

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
Vol. 2, No. 3
Summer 2003

State of the Vineyard

Summer is here, and the vineyard is vibrantly green. The late rains, which ended the first week of May, have contributed to incredible vigor in the vines and significant late growth in our cover crops and in the weeds and wildflowers that come along with the moisture. Our Tournesol in-row weeder ran non-stop from May well into June, and the weed abatement is just about completed. We finished mowing and tilled under portions of the vineyard in early June.

The weather has been unusual this spring: a very warm January and early February were followed by a very cool March and April, with several days of hard frost in March. The weather warmed up beautifully in mid-May, and the end of June brought the traditional temperatures of high 90s and 100s with full sun.

Overall, flowering and fruit set finished slightly later than normal. The Viognier, Syrah, and Chardonnay set in early June, the Grenache a few weeks later, and the Roussanne, Mourvèdre and Counoise at the end of June. We're seeing a substantial crop in all of the varieties, and the field crew has been shoot thinning and crop thinning for the past few weeks. Our neighbors are reporting a very vigorous year — not only for grapes, but also for walnuts, pistachios, and fruit trees.

In the vineyard itself, it appears that the organic efforts we've been employing for pest control are paying off. Although there are lots of insects in the vineyard, we haven't had

See **VINEYARD** on page 3



Wine 101: Blending

The great Bordeaux red wines are a blend of five different varieties. Côtes du Rhône wines can be made from 22 different varieties, and Châteauneuf-du-Pape from 13. Yet on American wine lists and retail shelves, wines are normally listed by variety: Chardonnay, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Syrah.

The prevalence of single-varietal wines in the United States began as an effort to ensure quality, or at least accuracy of reporting. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, much of the wine produced in the United States was jug wine marketed under European names like "California Chablis" or "California Burgundy", even if the wines themselves bore no resemblance to the French Chablis (made from the Chardonnay grape) or Burgundy (Pinot Noir). As high-quality producers in the 1970s tried to distinguish themselves from the blends of the past, they labeled their wines according to the grapes that were in them, and taught consumers to equate specific varietal labeling with quality. Later, when laws changed to protect the proprietary rights of French wine regions (for example "Champagne" can only refer to sparkling wine made in the French region of Champagne, and not to sparkling wine made elsewhere in a Champagne style), BATF legislation mandated that wines not labeled by variety be called by the generic terms "red table wine" or "white table wine."

See **BLENDING** on page 4

Focus Varietal: Viognier

Viognier (VEE-ohn-yay) forms an important component of our *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, and the base of our new 2002 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*. It contributes aromatics of peaches, apricots and violets to the blend, as well as a clean, chalky crispness in the mouth.

Early History

Viognier is historically grown in the Northern Rhône valley, and reaches its peak in the tiny appellations of Condrieu and Château Grillet. The precise historical origin of the varietal is unknown, but many believe it dates back to the Roman Empire. According to one story, Emperor Probus imported Viognier into Condrieu from Dalmatia (in present-day Croatia) in 281 AD as a means of replacing the vineyards destroyed by Emperor Vespasian. Legend has it that Vespasian tore up the Condrieu vineyards after the locals revolted, a revolt which he attributed to drinking too much of the native wine.

Regardless of how the varietal originally arrived in Condrieu, historical records confirm that Viognier was grown in the area during the Roman Empire. When the Romans were forced out of Gaul in the 5th Century, the vines remained uncultivated for centuries but were revived by locals in the 9th Century. The varietal spread to neighboring Château Grillet, and from there to the papal palace at Avignon in the 14th Century.

Viognier in California

Once found almost exclusively in the northern Rhône appellations of Condrieu and Château Grillet, Viognier is becoming increasingly popular around the world. American

growers, led by pioneers such as Calera and Joseph Phelps, brought Viognier into the United States in small quantities in the late 1980s. Almost simultaneously, other American growers brought over what they thought were Roussanne cuttings from the Rhône Valley, which were then propagated and planted in vineyards all over California. Years later, in

thrive at Tablas Creek, where we dry farm as much as possible. The varietal flowers and ripens early, and is usually the first varietal harvested. Because Viognier flowers so early in the season, it is very susceptible to spring frosts; the frost-protection fans installed in the Viognier growing block at the vineyard have been important. The vines have medium-sized leaves, with small clusters of small, deep yellow berries that produce straw-gold colored wines.

Flavors and Aromas

The distinctive aroma of peaches, apricots, and violets is a hallmark of Viognier. Its highly aromatic nose is complemented by moderate acidity and flavors of peaches and minerals in the mouth.

The varietal has thrived in the warm climate and limestone-clay soils of Tablas Creek. On the nine acres we had in production in 2002, we harvested approximately 17 tons of Viognier, which is about 20% of our white Rhône production.

With the 2002 vintage we will be debuting a new blend profile based on Viognier. This *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* -- principally Viognier and Marsanne, with a little Grenache Blanc for acidity and just a splash of Roussanne -- will be released in September of 2003.



1998, those vines were identified as Viognier, not Roussanne -- a discovery which led to confusion, relabeling, and several lawsuits. We avoided this confusion by importing all of our vine cuttings directly from Château de Beaucastel; the Tablas Creek Roussanne and Viognier are certified clones, tested by the USDA, and declared virus-free.

Viognier is a reasonably difficult grape to grow, as it is somewhat more prone to disease than other varieties and can be unpredictable in its yield. It is, however, reasonably drought resistant, enabling it to

For more information about the Roussanne/Viognier controversy, visit tablascreek.com/viog-rous.html

Recent Events

🍷 New Orleans Food and Wine Experience

We participated for the first time in the New Orleans Food and Wine Experience over Memorial Day weekend, May 23-26. Jason Haas led a blending seminar for 50 people, in which participants tasted the individual red varietals that comprise our *Esprit de Beaucastel* blend; they then created their own unique blends from those varietals. We also participated in the two grand tastings, and discovered that our wines pair perfectly with the local Cajun cuisine!

🍷 Hospice du Rhône

The Hospice du Rhône, the annual gathering of Rhône-varietal producers from around the world, was held in Paso Robles from May 29 to June 1. The event is dedicated solely to the celebration of wines made from Rhône grapes, and is the largest tasting of Rhône wines in the world. At the grand tasting, we debuted our 2002 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* and our 2002 *Roussanne* to excellent reviews from an enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience.

🍷 Vine Planting Seminar

Our seminar series continued with a Vine Planting Seminar at the vineyard on June 7. Eighteen participants learned the basics of vine care from Nursery Manager Laura Wulff, and those who had attended the Pruning and Grafting seminar in January were able to pick up their maturing grape vines. The event concluded with a field lunch cooked by Assistant Nursery Manager Santos Espinoza, and everyone went home with vines of their own to plant. Our seminars have been extremely successful, and we plan to continue them. See page 7 for more information about upcoming events, or check our website for the latest offerings.

🍷 Paso Robles Wine Festival

Tablas Creek was one of 66 wineries represented in the park during the 21st Annual Paso Robles Wine Festival on May 17, and we poured the four wines in current release. The weekend also marked the release of the 2002 *Rosé*, especially for the Festival, and it was a perfect match for the hot sunny day. The tasting room was also busy, and we welcomed more than 750 people over the course of the Festival weekend.



The Tablas Creek booth at the park on Wine Festival Saturday

VINEYARD, from Page 1

any problems with destructive pests such as leafhoppers. As nearby non-organically farmed vineyards are reporting ballooning populations of leafhoppers, our beneficial insect habitat creation appears to be having an excellent effect.

In June we replaced a portion of one of the rootstock fields with 800 head-pruned Grenache vines. Because the rootstock field is relatively flat, we chose to head-prune these vines, the way vines in Châteauneuf-du-Pape are grown. It allows us to cross cultivate, and is better for weed control and dry farming.

In the winery, we completed bottling the 2001 reds in early June, and we're very pleased with them. Look for the release of the 2001 *Côtes de Tablas* in September, along with the 2002 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* and the 2002 *Roussanne*. We'll be holding a release party at the winery for these wines on September 6th, and we invite you to join us (more information is on page 7). The 2002 reds are in foudre, and each time we taste them we're increasingly convinced that the 2002 vintage will be remembered as one of the best yet in Paso Robles. The reds are concentrated, rich, and aromatic, and the preliminary blends we've put together are knockouts.

Out in the nursery, hundreds of green-growing vines have been moved out of the greenhouses into the shadehouses to harden off in preparation for being picked up by the growers who have ordered them. In addition to preparing these greengrowing vines, we are propagating the new clones we just received out of quarantine from the USDA in January. The new varieties include Petit Manseng and Gros Manseng (white grapes native to the Basque region), as well as new clones of Syrah and Grenache. We expect these new vines to be ready for planting in our vineyard next spring.

We have also dedicated a greenhouse to quarantining the olive trees that we imported from France this spring. They will spend two years in quarantine on our property to ensure that they are free from exotic pests before we make them available to interested growers. 🍷

BLENDING, Continued from Page 1

Restaurant wine lists, reflecting the increasing popularity of single-varietal wines, began to organize their lists around specific varietals, and the long history of blends went largely unlearned by a generation of wine drinkers. However, the laws of varietal labeling have permitted limited blending for years. According to federal law, a wine must contain at least 75% of a varietal in order for it to bear the name of that varietal. Thus, a California Cabernet Sauvignon could contain up to 25% of some other varietal (such as Merlot, or Syrah, or a combination of the two), and yet still be called Cabernet Sauvignon.

In the 1980s, California winemakers, led by pioneers such as Paul Draper of Ridge and Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon, began rejecting the new varietal orthodoxy in favor of flavor complexity. As a result, wine lists and retail stores are beginning to dedicate sections to blends, particularly Bordeaux-style blends (which go by the name “Meritage”) and Rhône blends.

Blending Logistics

Blending at Tablas Creek is usually done in the spring, after the individual varietals have undergone both regular fermentation and malolactic fermentation and are in roughly finished form. The winemaking committee -- loosely made up of Winemaker Neil Collins, Assistant Winemaker Ryan Hebert,



François Perrin and Neil Collins discuss the 2002 reds in March

the reds, or Grenache Blanc may be added for crisper acid in the whites. Ideally, the finished blend will include the best characteristics of each varietal, in balance, to produce a wine with power and elegance, fruit and mineral flavors, richness and structure.

We believe that the size of the winemaking committee is important to the overall blending process. Each member contributes a different point of view, and the multiple perspectives result in a stronger final blend, in much the same way that multiple edits strengthen a manuscript. ☺

Interested in trying your own hand at blending? Come to one of our blending seminars! We offer them each year in the spring, out at the winery. Check the website (tablascreek.com) or the newsletter for updates.

Upcoming Wine Club Shipment

The next VINsider's shipment will go out at the beginning of August, and will include:

☺ 2 bottles of **2001 Founders' Reserve**, a limited-release red blend made especially for our wine club members (see below).

☺ 1 bottle of **2002 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc**, our Roussanne-based signature white wine. This wine will not be released nationally until January 2004.

☺ 1 bottle of **2002 Côtes de Tablas Blanc**, our new white blend based on Viognier and Marsanne.

☺ 1 bottle of **2002 Rosé**, a personal favorite here at the winery; a dry Mourvèdre-based rosé, perfect for summer.

☺ 1 bottle of **2002 Vermentino**, a VINsiders only release. Vermentino is a traditional Mediterranean grape, and the wine has a clean, almost tropical nose of lychee and lime with citrus and pear flavors in the mouth.

For more information, or to become a VINsider, visit tablascreek.com or call **805.237.1231**.

2001 Founders' Reserve

Our August VINsider shipment will include two bottles of our 2001 *Founders' Reserve*, a wine made only in years in which we don't produce an *Esprit de Beaucastel*.

The 2001 growing season was disrupted by a serious frost in late April, which led to multiple flowerings and irregular yields. The summer was beautifully warm and sunny, and the grapes came in with power, elegance, and beautiful aromatics, but we ultimately decided that we did not have enough quantity of truly outstanding grapes to make an *Esprit de Beaucastel*.

Instead, with the smaller quantities selected from the very best lots in the cellar, we made about 250 cases of our Mourvèdre-based *Founders' Reserve*. The remainder of the red lots went into what promises to be an exceptional *Côtes de Tablas 2001* (to be released in September).



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 20% on orders of any size.

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

IA, IL, MN, MO, VA, 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	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ANTITHESIS 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROSÉ 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
PANOPLIE 2000 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$80.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$35.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2000	_____	\$22.00	_____
PETITE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$22.00	_____
LIBRARY SPECIALS			
BLANC 1999	_____	\$25.00	_____
ROUGE 1998	_____	\$25.00	_____
HALF BOTTLES (375 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$18.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$18.00	_____
		SUBTOTAL	_____
MasterCard/Visa Number _____		DISCOUNT	_____
Expiration Date _____		7.25% TAX (CA ONLY)	_____
Name on Card _____		SHIPPING	_____
		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

New Tasting Room Merchandise



The merchandise selection in our tasting room continues to expand! In addition to our wines, we now offer a wonderful selection of linens and handmade pottery imported from Provence. The *Fleur de Terre* pottery is hand-crafted in Montpellier, France, and decorated with warm glazes and traditional Provençal motifs. Selections available at the winery include flower pots, serving dishes, and pitchers. The Provençal linens, made in a small family workshop, include tablecloths, placemats, and napkins, all featuring traditional Provençal colors and patterns.

And don't forget our nursery items! We sell organic Mediterranean herbs, olive trees and, of course, Rhône grape vines. We are adding new selections all the time, so stop by and see the great selection for yourself!

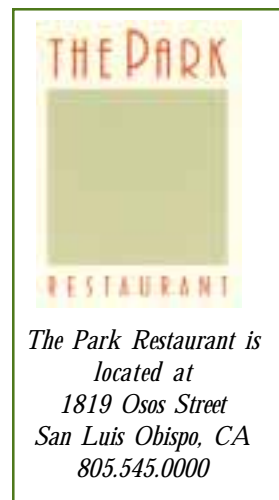
Wine Pairing: Grilled Scallops with Grilled Apples and Honey Drizzle

This recipe, from Chef Maegen Loring of the Park Restaurant in San Luis Obispo, was created to pair with the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. It was so successful that she added it to their menu!

Ingredients

- Ⓞ 2 Granny Smith apples, cored and peeled
- Ⓞ 12 big sea scallops
- Ⓞ 4 Tbsp olive oil
- Ⓞ 1/4 cup seasoned rice vinegar
- Ⓞ 1/4 cup honey
- Ⓞ 8 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced
- Ⓞ fresh ground pepper
- Ⓞ salt

- Ⓞ Preheat a gas grill at high heat.
- Ⓞ Slice apples crosswise into quarter-inch slices.
- Ⓞ Brush olive oil on both sides of apple slices and scallops, and season lightly with salt and pepper.
- Ⓞ Grill apple slices for 1 minute on each side.
- Ⓞ Remove from heat, and place 3 apple slices on each dinner plate.
- Ⓞ Grill scallops for 2 minutes on each side, and place a scallop on each grilled apple slice.
- Ⓞ Mix the rice vinegar and honey together and drizzle on scallops.
- Ⓞ Sprinkle with sliced basil and serve with freshly ground pepper and *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*.



*The Park Restaurant is located at
1819 Osos Street
San Luis Obispo, CA
805.545.0000*

Tablas on Tour -- Wine Festivals around the Country

🕒 August 1

Grape Escape Day
California Mid-State Fair
Paso Robles, California
www.midstatefair.com
805.239.0655

🕒 August 14-16

Santa Barbara International Wine Auction
Music Academy of the West
Santa Barbara, California
www.musicacademy.org
805.969.WINE

🕒 September 17

Taste of San Luis Obispo
San Luis Obispo, California
805.541.0286

🕒 September 24-28

Santa Fe Wine and Chile Fiesta
Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.santafewineandchile.org
505.438.8060

🕒 October 17-19

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

🕒 November 19-20

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

Tablas at Home -- Local Coming Events

Saturday, September 6 Wine Release Party

4:00 - 7:00PM

Join Tablas Creek in celebrating the release of our *Côtes de Tablas 2001*, *Côtes de Tablas Blanc 2002* and *Roussanne 2002*. The *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*, new for 2002, is a Viognier and Marsanne based blend. It is wonderfully perfumed with peach and violet aromatics, and clean minerality in the mouth. The *Roussanne* is a follow-up to the hugely successful 2001 *Roussanne*, and the *Côtes de Tablas 2001* is a continuation of the successful program begun in 2000. We'll be serving hors d'oeuvres and pouring some of our older vintages to give everyone a view of both past and future! The event is free to VINsiders and \$15 for guests. Space is limited, and reservations are required; call 805.237.1231 for reservations or more information.

Saturday, October 11 Harvest and Winemaking Seminar

9:00AM

Join Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins for a seminar on grape analysis, harvesting, and winemaking. We'll walk participants through the process of testing grape ripeness by examining physical characteristics and chemical analyses. Interested participants will then have a chance to work for about an

hour in the harvest. We'll take those grapes and vinify them separately. Participants will view the destemming process, and learn about native yeast fermentation techniques. The day will conclude with a light lunch. In the following months, our website will have updates on the special lot's fermentation, and we will bottle it specially for the participants. The event is free for VINsiders and \$20 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required; call 805.237.1231 for reservations or more information.

Early November (exact date and time to be determined) Tablas Drum Dinner

Tablas at Tablas! Tablas drums are traditional Indian drums, similar to kettle drums, played with fingers and palms. How could we resist hosting a dinner featuring these instruments? Come out to the vineyard and let a delightful band from San Jose entertain you with traditional Indian music while you enjoy a delicious catered Indian dinner paired with Tablas Creek wines. The specific time and date will be determined soon -- check the website at tablascreek.com for updates. The event is \$75 for VINsiders and \$95 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required; call 805.237.1231 for reservations or more information.

Tablas Creek Cuttings...

Shipping to Virginia Consumers

We will soon be able to ship to Virginia! As of July 1, 2003, California wineries are permitted to ship directly to consumers in Virginia. The state is working out the last details, and we can take pre-orders and VINsider sign-ups. See the order form on page 5 of this newsletter or visit our website at tablascreek.com for the available wines.

Currently we can ship to consumers in the following states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and West Virginia. We are hopeful that other states will follow Virginia's lead in the near future, so keep checking for updates! For more information about the direct shipping, visit www.freethegrapes.org and www.wineinstitute.org.

Open for Tours and Tasting

Summer hours are here at the tasting room! We are open daily from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, with tours offered at 10:30 and 2:00. Come visit the vineyard and nursery complex before tasting current releases! Special tours and tastings are always available -- call for more information.

Library Specials

We're offering a limited release of some gems from our cellar. While supplies last, you can get the Rouge 1998 and the Blanc 1999 for \$25 a bottle. See the order form on page 5 or visit our website at www.tablascreek.com for more information or to place an order.

© www.tablascreek.com © phone: 805.237.1231 © fax: 805.237.1314 © email: info@tablascreek.com ©



Printed on recycled paper

9339 Adelaida Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446

