

The WINE ADVOCATE®

TABLAS CREEK

2002 CHARDONNAY ANTITHESIS	WHITE	88
2001 COTES DE TABLAS	RED	89
2002 COTES DE TABLAS	WHITE	88
2002 ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL	RED	(92-95)
2000 ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL	RED	92
2002 ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC	WHITE	92

2001 ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC	WHITE	90
2002 GRENACHE BLANC	WHITE	89
2000 PANOPLIE	RED	94
2002 ROSE	ROSE	90
2002 ROUSSANNE	WHITE	90
2002 VERMENTINO	WHITE	91

"This vineyard is co-owned by the Perrin family of Chateau Beaucastel in Châteauneuf du Pape and the well-known American importer, Robert Haas, of Vineyard Brands. As I indicated last year, Tablas Creek is a work in progress, but since the 2000 vintage, the wines have become stronger and stronger, with the 2002s their finest efforts to date. Located west of Highway 101, the vineyard is planted with Beaucastel's French clones of Rhône varietals on steep hillsides with considerable limestone in the soil. It appears to be a star in the making. The ever-changing nature of this winery is reflected in the cuvées' name changes. The Grand Cuvée has been renamed Esprit de Beaucastel, and their slightly less expensive offering, called Côtes de Tablas, was formerly known as Petit Cuvée, which was a pejorative name that did not do justice to the wine's quality.

The white wines, which are Mediterranean in style, are well-worth checking out by those who find many Rhone Ranger whites too overblown and Chardonnays too woody and diluted. Little new oak is utilized as the fruit is clearly in the forefront. The **2001 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc** (an outstanding blend of 44% Roussanne, 22% Viognier, 18% Grenache, and 16% Marsanne) offers a beautiful perfume of flowers, honeysuckle, tangerines, pears, and citrus oils. Medium to full-bodied, pure, fresh, and lively (despite its substantial size), it will provide enormous pleasure over the next several years. Even better is the **2002 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc**. A blend of 70% Roussanne, 20% Grenache blanc, and 10% Viognier, it boasts impressive aromatics of honeyed citrus, candle wax, spice, rose petals, and lemon oil. A superb expression of a beautifully textured, pure, dry white, it will drink well for 1-5 years.

The primarily tank-fermented and aged **2002 Roussanne** (1,500 cases) carries its hefty 14.5% alcohol well. Aromas of rose water intermixed with pineapples, candle wax, and lanolin are followed by a well-defined, intense, full-bodied white. A perfect foil for grilled seafood, it should be consumed over the next 1-3 years.

A limited cuvée, the **2002 Grenache Blanc** comes across as a Paso Robles-styled Chablis. Crisp and fruity, with light to medium body as well as a striking minerality, this interesting white will drink well for 1-2 years. The same can be said for the limited production **2002 Vermentino** (250 cases). One of the finest Vermentinos (known as Rolle in southern France) I have tasted, it exhibits an excellent nose of acacia flowers, citrus oils, honeyed grapefruit, and a hint of mint in the richly fruity, medium to full-bodied, fresh, lively personality. It is a great example of an unknown varietal that has excelled in the limestone-based soils of Tablas Creek. The **2002 Côtes de Tablas Blanc** (36% Viognier, 30% Marsanne, 26% Grenache Blanc, and 8% Roussanne; 2,500 cases produced) reveals excellent citrus, pear, pineapple, and honeysuckle notes. This medium to full-bodied, pretty white will drink well for 1-2 years. Made from 100% Chardonnay, the **2002 Antithesis** possesses high acidity as well as characteristics of wheat thins, lemon zest, orange skins, and minerals. Medium-bodied and tangy, it will provide a lot of pleasure over the next 1-3 years.

One of the finest dry California rosés I have tasted is Tablas Creek's **2002 Rosé**, a blend of 57% Mourvèdre, 29% Grenache, and 14% Counoise. Only 365 cases of this expensive offering were produced. It is the Perrin/Haas interpretation of a full-bodied, old-styled Tavel. Powerful, rich, and concentrated, with plum, cherry, and currant flavors offered in a full-bodied, dry style, it should be consumed before February/March, 2004.

As indicated, the red offerings go from strength to strength. The **2001 Côtes de Tablas** (3,200 cases) is an excellent value. A blend of 38% Mourvèdre, 34% Syrah, 24% Grenache, and the balance Counoise, this deep ruby/purple-colored 2001 reveals aromas of plums, figs, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and spice box with hints of licorice and cigar smoke in the background. The complex aromatics are followed by a medium to full-bodied wine with copious quantities of sweet, concentrated fruit. Drink it over the next 5-6 years. The **2002 Esprit de Beaucastel** (a 2,800-case blend of 57% Mourvèdre, 27% Syrah, 10% Grenache, and 6% Counoise) is the finest dry red this estate has yet produced. The Counoise component provides violet and floral notes, the Mourvèdre, tannin, structure, and rugged notions of leather, animal fur, and tree bark, the Syrah offers blackberries as well as *creme de cassis*, and the Grenache, warmth, generosity, glycerin, and opulence. An intense, dense purple-colored, complex red with large body as well as a sense of elegance and definition, it should be a whopper when released next year. The superb **2000 Esprit de Beaucastel** (this is the same wine as the 2000 Grand Cuvée reviewed in issue #139 last year) is a blend of 35% Mourvèdre, 26% Syrah, 25% Grenache, and 14% Counoise. It reveals complex characteristics of cloves, spice box, cinnamon, and black fruits in a full-bodied, Châteauneuf du Pape-like style. Dense and chewy, with tremendous intensity as well as richness, like the 2002, it should age well for 10-12 years, possibly longer. Lastly, a new offering, the limited cuvée of Tablas Creek's version of Beaucastel's Hommage à Jacques Perrin, is the **2000 Panopile**. It will only be made in the greatest vintages. The full-throttle, blockbuster 2000 (a 75-case blend of 55% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, and 15% Grenache) exhibits notes of new saddle leather, blackberries, licorice, earth, pepper, and spice. Intense, full-bodied, and moderately tannic, it needs another 1-3 years of cellaring, and should last for 12-15."

TABLAS
CREEK
VINEYARD

