

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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Wine 101: Measuring Grape Ripeness

One of the most critical decisions that winemakers must make at harvest is when to pick the grapes. In order to help them make their decisions, they typically use a variety of methods, including chemical methods (measuring Brix, acidity and pH) and physiological methods (examining the grapes' color, berry texture, and taste).

Physiological maturity is the traditional way for winemakers to assess ripeness. For centuries, winemakers relied on the look, feel, and taste of the grapes on the vine to determine whether they were ready to be picked. At Tablas Creek, we still use taste as a determinant of ripeness, and our winemakers look for a good balance between sugar and acid.

Appearance and color also provide important indications of a grape's ripeness. Each varietal signals its ripeness in a different manner. Roussanne, for example, turns a golden color when ripe, whereas Grenache Blanc berries become translucent.

Relying solely on physiological characteristics fell out of favor when more scientific measures for evaluating sugar and acid were developed, roughly corresponding to the increased mechanization of many aspects of vineyard and winery work. Physi-

See RIPENESS on page 3

State of the Vineyard

Summer is here, and harvest is almost upon us. After a cooler than usual spell in early July, the weather has returned to the typical Paso Robles summertime pattern: hot sunny days and long cool evenings. Veraison, the time when the berries change skin color and soften, began in mid July. This year all of the varietals have begun turning color at the same time, whereas Viognier and Syrah are usually the first to go through veraison.

We escaped the traditional spring frost this year, and as a result have had an unusually long growing season. The warm February and March gave the vines a two-week head start and, even with the cool June, the hot July kept the vines on schedule. Sampling to test for ripeness [see adjacent article] began when veraison concluded, and as this newsletter goes to press, we anticipate harvest will begin around the third week of August.

The rapidly ripening grapes have attracted hungry birds, and we began netting portions of the vineyard at the end of July. Viognier seems to be a favorite of the birds, and was the first block to be netted. Other blocks will be netted as they are discovered by the birds. The long stretches of warm weather we've

See VINEYARD on page 4

**Featured Wine:
2002 Roussanne**

Details on page 6.

Focus Varietal: Roussanne

Roussanne, with its honeyed richness and excellent longevity, forms the backbone of our *Esprit 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 varieties permitted in Châteauneuf-du-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 in 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 identi-

fied those vines as Viognier – a discovery which led to significant 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. Around the same time we brought in the Beaucastel clones, John Alban imported Roussanne to plant in his Central Coast vineyards. 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 varieties 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 almost ten percent 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*. 

ological evaluation is returning, however, as a crucial component in determining ripeness, and is used in conjunction with newer, more technological methods. As you would expect, vineyards that rely on more traditional winemaking methods tend to attach more weight to its contribution than more mechanized industrial wineries do.

Three empirical measurements are also used by winemakers to measure the maturity of grapes: Brix (sugar content), total acidity, and pH. As the harvest approaches, readings on all three levels are taken every few days on grapes nearing ripeness. Brix is a measurement of the total dissolved compounds in grape juice, which roughly translates to the sugar content of the juice. One degree Brix corresponds to about 8 to 10 grams per liter of sugar. The evaluation of a grape's sugar content is an important ripeness measurement; as photosynthesis produces nutrients for the vine, those nutrients are concentrated into the fruit. Thus, the more energy the plant has absorbed, the more sugar the grapes contain.

In different regions of the world, grapes may be ripe at anywhere from 20° Brix up to 28° Brix. The Paso Robles climate results in the relatively high Brix of our grapes at harvest; our cold nights maintain high acid levels longer than other parts of the world. As a result, grapes grown here have naturally higher sugar levels by the time the acids have decreased to balanced levels. At Tablas Creek, Brix varies by varietal, but it generally ranges from 22° for Marsanne and 27.5° for Grenache.

Brix is not the only measurement used to determine ripeness. Just as acid is an important component of the finished wine, it is also an important factor in determining when to harvest. Two measurements of acid are most commonly used. Total acid is usually measured in concentration

of tartaric acid and gives a rough approximation of the amount of total acids (the most important of which are tartaric and malic acids) present in grape juice or finished wine. At harvest, ripe grapes typically contain between 7 and 10 grams of acid per liter. During the winemaking process (especially malolactic fermentation) various acids are lost, so the total acidity in a finished wine typically falls between 4 and 8 grams per liter.

The other measurement of acid is pH, a logarithmic scale that measures free acidity in a solution, and one that should be familiar to all who have taken high school chemistry. On the pH scale, a solution with a pH of 7 is neutral. Acidic solutions have pH levels below 7, and basic solutions have pH levels above 7. Thus, the lower the pH, the more acidic the solution. All grapes are acid, but the pH of ripe grapes typically falls between 3.2 and 4. Compared to other wine regions, pH in Paso Robles tends to be relatively low (or more acidic); at Tablas Creek, the pH varies between varietals, with Grenache Blanc being the most acidic at 3.2 and Mourvèdre the least acidic at 3.55.

All of these measurements are performed on samples taken from the vineyard in the several weeks preceding harvest. Beginning in early August, we take random samples of clusters from each varietal block. The samples are then brought back to the lab, where they are crushed and the juice analyzed for Brix, total acid and pH. Sampling is done weekly at first, but with increasing frequency as the harvest date approaches.

Although the same varietals are grown at both Tablas Creek and Château de Beaucastel, our numbers at harvest are often different, largely because of climate. In Paso Robles, we have hotter days and colder nights than Châteauneuf-du-Pape. As a result, we harvest with slightly higher numbers in sugar and acid than Château de Beaucastel does. The climate in Paso Robles slows down the physiological maturation process while keeping acid levels high. Regardless of location, when the grapes have struck the perfect balance between sugar, acids, and physiological signs, it's time to start harvesting. 🍷



Don Rose, VINSider and proprietor of Glenrose Vineyard, addressed the crowd at the June 12 pig roast celebration to launch the 2002 Las Tablas Estates Glenrose Vineyard wine. Eighty VINSiders and their guests enjoyed the Syrah-based blend with slow roasted pork prepared by winemaker Neil Collins. The Las Tablas Estates wines are single-vineyard expressions of varietals imported by Tablas Creek, grown in neighboring vineyards, and vinified and blended at Tablas Creek.

VINsider Wine Club Information: Fall 2004 Shipment

It's almost time for the release of this year's fall collection of Tablas Creek Vineyard wines selected especially for VINsiders.

Wines

- ⑥ 2 bottles of **2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel***, the newest vintage of our flagship Mourvèdre-based red wine which received a 92-95 from Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate* when he tasted it in barrel last year. This wine will not be released nationally until October 2004.
- ⑥ 1 bottle of **2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc***, our Roussanne-based signature white wine. This wine will not be released nationally until the end of the year.
- ⑥ 1 bottle of the ever-popular **2003 *Rosé***, a limited quantity of which we bottled with Stelvin screwcap closures (instead of cork). Let us know what you think!
- ⑥ 1 bottle of **2002 *Syrah***, which we bottled in limited quantities especially for VINsiders. This is our first bottling of a single-varietal Syrah, and the wine is intense, with a generous, elegant palate and a long clean finish.
- ⑥ 1 bottle of **2003 *Grenache Blanc***, another VINsider exclusive bottling of our most unusual white grape. It is delightfully clean, crisp and refreshing.

Shipping Details

Dates: The Fall 2004 shipment will leave the winery on Tuesday, September 14 and is scheduled to be delivered to your shipping address two days later on Thursday, September 16. For those of you who have requested pick-up of your shipment here at the winery, those shipments will be available beginning Saturday, September 18.

Changes: Now is the time to let us know if you have any changes to make to your VINsider record with us. If you have a new credit card number and/or new credit card expiration date, a different shipping address, or if you prefer to pick up your shipment at the winery instead of having it shipped to you, please let us know no later than Tuesday, August 31. An easy way to communicate your changes is through our VINsider Update Form online: <https://www.cleverconcepts.net/tablas-creek.com/wineclubupdate.html>. We are happy to accommodate any changes you have -- just let us know in time to reflect the changes appropriately.

If you have any questions about the shipment, your account or our shipping process, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 ext. 39 or cfaris@tablascreek.com.

Tasting Room Open Daily

We're open from 10 am to 5 pm daily, with tours offered at 10:30 am and 2:00 pm. Special tours and tastings are always available -- call 805.237.1231 or visit tablascreek.com for more information.

VINEYARD, continued from Page 1

had also encouraged the prevalence of another common vineyard pest, the leafhopper. We've been keeping their numbers under control by releasing lacewing eggs and nymphs throughout the late spring and early summer.

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

It's been a busy few months in the winery. In early July, we completed bottling the 2003 whites. Look for the release of the *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* at the end of the year and the 2003 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* and 2003 *Roussanne* early next year.

At the same time, we also bottled our first-ever dessert wine, the Vin de Paille. The Vin de Paille (literally "wine of straw") is a sweet wine made from white grapes in the traditional French method. We hand-picked select bunches of grapes and laid them on straw covered benches in our greenhouses. As the grapes raisined, the sugar concentration increased. We then gently pressed them and fermented them in French oak, resulting in a sweet rich wine. The Vin de Paille wines -- one a blend of Viognier, Grenache Blanc and Marsanne, and one a pure Roussanne -- will be released by the end of the year and will be sold only out of the tasting room.

Marc Perrin was out at the vineyard the first week of August for the blending of the 2003 reds -- *Esprit de Beaucastel*, *Côtes de Tablas* and *Panoplie*. The wines are now in foudre, and we are tremendously excited about them. They are concentrated, rich and aromatic, and may be even better than the 2002 vintage! ⑥



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 <i>Featured Wine August 15- September 15</i>	_____	\$27.00	_____
VERMENTINO 2002	_____	\$27.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROSÉ 2003	_____	\$27.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000 <i>(6 bottle limit)</i>	_____	\$35.00	_____
LAS TABLAS ESTATES GLENROSE VINEYARD 2002	_____	\$32.50	_____
FOUNDERS' RESERVE 2001	_____	\$45.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2001	_____	\$22.00	_____
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	_____

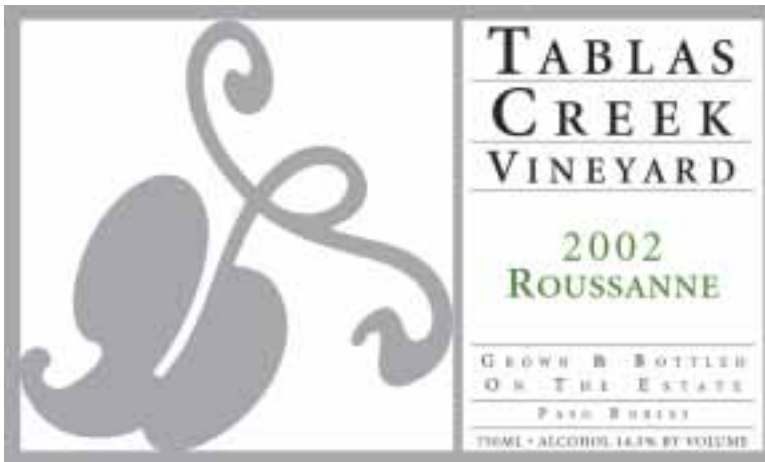
BILL To:
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Email: _____
 TCV Wine Club Member number: _____

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

FEATURED WINE: 2002 ROUSSANNE

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.



The Featured Wine program continues with the 2002 Roussanne, featured from August 15 to September 15.

Tasting Notes: The 2002 Roussanne is a rich concentrated expression of the Roussanne grape from the terrific 2002 vintage. It is elegant and exuberant in character. A rich nose of sweet oak, honeysuckle and rose petals is followed in the mouth by flavors of honey, toast and pear, with good crisp acids and a long finish. This Roussanne can be drunk young, or aged five to ten years or more.

Suggested Food Pairings: Roussanne is a versatile white varietal, and pairs wonderfully with food. As befitting its Mediterranean origins, it complements

dishes prepared in garlic and olive oil, but its richness can also stand up well to foods with spice, such as curries, gumbo, or Asian foods. It is also delicious when paired with rich shellfish dishes, such as lobster, crab and scallops.

Wine Pairing: Baked Coquilles St. Jacques

The richness of the butter and the slightly metallic creaminess of the scallops in this traditional recipe call for a white wine with richness, good acidity, and a mineral note. It pairs beautifully with the 2002 *Roussanne*, and is also excellent with the mature Roussanne notes of the 2000 *Clos Blanc*.

Serves 4 as an appetizer or 2 as a main dish.

Ingredients

1 pound bay scallops (small)
1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
2 tablespoons butter, melted
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (or 1 tablespoon chopped dried parsley)
lemon wedges for garnish
salt to taste

- Ⓢ Pre-heat oven to 325 degrees.
- Ⓢ Mix bread crumbs with parsley (and, if bread crumbs are unsalted, with salt). Set aside.

- Ⓢ Wash scallops in cold water and pat dry.
- Ⓢ Arrange scallops in single shallow flat-bottomed casserole dish or individual ramekins*.
- Ⓢ Cover with bread crumbs and parsley mixture.
- Ⓢ Drizzle butter over bread crumbs and scallops.
- Ⓢ Bake uncovered for 16-18 minutes, or until bubbling.
- Ⓢ Serve hot, garnished with lemon wedges.

**For an impressive display, you can use large scallop shells in place of ramekins for individual serving sizes. Scallop shells are oven-safe, and are available online or at kitchen supply stores.*

Tablas at Home -- Coming Events at the Vineyard

Sunday, September 12 **9:00 AM** **Harvest and Winemaking Seminar**

Back by popular demand! Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins will lead this seminar on grape analysis, harvesting and winemaking. We'll walk participants through the process of testing grapes for ripeness by examining physical characteristics and chemical analyses. Interested participants will then have an opportunity to work for about an hour in the harvest. Those grapes will be vinified separately, as participants view the destemming process and learn about native yeast fermentation techniques. The day will conclude with a field lunch prepared by our vineyard crew. The event is free for VINsiders and \$20 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required.

Saturday, September 25 **5:00 PM** **Fall VINsider Tasting Party**

It's VINsider Wine Club semi-annual shipment time! Pick up your Fall 2004 shipment while you join us for a tasting of the wines we're sending in the Fall offering. From the 2003 Grenache Blanc to the 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, this shipment represents the best of our fall lineup. Don't miss this chance to taste these wines, sample some wonderful hors d'oeuvres and enjoy the late summer weather on the terrace. The event is free for VINsiders and \$15 for guests; please reserve in advance.

To make reservations or get more information on any of these events, please contact Catherine Faris at 805.237.1231 ext. 39 or cfaris@tablascreek.com.

Saturday, October 16 **12:00 to 3:00 PM** **Harvest Festival Open House**

On the Saturday of the Paso Robles Harvest Festival, we will have an open house featuring complimentary hand-crafted *asada* tacos with "secret recipe" salsa from noon until 3:00 pm. No reservations necessary. Join us in celebrating the 2004 harvest and tasting wines from the 2003 harvest.

Friday & Saturday, November 26 & 27 **1:00 PM** **Holiday Party**

After enjoying Thanksgiving with your family and friends, visit Tablas Creek to see what we're proposing for holiday gift-giving. From collector's edition sets of *Esprit de Beaucastel* to linens and a range of recent food and wine publications, you're sure to find something you love. We'll serve hors d'oeuvres chosen specifically to pair with our wines on both days. No reservations necessary.

Saturday, December 4 **1:00 PM** **En Primeur Barrel Tasting and Futures Offer**

Join us for our second annual barrel tasting and *en primeur* offering of our two remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2003 vintage: *Esprit de Beaucastel* and *Panoplie*. In this time-honored French tradition most often associated with first-growth Bordeaux estates, valued customers are offered the opportunity to secure a limited quantity of sought-after wines at a special price in advance of bottling and subsequent general release. Join Jason Haas and Winemaker Neil Collins to taste these wines in barrel, and enjoy a buffet lunch at the winery. The event is free to VINsiders but space is limited and reservations are required.

Tablas in the Community -- Coming Events in Paso Robles

Paso Robles Wine University **September 18-19**

Tablas Creek Vineyard is joining with Paso Robles Wine Country wineries and the Paso Robles Vintners and Growers Association to present the Paso Robles Wine University (PRWU). Designed to offer participants an opportunity to learn winemaking, wine tasting and viticulture from area vintners and growers, the two-day program features a hands-on, interactive approach to wine production, exploring all aspects of the process from terroir to taste. For more information and to enroll, visit the PRVGA website: www.pasowine.com/prwu/ or call 805.239.8463.

Best of the West **October 16** **Far Out Wineries Tasting**

Join us for a celebration of the Paso Robles west side! Winemakers and owners from each of the twelve Far Out Wineries will showcase their signature wines and discuss how those wines reflect the unique soils of the "far out" hills west of Paso Robles. The seminar will be held at 10:00 am at Opolo Winery and Vineyard, located at 7110 Vineyard Drive. The event is \$45 per person, and will include a selection of cheeses, breads and other treats. Seating is limited and reservations are required -- this event will sell out. Tickets are available through Opolo Winery and Vineyard; call 805.238.8593 or visit www.opolo.com.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

☎ August 21-22, 2004

Edible Gardens Festival
COPIA: American Center for Wine Food & the Arts
Napa, California
www.copia.org
888.51.COPIA

☎ September 8, 2004

Taste of San Luis
San Luis Obispo, California
805.541.0286

☎ September 22-26, 2004

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

☎ October 15-17, 2004

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

☎ November 4-6, 2004

California Wine Experience
Chicago, Illinois
www.winespectator.com

☎ November 7-8, 2004

Family Winemakers of California Tasting
San Francisco, California
www.familywinemakers.org

☎ November 17-18, 2004

Yosemite Vintners' Holiday
Ahwahnee Hotel
Yosemite Park, California
www.yosemitepark.com
559.253.5635

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