

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



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Harvest Report

The vineyard is now dormant after an excellent harvest, and a cover crop of peas, oats, and vetch is well established. We are into the standard winter weather patterns: cool foggy mornings, with daytime highs getting briefly into the upper sixties. December was marked by soaking rain storms which replenished the ground water supply and increased the likelihood that we will be able to dry-farm in 2003.

Harvest kicked off with the Syrah on September 6, and the other varietals followed soon after: Viognier on September 12, Marsanne on September 13, Roussanne on September 14, Counoise on September 17, Grenache Blanc & Grenache Noir on September 19, and Mourvèdre on September 26. The last lots were picked and in the winery by November 6, two days before our first winter storm dumped 6 inches of rain on the vineyard. Weather during harvest was generally cool, with a few intense heat waves. The result was ripe grapes with crisp acid backbones.

Overall, the quality is tremendous. This is our largest harvest to date, and we're thrilled with the quality of the wines the grapes have produced. The year appears to have been favorable to both the early-ripening and the later-ripening varietals. The early contingent (Viognier and Syrah) is showing beautifully: the Viognier is hugely aromatic, and the smell of peaches and violets characteristic of the varietal permeated the tank room during fermentation. The Syrah is inky and dense, with highly concentrated fruit, good spice, and relatively moderate tannins. At the same time, the later varietals benefited from the extended ripening: the Roussanne is rich and honeyed, but balanced by crisp acidity, while the Mourvèdre is meaty, with a dense smoky quality. There is always a risk of believing that each new year is the best ever...but in the 2002 vintage, we appear to have hit a home run.

See **HARVEST** on page 4



Wine Club Update

Tablas Creek Wine Club members can look forward to some excitement in their February Wine Club shipment. The coming installment will include a bottle of the 2000 *Panoplie*, our elite cuvée made in the style of Château de Beaucastel's *Hommage à Jacques Perrin*.

The Wine Club is a great opportunity to sample some unique Tablas Creek Vineyard wines! You can sign up online at tablascreek.com, or call us at 805.237.1231.

Wine 101: Grafting

Grafting is a crucial part of any vineyard operation. Vinifera are susceptible to a root louse called phylloxera, which sucks the nutrients from the root and slowly starves the vine. Phylloxera is native to North America, but when vine cuttings from the eastern United States brought the parasite to France in the 1860s, the result was the decimation of French and other European vineyards by the end of the 19th century. With international shipments of grape vines, the parasite spread to wine regions around the world and caused serious damage to vineyards in California, Australia and South Africa. Vineyards which succumb to phylloxera must be replanted – an expensive and time-consuming enterprise.

Many research dollars have been spent on finding a way of preventing phylloxera infestations. Vines planted in sandy soil were found to be immune to the

See **GRAFTING** on page 3

Focus Varietal: Counoise

Perhaps the question we hear most frequently at wine events and in our tasting room is “Counoise? What the heck is Counoise?” Even the *Wall Street Journal* joked about Counoise’s obscurity in a recent article about blends. Yet the grape is a key component of many Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines, and comprises 10% of the Beaucastel Rouge.

Early History

The precise origin of Counoise (pronounced “Coon-wahz”) is unknown. According to the great Provençal poet Frederic Mistral, it was introduced into Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Spain by a papal officer, who offered it to Pope Urban V when the papacy was based in Avignon in the mid-14th century.

Counoise was planted in the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and was given a prominent place in the wines of the celebrated *Château la Nerthe* estate of Commandant Ducos in the late 19th century. Ducos was a student of the characteristics of various grape varieties, and played a key role in the development of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape region. When the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée laws regulating (among other things) the permitted grape varieties were passed in the 1930s, the varieties planted by Ducos (including Counoise) comprised 11 of the 13 allowed Châteauneuf-du-Pape varieties.

The varietal saw a similar rebirth at Château de Beaucastel when Jacques Perrin increased the planting of Counoise as a complement for Syrah.

Its moderate alcohol and tannins, combined with good fruit and aromatics, balances Syrah’s characteristic intense spice, strong tannins, and high alcohol.



Counoise at Tablas Creek

We brought Counoise cuttings from Château de Beaucastel in 1990 and they spent three years in USDA inspection. Once the vines cleared quarantine, we began the process of multiplying and grafting, and we currently have 5 acres planted. The grape is particularly suited to the geography of Tablas Creek, as it produces most reliably in stony hillside soils and reliable sun. It is easy to graft, is moderately vigorous, and ripens fairly late in the cycle.

We knew that we wanted to list the

individual varieties on the front label of our bottles beginning with the 1999 *Reserve Cuvée*. Before we could do that, though, we had to get past the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms – the federal agency which, until the reorganization mandated by the Homeland Security Act, oversaw label approval for wine. Since no one else in the States had used Counoise on their label, it fell to us to demonstrate it was a legitimate grape. The process, which included submitting a full dossier of materials (in French and English), took two years. Now Counoise is a fully registered (if not widely recognized!) grape varietal.

Flavors and Aromas

Counoise is a deep purple-red, and has a rich, spicy character, with flavors of anise, strawberries, and blueberries.

In our *Esprit de Beaucastel*, Counoise comprises 10-15% of the blend, and helps open up the more closed varieties of Mourvèdre and Syrah. Its soft tannins and forward fruit rounds out the blend and provides an element of finesse to the final product. ☺

Come Try Counoise!

If you want to try Counoise, or any of the other Tablas Creek varieties individually, join us on Sunday, March 16 for a varietal tasting and blending seminar at the vineyard. The cost is \$20 for Wine Club members and \$30 for guests. To make reservations, or for more information, call 805.237.1231.



Free the Grapes!

Why, you ask, can we not ship directly to consumers in all 50 states? The question has attracted the attention of federal courts around the country. Because the 21st Amendment of the US Constitution gives the states the power to regulate how alcohol is distributed and marketed within their borders, states can prohibit the shipment of wine directly to consumers, and many do.

These laws have been recently challenged in several states (New York, Florida, Texas and Virginia) as violating another clause of the Constitution – the Commerce clause, which empowers Congress to regulate trade among the states. It seems likely that the Supreme Court will hear the issue within the next few years.

In the meantime, however, Tablas Creek Vineyard can only ship wine to residents of certain states. For more information about the issue, visit www.freethegrapes.com. 🍷

parasite, but this discovery did not help the vast majority of vineyards. The most effective solution involved exploiting the native North American rootstock's natural immunity to the parasite; because wild grapevines from eastern North America evolved with phylloxera, they developed a resistance to it. If vinifera is grafted onto the phylloxera-tolerant native American rootstock, the grafted vine will not succumb to the root louse. Vineyards in Europe and North America were replanted using grafted vines, and the practice is still a necessary one.

Grafting is the primary winter activity in the Tablas Creek nursery, and every year we graft thousands of vinifera buds onto rootstocks. An omega grafting machine joins the rootstock to the vinifera like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

There are many different types of rootstock, and we match the vinifera to specific types of rootstock based on compatibility, soil characteristics and desired level of vigor. The grafted vines are put in a warm, humid room to promote the development of calluses where the two plants grow together. After 3 to 4 weeks, they are removed, dipped in wax, planted in plastic pots, and moved into our greenhouses. The vines spend several weeks in greenhouses before they are planted on our estate or sold to other vineyards. 🍷



Nursery Manager Laura Wulff with Jack and Dotty Hopkins of Terra Bella Vineyards at a recent nursery luncheon.

Tablas Creek Open for Tours and Tasting

Tablas Creek Vineyard has finally opened a tasting room! Our winter hours are Thursday through Monday, 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, with tours offered at 10:30 and 2:00. Come visit the vineyard and nursery complex before tasting current releases. Special tours and tastings are always available -- call for more information.



Are you ready for some football!?!

Bob and Barbara Haas, with 49ers owner John York, inaugurate the San Francisco 49ers new wine tasting program. Tablas Creek was the featured wine in the owners' box and VIP suites at the home opener against the Denver Broncos. More details and photos are available online at www.tablascreek.com.

Tablas Creek Cuttings...

☺ Nursery Luncheon

At the beginning of December, we hosted a nursery luncheon showcasing growers and winemakers who have bought vines from our nursery and are producing terrific wines from those vines. Participants included Bob Lindquist of Qupé, Steve Edmunds of Edmunds St. John, Andrew Murray of Andrew Murray, Steve Beckmen of Beckmen, Stephan Asseo of L'Aventure, David Gates of Ridge, and many others. Representatives from these wineries poured their wines made from the Tablas clones, followed by a fantastic group tasting and discussion.

☺ James Beard Dinner

On November 12, the James Beard Foundation in New York featured a dinner celebrating leading lights of the Paso Robles food and wine scene. Laurent Grangien, chef and owner of Bistro Laurent, prepared a 5-course meal and paired each with wines from Tablas Creek Vineyard, Justin, and L'Aventure. The James Beard Foundation celebrates the country's culinary artists, provides scholarships and educational opportunities, serves as a resource for the industry, and offers members the opportunity to enjoy the delights of fine dining. We were thrilled and honored to be selected.

☺ Favorable Reviews

In the November/December 2002 issue of Stephen Tanzer's highly-esteemed *International Wine Cellar*, the 1999 *Reserve Cuvée* received a score of 90. In the December 2002 issue of *Decanter*, a British wine magazine, both the 2000 *Clos Blanc* (5 stars) and the 1999 *Reserve Cuvée* (4 stars) received glowing reviews. ☺

We ended with final crush weights of just over 225 tons: 135 tons of red grapes, and 90 tons of white grapes.

The wines, still in their component varietals, have finished their sugar fermentation (in which sugar turns into alcohol); most have also completed malolactic, or secondary, fermentation (in which malic acid turns into lactic acid). We have begun to taste the lots with an eye to putting together our blends, which we will assemble in March.

We expect to produce just over 5000 cases of whites and about 7500 cases of reds, in addition to slightly increasing our Rosé production to about 400 cases. ☺

Organic Certification

We're thrilled to have passed the last of our tests to receive organic certification. From the beginning, we've farmed without the use of systemic pesticides or herbicides, both because we believe it creates healthier vines, and because it builds a healthier vineyard, soils, and environment.

To that end, we've used compost, cover crops, and beneficial insects to control weeds and pests, in conjunction with hand-harvesting.

Until this year, each state had its own definition of organic agriculture. To protect consumers, and to provide growers with a single set of standards, new USDA regulations went into effect on October 21, superseding all states' statutes regarding organic certification. We are thrilled to be one of the first vineyards in California to be certified organic under the new regulations. You can be assured that all of our wines are produced in a sustainable way...and that we're building a vineyard to last for hundreds of years. ☺



WINE ORDER FORM

DISCOUNTS
 Non-Wine Club members receive a 10% discount on orders of 12 bottles or more.

Wine Club members receive a discount of 20% on orders of any size.

SHIPPING
 For best results, we recommend having your wine shipped to a business address. All shipping is done FedEx 2nd Day Air.

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

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

IA, IL, MN, MO, WI, WV
 1-6 bottles: \$25.00
 7-12 bottles: \$40.00

LEGAL
 Due to federal and state laws, we are permitted to ship to addresses in the above states only.

Wines may only be shipped to and received by adults at least 21 years of age. Adult signature is required for receipt of wine orders.

WINE	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
FULL BOTTLES (750 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$35.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ANTITHESIS 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROSÉ 2001	SOLD OUT	\$27.00	SOLD OUT
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$35.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$35.00	_____
ROUGE 1998	_____	\$32.50	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2000	_____	\$22.00	_____
PETITE CUVÉE 1999	_____	\$22.00	_____
HALF BOTTLES (375 ML)			
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2001	_____	\$18.00	_____
CLOS BLANC 2000	SOLD OUT	\$18.00	SOLD OUT
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2000	_____	\$18.00	_____
RESERVE CUVÉE 1999	SOLD OUT	\$18.00	SOLD OUT
		SUBTOTAL	_____
_____	MasterCard/Visa Number	DISCOUNT	_____
_____	Expiration Date	7.25% TAX (CA ONLY)	_____
_____	Name on Card	SHIPPING	_____
		ORDER TOTAL	_____

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

SHIP TO:
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____

Return form to Tablas Creek Vineyard, 9339 Adelaida Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446 or fax to 805.237.1314

Wine Pairing: Boeuf Provençale

Tablas Creek Winemaker Neil Collins contributed this traditional French recipe. An excellent choice for a cold winter's evening, it provides a terrific complement to Tablas Creek Vineyard's 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel*.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs. stewing beef, cut into 3/4 inch cubes
- 5 strips bacon, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1/2 cup flour
- 3/4 tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tbsp ground fennel seed
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 5 shallots, peeled
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 1/2 tbsp grated orange zest
- 12-15 dry cured black olives, pitted
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped
- 2 large portobello mushrooms, chopped into 1/2 inch slices
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 bottle red wine
- 4 1/2 cups of veal or beef stock



Preparation:

- ⑥ Cook bacon pieces, and dispose of grease. Set aside.
- ⑥ Simmer wine, 3 1/2 cups of stock, bay leaf and rosemary in sauce pan until reduced by 1/4. Leave in sauce pan until needed.
- ⑥ Mix flour, black pepper, salt and ground fennel seed in a mixing bowl. Toss beef cubes in seasoned flour until completely coated. Remove from bowl and pat off excess flour.
- ⑥ Brown the floured meat in olive oil on high in a large casserole dish in small batches. Remove browned beef from pan and set aside.
- ⑥ Lower the heat under the casserole dish, and add carrots, celery, garlic and whole shallots (if needed, add more olive oil). Cook on medium heat until vegetables are browned. Add cooked bacon.
- ⑥ Turn heat to high, and add the browned beef, stirring well. When pan is hot, sprinkle with remains of seasoned flour and stir.
- ⑥ Pour in reduced wine mixture from sauce pan, and bring to a boil. Stir in olives, orange zest, mushroom slices, and the remaining 1 cup of stock.
- ⑥ Cover, and heat in oven for 3 hours at 250 degrees. Remove, taste, and adjust seasoning.

Tablas on Tour -- Coming Events around the Country

⑥ February 1, 2003

Cambria Art and Wine Festival
Cambria, California
805.927.3624

⑥ February 15-16, 2003

President's Day Group Tasting
Various Wineries
Paso Robles, California
www.faroutwineries.com

⑥ February 19-23, 2003

Masters of Food and Wine
Carmel, California
www.highlands-inn.com
800.401.1009

⑥ March 15-16, 2003

Far Out Wineries Zin Summit III:
Zinfandel and More
Paso Robles, California
www.faroutwineries.com

⑥ April 2-6, 2003

Texas Hill Country Food and Wine Festival
Austin, Texas
www.texasfoodandwine.org
512.542.WINE

⑥ April 26, 2003

Rhone Rangers Tasting
San Francisco, California
www.rhonerangers.org
415.345.7575

Tablas at Home -- Coming Events at the Vineyard

January 25, 2003 6:30 pm Joint Winemaker Dinner with Windward Vineyard

Windward is a family owned and operated estate vineyard in the Templeton Gap. They make exclusively Pinot Noir, and share our winemaking philosophy of starting with the very best grapes, and bringing the juice through fermentation naturally. The dinner at Tablas Creek Vineyard will feature wines from Burgundy and Châteauneuf-du-Pape as well as Windward and Tablas Creek. Tickets are \$125; call 805.237.1231 for reservations or more information.



January 26, 2003 11:00 am Pruning and Grafting Seminar

Get an inside glimpse into the pruning, grafting, and growing of vines at Tablas Creek's nursery! You will receive a field seminar on pruning from Vineyard Manager Neil Collins and on bench-grafting from Nursery Manager Laura

Wulff. You will then have the opportunity to prune both vinifera and rootstock, and to graft the vines you pruned. Tablas Creek will care for your grafts, and you will be able to return in April to pick up your vines! The event is free, but space is limited and reservations are required. Call 805.237.1231 for reservations.



March 16, 2003 11:00 am Barrel Tasting and Blending Seminar

Ever tasted Counoise? Or Mourvèdre? How about Roussanne? If you love Rhône varietals, join Jason Haas and winemaker Neil Collins at Tablas Creek Vineyard for a barrel tasting of individual varietals, and have a chance to produce the blends of your dreams. See what each varietal brings to our cuvées! \$30.00 per person; \$20 for wine club members. Space is limited. Reservations required; call 805.237.1231.



New Vintages Released!

Our 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel* (formerly *Reserve Cuvée*), our 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* (formerly *Clos Blanc*), and our 2000 *Côtes de Tablas* (formerly *Petite Cuvée*) were released nationwide on January 1, 2003. Look for them at a retail store near you!

Happy New Year from Tablas Creek Vineyard!



9339 Adelaida Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446

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