

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
Vol. 8, No. 2
August 2009

State of the Vineyard

Following our third-consecutive winter with below-average rainfall, we were pleased to see the grapes set a moderately heavy crop. Even though our total rainfall of 18 inches was only about two-thirds of normal, the distribution of the rain we received was favorable to the grapevines. We saw lots of days of moderate rainfall instead of a few days of heavy downpours, and this pattern allowed the rain to soak into the topsoil rather than running off.

We had one moderate frost event in late April that particularly impacted the Grenache, Grenache Blanc, Picpoul Blanc, and Counoise. We do see some residual damage from the frosts even now, but the vigor of the year should mitigate the frost's impact at harvest time. Every part of the vineyard re-sprouted, and although some weaker or younger vines didn't set a crop, we still expect to see decent yields. Some affected sections of vineyard have a mix of first- and second-flowering crops, which will ripen at different times. We typically harvest each block two or three times anyway, and it will be particularly important that we do so this year.

Spring came late, and was relatively cool. Most of May and June saw days topping out in the mid- to high-70s, with frequent low cloud cover at night, instead of the more typical cloudless skies and 90 degree days. Overall, between the cool spring and the frosts, flowering was fully three weeks later than normal.

A major heat wave settled over California in early July, and we switched to daytime highs in the upper-90s and low 100s, with slightly warmer than usual nights (lows in the upper 50s and low 60s). We have seen rapid acceleration of ripening across the entire vineyard, and saw the first signs of veraison the next-to-last week of July, just a few days later than both 2006 and 2007.

See **VINEYARD**, page 3



Wine 101: Vertical Tasting of *Esprit de Beaucastel*

by Jason Haas

Francois Perrin joined us at the vineyard in May for one of his semi-annual visits, and we spent two days tasting through our blended but unbottled wines (reds from 2007 and whites from 2008) and tasting components of our 2008 reds, with the goal of creating some preliminary blends.

We try to look back as we're looking forward, and to that end we pulled samples of every vintage of our *Esprit de Beaucastel* wines (red and white) to taste in vertical format alongside the soon-to-be-bottled 2007 *Esprit* red and the 2008 *Esprit Blanc*. This article describes the reds; for a recap of the whites, visit the blog at tablascreek.typepad.com

While the whites showed wines in a variety of stages, the reds, surprisingly, didn't show any wines in a closed stage. The 2002 and 2003, both closed last year, have opened back up, and the 2004 hasn't shown any signs of shutting down yet (though I expect it will sometime in the next year). Consistent with other recent tastings, I loved the 2002, 2006 and 2007. Note that we didn't make an *Esprit de Beaucastel* in 2001.

* 2000 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A meaty, earthy nose lifted by the impression of

See **VERTICAL**, page 4

Featured Wine:
2007 ROUSSANNE
Details on page 6

Focus Varietal: Counoise

Perhaps the question we hear most frequently at wine events and in our tasting room is “Counoise? What’s Counoise?” Even the *Wall Street Journal* joked about Counoise’s obscurity in an article about blends. Yet the grape is a key component of many Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines, and comprises 10% of the Beaucastel Rouge. Its moderate alcohol and tannins, combined with good fruit and aromatics, balances the characteristic intense spice, strong tannins, and high alcohol of Syrah.

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 variety saw a similar rebirth at Château de Beaucastel when Jacques

Perrin increased the planting of Counoise as a complement for Syrah. In Provence, it is renowned for its use in rosés.



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 hill-

side 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. 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.

Flavors and Aromas

Counoise is a light purple-red, and has a rich, spicy character, with flavors of anise, strawberries, and blueberries. In our *Esprit de Beaucastel*, Counoise comprises 5-10% 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. At slightly higher percentages (10-25%) in our *Côtes de Tablas*, its soft fruitiness and pronounced spice give the wine an earlier-drinking friendliness that compliments the fruit and acidity of Grenache and the structure of Syrah. We also include Counoise in our *Rosé*. In years of noteworthy intensity, Counoise also makes a delightful single-varietal wine with the character of a Cru Beaujolais: earth, spice, intense floral fruit, light body, vibrant acidity and soft tannins. We’ve bottled it as a single varietal wine three times: in 2002, 2005 and 2006. 🍷

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Veraison is the time in the ripening cycle at which the grapes stop growing in size and start accumulating sugar. Red grapes start to soften and turn red, while the white grapes start softening and add a little yellow to their green tone. Veraison typically marks a point about six weeks from the beginning of harvest, which suggests that harvest will start the first or second week of September. However, the extensive variation within each varietal and the high percentage of second crop suggest that this year's harvest will be a long one.

Since early summer, our main challenge in the vineyard has been canopy management -- removing extra shoots and leaves. Most of our vines, with energy stored up after consecutive light crops and encouraged by the regular rainfall this winter, sent out dozens, even hundreds of shoots. We've been going through the vineyard thinning out the canopy to allow the circulation of air and light around the clusters. It is important to expose the grapes to sun early in the season, which gives them thicker skins and more protection against sunburn later in the summer.

In the cellar, we have completed the bottling of our 2007 reds and have mostly completed the bottling of our 2008 whites. 2007 is looking like the vintage of the decade for producers around Paso Robles,

and we are incredibly excited about the wines that we have in bottle. The year's character was determined by the cold, very dry winter of 2006-2007, which concentrated the berries and produced yields that were between 15% and 30% lighter than normal. The ripening cycle was warm but rarely hot, and the resulting wines were intense and structured but with an appealing lushness that cloaks the tannins and makes them surprisingly approachable. The more structured varieties (Mourvèdre and Roussanne, in particular) really excelled, and we believe that the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel* and *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* are the best red and white wines we've ever made.

The 2008 wines look very strong, with similar intense fruit and lush mouthfeel to the spectacular 2007 wines but perhaps a touch softer and less structured. It's a profoundly pretty vintage, and while it will perhaps not be quite as long lived as the 2007 vintage, it should provide some exceptionally appealing wines. The newly-blended 2008 *Esprit de Beaucastel* is gorgeous, slightly more old-world in style than 2007 with lots of dark fruit and earth tones. We're excited to offer it as a part of our *en primeur* program in December.

This is a quiet time in the winery. We're enjoying the summer weather, having a great time with all the guests coming to see us and looking forward to the fall. 🍷



Sebastian and Eli Haas help out in the park during the Paso Robles Wine Festival

VINsiders' Corner

Fall Wine Club Shipment

We're very excited about the upcoming Fall 2009 wine club shipment, which is highlighted by the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel* and the 2008 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. The shipment will include:

- * 2 bottles of the 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, our signature Mourvèdre-based red wine from the blockbuster 2007 vintage.

- * 1 bottle of the 2008 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, our signature Roussanne-based white wine, which will not be released nationally until spring of 2010.

- * 1 bottle of 2007 *En Gobelet*, our newest blend, a special cuvée from head-pruned, dry-farmed sections of the vineyard.

- * 1 bottle of the bright and tropical 2008 *Picpoul*, our third ever bottling of this traditional Rhône grape whose name translates as "lip stinger".

- * 1 bottle of 2008 *Bergeron*, a 100% Roussanne made in the model of the great Bergeron Roussannes from the Savoie region.

The shipment will leave the winery on Tuesday, September 22. Will-call VINsiders may pick up their shipments at the winery beginning Friday, September 18. If you need to make any changes to your VINsider record (i.e., credit card number or expiration date, shipping address, etc), please do so as soon as possible by contacting Nicole Getty at vinsider@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39.

Fall VINsider Tasting Party

Mark your calendars now for our shipment tasting party here at the vineyard on Saturday, September 19 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Pick up your Fall 2009 shipment while you join us for a tasting of the wines in the offering, including the remarkable 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. 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 14 to events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39.

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acidity. A little rustic on the palate, with acid elevated at this moment lifting what would otherwise be dark red fruit to a brighter tone (red plum, particularly). The tannins are a little drying at the moment. The wine improved with some air. It's not closed right now, but I feel that it will be better in another year or two.

* 2002 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A rich, deep nose with a little minty character giving it lift. The mouth is powerful with rich flavors of mocha, leather and currant. There are still some substantial tannins, but they're very well cloaked. This should give a lot of pleasure for another decade.

* 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A little alcohol on the nose, then mint, cherry and spice. Very nice in the mouth with good acids highlighting the dark cherry and plum fruit. Mint chocolate on the finish, still with some tannic edges. This seems to be mostly out of its closed stage, and may well be even better in 6 months than it is now. Should be good for another 6-8 years at least.

* 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A nice elegant and restrained nose. Very self-contained; Francois Perrin called it "un vin carré", literally translated as "a square wine". Beautiful structure, with flavors of figs, chocolate and mineral. Not hugely giving right now, this has another decade ahead of it at least.

Announcing the VINsider Wine Club Collector's Edition

We are thrilled to announce the inauguration of the VINsider Wine Club Collector's Edition, whose members will have exclusive access to library vintages of *Esprit de Beaucastel* wines that we have aged in ideal conditions in our own cellars since the 2003 vintage. Members will also receive an increased allocation of our newest *Esprit de Beaucastel* wines. Initial membership in this program is limited to 250, so we encourage you to act quickly.

Collector's Edition members will continue to receive two shipments of wine per year from us. The spring shipment will be the same six-bottle selection that all VINsiders receive but the fall shipment will be a full case -- the regular fall shipment wines, plus additional current and library selections of *Esprit* and *Esprit Blanc*. The fall 2009 shipment for Collector's Edition members will include the following: 2 bottles of 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, 1 bottle of 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, 4 bottles of 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, 2 bottles of 2008 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, 1 bottle of 2007 *En Gobelet*, 1 bottle of 2008 *Picpoul Blanc* and 1 bottle of 2008 *Bergeron*.

VINsiders should have received a letter with more details about the program. Those who are interested in becoming inaugural Collector's Edition members can do by registering online at tablascreek.com, by faxing back the sign-up sheet included with the letter, or by contacting Nicole Getty at 805.237.1231 x39 or vinsider@tablascreek.com.



Francois Perrin and Robert Haas taste the verticals of *Esprit de Beaucastel* and *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*

* 2005 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A gamy nose but with lots of fruit behind it, particularly after some time in the glass. The fruit is high-toned compared to '02-'04, perhaps because of the increased percentage of Grenache and the decreased percentage of Syrah. There are nice powdery tannins on the finish, and lingering flavors of leather, chocolate and plum. Definitely decant if you're drinking it now or wait up to 15 more years.

* 2006 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: Very precise fruit and mineral on the nose, with a little Cunoise-driven briary wildness lurking behind. Dark cherry and mint in the mouth along with a nice foresty character that provides counterpoint to the fruit. Very clean all the way through. Drinking great now, and should have another 15 or more years ahead of it.

* 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel*: A spectacularly rich, layered nose with waves of dark red fruit, mineral, meat and mocha. The palate is equally intense, with balance given by a combination of nice, fresh acidity and substantial but fine-grained tannins. There is a powdered-sugar character to the tannins that I often find in great wines. This will be wonderful young but should age for 20 years or more.

It was clear from these tastings that 2007 is a truly special vintage, a notch above anything else that we've achieved. But still, there was a consistency of character and style to these wines, even as the vintage and varietal blend has changed. And that's a good thing. Anyone who is interested in taking advantage of our experiences in tasting through our older wines can get our assessments on the stage that our library wines are at by looking at our *Tablas Creek Vintage Chart*, which we update every few months.





WINE ORDER FORM

AUGUST 2009

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
Shipping included on orders that include 6 or more bottles of *Esprit* and/or *Esprit Blanc*.

CA*
 1-2 bottles: \$10.00
 3- 6 bottles: \$15.00
 7-12 bottles: \$25.00

CO, ID*,NM, NV*,OR, WA*,WY
 1-2 bottles: \$15.00
 3-6 bottles: \$25.00
 7-12 bottles: \$35.00

AK, DC, FL, GA*,IA, IL, MI*, MN, MO, NC*, NE*, NH, NY*, OH*, SC*, TX*, VA*, VT*, WI, WV*
 1-2 bottles: \$20.00
 3- 6 bottles: \$30.00
 7-12 bottles: \$45.00

**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]				
ROUSSANNE 2007	_____	\$22.95	\$17.55	_____
WHITE WINES				
VERMENTINO 2008	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2007	_____	\$40.00	\$32.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2006	_____	\$40.00	\$32.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2008	_____	\$25.00	\$20.00	_____
GRENACHE BLANC 2007	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
ROSÉ 2008	_____	\$27.00	\$21.60	_____
RED WINES				
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2006	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____
CÔTES DE TABLAS 2007	_____	\$25.00	\$20.00	_____
PANOPLIE 2006 (<i>VINsiders only; 2 bottle limit</i>)	_____	\$95.00	\$76.00	_____
SYRAH 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
GRENACHE 2006	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
MOURVÈDRE 2007	_____	\$35.00	\$28.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2005	_____	\$45.00	\$36.00	_____
ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2004	_____	\$50.00	\$40.00	_____

SUBTOTAL _____
 DISCOUNT _____
 8.25% TAX (CA ONLY) _____
 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

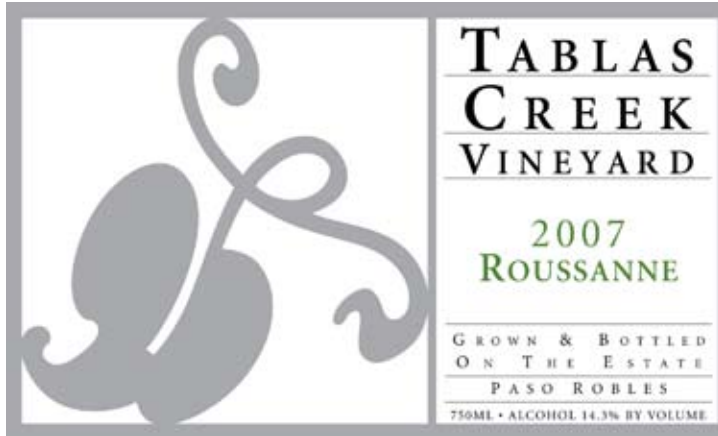
BILL TO:	SHIP TO:	CREDIT CARD:
Name: _____	Name: _____	MC/Visa #: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Exp. Date: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____	Name on Card: _____
Email: _____	Phone: _____	Signature: _____

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: 2007 ROUSSANNE

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 15% 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 2007 *Roussanne*, featured from August 1 through August 31, 2009.



Tasting Notes: The 2007 Tablas Creek Vineyard *Roussanne* is Tablas Creek's seventh release of its 100% Roussanne. The wine is exuberantly and elegantly characteristic of the Roussanne grape, with honey, honeysuckle, and pear aromatics, a rich, viscous mouthfeel with just a hint of oak, and a long, lingering finish.

Suggested Food Pairings: Roussanne is a tremendously versatile white varietal, and pairs wonderfully with food. As befitting its Mediterranean origins, it complements dishes prepared in garlic and olive oil, but its richness can also stand up well to foods with spice, such as curries, gumbo, or Asian foods. It is also delicious when paired with rich shellfish dishes like lobster, crab and scallops.

Wine Pairing: Gazpacho

The end of the summer is tomato season throughout most of the United States, and there is no dish that tastes more like summer than gazpacho. This recipe, which, in the traditional Anadalucian style contains bread, is hearty enough for a light summer meal. The dry fruitiness of the Tablas Creek *Rosé* make it a perfect wine to pair with gazpacho. *Serves 4-6.*

Ingredients

4 slices country-style bread, about 1 inch thick, crusts removed
4 small cucumbers, peeled, seeded and chopped
4 lbs. very ripe tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
1/2 cup sherry vinegar
3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 cup water
salt

Soak bread for 30 minutes in a small bowl in water to cover. Squeeze out moisture with your hands.

Puree bread, cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, olive oil, and water with an immersion blender until very smooth. The soup should be fairly thin.

Season to taste with salt.

Chill gazpacho in refrigerator for at least two hours. Adjust seasonings and serve in individual glasses or soup bowls.

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

Saturday, August 22 **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 beginning of harvest and the newly released 2007 *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, October 3 **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 and cellar staff walk participants through the process of testing grapes for ripeness, both through traditional examination of physiological characteristics and more modern chemical analyses of sugars, acids, and pH. Participants who wish to do so will have an 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 fermenting tanks. The day will conclude with a field lunch prepared by our vineyard crew. The event is free for VINsiders and \$20 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are required.

Saturday, October 17, 2009 **Best of the West** **Far Out Wineries Tasting**

10:00 AM

Join us for the Far Out Wineries' signature annual event: a celebration of the Paso Robles west side! Winemakers and owners from the seventeen Far Out Wineries will showcase their top wine as they impart insight into their winemaking philosophy and vineyard operations. It is sure to be an impressive line up of wines, and a memorable collection of personalities! The price is \$55 per person and tickets are on sale now. The seminar will be held at Opolo Winery and Vineyard, and sells out quickly. For tickets, call 805.237.0138.

Friday through Sunday, October 16-18 **Paso Robles Harvest Wine Weekend**

Tablas Creek is celebrating the Paso Robles Harvest Wine weekend! Join us all weekend for tastings including selections from our new VINsider club shipment such as the spectacular 2007 *Esprit de Beaucastel*. Tours will run Friday-Sunday at 10:30am, 12:00 noon and 2:00pm; no reservations are necessary. On Saturday, come out the tasting room to enjoy hand-crafted *al pastor* tacos from Señor Camacho, from noon until three. Tacos are free with tasting fee, and no reservations are required. Wine club members can also pick up their Fall shipments at the winery. We hope to see you there!

Friday through Sunday, November 27-29 **Holiday Open House**

After eating 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. The open house and gift showcase is free to all, and no reservations are necessary.

Saturday, December 5 **En Primeur Tasting and Futures Offering**

VINsiders are invited to join Tablas Creek's winemakers for the sixth annual barrel tasting and sale *en primeur* of Tablas Creek's remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2008 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 x39, or events@tablascreek.com.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

August 9, 2009

Rhone Rangers Tasting
Santa Monica, California
www.rhonerangers.org
800.467.0163

August 23-24, 2009

Family Winemakers of California
Fort Mason Center
San Francisco, California
www.familywinemakers.org

August 29, 2009

Malibu Wine Classic
Malibu, California
www.malibuwineclassic.com
310.451.7600

September 23-26, 2009

Santa Fe Wine & Chile Fiesta
Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.santefewineandchile.org
505.438.8060

October 8, 2009

Winemaker Dinner at York Street Restaurant
Dallas, Texas
yorkstreetdallas.com
214.826.0986

October 16-18, 2009

Harvest Festival
Paso Robles, California
www.pasowine.com
805.239.8463

November 1, 2009

Celebrate the Craft
Lodge at Torrey Pines
La Jolla, California
www.celebratethecraft.com
858.777.6635

November 5-8, 2009

Big Sur Food & Wine Festival
Big Sur, CA
www.bigsurfoodandwine.org
831.667.0800

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



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