

State of the Vineyard

Each winter, we hope for two things. First, we want rain. Lots of it, starting early and ending late. Second, we want to avoid frost after the vines have begun to sprout. This year, we'll have to make do with one of our two wishes.

Rain we got, over 36 inches so far, more than 125% of our normal rainfall. This was our second consecutive wet winter, and we've never seen Tablas Creek so flush with water as it was in March. It's probably hard for visitors used to seeing Paso Robles in the dry summertime to imagine this green landscape of streams and springs, but it's a beautiful time of year, and necessary for both the vineyard's short-term productivity and its long-term health. This winter was wet early, with over 17 inches of rain by the beginning of January. Between early January and mid-February we had six weeks of warm, sunny weather, which encouraged good cover crop growth, before a second rainy period commenced that provided another 18 inches of rain over the next month. Warm weather had returned by early April, but the cool, wet weather had delayed budbreak by about three weeks compared to a normal vintage and should ensure that the soils have ample moisture for the growing season. It looks like we'll be able to dry farm again this year.

Frost, unfortunately, got us. Between April 7th and 9th, we saw temperatures down to 24 degrees on consecutive nights as well as two separate hailstorms and an inch of snow. The four grape varieties that had sprouted (Grenache, Grenache Blanc, Viognier and Marsanne) saw nearly 100% damage. It was so cold that even the vines at *See* **VINEYARD**, *page 3*



The VINformer Vol. 10, No. 1 May 2011

Creating a New Wine: *Patelin de Tablas*

by Jason Haas

We have big news on the wine front! We are excited to debut with the 2010 vintage our first new red and white Rhône blends in nearly a decade. These wines will be called *Patelin de Tablas* and *Patelin de Tablas Blanc.*

Over the last few years, we have been fortunate to see our sales continue to grow, thanks to the wonderful loyalty of our customers, an unprecedented run of great press, and lots of hard work by the wholesalers, restaurants, and retailers who represent our wines. At the same time, we saw three consecutive years of drought from 2007-2009 reduce the yields from our vineyard from nearly 19,000 cases in 2006 to just 12,000 cases in 2009. The continued growth of our direct sales, both wine club and tasting room, has exacerbated the impact of the fluctuations of supply on our wholesalers.

It's terrible to have to tell a wholesaler who has done a great job for you that you're going to have to cut their allocation. And there are lasting consequences on your business: the next time that wholesaler has the chance to place a wine in a choice location, do you think that they'll choose you, or another winery whose supply is more regular? Making it

See PATELIN, page 4

Featured Wine: 2009 Côtes de Tablas Blanc Details on page 6

Focus Varietal: Vermentino

ermentino, with its bright acidity, aromas of citrus leaf and mineral, and refreshing finish, has become a favorite of Tablas Creek VINsiders and restauranteurs alike. Its story, however, does not originate in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and unlike most of Tablas Creek's white varietals, it is a grape that is more commonly seen on its own than in blends.

Vermentino in the Old World

Vermentino is commonly thought to be Spanish in origin. Although it is currently grown in several countries around the Mediterranean, its best known examples come from northern Italy (particularly in the region of Liguria) and the island of Sardinia, where the wines are crisp, citrusy and generally unoaked. It is also the most widely planted white grape on the island of Corsica, where high altitude and hot climate vineyards produce more full-bodied wines with heady floral aromas. On the French mainland (where the grape is known as Rolle), it is found in Côtes de Provence and, increasingly, in Languedoc. Although it makes excellent wine, for many years Vermentino was best known for producing table grapes. The grapes are large with a good sugar/acid balance, making them a perfect choice for sweet snacking.

Vermentino at Tablas Creek

Although Vermentino is not a Châteauneuf-du-Pape grape varietal, we imported it at the recommendation of the Perrins' French nurseryman, who believed it would thrive in the rocky limestone soils of Paso Robles. We brought the cuttings in and entered them into quarantine at the USDA station in Geneva, New York. In 1993, they were declared virus free and released to us. We propagated the vines in our nursery, and planted about an acre of Vermentino on an east-facing slope near Adelaida Road in the northern portion of the property. As the nurseryman predicted, it has indeed thrived here, and in 2008 we planted another two acres at the western edge of the property.

S m a l l quantities of Vermentino were in c l u d e d in our early white blends. H o w e v e r, we found distinctive to fit

it too seamlessly

into our blends, and since 2002 we have bottled it on its own. We used the Italian name for the grape instead of the French one because Wild Horse Winery (who bought cuttings from us) registered the grape as Vermentino, and, with the exception of a few varietals which have been grandfathered in, the BATF does not permit multiple names for the same grape.

In the vineyard, Vermentino is one of the easiest varietals to grow. It is a vigorous grower, resistant to drought, and usually ripens towards the middle of the harvest cycle. In the cellar, we ferment it in stainless steel tanks and prevent it from completing malolactic fermentation. Both procedures serve to emphasize the grape's natural minerality and retain its bright citrus character.

> As part of our ongoing research on Stelvin screwcaps, we bottled half of the Vermentino in screwcap and half in cork in 2002. We were so convinced that the screwcap preserved the wine's aromatics and freshness that we have bottled Vermentino exclusively in screwcap since the 2003 vintage.

Flavors and Aromas

Vermentino wines are a pale straw color and relatively low in alcohol, with crisp acids, citrus-leaf aromatics, and pronounced minerality. In the mouth, Vermentino shows flavors of green apple and lime, heightened by refreshing acidity, good richness and medium body. The wine's crispness makes it a delicious accompaniment to fresh seafood, oysters on the half shell, or grilled Mediterranean vegetables. The 2010 *Vermentino* was sent to wine club members in the spring 2011 shipment and a small allocation was released to our wholesalers around the country.

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Frost damaged vines, with secondary buds.

the tops of the hills froze, which hasn't happened in the twenty years we've been here. The cold temperatures in the upper and middle atmosphere meant that our fans were largely ineffective; we were moving out cold air but replacing it with air that was only slightly warmer and still below freezing.

We were far from alone: Paso Robles vineyards up at 2000 feet elevation saw similar levels of damage, as did those on the plateau east of town. It was only the vineyards with ample water supplies who frost protected with overhead sprinklers that (mostly) escaped.

The four most affected varieties account for about 35% of our planted acreage. And these vines will have to re-sprout. Grapevines are prepared, evolutionarily, for freezes, and have secondary buds that push only if the primary buds are damaged or destroyed, though never with the same vigor. On the positive side, the rain that we received last winter means that the vines should be able to grow better than they would have after a dry winter.

With the early-sprouting varieties forced to start later by the freeze and the latersprouting varieties just coming out now for their primary growth, it looks like it will be a busy October. There is every reason to expect that harvest will be late and compressed, with varieties that normally ripen weeks or months apart coming in at roughly the same time.

Production will be affected. The two years we've seen serious frosts (2001 and 2009) we estimate that we lost something like 40% of our production off of the affected blocks. But both of those frosts were later, and all the varieties had sprouted. It appears that our latersprouting varieties like Mourvèdre, Roussanne, Picpoul and Counoise (as well as, for some reason, Syrah, which wasn't much sprouted at the time of the frosts) didn't sustain much if any damage. So, we estimate that we will be down perhaps 20% from what we might otherwise have been able to produce.

Quality should be fine, if 2009 is any indication. The 2009 reds, which are just being bottled now, are some of the most compelling that we've ever produced. And it's good that the varieties on which we base our signature blends were the least affected. We'll know more, of course, by harvest time.

In the vineyard now we're working to get the cover crop mowed, disked and spaded into the soil. We're behind here as well because of how wet the spring was; it's only in the last three weeks or so it's been dry enough to get tractors into the vineyard. The weather has been cooperating, with days in the 70s and mostly dry.

In the cellar, we've been working on our 2010 whites and have completed our first bottling of the year: the 2010 Rosé, the 2010 Vermentino, and the 2010 Patelin Blanc, as well as the 2009 Côtes de Tablas, the 2009 En Gobelet and the 2009 Grenache. The blends for the 2010 whites were finalized in early April, and they, along with the rest of the 2009 reds, will be bottled later this summer. Our early tastings suggest that 2010 is a serious, structured vintage, not fruity and flowery but rather rich across the board despite higher than normal acids, with its breadth moderated by minerality. It seems to us likely to be exceptionally ageable.



We've been working since last summer on a new addition to our building that incorporates two new cellar rooms, more office space, and a beautiful new tasting room. The tasting room is now open, and the early responses have been wonderful. Surrounded by the new cellar rooms, with walls of windows to show visitors what's happening, there is plenty of space to taste even on busy days and lots of hidden sound-abatement materials that make for more relaxed tasting.

PATELIN, from page 1

worse, if you have a productive vintage the next year, you might need to ask your wholesalers to take double or triple the quantity they received the previous year. Even if they want to help you, you're asking the impossible.

At the same time that we're struggling with how we handle our supply crisis, other vineyards in Paso Robles are struggling with the results of the weak economy. This has meant that we've seen some of the best growers in the area -- growers who three years ago would have had a long waiting list to get their grapes -searching for buyers.

We decided to see if we could find a handful of growers whose work we respected with whom we could create a new wine. This wine, in a year when our estate production was high, could have more Tablas Creek fruit. In a year when production was low, it could be mostly purchased. This would buffer our own swings in production, and give us the opportunity to collaborate with some of the top growers in our area.

The name *Patelin* (French slang roughly translated as "country neighborhood") is significant. We chose the growers for the care they take in their vineyards, and for the track records of the wines that these vineyards have produced. All are in our neighborhood. Many have planted Tablas Creek cuttings. All farm sustainably, and many are organic or biodynamic. We're celebrating the growers explicitly on the labels; each wine will list the vineyards that contributed fruit, with the percentage of the wine that each accounted for.

The *Patelin de Tablas Blanc* is based on the citrus, green apple and mineral of Grenache Blanc, and given lushness and lift by Viognier and mineral and spice by Roussanne and Marsanne. The *Patelin de Tablas* will be based on the dark spice and meatiness of Syrah, brightened with Grenache and Counoise, and given some earthy structure by Mourvèdre.

Adding the *Patelin de Tablas* wines will also allow us to be more rigorous in the selection program for our *Côtes de Tablas* wines. Right now, the *Côtes* wines are our home for the lots that are bright and open, ready to drink younger, and showcase Grenache (for the red) and Viognier (for the white). But the reality is that there are lots that go into the *Côtes* wines because they are perfect for our *Côtes de Tablas* model, and lots that go in because they don't have another obvious home. We think that adding the *Patelin* line will allow us to make the *Côtes* and *Côtes Blanc* that much better. We're hopeful that we can establish them as the best Grenache-based red blend and the best Viognier-based white blend in California.

We'll sell both the *Patelin* and *Patelin Blanc* for \$20. The white was released April 1st, and the red will be released in September. The line will be distinguished visually from our existing ones by color scheme. As the *Esprit de Beaucastel* wines have gold leaf on their labels, and the *Côtes de Tablas* wines silver, the *Patelin de Tablas* wines will have bronze leaf.

The early reception of the white has been enthusiastic, and the red is tasting great in the cellar, though we haven't finished its final assembly yet. Given the pedigree of the vineyards, we're convinced that both *Patelin* wines will blow people away at their price.



Cheers! Sebastian (3 1/2) and Eli (6) Haas enjoy the new patio area outside the tasting room.

HR 5034 lurches back to life as HR 1161

Last year, beer and wine wholesalers' associations spearheaded the introduction of HR 5034 into the US House of Representatives. Although the legislation was never passed (it never even made it out of committee), by the end of the legislative year it had amassed 153 co-sponsors, or more than one-third of the House's total membership. On March 17th an updated piece of legislation was introduced into the 2011 Congress. The risks of this year's bill are real, and we urge wineries and wine lovers not to be complacent about the act's prospects. Visit freethegrapes.org for suggestions on how to get involved.

Follow Tablas Creek online

Check out the Tablas Creek blog (a finalist for Best Winery Blog in the 2010 American Wine Blog Awards) for regular updates covering a wide range of wine-related and Tablas Creek-specific topics. Visit it at http:// tablascreek.typepad.com

Stay in touch with our Facebook page, which we use to publicize events, share photos, and interact virtually with supporters: facebook. com/tablascreek.

And follow us on Twitter: @TablasCreek.

See you there!

ABLAS

CREEK

VINEYARD

2010 THUNG TABLE

BLANC



Wine Order Form May 2011

DISCOUNTS		Wine	QUANTITY	List Price	VINsider Price	Total
	rs receive a discount s of 12 bottles or	FEATURED WINES [10%	DISCOUNT IS	REFLECTED	IN PRICE]	
more and 20% on o	orders of fewer than /INsiders receive a	Côtes de Tablas Blanc 2009		\$22.50	\$17.50	
10% discount on orders of 12 bottles			WHITE AND ROSÉ WINES			
SHIPPING Shipping included on orders that include 6 or more bottles of <i>Esprit</i>		PATELIN DE TABLAS BLANC 2010		\$20.00	\$16.00	
				\$27.00	\$21.60	
		ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2009		\$40.00	\$32.00	
CA*		ROUSSANNE 2009		\$30.00	\$24.00	
1-2 bottles: 3- 6 bottles:	\$10.00 \$15.00	GRENACHE BLANC 2009 (VINsiders only)		\$27.00	\$21.60	
7-12 bottles:	\$25.00	ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2008(12 bt/ limi	t)	\$40.00	\$32.00	
CO, ID*,NM, NV		BERGERON 2009 (6 bottle limit)		\$30.00	\$24.00	
1-2 bottles: 3-6 bottles:	\$15.00 \$25.00	Rosé 2010		\$27.00	\$21.60	
7-12 bottles:	\$35.00		RED WINES		1	
AK, DC, FL, GA*		Côtes de Tablas 2009	ICED WIINES	\$30.00	\$24.00	
ME*, MI*, MN, MO, NC*, NE*, NH*, NY*, OH*, SC*, TN*, TX*,						
VA*, VT*, WI, WV	/*	ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2008 (12 bottle limit)		\$50.00	\$40.00	
1-2 bottles: 3- 6 bottles:	\$20.00 \$30.00	Mourvèdre 2008 (6 bottle limit)		\$40.00	\$32.00	
7-12 bottles:	\$45.00	Syrah 2008 (VINsiders only)		\$40.00	\$32.00	
*State and local taxes apply		GRENACHE 2008 (VINsiders only)		\$40.00	\$32.00	
LEGAL		TANNAT 2008		\$40.00	\$32.00	
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		Syrah 2007 (12 bottle limit)		\$40.00	\$32.00	
		ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2006 (12 bottle limit)		\$50.00	\$40.00	
at least 21 years of	age. An adult					
signature is requ for all shipped wi	•		Subt	OTAL		
			DISCOUNT			
BILLING & SHIPMENT: <i>Either</i> VINsider Name:						
VINsider Name:			8.25% TAX (CA ONLY)			
Signature:			SHIPPING			
🔲 Bill to my d	credit card on fil	e 🔲 Ship to my address on file		DER TOTA		
Or				<u> </u>	am 21 years o	or older.
BILL TO:		Ship To:				
Name: Address:				MC/Visa/AmEx #:		
		Address: City, State, Zip:				
Email:						

To order: return form to Tablas Creek Vineyard, 9339 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446 or **fax** 805.237.1314 :: **email** orders@tablascreek.com :: **order online** at www.tablascreek.com

FEATURED WINE: 2009 CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC

Wines are organic products and, as such, have their own life cycles. At the vineyard, we taste through our cellar every month and see which wines are showing particularly well given the season and the wines' own inherent evolution. As a way of sharing these observations with you, we will periodically spotlight one of our wines. To encourage you to try these great wines, we are offering the featured wine, for the designated time only, at a 10% 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 2009 Côtes de Tablas Blanc, featured from May 1 to May 31, 2011.

Tasting Notes: The 2009 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* is a blend in the style of French Cotes du Rhône whites. It features the stone fruit of Viognier, the structure and minerality of Marsanne and Roussanne, and the crisp acids and rich mouthfeel of Grenache Blanc. It displays intense aromas of stone fruits and minerals, flavors of apricot and Provencal herbs, rich texture, moderate acidity and a long peachy finish.

Suggested Food Pairings: The 2009 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* is a delicious food wine, and pairs beautifully with seafood, such as mussels mariniere, scallops, ceviche and light fish (halibut or sole) with tropical salsas. It is also delicious with green salads with citrusy dressing and avocados.



Wine Pairing: Chicken Piccata

This classic recipe, often made with veal, is a delicious match with the citrus notes of the Vermentino.

Ingredients:

- 2 whole boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 2 lbs) 1 cup flour
- kosher salt
- fresh-ground pepper
- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups bread crumbs

3 tbsps unsalted butter, at room temperature

extra virgin olive oil

juice of 2 lemons (about 1/3 cup), with lemon halves reserved 1/2 cup dry white wine

- 1 tbsp capers
- chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.

Place each chicken breast between two sheets of parchment paper, and pound to 1/4-inch thick. Sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper

Mix flour, 1 tsp salt, and 1/2 tsp pepper on a shallow plate. In a second plate, beat the eggs and add 1 tbsp water. In a third, add bread crumbs.

Dip each chicken breast in the flour, shake off the excess, and then dip in the egg mixture, and then in the bread crumbs.

Heat 4 tbsp olive oil in a large pan over medium-high heat. Add 2 chicken breasts and cook for 2 minutes on each side, until golden-brown. Place them on the baking sheet in the oven while you cook the rest of the chicken.

Heat more olive oil in the pan and cook the remaining chicken breasts. Place them on the same baking sheet, and allow them to bake in the 400 degree oven while you make the sauce.

Wipe out the pan with a dry paper towel. Melt 1 tbsp butter on medium heat, and add the lemon juice, white wine, reserved lemon halves, 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper.

Boil over high heat until reduced by half, about 2 minutes. About one minute after it reaches a boil, add capers. Turn off the heat, add the remaining 2 tbsp of butter and swirl to combine. Discard the lemon halves.

To serve, spoon sauce over the chicken breasts, and top with a sprinkling of fresh parsley.

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

Sunday, May 14 Cass House Circus Cayucos, California

6:00 PM

The Cass House, in Cayucos, is a local treasure, truly one of the best restaurants in California. We're thrilled to partner with them to celebrate their three year anniversary. The theme is "dinner and a movie", but not just any movie (Charlie Chaplin's "The Circus") and not just any dinner, with a circus-inspired prix fixe menu including Cotechino corn dogs, lavender cotton candy, truffled popcorn and a feast of wood-fired Dungeness crab. We'll be pairing three wines with this feast, including the brand-new 2010 *Rasé* and the even-newer 2010 *Patelin de Tablas Blanc*. The \$85 price includes dinner, the movie, wine, and a live performance by the Red Skunk Jipzee Swing Trio. For more information, view the event flyer at http://tablascreek.com/images/CassHouseCircus.jpg or call the Cass House at 805.995.3669.

May 20-22 Paso Robles Wine Festival

Join us throughout the weekend as we celebrate Paso Robles wine! We'll be pouring at the downtown park for the Reserve Tasting on Friday evening and the Grand Tasting on Saturday. Out at the winery, we'll inaugurate our new tasting room and expanded winery with tastings of our Rhône varietals and blends all weekend. We will also be offering free tours of our expanded cellars, organic vineyard and vine nursery at 10:30 am, noon, and 2:00 pm each day.

The weekend will culminate on Sunday, when we welcome KRUSH 92.5 to the winery for a live broadcast, special giveaways, and a generally good time. Chef Jeffrey Scott will be making croque monsieurs (\$10, from noon until they run out), so come out and enjoy one with the music and a glass of our newly released 2010 *Rost*. No reservations necessary.

Saturday, June 4 Locavore Luncheon

11:00 AM

Join chef Jeffrey Scott for a seminar and lunch celebrating the meats, cheeses, and produce grown, farmed or harvested by small production growers and producers within 30 miles of Tablas Creek. Enjoy a three-course lunch, meet some of the farmers, and learn about the effects of terroir not only in wines but in cuisine as well. Chef Jeff will be working with Bloom Micro Greens (Los Osos), Chaparral Gardens (Atascadero), Fat Cat Herb Farms (Paso Robles), Happy Acres Family Farm (Templeton), Hearst Ranch Beef (San Simeon), Limerock Walnut Oil (Paso Robles), Nature's Touch Produce (Templeton) and Windrose Farms (Paso Robles). \$50 for VINsider Club Members and \$65 for guests. Contact Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x39 or events@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.

Sunday, July 17 Festival Mozaic Notable Encounter Villa Filaree, Arroyo Grande

We are proud to again sponsor Festival Mozaic, which brings orchestral and chamber music to the Central Coast each summer. One of the particularly appealing opportunities that the festival offers is a series called Notable Encounters: intimate concerts and discussions paired with gourmet food and great wines in wonderful venues. This year, we're sponsoring *French Impressions* with Scott Yoo and Anna Polonsky performing a violin sonata by Claude Debussy. Festival Music Director Scott Yoo serves as your tour guide, illuminating the fire, emotional depth and musical texture that makes this work a masterpiece. For more information, or to buy tickets, contact Festival Mozaic at festivalmozaic.com or 805.781.3009.

Saturday, August 20 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 annual pig roast to celebrate the impending harvest and the first public appearance of our new 2010 *Patelin de Tablas*. 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 \$70 for VINsiders and \$85 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are essential -- this is one of our most popular events and sells out quickly! Contact Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x39 or events@tablascreek.com for reservations or more information.



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- www.sbnature.org/winefestival/ 805.682.4711 ext. 112

Santa Barbara Wine Festival Santa Barbara, California

June 25, 2011 ٢

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June 12, 2011 Ojai Wine Festival Ojai, California www.ojaiwinefestival.com 800.648.4881

Paso Robles Wine Festival Paso Robles, California www.pasowine.com

Los Angeles, California

i March 20-22, 2011

🏟 May 14, 2011

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www.californiawinemasters.org

A Culinary Evening with California Winemasters

Tablas on Tour: National Events

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

Rhone Rangers Pacific Northwest Tasting

Rhone Rangers Southern California Tasting

July 7-10, 2011

🂰 July 13, 2011

🎳 August 7, 2011

Seattle, Washington

800.467.0163

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September 22-25, 2011

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