

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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Wine 101: Paso Robles Climate

by Jason Haas

There is an ongoing debate being waged in the wine press and trade as to the benefits of cool-climate viticulture. The evidence tends to support the assertion that wine grapes perform best at the coolest limit of their range, perhaps because in such places the grapes stay on the vine longer than in warmer climates, thereby achieving physiological ripeness more gradually, resulting in lower sugar levels (and lower alcohols). Additionally, the longer a grape cluster stays connected to its roots, the more character it is able to develop.

In France, examples of grapes achieving the pinnacle of their complexity at the coldest edge of their range are well established. Chardonnay from Burgundy (a cooler climate) is considered better than that from the Languedoc (a warmer climate). Syrah from Hermitage (at the very Northern limit of the Rhône Valley) is considered better than Syrah from Châteauneuf du Pape (in the Southern Rhône). Sauvignon Blanc from Sancerre, in the Loire Valley, is generally considered finer than that from Bordeaux, roughly 300 miles to the southwest.

This example has been broadly applied to California, which was for a long time considered unfit for earlier ripening varieties like Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, and Pinot Noir. It has been only relatively recently that maverick growers have been proving that it is possible to find the right climate to grow all of these grapes well in California.

By California standards (and certainly by California coastal standards), Paso Robles is generally considered a hot climate. The measurement of degree days (which measure the number of days or hours over a minimum temperature) lends support to this classification. It is indisputable that during the heat of the day in summertime, Paso

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State of the Vineyard

Summer is in full swing here at the vineyard, and the vines are thriving in the warm weather. We had very little rain this winter; the final rainfall total was only ten inches, just over one third of our annual average. To compensate, we did minimal irrigation to the vines in the late spring. The residual supply of groundwater from the previous two rainy winters, however, has meant that the vines are faring very well.

The new head-pruned plantings on Scruffy Hill were an initial source of concern, as they are completely dry-farmed with no provisions for irrigation. Knowing that section of the vineyard would be exclusively dry-farmed, we had prepared the ground two years prior to planting, by cultivating the ground and eliminating weeds before they were two inches high. These precautions ensured the weeds did not rob the vines of the existing supply of groundwater. Happily, the vines are flourishing.

The canopy is growing vigorously, and flowering and fruit set took place under perfect conditions. Veraison (the time at which the berries change skin color and soften) began in late July,

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Featured Wine:
2005 COUNOISE
Details on page 6.

Focus Varietal: Viognier

Viognier (VEE-own-yay) forms the base (along with Marsanne) of our *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*, as well as in some years providing an aromatic lift to our Roussanne-based *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. Whether in the *Esprit Blanc* or the *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*, Viognier contributes intense aromatics of peaches, apricots, and violets, as well as viscosity and minerality 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 it dates back at least 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, Viognier is becoming increasingly popular around the world. American growers, led by pioneers such as Josh Jensen at 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 1998, those vines were identified as Viognier, not Roussanne – a discovery which led to confusion, relabeling, and several lawsuits. You can read

more about the Roussanne/Viognier controversy at www.tablascreek.com/viog-rous.html

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 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 along with high viscosity and a lingering finish.

The varietal has thrived in the warm climate and limestone-clay soils of Tablas Creek. On the nine acres we had in production in 2006, we harvested approximately 27 tons of Viognier, which is about one quarter of our white Rhône production. 🍷

Robles is hot. 100 degrees is not uncommon. And yet, these same nights are cold... colder than in most other regions. Compared to Châteauneuf du Pape, our summer days are hotter by an average of about 10 degrees. Yet our nights are colder by an average of 15 degrees. Although this would suggest that our climate is cooler than that of Châteauneuf du Pape, the most common measurement of climate suggests otherwise. Degree days factor in the number of degrees and the number of hours that temperature surpasses an arbitrary value. How much the temperature drops below that value is not taken into account.

As you might expect, grapes at Tablas Creek ripen more gradually than those at Beaucastel. Yes, the sugar levels at Tablas (driven by the extra sun and daytime heat) accumulate more quickly than they do at Beaucastel. However, the acids at Tablas Creek, preserved by the nighttime cold, remain high significantly longer than they do in Châteauneuf, and the grapes achieve physiological maturity (shown by seeds and stems turning brown, or lignifying) on average about two weeks later in Paso Robles than in Châteauneuf du Pape.

Even better, in Paso Robles the growing season before the fall rains is significantly longer than it is anywhere in France. The cold nights and lengthened ripening cycle mean the earlier-ripening varieties can be successfully grown here. Late ripeners like Mourvèdre, Cabernet, or Zinfandel, are also possible; all that is required is patience. When we started the Tablas Creek project, we expected that the Paso Robles climate would allow us to focus on our southern Rhône varieties, particularly Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Roussanne. What we didn't expect was that the cooler nights would allow grapes like Syrah and Viognier to thrive as well. We never expected to make a single-varietal Syrah, let alone something even earlier-ripening like our *Antithesis* Chardonnay. And, if we need to wait until November to get ripe Mourvèdre, we can. It's a tremendous luxury.

While viticulturists and journalists debate the impacts of heat and chill on grape ripening, the simplest measurement of climate can be found by asking the grapes. And at Tablas Creek, grapes ripen more gradually, and are harvested later, than in equivalent regions in France.

For more thoughts on wine, winemaking, and the business of wine, visit the Tablas Creek blog at tablascreek.typepad.com 🍷



Tablas Creek Winemaker Neil Collins (on right in hat) and Château de Beaucastel's Marc Perrin (second from right, in navy shirt) joined other world-class winemakers and chefs at a week of Midsummer Epicurean Delights at the Malliouhana Hotel and Spa in Anguilla, British West Indies. The gourmet event is designed to celebrate the world's best chefs and winemakers. Details are at malliouhana.com

Fall Wine Club Shipment

We're really excited about the September wine club shipment. It is built around the upcoming releases of our two signature wines, and includes one bottle of the Roussanne-based 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and two bottles of the blockbuster 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, our signature Mourvèdre-based red wine. The shipment will also feature three terrific single varietal wines: one bottle each of the delightfully clean and citrusy 2006 *Vermentino*, the vibrant and expressive 2005 *Grenache Blanc*, and the lush and spicy 2005 *Syrah*.

The shipment will leave the winery on Tuesday, September 25. Local VINSiders can pick up their shipments at the winery starting Friday, September 21. 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.

Fall VINSider Tasting

Mark your calendar now for our shipment tasting party here at the vineyard on Saturday, September 29 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Pick up your Fall 2007 shipment while you join us for a tasting of the wines in the Fall 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 September 24 to events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x 39.

and we are currently expecting harvest to begin in the middle of September. The crop looks wonderful at this point, with all of the varietals showing slightly smaller than average berries -- an indication that the wines will have intense flavor.

In June we tackled the winter's collection of weeds, mowing and disking between the rows, and using our tournesol weeder to cultivate among the vines. Leafhoppers, our most common pest, have been largely absent this year; the cold winter significantly reduced their population.

In the winery, we have been busy bottling the 2005 reds and the 2006 whites. The Viognier and Grenache Blanc-based wines were bottled under screwcap in late April, and the Roussanne-based wines (including the 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*) under cork finish in late June. The 2005 reds (*Côtes de Tablas*, *Esprit de Beaucastel*, *Panoplie*, *Syrah* and *Mourvèdre*) went into bottle in April and May. Like the whites, they will rest in bottle for the next few months to give them a chance to emerge from bottle-shock. Both vintages look tremendous, and we are excited to begin showing the wines this summer.

In the market, we have just completed the busy wine festival season, including the annual Hospice du Rhône event, the Paso Robles Wine Festival, the Atascadero Wine Festival, and the Central Coast Wine Classic, all of which were held locally. Out of town wine festivals have also been plentiful; in addition to the Midsummer Epicurean Delight week in the British Virgin Islands, Tablas Creek attended the Charleston Food and Wine Festival in South Carolina, the High Museum Wine Auction in Atlanta, the Rhone Rangers tasting in Seattle, and the New Orleans Wine and Food Experience. Finally, we participated in the Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance's Grand Tasting Tour with other local wineries, with appearances in Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, Boston and Washington DC. Look for a complete listing of our upcoming events on our website, www.tablascreek.com/upcomingevents.html 🍷



Tablas Creek founder Bob Haas (pictured above with children Daniel, Janet, Jason and Rebecca) celebrated his 80th birthday in April, an event marked by a party at the vineyard and glowing press coverage in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Wines & Vines*, and the *San Luis Obispo Tribune*.



Bob's grandson Eli Haas (at left) also celebrated a milestone birthday in April -- he turned 2 on April 8.

In the News

Tablas Creek, and Rhône wines in general, have been the recipients of quite a bit of positive press in the past several months. **ForbesLife** gave the 2004 *Panoplie* a glowing review, calling it "a sumptuous, palate-caressing red with an arrestingly clear purity of fruit."

The newly-released 2006 *Rosé* also received a terrific review in the July 2007 **Wine Enthusiast**, where Steve Heimoff called it "just delicious, a wine you can't stop drinking" and awarded it 90 points.

White Rhône wines were the focus of a recent **Bon Appétit** feature (August 2007), in which Tablas Creek was lauded as a pioneer in the growth of the California white Rhône movement, and the 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* was recommended. The 2005 *Esprit Blanc* was also reviewed in the August 2007 issue of **Wine & Spirits**, where it was awarded a score of 93.

Finally, *Mourvèdre* was featured in an amusingly-titled article in **Slate** (*Mourvèdre: A Great and Stinky Grape*); the 2004 *Mourvèdre* was singled out for praise as a "nicely proportioned, satisfying wine." A complete list of recent press can be found at www.tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html 🍷



WINE ORDER FORM

AUGUST 2007

DISCOUNTS

Wine Club members receive a discount of 25% on orders of 12 bottles or more and 20% on orders of fewer than 12 bottles.

Non-VINsiders receive a 10% discount on orders of 12 bottles or more.

SHIPPING

CA*
1- 6 bottles: \$14.00
7-12 bottles: \$20.00

CO, ID*, NM, NV*, OR, WA*, WY
1-6 bottles: \$20.00
7-12 bottles: \$30.00

AK, FL, IA, IL, MI*, MN, MO, NC*, NE*, NH, NY*, OH, SC*, TX*, VA*, VT*, WI, WV*
1- 6 bottles: \$25.00
7-12 bottles: \$40.00

*State and local taxes apply

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.

An adult signature is required at delivery for all shipped wine orders.

WINE	QUANTITY	LIST PRICE	VINSIDER PRICE	TOTAL
FEATURED WINE [15% DISCOUNT IS REFLECTED IN PRICE]				
COUNOISE 2005	_____	\$29.75	\$22.75	_____
WHITE WINES				
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2005	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2005	_____	\$22.00	\$17.60	_____
ROUSSANNE 2005	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
GRENACHE BLANC 2005	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
ANTITHESIS 2005	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2004	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
ROSÉ WINES				
ROSÉ 2006	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
RED WINES				
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2004 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2004	_____	\$22.00	\$17.60	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2003 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$40.00	\$32.00	_____
MOURVÈDRE 2004	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
TANNAT 2004	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
DESSERT WINES (375 mL)				
VIN DE PAILLE QUINTESSENCE 2004	_____	\$85.00	\$68.00	_____

SUBTOTAL _____

CASE DISCOUNT _____

SHIPPING _____

ORDER TOTAL _____

I certify that I am 21 years or older.

BILLING & SHIPMENT: EITHER

VINsider Name: _____

VINsider Number: _____

Signature: _____

Bill to my credit card on file Ship to my address on file

OR

BILL TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

SHIP TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

CREDIT CARD:

MC/Visa #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

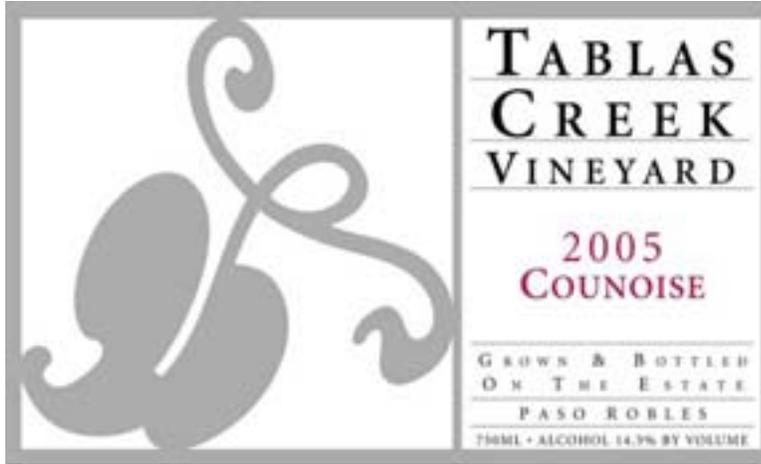
Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

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: 2005 COUNOISE

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 offer the featured wine, for the designated time, at a 15% discount. This discount is granted above and beyond any other discounts that apply, such as for case purchases or wine club membership.



The Featured Wine program continues with the 2005 Counoise, featured from August 1 through August 31, 2007.

Tasting Notes: The 2005 *Counoise* is Tablas Creek's second bottling (and first since 2002) of this traditional blending varietal from the Southern Rhône. The Counoise grape has an unusual combination of lush blue and purple fruit (blueberries and cranberries), sweet spice (nutmeg and cinnamon), light-to-medium body, bright acidity, pale ruby color, and very little tannin.

Suggested Food Pairings: The 2005 *Counoise* is a wonderful food wine. It is particularly good with pork, such as sausages or pork chops, but is also delicious when paired with turkey, roasted chicken or meaty fishes, and is a natural fit with the grilled shrimp featured below.

Wine Pairing: Grilled Shrimp and Grits



Artisan Restaurant is a new highlight in the Paso Robles culinary scene, and chef Chris Kobayashi provided this delicious recipe to pair with the Tablas Creek 2005 *Counoise*.

GRITS

- 1 cup white grits
- 2 ½ cups water, plus more as needed
- 2 cups milk
- 1 ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 4 Tbsp. (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1/3 cup shredded medium-sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/3 cup shredded smoked gouda cheese
- 1/3 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- Additional salt, to taste
- 1 tsp. Tabasco (optional)

In a saucier or Dutch oven over medium heat, combine the grits, water, milk, salt and 2 Tbsp. butter and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until tender, 45-60 minutes. If grits become too thick, add more water. Remove from heat and stir in remaining 2 Tbsp. butter, cheddar, smoked gouda and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheeses, pepper and tabasco. Reserve and keep warm.

*Artisan is located at 1404 Park Street, Paso Robles
805.237.8084
artisanpasoobles.com*

SHRIMP

- 8 slices center cut bacon, cut in half in pieces
- 2 lbs. jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pound white mushrooms, sliced
- 1 bunch green onions (white and some of the green), chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, grated
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 8-10 red grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

Cook the bacon in a large sauté pan until crisp. Set bacon aside and drain excess grease from pan. Add 1-2 Tbs. olive oil to the pan. Sauté the sliced mushrooms over medium heat until caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add half the onions and continue to sauté for 2-3 more minutes. Remove from heat and stir in grated garlic, lemon juice, halved red grape tomatoes and cooked bacon. Cover and set aside while you grill the shrimp.

Build a charcoal fire or preheat a gas grill to medium. Toss shrimp with more oil and season with salt. Place shrimp on cooking grate over direct medium heat, cover and grill 2-3 minutes on each side or until shrimp are pink and slightly curled (smaller shrimp take less time).

Remove shrimp from grill to a clean platter and add them to the bacon-mushroom mixture. Stir and reheat on medium low heat until very hot, about 5 minutes. Stir the grits if necessary.

Divide grits equally among four plates, top with equal portions of grilled shrimp, and sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley and remaining green onions. Let rest for a few minutes and then serve. *Serves four.*

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

Saturday, August 11 **Pig Roast**

6:00 PM

At Tablas Creek, we love terrific parties, especially when they involve great food, charming company, and, of course, wonderful wines. To that end, we're hosting our fourth annual pig roast to celebrate the beginning of harvest and the newly released 2005 *Mourvèdre*. Join us for roast pork with all the accompaniments. This is a casual outdoor party, just right for summer in the vineyard. The cost is \$55 for VINSiders and \$70 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are essential -- this is one of our most popular events and sells out quickly!

Saturday, August 25 **August Moon in the Historic Adelaide**

6:30 PM

Join the Far Out Wineries and the Adelaide Historical Foundation for our second annual fund raiser to benefit the Adelaide School House restoration effort. All 16 Far Out Wineries will be pouring a selection of wines to accompany the Historical Society's traditional BBQ fare. Savory offerings will include oak grilled chicken and beef, grilled veggies, garlic bread and salad, along with a selection of homemade pies for dessert. To entertain you during your tasting and dining, we will have live music with guest appearances by a number of winery personalities.

Auction items will include unique offerings from each of the Far Out Wineries, artwork by Gary Conway, private ranch and vineyard tours and Adelaide Schoolhouse memorabilia. More information is at www.faroutwineries.com. For reservations, please contact Judy at (805)237-0138. The cost is \$75 per person.

Saturday, September 15 **Harvest and Winemaking Seminar**

9:00 AM

Winemaker and Vineyard Manager Neil Collins will lead this seminar on grape analysis, harvest and winemaking. He and the Tablas Creek Vineyard staff will walk participants through the process of testing grapes for ripeness, both through traditional examination of physiological characteristics and more modern chemical analyses. Participants will have the opportunity to work for about an hour in the harvest, followed by a hands-on demonstration of the destemming process and typical cellar techniques, including hand punch-downs and pump-overs of fermentation tanks. The day will conclude with a field lunch prepared by our vineyard crew. Free for VINSiders and \$20 for guests; reservations are required.

Saturday, October 20

10:00 AM

Best of the West VI: Far Out Wineries Tasting

A celebration of the Paso Robles "far out" country! Winemakers and owners from each of the sixteen Far Out Wineries will showcase their signature wines and discuss how these wines reflect the unique soils of the "far out" hills west of Paso Robles. The seminar will be held at Opolo Winery and Vineyard, and sells out quickly! The cost is \$55 per person. For tickets or more information, call Judy at (805)237-0138.

Friday through Sunday, November 23-25 **Holiday Open House**

After having eaten your fill at Thanksgiving dinner (accompanied by Tablas Creek wines, of course!), come out to the Tablas Creek tasting room to sample an assortment of gift ideas for the holidays. We will be featuring products by Ess & Jae, the stationery company founded by local artists Sierra Christenson and Jillian Waters. Sierra and Jill will be on hand to discuss their methods and products, and Ess & Jae products, including unique holiday cards, will be on display and available for purchase. The open house and gift showcase is free to all, and no reservations are necessary.

Saturday, December 8

6:00 PM

En Primeur Tasting and Futures Offering

VINSiders are invited to join Tablas Creek's winemakers for the fourth annual barrel tasting and sale *en primeur* of Tablas Creek's remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2006 vintage. Offering wine *en primeur* is a time-honored French tradition most often associated with first-growth Bordeaux estates. In outstanding vintages, 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. VINSiders will receive an invitation and reservation form in the mail in early November.

**To make reservations or get more information about any of these events, please contact
Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x 39, or ngetty@tablascreek.com**

Tablas on Tour: National Events

August 19-20, 2007

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

August 30, 2007

A Taste of Paso
San Jose, California
www.tastepasowines.com
800.549.9463

September 19, 2007

Taste of San Luis
Mission Plaza
San Luis Obispo, California
805.541.0286

September 23, 2007

Celebrate the Craft
The Lodge at Torrey Pines
San Diego, California
www.celebratethecraft.com
858.777.6635

September 26-29, 2007

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

October 6, 2007

Paso Rhone Rangers Celebration
Paso Robles, California
www.rhonerangers.org
707.462.5943

October 19-21, 2007

Harvest Wine Tour
Paso Robles, California
www.pasowine.com
805.239.8463

November 14-23, 2007

San Diego Bay Wine and Food Festival
San Diego, California
www.worldofwineevents.com
619.342.7337

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

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