhône" and praised the whites and reds as "equally impressive". His review of the wines focused particularly on the whites, and celebrated Roussanne's emergence "as the noble white Rhône grape".

Our organic efforts are also being recognized by the media; the January 2004 *Food & Wine* named the 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel* as one of ten top wines made from organically grown grapes.

The February 2004 *Wine Spectator* reviewed the 2001 and 2002 *Roussannes*, giving the 2001 at 90 and the 2002 an 89. Both wines were complimented in James Laube's accompanying article on California Rhônes.

Finally, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Bob Haas's first trip to France as a wine buyer, and a nice retrospective of his career appeared on the front page of the *Boston Globe* food section on January 28.

Links to a complete list of articles and reviews featuring Tablas Creek are available on our website at tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html. ☺



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.

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 2002 | _____ | \$35.00 | _____ |
| 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 BLANC 2002 | _____ | \$18.00 | _____ |
| ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000 | _____ | \$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

VINsiders' Corner

March Wine Club Shipment

We are really excited about the upcoming wine club shipment. It will feature some single-varietal wines made exclusively for VINsiders: one bottle each of the 2002 *Grenache Blanc*, 2002 *Antithesis*, 2002 *Roussanne*, and 2002 *Counoise*, and two bottles of the 2001 *Côtes de Tablas*. These wines will give you a chance to see the individual components of our blends, and see what each contributes to the overall flavor profile of our flagship wines.

Most of these wines are exclusive to VINsiders, and will not be released to the general public. Quantities are limited, and you may reorder the wines immediately.

The shipment will leave the winery on Monday, March 15. Local VINsiders and those who plan to be in town for the Zinfandel Festival can avoid the shipping charge by picking up their shipment at the winery starting Friday, March 19. Some of you have already let us know that you plan to pick up your March shipment at the winery. If you have not done so, please contact Catherine Faris no later than March 1st. If you have additional record changes to make (e.g., credit card number or expiration date, shipping address, etc.) please let Catherine Faris know as soon as possible.

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. Photos from recent events, including the *en primeur* tasting and the Pruning and Grafting Seminar, as well as the progress report on the wine from the Harvest and Winemaking Seminar are currently posted.



VINsiders Jim Gerakaris and Jim Everitt enjoy barrel samples of 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel* and 2002 *Panoplie* at the first annual Tablas Creek *En Primeur* and Barrel Tasting on December 6. Sixty-six VINsiders took advantage of the futures offer.

Wine Pairing: *Spicy Orange Shrimp Ceviche*

This exotic and tropical shrimp dish with North African spices perfectly complements the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. The richness of the Roussanne stands up to the spice in the dish, and the savory aromatics highlight the wine's honey notes.

Serves 8 as an appetizer

Ingredients

1 pound large shrimp
1/2 cup ketchup
3/4 cup fresh orange juice
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1 jalapeño, seeded and thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
Large pinch of ground cumin
Small pinch of ground cinnamon
Small pinch of ground cloves
Salt
Hot sauce
1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
1 medium tomato, seeded and cut into 1/2-inch dice
1/2 cup chopped cilantro, plus leaves for garnish
1 Belgian endive, spears separated

⑤ Fill a medium bowl with ice water. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add the shrimp and immediately remove the pan from the heat. Let the shrimp sit in the hot water for 2 minutes, then drain and cool in the ice water. Drain the shrimp, then peel and devein them; pat dry.

⑤ In a large bowl, whisk the ketchup with the orange juice. Add the lime and lemon juices, garlic, jalapeño, oregano, pepper, cumin, cinnamon and cloves and season generously with salt and hot sauce. Add the shrimp, red onion, tomato and chopped cilantro. Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight; stir once or twice.

⑤ Spoon the shrimp and sauce into martini glasses or onto small plates, garnish with endive spears and cilantro leaves and serve.

This recipe was adapted with permission from The Greatest Dishes: Around the World in 80 Recipes (HarperCollins), by Anya von Bremzen and appeared in the January 2004 issue of Food and Wine.

Tablas at Home -- Coming Events at the Vineyard

Saturday, February 28 **10:00 AM** **Bottling Seminar (Seasons of the Cellar Series)**

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! The event is free to VINsiders and \$20 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.

Saturday, April 17 **10:00 AM** **Blending Seminar (Seasons of the Cellar Series)**

If you love Rhône varietals, join us for our second annual barrel tasting and blending seminar! Jason Haas and winemaker Neil Collins will lead a barrel tasting of the individual varietals, and then will set you loose with graduated cylinders to produce your own blend! The cost is \$25 for VINsiders and \$35 for guests. Space is limited, and reservations are required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.

Saturday, May 1 **9:00 AM** **Organic Farming Seminar (Seasons of the Vineyard)**

Come learn about the processes of composting, compost tea development, beneficial insect habitat creation, cover crop-

ping and more. We'll discuss the techniques we use in the vineyard, and discuss what you can do at home in your own gardens. The event will conclude with an informal field lunch prepared by our vineyard crew. Space is limited, and reservations are required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.

Friday, May 14 **6:30 PM** **Winemaker Dinner with Maegen Loring**

Kick off the Wine Festival weekend with a delicious Winemaker Dinner at the vineyard. Chef Maegen Loring of The Park Restaurant in San Luis Obispo will showcase organic and sustainably-raised local products artfully prepared to complement our wines. The cost is \$95 for VINsiders and \$125 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.

Sunday, May 16 **Wine Festival Open House**

On the Sunday of Wine Festival, we will have an open house featuring artisanal pizza from Giuseppe's of Pismo Beach prepared at the winery. We will be open our normal hours (10 - 5), with tours regularly, and pizza will be served from 12 to 3:00 pm. No reservations required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for more information.

Tablas in the Community -- Coming Events in Paso Robles

Zinfandel Festival **March 20, 2004** **Far Out Wineries ZIN Summit IV**

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 fourth annual "Zinfandel and More" seminar organized by the Far Out Wineries. The seminar will include tasting of current releases and barrel samples produced by the 12 members of the Far Out Wineries. Don't miss this excellent opportunity to experience the wines of the west side! The event is hosted by Adelaida Cellars, and the cost is \$40 per person. Contact Paula at Adelaida Cellars for reservations or more information at (800) 676-1232.

Hospice du Rhône **May 22, 2004** **Far Out Rhônes**

The Rhône Revolution is coming to Paso Robles! In an event designed to complement the Hospice du Rhône, the Far Out Wineries will showcase their Rhône producers in a seminar at Justin Winery's new Isosceles Center. Jason Haas will join representatives from the other Far Our Wineries to pour our newest blends, and discuss why Rhône varietals have thrived on the Central Coast. For more information, visit the Far Out Wineries website at www.faroutwineries.com.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

🕒 **February 18-22, 2004**

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

🕒 **February 28-29, 2004**

Washington DC International Wine & Food Festival
Washington, DC
www.wine-expos.com/dc
800.343.1174

🕒 **March 15-21, 2004**

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

🕒 **March 20, 2004**

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

🕒 **March 25-27, 2004**

High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction
Atlanta, Georgia
www.atlanta-wineauction.org
404.733.5335

🕒 **April 29 - May 1, 2004**

Monterey Wine Festival
Monterey, California
www.montereywine.com
800.656.4282

🕒 **May 14-16, 2004**

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

🕒 **May 20-22, 2004**

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

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