

As usual, there's a dizzying array of bottlings on offer from Tablas Creek, the iconic Paso Robles producer whose wines continue to set the pace for elegance in the region. Owner Jason Haas and longtime winemaker Neil Collins (actually the only person ever to have that job) told me that the 2016 growing season was "extremely easy and well-timed," with no frost events early on and a warm but not too hot growing season that kept acidity levels healthy. The resulting wines are, perhaps, richer than the 2015s, he said, but "they aren't on the super-ripe side of the equation, either." I've been especially impressed by the white wine program here in recent years and, starting with the 2016 vintage, there is now a Picardan bottling in the Tablas Creek lineup. This rare southern Rhône variety is rarely encountered, much less vinified on its own, in its native region these days, so it was especially interesting to be able to check it out here this summer.

SCORES

2016	Roussanne	White	92
2016	Esprit de Tablas Blanc	White	93
2017	Blanc Patelin de Tablas	White	91
2017	Grenache Blanc	White	91-92
2017	Marsanne	White	91-92
2017	Picardin	White	91
2017	Picpoul Blanc	White	91
2017	Roussanne	White	92-93
2017	Vermentino	White	91
2017	Viognier	White	91-92
2017	Côtes de Tablas Blanc	White	92
2017	Esprit de Tablas Blanc	White	93-94
2015	Esprit de Tablas	Red	94
2015	Panoplie	Red	95
2016	Patelin de Tablas	Red	91
2016	Counoise	Red	92
2016	Grenache	Red	92
2016	Pinot Noir Full Circle	Red	93
2016	Tannat	Red	92
2016	Côtes de Tablas	Red	92
2016	En Gobelet	Red	94
2016	Le Complice	Red	93
2016	Esprit de Tablas	Red	94-95
2016	Panoplie	Red	95-96
2017	Patelin de Tablas	Red	90-92
2017	Counoise	Red	91-93
2017	Grenache	Red	91-93
2017	Mourvèdre	Red	92-94
2017	Pinot Full Circle	Red	92-94
2017	Esprit de Tablas	Red	93-95
2017	Panoplie	Red	93-95

REVIEWS

2016 Roussanne

92 points

“Light bright yellow. Aromas of fresh pear and white peach are complicated by suggestions of orange pith and chamomile. Juicy and penetrating on the palate, offering intense, mineral-tinged citrus and orchard fruit flavors that deepen steadily on the back half. Anise and candied ginger qualities emerge on a very long, mineral-dominated finish that echoes the orange and pear notes.”

2016 Esprit de Tablas Blanc

93 points

“Pale straw-gold. Intense, mineral-accented Meyer lemon, nectarine and pear skin aromas are complemented by a deeper honey nuance. Tightly wound citrus and orchard fruit flavors unfurl slowly with air, picking up a suave floral character and a hint of chalky minerality. The impressively long, incisive finish shows outstanding clarity and leaves behind lively citrus zest and honeysuckle notes.”

2017 Patelin de Tablas Blanc

91 points

“Pale gold. Mineral-accented orange, pear and white flowers on the perfumed nose, along with a gingery nuance that adds spicy lift. Taut citrus and orchard fruit flavors unfurl slowly and show hints of bitter quinine and anise that build slowly with air. Shows very good depth as well as energy on the finish, which echoes the mineral and citrus fruit notes.”

2017 Grenache Blanc

91-92 points

“Brilliant straw-yellow. Bright and incisive on the fragrant nose, displaying lively citrus and orchard fruit and floral qualities, along with a chalky mineral overtone. Sharply focused and energetic in the mouth, displaying strong, minerally lift to the zesty orange, Anjou pear and honeysuckle flavors. Shows very good delineation and tangy cut on the persistent finish, which echoes the floral and pear notes.”

2017 Marsanne

91-92 points

“Pale gold. Pungent Meyer lemon, pear nectar and pineapple aromas show excellent clarity and suggestions of fennel and smoky lees. Round and fleshy on the palate, offering ripe citrus and orchard fruit flavors and deeper suggestions of sweet butter and honey that build on the back half. Shows impressive heft as well as energy and finishes supple and long; a refreshing ginger nuance adds closing spiciness.”

2017 Picardan

91 points

“Limpid straw. Pungent Meyer lemon and pear aromas show very good energy and complicating hints of fennel and white flowers. Smooth and seamless on the palate, offering ripe melon and pear flavors that firm up and take on a bitter citrus pith quality with aeration. Shows impressive vibrancy for its heft and finishes silky and long, with a suave floral note hanging on.”

2017 Picpoul Blanc

91 points

“Green-tinged straw. Bright and sharply focused on the nose, displaying incisive lemon zest, quinine and mineral scents, along with a hint of pungent flowers in the background. Dry, tightly focused and nervy in the mouth, offering brisk, mineral-tinged citrus and orchard fruit flavors that show zero excess weight. Closes on a floral note, displaying very good focus and tangy persistence.”

2017 Roussanne

92-93 points

“Lurid gold. A powerfully scented bouquet evokes ripe fig, pear nectar, white flowers, honey and smoky minerals. Plush, deeply concentrated and expressive on the palate, offering sappy orchard and pit fruit flavors braced by a spine of juicy acidity. Hefty but refreshingly vibrant as well, displaying impressive finishing clarity and strong, mineral-dominated persistence.”

2017 Vermentino

91 points

“Limpid straw-yellow. Fresh pear and lemon zest aromas are lifted by notes of white flowers and dusty minerals and backed by a subtle herbal nuance. Silky, focused and penetrating on the palate, offering refreshingly bitter citrus and orchard fruit flavors that put on weight with air. A fennel nuance emerges on the finish, which clings with strong, minerally tenacity”

2017 Viognier**91-92 points**

“Limpid green-hued gold. Primary aromas of fresh citrus and orchard fruits are complemented by hints of chalky minerals and ginger. Juicy and energetic on the palate, offering fresh pear and Meyer lemon flavors that show very good focus and mineral drive. The mineral and floral notes repeat on the incisive finish, which shows strong cut and fruity cling.”

2017 Côtes de Tablas Blanc**92 points**

“Light bright yellow. Mineral-accented orange, honeydew melon and pear nectar on the highly perfumed nose, along with a hint of pungent flowers. Juicy citrus and orchard fruit flavors show impressive clarity, and a touch of bitter quinine adds back-end cut. Shows impressive depth as well as delineation on the finish, which hangs on with strong, mineral-tinged persistence.”

2017 Esprit de Tablas Blanc**93-94 points**

“Light green-tinged gold. Mineral-accented tangerine, melon and pear scents on the highly perfumed nose; a floral nuance gains strength as the wine opens up. Vibrant citrus and orchard fruit flavors are joined by bitter quinine and honeysuckle flourishes that build slowly with air. Shows impressive depth as well as nerviness on the finish, which hangs on with strong, mineral-dominated persistence.”

2015 Esprit de Tablas**94 points**

“Brilliant ruby-red. Pungent, spice-accented red and blue fruit aromas show excellent clarity and pick up a sexy floral nuance as the wine opens up. Juicy and lively on the palate, offering intense raspberry and boysenberry flavors that steadily deepen and become sweeter on the back half. At once concentrated and energetic in style, showing outstanding focus and drive on an impressively long, subtly tannic, spice-accented finish.”

2015 Panoplie**95 points**

“Dark purple. A heady, exotically perfumed bouquet evokes ripe dark berries, candied flowers, incense and baking spices, along with a smoky mineral overtone. Broad, deep and intensely spicy on the palate, offering sweet blackberry and bitter cherry flavors that flesh out slowly as the wine stretches out. Concentrated yet vibrant and almost shockingly lithe, showing strong finishing cut and chewy tannins that add final grip.”

2016 Patelin de Tablas**91 points**

“Lurid ruby-red. Powerful, spice-accented aromas of dark berries and violet, joined by a smoky quality that builds in the glass. Chewy and broad on the palate, offering sappy black currant and bitter cherry flavors and a touch of dark chocolate. Youthfully tannic on the finish, which leaves spice and cherry pit notes behind. This is a pretty serious example of an entry-level bottling.”

2016 Counoise**92 points**

“Brilliant ruby-red. Vibrant red berry, floral pastille and licorice aromas are complemented by mineral and allspice accents. Sappy and energetic in the mouth, offering nervy raspberry and bitter cherry flavors that become sweeter and deeper as the wine opens up. Finishes with bright mineral cut, supple, slow-building tannins and impressive, red-fruit-dominated persistence.”

2016 Grenache**92 points**

“Deep bright-hued red. Ripe cherry and raspberry aromas are complemented by suggestions of spicy white pepper and woodsmoke. Appealingly sweet red fruit liqueur and floral pastille qualities are joined by a subtle herbal nuance that emerges with aeration. Shows impressive energy on the long, juicy finish, which features gentle, well-knit tannins and lingering florality.”

2016 Pinot Noir Full Circle**93 points**

“Deep vivid red. A highly perfumed bouquet evokes ripe, spice-tinged red berries, candied rose and incense, along with an intense mineral topnote. Concentrated yet vibrant in style, showing impressive delineation and spicy cut to the sweet raspberry, cherry cola, floral pastille and cinnamon flavors. Becomes deeper on the subtly tannic finish, which hangs on with strong tension and floral tenacity.”



2016 Tannat**92 points**

“Bright purple. Spice-tinged blackberry, cassis, candied flowers and allspice on the deeply perfumed nose. Intense dark berry liqueur, licorice and violet pastille flavors are lifted and sharpened by smoky minerality, and a peppery quality emerges with air. Concentrated but energetic as well, finishing with impressive length, youthful tannins and resonating dark fruit character.”

2016 Côtes de Tablas**92 points**

“Vivid ruby-red. A highly perfumed bouquet evokes ripe red fruits, succulent herbs and potpourri. Sweet, seamless and penetrating on the palate, offering energetic raspberry, cherry and succulent herb flavors sharpened by a lively mineral quality and a jolt of white pepper. Finishes long and spicy, with sneaky tannins that add shape and youthful grip.”

2016 En Gobelet**94 points**

“Lurid ruby. Sexy, highly perfumed raspberry liqueur, spicecake and floral pastille aromas display excellent clarity and hints of smoky minerals and licorice. Broad, supple and appealingly sweet, showing impressive depth and intensity to the red and blue fruit, exotic spice and candied lavender flavors. Finishes very long, sappy and energetic, with smooth tannins lending shape and gentle grip.”

2016 Le Complice**93 points**

“Opaque ruby. Primary blackberry and cherry cola aromas are complemented by suggestions of succulent herbs and exotic spices. Broad and fleshy on the palate, offering sweet dark fruit flavors along with bitter chocolate, cola and licorice flourishes. Becomes deeper with air and finishes with excellent clarity, building tannins and strong, spicy persistence.”

2016 Esprit de Tablas**94-95 points**

“Bright violet. Smoke-accented cherry and blackberry aromas are complemented by suggestions of candied licorice, musky rhubarb and cracked pepper. Chewy and broad on entry and then tighter in the midpalate, offering concentrated dark berry preserve and spicecake flavors and a sweet touch of candied violet. Closes on a recurring floral note, showing impressive persistence and suave, even tannins.”

2016 Panoplie**95-96 points**

“Deep brilliant violet. Energetic, mineral-accented aromas of ripe red and dark berries are complicated by suggestions of incense and potpourri. Broad and fleshy on the palate, offering impressively concentrated black raspberry, cherry liqueur and violet pastille flavors and a strong suggestion of five-spice powder. Finishes extremely long and sweet, featuring slow-building tannins, a hint of smokiness and repeating florality.”

2017 Patelin de Tablas**94-95 points**

“Lurid ruby. Sexy, highly perfumed raspberry liqueur, spicecake and floral pastille aromas display excellent clarity and hints of smoky minerals and licorice. Broad, supple and appealingly sweet, showing impressive depth and intensity to the red and blue fruit, exotic spice and candied lavender flavors. Finishes very long, sappy and energetic, with smooth tannins lending shape and gentle grip.”

2017 Counoise**91-93 points**

“Limpid ruby-red. Expressive red berry and cherry preserve aromas are complemented by incense and floral pastille nuances. Sappy and seamless in the mouth, offering concentrated raspberry, bitter cherry and spicecake flavors and a hint of candied flowers. Silky, harmonious tannins build slowly on a very long, focused finish that leaves behind sappy floral and red berry notes.”

2017 Grenache**91-93 points**

“Limpid ruby. Mineral-accented red berry liqueur and floral oil aromas are complemented by suggestions of pungent herbs and Asian spices. Supple, concentrated and alluringly sweet, showing impressive clarity and lift to the intense raspberry liqueur and lavender pastille flavors. Finishes very long and minerally, with harmonious tannins sneaking in late.”

2017 Mourvèdre**92-94 points**

“Inky ruby. Expressive, sharply delineated dark berry, cherry and licorice scents, along with building floral and mineral notes. Juicy, sharply focused and energetic on the palate, offering concentrated blackberry and bitter flavors and a touch of candied flowers. Smoothly plays depth off energy and finishes very long and smoky, displaying firm cut and youthfully solid tannins.”

2017 Pinot Noir Full Circle**92-94 points**

“Brilliant ruby-red. Intensely perfumed red berry, exotic spice and floral pastille aromas show excellent clarity, and a subtle mineral overtone builds in the glass. Nervy and focused on the palate, offering taut raspberry and bitter cherry flavors that unfurl and become deeper on the back half. Juicy and precise, showing strong tension and finishing very long and sweet, with silky, even tannins that add framework and gentle grip. If this wine turns out the way I suspect it will, then it could easily stand toe-to-toe with some of the best examples of the variety from anywhere in the greater Central Coast.”

2017 Esprit de Tablas**93-95 points**

“Deep lurid ruby. Ripe red and blue fruit, Moroccan spice and lavender oil aromas are enlivened by a smoky mineral quality as the wine opens up. Sappy and expansive on the palate, offering vibrant, mineral-tinged black raspberry, cola and spiced flavors that show excellent clarity and thrust. The mineral and spice notes drive an impressively persistent finish that’s given shape by smooth, slow-building tannins.”

2017 Panoplie**95-97 points**

“Dark bright-rimmed purple. A complex, highly perfumed bouquet displays ripe red and blue fruit, potpourri, incense and exotic spice qualities, along with a smoky mineral topnote. Shows superb energy and tension in the mouth, offering sweet, densely packed black raspberry, boysenberry and floral pastille flavors sharpened by a peppery spice nuance. Shows outstanding clarity and floral lift on an extremely long, penetrating finish shaped by smooth tannins.”