

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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May 2004

State of the Vineyard

Spring is well under way at Tablas Creek! After a cold February, a very warm sunny stretch brought the vines out of dormancy beginning in mid-March. Grenache and Viognier began flowering the first week of May, and the other varietals will soon follow. The focus in the vineyard is now on organic weed control and fertilization. Disking is an ongoing process, and we've begun brewing our organic compost tea and preparing our organic fertilizer (made primarily from fish). With less rain and warmer weather than at this point last year, we're roughly two weeks ahead of the 2003 growing season.

Late spring frosts are still a possibility until early May, and we're relying on our frost-prevention fans to protect us. The spring frosts in Paso Robles are generally radiation frosts, in which a narrow layer of cold air settles in low-lying areas. During those periods, temperatures can be as much as 10 degrees warmer a few dozen feet off the surface. The frost-prevention machines are in essence giant fans mounted parallel to the ground that propel the cold air a few hundred feet in the air by way of a short chimney. The cold air is then replaced by warmer air just above the surface. We now have twelve fans scattered throughout the vineyard in the areas most susceptible to frost.

In the winery, spring is the time for blending and bottling. In mid-April, Pierre Perrin was at the vineyard to assist in composing the 2003 white blends including the *Esprit de*

See **VINEYARD** on page 3



Wine 101: Phylloxera

In the late 18th century, Thomas Jefferson, a lover of French wine, brought French grapevines to plant at his Monticello estate in the mountains of western Virginia. The vines would live for a few years and then die. He replanted several times with no better results. Although he didn't know it, he had come up against phylloxera: a vine pest that devastated the world's vineyards at the end of the 19th century.

Phylloxera is a root louse native to the Mississippi River valley that attacks the roots of plants in the grape family (genus *vitis*). It is indigenous to most of the Eastern United States, and grapevines native to this region have evolved with resistance to the parasite, and may be safely planted in soil where it is present. European grapevines, however (which produce the large majority of the world's fine wine), have no native resistance. Phylloxera will destroy the vines' root systems, starve the plant of nutrients, and kill the vine within five years.

The vibrant trade between Europe and North America in the late 1700s encouraged the spread of phylloxera. Victorian botanists and European scientists imported wild North American grapevines for study. With those grapevines came several shipments infested with phylloxera.

The louse was first identified in Europe in 1863 in England, where it had infested a vineyard at Hammersmith, in suburban

See **PHYLLOXERA** on page 4

Featured Wine:
2002 Vermentino.

Details on page 6.

Focus Varietal: Mourvèdre

Mourvèdre (more-vehd-ruh), with its meaty richness and wonderful longevity, forms the backbone of our *Esprit de Beaucastel*. Seventeen acres of our vineyard are devoted to Mourvèdre, representing over a third of our red Châteauneuf-du-Pape varieties.

Early History

Mourvèdre is native to Spain, where it is known as Monastrell and is second only to Grenache (Garnacha) in importance. From the Spanish town of Murviedro, near Valencia, Mourvèdre was brought to Provence in the late Middle Ages where, prior to the *phylloxera* invasion at the end of the 19th century, it was the dominant varietal.

The *phylloxera* invasion was particularly devastating to Mourvèdre. Whereas most of the other Rhône varieties were easily matched with compatible rootstocks, Mourvèdre proved difficult to graft with the existing *phylloxera*-resistant rootstock. Thus, when the vineyards were replanted, most producers in Châteauneuf-du-Pape chose to replant with varieties that were easier to graft, such as Grenache. For decades, Mourvèdre was found almost exclusively in the sandy (and *phylloxera*-free) soil of Bandol, on the French Mediterranean coast, where it is bottled both as a red wine (blended with Grenache and Cinsault) and as a dry rosé. Compatible rootstocks for Mourvèdre were developed only after World War II. Shortly thereafter, Jacques Perrin of Château de Beaucastel led regeneration efforts in Châteauneuf-du-Pape and made Mourvèdre a primary grape in the red Beaucastel wines. Since the late 1960s, total plantings in Southern France have increased dramatically.

Mourvèdre came to the New World as Mataro (a name taken from a town near Barcelona where the varietal was grown) in the mid to late 1800s. In Australia, it found a home in the Barossa Valley and in California it was first established in Contra Costa County. Until



recently, the grape was rarely bottled by itself, and was instead generally used as a component of field blends. The increasing popularity and prestige of Rhône varieties and a return to the French Mourvèdre name has given the varietal a new life. Currently about 400 acres are planted in California.

Mourvèdre at Tablas Creek

Mourvèdre is a late-ripening varietal that flourishes with hot summer temperatures. As such, it is beautifully suited to our southern Rhône-like climate at Tablas Creek, where its lateness in ripening makes it less vulnerable

to late spring frosts. In the vineyard, Mourvèdre is a moderately vigorous varietal that does not require a great deal of extra care. The vines tend to grow vertically, making Mourvèdre an ideal candidate for head-pruning (the method traditional to Châteauneuf-du-Pape), although vines can also be successfully trellised. When head-pruned, the weight of the ripening grapes pulls the vines down like the spokes of an umbrella, providing the ripening bunches with ideal sun exposure.

Our Mourvèdre vines (like all of the vines at Tablas Creek) are cuttings from Château de Beaucastel's French vines. Although Mourvèdre was available in California when we began our project, we felt that the American source material was less intense in both color and flavor than the French clones. The berries from the Beaucastel clones are small and sweet, with thick skins and intense flavors.

Flavors and Aromas

Wines made from Mourvèdre are intensely colored, rich and velvety with aromas of leather, game, and truffles. They tend to be high in alcohol and tannin when young, and are well-suited to aging. The animal, game-like flavors present in young Mourvèdres resolve into aromas of forest floor and leather with aging. Although it is occasionally bottled as a single varietal, the intense animal quality of Mourvèdre is often improved by the warmth and fruit of Grenache and the structure, spice and tannin of Syrah. Mourvèdre-based wines, like our *Esprit de Beaucastel*, pair well with grilled and roasted meats, root vegetables, mushrooms and dark fowl such as duck: flavors that harmonize with the earthiness of the wine. 6



The Rhône Rangers Visit Dixie

Craig Jaffurs of Jaffurs Wine Cellars, Mat Garretson of Garretson Wine Company, and Bob Lindquist of Qupé Wine Cellars join Jason Haas at a Rhône seminar at the Atlanta High Museum of Art Wine Auction in March 2004.

Beaucastel Blanc, the *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* and the *Roussanne*, as well as a *Viognier* and a *Grenache Blanc* that will be made in small quantities and available direct from the winery. These wines are now blended, and will be bottled in July. The 2002 reds (the 2002 *Côtes de Tablas*, the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, and the 2002 *Panopliè*) were bottled in April. Like the whites, they will rest in bottle for several months, to give them a chance to come out of bottle shock before they are released.

This year marks our first experiments with Stelvin screwcaps. A portion of our 2003 *Vermentino* and 2003 *Rosé* were bottled in screwcaps, as were a few cases of each of our other wines. Many of the top producers in California are moving to screwcap technology to capture their wines at peak freshness, and we've decided to experiment for ourselves. We will track the evolution of the wines, and plan to do a side-by-side tasting of the same wines, comparing the ones sealed with cork to the ones sealed with a screwcap. ☺

New Wines Released

☺ **Las Tablas Estates *Glenrose Vineyard* 2002**

On May 1, we released our newest wine, the Las Tablas Estates *Glenrose Vineyard*. The release marked the debut of our Las Tablas Estates program, designed to showcase single vineyard expressions of traditional Rhône varieties from sites planted with our imported French vine cuttings. The *Glenrose Vineyard* is perched at 2,000 feet just seven miles away from *Tablas Creek*. It has been painstakingly terraced from the limestone mountain by its intrepid proprietor, Don Rose, to produce intense and flavorful wines with distinctive bright fruit. This resulting first effort, a blend of *Syrah*, *Mourvèdre*, *Grenache Noir*, and *Counoise*, is a delight, delivering lots of juicy, raspberry fruit, firm ripe tannins, and a lingering finish. Taste it and experience the *Tablas Creek* clones planted in a different terroir!

☺ **2003 *Rosé* Released**

The onset of summer marks the return of one of our most popular wines, the *Rosé*, which we released on May 10. The wine is a dry *Mourvèdre*-based blend with white plum aromatics and ripe strawberry flavors. It pairs terrifically with a wide variety of foods, from elegant Mediterranean preparations to good old fashioned barbecue. It's the perfect wine for dining al fresco. This wine generally sells out before the summer's over, so don't wait too long to get your hands on some!



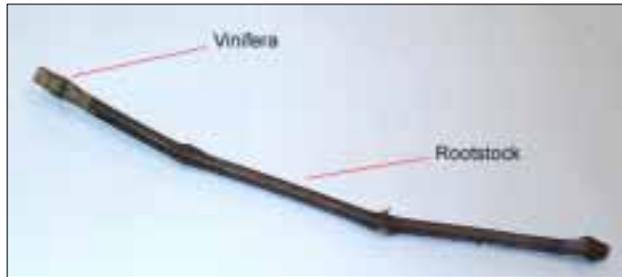
Bud break on the vines heralds the arrival of spring

Tasting Room Open Daily from 10:00 to 5:00

Come taste our Rhône blends, browse our selection of Provençal merchandise, and take a tour (offered daily at 10:30 and 2:00) of the vineyard and nursery complex. For more information, call 805.237.1231 or visit www.tablascreek.com.

London. It was independently identified in 1865 in Roquemaure, in Provence, and in 1866 in Bordeaux. From there, the infestation spread outward, reaching Austria in 1872, Spain in 1878, Italy in 1879, Russia in 1880, and New Zealand in 1885. By 1873 it had crossed the Rocky Mountains to California.

Between 1865 and 1885, more than two-thirds of European vineyards were killed by phylloxera, causing widespread wine shortages. By 1873, the louse had devastated vineyards to such an extent that the French government offered a prize for a remedy. The contest elicited over a thousand different suggestions, including burying live frogs under the vines and irrigating vines with white wine. All suggestions were tested at the School of Agriculture in Montpellier, France, but only the chemical application of various sulfides was found to be of any use and the prize was never awarded. Other European governments tried other techniques to contain the spread of the plague, including isolating and burning infected vineyards and flooding vineyards. Although some techniques slowed the spread of the parasite, it advanced nonetheless, and by the 1880s the French had turned to grafting their wine (vinifera) grapes onto the North American rootstocks whose long acquaintance with phylloxera had rendered them immune to its ravages.



A phylloxera-resistant grafted vine

Even after grafting was accepted as the most effective control for phylloxera, fine-tuning was necessary, as many of the American rootstocks could not handle the calcareous soil of French vineyards. Most of the world's vineyards are now planted on grafted vines, with European vinifera and North American rootstocks. The necessity of grafting has changed the viticultural map of Europe, as growers chose to replant with more productive or easier to graft varieties. Although we don't have phylloxera in the soil at Tablas Creek, we graft all of our vines onto resistant rootstock as insurance, and you can see the grafting process on one of our twice daily tours. ☺



VINsiders Larry Rasmussen and Sig Storz were among the 62 participants to experiment with blending different varieties at the second annual Barrel Tasting and Blending seminar in April.

Recent Press

Tablas Creek continues to attract media attention, and we've received several good reviews in recent publications. The new vintages of the whites have been particularly popular. The 2002 Roussanne received a score of 90 from *Wine & Spirits* (June 2004), and was named one of the top 10 Paso Robles wines in the May 2004 issue of *Food & Wine*, where it was described as, "one of the area's standout wines." The May 2004 issue of *Wine Enthusiast* also reviewed the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*; it was described as, "interesting, complex and different from the usual fare" and received a score of 92.

The 2001 *Côtes de Tablas* continues to receive accolades; it was described as "very enjoyable" in the May 2004 *Wine Enthusiast* and as a "thick blanket of flavor for meaty daubes" in the June 2004 issue of *Food & Wine*. Additionally, a story in the June 2004 issue of *Decanter* highlighted our efforts to bring the other seven Châteauneuf-du-Pape varieties to California through U.C.Davis. The complete text of reviews and other relevant articles, updated regularly, is available online at tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html. ☺

Recent Events at the Vineyard

Our Seasons in the Cellar/Seasons in the Vineyard Seminar series recently concluded with the Organic Farming seminar on Saturday, May 1. Twenty-two VINsiders joined Vineyard Manager Neil Collins to learn about organic farming techniques in the vineyard and how to apply those techniques to personal gardens. Previous sessions included the Pruning and Grafting seminar on January 24th, the Bottling seminar on February 28th, and the Barrel Tasting and Blending seminar on April 17. The seminar series is intended to give participants a chance to experience the various seasonal activities at the vineyard and winery. The series has been a huge success, and we plan to resume with the Harvest and Winemaking seminar in the fall. More information about future seminars can be found in upcoming newsletters, or on our website at www.tablascreek.com. ☺



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, NC, NH, 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	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2002	_____	\$22.00	_____
ROUSSANNE 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
VERMENTINO 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROSE 2003 (available May 10)	_____	\$27.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$35.00	_____
LAS TABLAS ESTATES GLENROSE VINEYARD 2002	_____	\$32.50	_____
FOUNDERS' RESERVE 2001	_____	\$45.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2001	_____	\$22.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$35.00	_____
PETITE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$22.00	_____
HALF BOTTLES (375 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2002	_____	\$18.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$18.00	_____
		SUBTOTAL	_____
		DISCOUNT	_____
		7.25% TAX (CA ONLY)	_____
		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

FEATURED WINE: 2002 VERMENTINO

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 outside weather 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.



We are debuting this new program from May 15 to June 15 with our 2002 Vermentino, available exclusively from the winery.

What is Vermentino and why does Tablas Creek grow it? Vermentino is a traditional Mediterranean white grape, most often grown in Sardinia, Corsica and northern Italy. It is grown in Southern France (particularly in Côtes de Provence) under the name of Rolle. When we imported our Châteauneuf du Pape clones, our contact in the French nursery service included the Vermentino because he believed it would thrive in the rocky limestone soils of Paso Robles.

Tasting Notes: The 2002 Vermentino is clean and bright with tropical aromas of lychee, lime and marshmallow, and no evidence of oak. In the mouth, it is

mineral with citrus and pear flavors, good richness, refreshing acidity and a lingering finish.

Suggested Food Pairings: Vermentino pairs splendidly with fresh seafood and foods with spice or acidity. It is a beautiful foil for fresh oysters and dishes prepared with garlic and olive oil (try it with aioli). It also works well with linguine with clam sauce, pestos, or simply cooked green vegetables. Try the recipe below!

Wine Pairing: Braised Tuna or Pacific Swordfish in Vermentino

This zesty dish and its variations celebrate the full-flavored, intense cuisine that is the hallmark of Liguria, Italy. Serve with sautéed Italian greens like chard, kale or broccoli rabe and olive oil-roasted Yellow Finn potatoes.

Serves four.

Ingredients

- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 or 2 red or yellow peppers, white membranes and seeds removed and cut into thin strips
- Several tablespoons of best quality extra-virgin olive oil
- One fresh tuna or Pacific swordfish steak, about 1 ½ to 2 inches thick (use two if small; total weight should be 1 to 1 ¼ pounds)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 cup Tablas Creek Vineyard Vermentino
- ½ cup pitted black olives, coarsely chopped
- 1 tbsp. drained capers, coarsely chopped
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped lemon zest
- A few tablespoons of freshly chopped Italian parsley

Sauté the onions, garlic and pepper strips over medium low heat in the olive oil for about 10 to 15 minutes, using a large, non-stick sauté pan. Remove and set aside.

Pat fish steaks with a paper towel to absorb any moisture. Raise the heat to medium high and add the fish. Quickly sear the fish, adding more olive oil if necessary.

Flip the fish over when it looks like one side is nicely seared (approximately 1 ½ to 2 minutes), finish searing the other side and salt it lightly with kosher salt.

Return the vegetables to the pan, and add the wine. Bring the wine to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium, cover the pan, and simmer until the interior of the fish is no longer opaque (about 10 minutes). Timing depends on the thickness of the fish; keep in mind that the fish will continue to cook even when you think you're done.

Add the olives, capers, lemon zest, and Italian parsley and allow the flavors to combine for 2 to 3 minutes.

Transfer fish to heated serving dish, spoon the vegetables on top and around the steaks. Turn up the heat in the pan and reduce the remaining braising liquid until it is thick and syrupy (approximately 8 to 10 minutes). Pour over the fish and serve.

Tablas at Home -- Coming Events at the Vineyard

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 featuring organic or sustainably produced local ingredients artfully prepared to complement our wines. Our chef is Maegen Loring of The Park Restaurant in San Luis Obispo, who is as committed as we are to the support of sustainable farming practices. The cost is \$95 for VINSiders and \$125 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231, ext. 39 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. Join us in pairing Rhône wines with pizza! Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231, ext. 29 or cfaris@tablascreek.com for more information.

Saturday, June 12 **6:00 PM** **Glenrose Debut and Pig Roast**

At Tablas Creek, we love terrific parties—especially when they involve great food, charming company and, of course, wonderful wine. To that end, we're hosting a pig roast in honor of our new Las Tablas Estates *Glenrose Vineyard* 2002, a mouth-filling blend of Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Cunoise grown by the intrepid Don Rose at Glenrose Vineyard. Join us on Saturday, June 12 at 6 p.m. for roast pork and all the accompaniments to launch our newest blend. This will be a casual, outdoor party—just right for summer at the vineyard. The cost is \$50 for VINSiders and \$70 for guests. Reservations are essential; contact Catherine Faris at cfaris@tablascreek.com or (805) 237-1231, ext. 39.

Saturday, August 7 **Time TBA** **Fête de la Véraison**

A party in the vines! The village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape celebrates the ripening of the grapes with a weekend-long festival culminating in a grand medieval banquet. While we can't replicate exactly this historic celebration, we will have a celebratory party and wine-friendly feast. We're still working out exact details, but it's sure to be a fun event! Check the website for updates.

Tablas in the Community -- Coming Events in Paso Robles

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

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.

Great White Wines **July 3, 2004** **Far Out Wineries Tasting**

Experience the stellar white wines produced by the Far Out Wineries, including Roussanne, Chardonnay, and our own Châteauneuf-du-Pape inspired blends! These are whites for red wine drinkers, so don't let the hue scare you away. Winemakers and owners from each of the Far Outs will lead a spirited discussion, followed by a tasting of their great whites. The event is hosted by Carmody-McKnight, and the cost is \$45 per person. Seating is limited; contact Carmody-McKnight at 805.238.9329 for reservations.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

☉ May 20-22, 2004

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

☉ June 25-26, 2004

Atascadero Wine Festival
Atascadero, California
www.atascaderowinefest.org
805.461.WINE

☉ July 10, 2004

Rhône Rangers Ride into Seattle
Seattle, Washington
www.rhonerangers.org
707.939.8014

☉ July 15-18, 2004

Central Coast Wine Classic
Shell Beach, California
www.wineclassic.org
805.544.1285

☉ July 24, 2004

Reds, Whites and Blues on the Beach
Santa Barbara, CA
www.touringandtasting.com
800.850.4370

☉ September 22-26, 2004

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

NC and NH eligible for direct shipment

We can now ship directly to residents of North Carolina and New Hampshire! We continue to monitor the ongoing developments in this area, and will keep you posted as we are able to ship to new states.

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



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