

Harvest Report

The 2007 harvest was long-lasting, light in quantity, and intense in character. It lasted 65 days (15 days longer than 2006) beginning with Viognier on August 27th and ending with Mourvèdre on Halloween. We brought in a total of 252 tons (165 tons of red and 87 tons of white).

A very cold, dry winter, which delayed the beginning of budbreak and flowering, was followed by a remarkably moderate summer, with few days over 100 degrees and no extended cold spells. Weather patterns alternated between warm, seasonable weather (days in the mid-90s, nights in the upper 50s) and cooler weeks (days in the 80s, nights in the upper 40s to lower 50s). Our one extended hot spell, in the second half of August, led to an early debut of harvest while Grenache and Mourvèdre were still completing veraison. By mid-September, though, it had cooled considerably, with daytime highs in the 70s, marine layer in the mornings, and nights in the 40s. After the first rush of Viognier and Chardonnay, there was a significant lull before the next lots of grapes were ready to come in. On September 19th, three weeks into harvest, we had harvested less than 30% of our crop.

The weather warmed up at the end of September, and we entered our busiest period, harvesting nearly 40% of our crop in the two weeks between September 27th and October 11th. This consisted of most of our Grenache, nearly all of our Syrah, and our first significant blocks of Mourvèdre. With harvest approximately 70% completed,



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The VINformer Vol. 7, No. 1 January 2008

Wine 101: The Importance of Place

by Jason Haas

Place is the one unchangeable element that comprises the elusive sense of somewhereness that the French call *terroir*. Different grape varieties, human intervention, and vintage weather can all change the character of a wine, but the geology of a place is immutable and therefore affects the character of every wine produced in its location in the same way every year.

When we and the Perrins bought our property, we named it Tablas Creek Vineyard, tying it to its place and emphasizing the importance of viticulture and vineyard in our winemaking, instead of Perrin-Haas, or another name that would have tied it more to "who" rather than "where".

We continue this commitment to place in our decision to use only grapes grown on our own vineyard for all Tablas Creek Vineyard wines. This is the true meaning of being 100% estate grown, made and bottled: we grow all our own grapes on one vineyard that surrounds the winery, and our winemaker Neil Collins is also our vineyard manager.

We feel estate bottling is of enormous importance, although its significance is not well understood by most people outside the industry (or by many inside it). Estate bottling means that a winery

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Focus Varietal: Roussanne

Roussanne, with its honeyed richness and excellent longevity, forms the backbone of our *Es*prit de Beaucastel Blanc. The varietal takes its name from "roux", the French word for "russet" – an apt description of the grapes' reddish-gold skins at harvest.

Roussanne in France

Although no one is precisely sure where Roussanne originated, it seems likely the varietal is native to the Rhône Valley and to the Isere Valley in eastern France. The varietal has not ventured far from its origin; most of the world's Roussanne is grown throughout the Rhône, where it is traditionally used as a blending grape. In the Southern Rhône, Roussanne is one of four white grape varietals permitted in Châteauneufdu-Pape, and it is often blended with Grenache Blanc. whose richness and crisp acids highlight Roussanne's pear and honey flavors. In the Northern Rhône. Roussanne is frequently blended with Marsanne in the appellations of Hermitage, Crozes- Hermitage, and Saint Joseph to provide acidity, minerality and richness. As a single varietal wine, it reaches its pinnacle as the sole component of Château de Beaucastel's Roussanne Vieille Vignes.

Roussanne is also found the Savoie region of France (where it is known as Bergeron), and in limited quantities in Australia and Italy. In the United States, Roussanne is planted in the Central Coast and Sonoma regions of California, as well as in the Yakima Valley of Washington State.

Roussanne in California

In the 1980s, pioneering American growers attempted to import Roussanne into the United States by taking cuttings from the Rhône Valley. Those cuttings were propagated and planted in vineyards all over California, and many wines from those cuttings garnered critical acclaim. Years later, in 1998, DNA tests identified those vines as Viognier – a discovery which led to significant confusion, relabeling, and several lawsuits. We avoided this

confusion

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importing all of our vine cuttings directly from Château de Beaucastel; the Tablas Creek Roussanne are certified clones, tested by the USDA and declared virus free. Around the same time we brought in the Beaucastel clones, John Alban imported Roussanne to plant in his Central Coast vine-

yards. Those clones were also true Roussanne, and virtually all of the 177 acres of Roussanne currently planted in California are descendants of the clones brought in by Alban and by Tablas Creek.

Roussanne at Tablas Creek

Roussanne has a reputation as a difficult varietal to grow, and as such is often passed over in favor of the more cooperative Marsanne. In its native France, plantings had almost disappeared until superior clones were developed towards the end of the twentieth century. Roussanne grapes are susceptible to powdery mildew and rot, and the vine is a shy producer even under ideal conditions.

Of the four primary white Rhône varietals that we grow at Tablas Creek, Roussanne is generally the latest-ripening. The vines are particularly responsive to sunlight, and grape bunches on the western side of the vine tend to ripen more quickly than bunches on the eastern side. To combat this tendency, we aggressively thin the leaves to expose more bunches to sunlight and harvest the grapes in multiple passes. Bunches on the western side are picked first, leaving the eastern ones more time to ripen.

Sixteen acres of our vineyard are devoted to Roussanne, representing over half of our white Châteauneuf-du-Pape varieties and 10% of the Roussanne planted in California.

Flavors and Aromas

Wines made from Roussanne are rich and complex, with distinct honey, floral and apricot flavors. At Tablas Creek, we ferment and age about half of our Roussanne in one- to five-year-old French oak, which provides a structured richness and enhances the flavors of honeyed peach and apricot fruit. Unlike most white wines, Roussanne ages very well due to its unusual combination of richness and crisp acids; Château de Beaucastel's *Roussanne Vieille Vignes* wines can be enjoyed up to 15 years or more after bottling.

Roussanne is gaining popularity as a single varietal, especially among producers on the Central Coast. After a wine-club-only bottling of three barrels in 2001, we have begun producing a single-varietal Roussanne made from grapes that we feel are particularly characteristic of the varietal. The single-varietal bottling provides a nice counterpoint to the terroir-characteristic grapes we use in our Roussanne-based *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc.*

HARVEST, from page 1

mid-October saw the first rain of the year. The vineyard received about half an inch in the storm, just enough to wash off some dust. The cool, sunny and breezy weather in the second half of October saw the completion of harvest, with the rest of the Mourvèdre, the Counoise and the last bits of Grenache brought in. The

Mourvèdre from the slope behind the winery completed harvest on October 31.

Our yields were down approximately 20% from the 315 tons we saw in 2006 and the 319 tons we saw in 2005. We believe that the cold, dry winter of 2006-2007 was the primary factor in the reduced yields, although we expected a decline after the higher-than-normal yields the two previous years. At our normal conversion rates, we expect between 14,000 and 15,000 cases in 2007.

The low yields and moderate weather conditions during harvest have the advantage of increasing the intensity of the fruit, and at this stage the quality looks tremendous. Berry sizes were small, but skins were thick and we've seen tremendous color and extraction in this year's fermentations. By the end of December, the wines had mostly completed their primary fermentations and several had begun malolactic fermentation.

The one wine in the cellar in almost-finished form is the 2007 *Rosé*. We began with a base of Grenache juice, pulled off the skins 48 hours after harvest. As Mourvèdre and Counoise came in later in harvest, we pulled a *saignée* when the wine was at the intensity of color and flavor that we wanted, and added them to the Grenache base. The wine completed its sugar fermentation in early November, and is currently assembled in tank awaiting spring.

One technique that we are often asked about is co-fermentation. Because the



The vineyard crew poses with the last bin of the 2007 harvest.

grapes don't ripen at the same time, and because we want to preserve our options for blending, we typically don't co-ferment. The one exception each year is one lot of Syrah with Roussanne. We typically combine a bin of Roussanne with nine or ten bins of Syrah by first de-stemming the two grapes at the same time and then moving them together into an open-top fermenter.

This year, we encountered an unexpected problem when the Roussanne refused to be de-stemmed. We had never had a problem with this before, but with particularly tight clusters in 2007 and the overall small berry sizes, it seems that the berries just wouldn't give up their grip on the stems. We ended up pressing the Roussanne and add it to the fermenting Syrah as juice.

Although Viognier is a more traditional blending partner for Syrah, we have found that Roussanne does a better job at rounding out (providing mid-palate richness for) our Syrah, which can be fairly angular on its own.

With the lower yields, particularly on our white wines, we decided not to make any *Vin de Paille* white dessert wines this year, and will likely be cutting quantities on many of our non-core wines. In a year where grapes are scarce, we need to protect our most important wines. We did set aside grapes for a 2007 *Vin de Paille Sacrérouge*, however, and these Mourvèdre grapes spent most of October in our greenhouse before being pressed on October 29th as one of the last lots of the 2007 harvest.

Spring Wine Club Shipment

We're really excited about the March wine club shipment. It includes a bottle of the much anticipated 2005 Panoplie (awarded 94-96 points from Robert Parker), our fifth vintage of this elite Mourvèdre-based wine. The shipment will also feature four terrific single varietal wines: one bottle each of the 2006 Antithesis (our limited-availability Chardonnay, which received 91-93 points from Robert Parker); the rich and nuanced 2006 Roussanne, the 2006 Bergeron, a bright and lemony interpretation of the Roussanne grape; and the smoky, powerful 2005 Tannat. One bottle of the terrific Grenache-based 2005 Côtes de Tablas will complete the shipment.

The shipment will leave the winery on Tuesday, March 18. Local VINsiders can pick up their shipments at the winery starting Friday, March 14. Now is the time to make any necessary changes to your VINsider record (e.g., credit card number or expiration date, shipping address, etc.). If you have changes, please let Nicole 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 Saturday, March 22 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Pick up your Spring 2008 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 20 to events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x 39. PLACE, from page 1

grows the grapes themselves and controls the product from beginning to end. Although this process does not guarantee a great wine (obviously, not all vineyards are capable or greatness, and just because you farm it yourself does not mean you have maximized its potential) it does mean that there are no excuses. You grew the grapes, you made the wine, and you did it all on site. You have given yourself a chance of expressing the terroir.

Unfortunately, not all estate bottled wines are held to the same standards. As the labeling laws are written, you can claim estate bottled status for vineyards over which you exercise "significant control". This definition is self-reported, and I've never heard of it being audited by the Tax and Trade Bureau, which oversees the wine labeling process. That looseness of definition weakens the designation dangerously, and if you asked most consumers which was more important, "Single Vineyard" or "Estate Bottled", most, I venture, would say "Single Vineyard".

There is good reason for this perception; the TTB mandates that 95% of the grapes in any vineyard-designate wine be grown in that vineyard (although there's no guarantee of how, or to whose standards, that vineyard was farmed). Many (maybe even most) vineyard-designate wines are from purchased grapes, and the best vineyards (think of Bien Nacido, in Santa Barbara County, or To Kalon, in Napa) sell grapes to dozens of winemakers.

Our commitment to place also informs the viticultural and winemaking decisions we make, from employing organic farming, irrigating minimally (if at all), using only native yeasts for fermentation, using minimal new oak, and blending to reduce the signature of any one varietal on our flagship wines. We believe, and we hope you have come to appreciate, that the Tablas Creek wines could never be made anywhere else, because the place that they are made is such an inherent part of the style.



The Newest Member of the Tablas Creek Family

Shortly after Eli Haas, age 2, demonstrated how to judge the ripeness of Grenache at the annual Tablas Creek pig roast, he (along with parents Meghan Dunn and Jason Haas) welcomed brother Sebastian Haas. Sebastian's arrival on August 27 also marked the beginning of harvest -- an auspicious start to a wine career!

Esprit de Beaucastel 2005 released

We're thrilled to announce the national release of our 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel.* This wine showcases the force and power of the 2005 vintage, and features the largest Grenache component (26%) to date. It was recently rated 92-94 points by Robert Parker and 93 points by Tanzer's <u>International Wine Cellar</u>. We feel it is our best *Esprit* yet. This wine was released to our distributors in October, and is in stock in most states in time for the holidays. It is also available from the Tablas Creek online wine shop at www.tablascreek.com

Recent Press

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 in the <u>Wine Advocate</u> gave Tablas Creek terrific reviews: 94-96 for the 2005 *Panoplie*, 92-95 for the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, and 92-94 for the 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. Parker also named Tablas Creek as a "leading Paso pioneer" in an October 2007 article in <u>Food & Wine</u>, and called recent Tablas vintages "among the most interesting in the state."

More recently, we received a glowing write-up in the November 2007 issue of Stephen Tanzer's <u>International Wine Cellar</u>, with 19 wines receiving scores of 90 or higher from this notoriously tough grader, including a 94 for the 2005 *Panoplie*, a 93 for the 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, and a 91 for the 2005 *Mourvèdre* (which he described as "extremely elegant for the variety, displaying outstanding complexity, poise and clarity"). Some of our small-production wine club wines came in for praise from Tanzer as well, including our 2006 *Viognier* (90 points), 2005 *Counoise* (91 points), and the 2005 *Vin de Paille* (92 points)

We were also thrilled to be named one of the top 100 wineries of the year in the Winter 2007 issue of <u>Wine & Spirits</u>. And finally, just in time for the holidays, <u>Food & Wine</u> singled out Tablas Creek wines as "gifts to impress the host" in the December 2007 issue. A complete list of recent press can be found at www.tablascreek. com/news.html



WINE ORDER FORM JANUARY 2008

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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: 2002 LAS TABLAS ESTATES GLENROSE VINEYARD

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 2002 Las Tablas Estates *Glenrose Vineyard*, featured from January 1 through January 31, 2008.

Tasting Notes: Las Tablas Estates wines are single-vineyard expressions of varietals traditional to France's Rhône Valley. These estates are planted with imported French vine cuttings from the Tablas Creek Collection. Glenrose Vineyard is perched at 2,000 feet in western Paso Robles and has been painstakingly terraced from the limestone mountain to produce intense and flavorful wines with distinctive bright fruit. The 2002 *Glenrose Vineyard* is a dark purple-red, with aromas of smoke, blackberries and violets. The peppery palate shows firm ripe tannins with juicy raspberry fruit, excellent structure and a lingering finish.

Suggested Food Pairings: The 2002 *Las Tablas Estates Glenrose Vineyard* is a terrific food wine. It is particularly good with roasted meats and game such as wild boar, but is also delicious when paired with pastas with rich meat sauces.

Wine Pairing: Tenderloin of Pork with Apricots

This recipe, a Haas family favorite for the winter months, is an excellent pairing with the newly released 2005 Esprit de Beaucastel. The fruit of the apricots and the natural earthiness of the pork enhances the intense fruit and spicy, smoky flavors of the Esprit. Cous-cous makes a delicious accompaniment. Serves 6.

Ingredients

- 3 pounds pork tenderloin, cut into 1 inch cubes
- 1 pound dried apricot halves
- 1 cup seedless raisins
- 2 cups dry red wine
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- salt, to taste
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 shallots, peeled and minced
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 tablespoons honey

In a large bowl, combine pork, apricots, raisins, 1 1/2 cups wine, vinegar, parsley, mint, cumin, pepper, thyme, and salt to taste. Cover and marinate, refrigerated, for 4 hours. Stir occasionally.

Remove pork and fruit from marinade, reserving marinade. Place fruit in a small bowl. Pat pork dry with paper towel.

Heat olive oil in large skillet and saute meat, a few pieces at a time, until well browned. With a slotted spoon, transfer pork to a deep casserole.

Drain oil from skillet, add shallots, and saute over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add reserved marinade and bring to a boil, scraping up any browned bits remaining in the skillet. Cook for several minutes, until slightly reduced, and add to the casserole.

Preheat oven to 375F

Stir in apricots, raisins, remaining 1/2 cup of wine, chicken stock, bay leaves and honey; mix well. Set over medium heat, bring to a boil, cover, and set on the middle rack of the oven.

Bake for 2 hours, or until meat is tender and sauce rich and thick.

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

Saturday, February 2 Noon Wine and Food Seminar: Foods from the Rhône

Join Tablas Creek and master chef Jeff Scott for a tasting and discussion of foods and the food traditions of France's Rhône Valley. Jeff will present two flights of Rhône dishes, one traditional and one modern, and will lead participants on an exploration of the food culture of this wonderful region of France. Each flight will be paired with Tablas Creek wines. Don't miss this opportunity to experience the authentic Provencal cuisine that has made such an impact on the culinary traditions of France and California. Space is limited, reservations are required; the cost is \$50 for VINsiders and \$65 for guests.

February 15-17 10:00 AM to 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 fundraiser 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 tasting 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 advance passport purchase, contact Judy at Norman Vineyards at 805-237-0138, or read more info at www.faroutwineries.com.

Sunday, February 17 Paso Robles Rhone Ranger Experience Seminar and Lunch 11:00 AM Walk-around Tasting 1:30 PM

Join the 25+ 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 \$50, and tickets for tasting alone are available for just \$20. Qualified trade will be admitted free to the walk-around tasting. For more information or reservations, visit rhonerangers.org or call Robert Hall Winery at 805-239-1616 x17.

Saturday, March 1 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, 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, March 18 10:00 AM to Noon Far Out Wineries ZIN Summit V

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 fifth annual "Zinfandel and More" seminar (we're the "and more"!), organized by the Far Out Wineries. The seminar will include tasting of current releases and barrel samples produced by the 16 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 at Calcareous Vineyard, and the cost is \$55 per person. The event always sells out quickly, so get your tickets now. Contact Judy for reservations or more information at 805.237.0138

Saturday, April 12 Blending Seminar: REDS

10:00 AM

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.

Sunday, May 18 Wine Festival Open House

10:00 AM

On the Sunday of Wine Festival, we will be welcoming Chef Jeff Scott back to the vineyard for a cured salmon tasting. Come early on Sunday and enjoy different cured salmons, homemade bread, and pair them with the newly released *Rosé*. We will serve the fish until it's gone, but we don't expect it to last past 11AM, so come early! No reservations necessary.

To make reservations or get more information about any of these events, please contact Nikki Getty at 805.237.1231 x39, or ngetty@tablascreek.com.

10:00AM



Paso Robles, CA 93446 9339 Adelaida Road

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March 15-16, 2008

707.462.5943

805.239.8463 **Rhone Rangers Tasting** San Francisco, California www.rhonerangers.org

March 14-16, 2008 Zinfandel Festival

Paso Robles, CA www.pasowine.com

Dallas, Texas www.savordallas.com 866.277.7920

March 7-8, 2008

Savor Dallas

Cambria, California www.seecambria.com

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January 9, 2008

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805.927.9426

January 25-27, 2008

Cambria Arts and Wine Festival

Quechee, Vermont www.simonpearce.com

802.295.1740

Winemaker Dinner at Simon Pearce

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

March 27-30, 2008

Pebble Beach Food and Wine Classic Carmel, California www.pebblebeachfoodandwine.com

March 29, 2008

🔥 May 1-3, 2008

🍙 May 16-18, 2008

Malibu Wine Classic Malibu, California www.malibuwineclassic.com

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Hospice du Rhone

Paso Robles, California

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Paso Robles Wine Festival

Paso Robles, California

www.pasowine.com

🔥 March 27-29, 2008

Tablas on Tour: National Events