

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
Vol. 4, No.3
Fall 2005



The vineyard crew harvests Viognier.



Viognier grapes are brought from the vineyard to the winery in macrobins

State of the Vineyard

Harvest 2005 is underway! On Wednesday, September 21, we brought the first lots of the year (Viognier, as usual) into the cellar. Since then, in addition to more Viognier and Chardonnay, we have begun harvesting the Roussanne, and we expect the Syrah, Grenache Blanc, and Marsanne to be in before the end of the month. The weather has been cooperative; after a hot mid-summer and a cool late summer (daytime highs in the second half of August and first week of September were an unseasonable mid-70s), a picture-perfect spell of weather set in the second week of September and has continued ever since. Daytime highs in the mid to upper 80s have allowed the grapes to attain ripeness, while cool nights (typically in the upper 40s) have maintained acids and given us the flexibility to pick at peak flavors. It appears that the grapes are ripening at slightly lower sugars in 2005, at least for the whites, which should allow us to make full bodied wines at slightly lower alcohol levels than in the past few years.

In the cellar, Beaucastel winemaker Claude Gouan joined the Tablas Creek winemaking team the week of August 22nd to create final assemblages of the 2004 reds. We were stunned by the wines' evolution since they were put in foudre in May. The Mourvèdre, in particular, stood out, although there were many excellent lots of every varietal. We blended the *Esprit de Beaucastel*, *Côtes de Tablas* and *Panoplie*, and also saved enough to keep aside single-varietal Mourvèdre, Syrah, Grenache and Counoise. It appears to us that the 2004 vintage will push Paso Robles even more to the forefront of wine regions within California.

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Wine 101: Organic Viticulture

At Tablas Creek, we believe that organic farming allows the grapes to show more varietal character, have more intense flavors and taste more like where they are grown. Since our beginning in 1989, we have followed the model set by Château de Beaucastel, which has been an organically farmed vineyard since the 1960s. Like Beaucastel, we are confident that in addition to producing the highest quality fruit, avoiding chemical additives makes for a healthier vineyard.

To reap a successful harvest, all farmers must ensure that their crops are not overrun with weeds, are not eaten by bugs or other pests, and receive sufficient nutrients. Modern (often termed "conventional") viticulture relies on commercial herbicides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers for those purposes. Organic grape growers, on the other hand, eschew chemi-

See **ORGANIC** on page 3



Cover crops serve a variety of purposes in an organic vineyard

Focus Varietal: Picpoul Blanc

Picpoul Blanc (also spelled *Piquepoul Blanc*) is one of the lesser-known Rhône varieties, but one that we think has a tremendous future in California. It is one of the thirteen permitted varieties in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where it is used primarily as a blending component to take advantage of its acidity. Like the better known Grenache and Pinot, Picpoul has red, white and pink variants, though Picpoul Noir and Picpoul Gris are very rare. Literally translating to “lip stinger”, Picpoul Blanc produces wines known in France for their bright acidity, minerality, and clean lemony flavor.

Picpoul in France

Most scholars believe Picpoul is native to the Languedoc region of Southern France, where it is still found today. Records from the early 17th century indicate that it was blended with Clairette (another white Rhône variety) to form the popular sweet Picardan wine (not to be confused with the Châteauneuf du Pape variety of the same name) which was exported by Dutch wine traders from Languedoc throughout Northern Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. After the *phylloxera* invasion at the end of the 19th century, Picpoul was not widely replanted. Today it is best known from Picpoul de Pine, the crisp light green wine of the Pinet Region in the Côteaux de Languedoc.

Picpoul at Tablas Creek

We did not import Picpoul with our initial eight varieties. After the original eight were established in the vineyard, we decided that the consistent sun and long growing season at Tablas Creek might allow varieties that in France are lean and high in acidity to show character impossible elsewhere. Picpoul, with its reputation for sharp acidity, was the first of these high-acid whites that we brought into quarantine,

and was in fact the first supplemental variety we brought in of any sort. It was released from quarantine in 1998, and we spent the next two years propagating and grafting it. We planted approximately one acre of Picpoul in 2000, and received our first significant harvest in 2003. It has been such a success that we plan to triple our acreage in the next few years.



In the vineyard, Picpoul is not a difficult variety to grow. It pushes early, making it somewhat susceptible to frost, but ripens relatively late. In the past two years, Picpoul was the last white variety to be brought in, just before Mourvèdre (the last red of the season) at the end of October. In the winery, we ferment it in neutral barrels to complement the grape's brightness with a bit of roundness.

When we first bottled Picpoul, it was necessary to petition the Tax and Trade Bureau to recognize the variety, a process we had undergone with several other

varieties, including Grenache Blanc, Counoise and Tannat. We amassed literature on Picpoul to demonstrate that it was a recognized variety in other countries, and compiled descriptions of its characteristics to satisfy the TTB's requirement that it have distinct value as a wine grape in the United States. In February of 2004, our petition was formally approved.

Aromas and Flavors

We have found that, in California, Picpoul maintains its bright acidity, but also develops an appealing tropical lushness. It is quite rich in the mouth, with an exceptionally long finish. We chose to bottle our first vintage of *Picpoul Blanc* as a single variety in 2003, and the wine shows a rich nose of pear, pineapple and spice. In the mouth, buttery flavors of pineapple and orange are balanced by crisp acids, and the long, rich finish shows flavors of piña colada.

Unfortunately, we don't yet have enough Picpoul planted to both produce a single variety and include it in our blends, and in the 2004 vintage we decided that Picpoul would be an excellent component of the 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. In the blend, the addition of Picpoul lifts the aromatics of the wine in much the same way Viognier might, and its bright acids highlight the richness of the Roussanne and Grenache Blanc.

Whereas in previous vintages Viognier had played the role of lifting the aromatic profile, including Picpoul instead in the *Esprit Blanc* means that the wine includes only grapes approved for Châteauneuf-du-Pape. (Viognier, while a Rhône variety, is not permitted in Châteauneuf-du-Pape). The 2004 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* was included in the Fall 2005 VINsider shipment, and will be released nationwide in early 2006. ©

cal solutions, and must be more creative. They rely on a variety of solutions, including cover crops, mulch, beneficial insects and composting. At Tablas Creek, we use all of these methods.

Cover cropping is one of the mainstays of our organic viticulture program, and serves several purposes throughout the year. Each fall after harvest, a selection of crops (including peas, oats, clover and vetch) are planted between the rows of vines. During the winter rains, the cover crop minimizes soil erosion. In the spring, we plow the cover crop under, and it acts as a natural fertilizer, returning valuable nitrogen to the soil. These cover crops provide a habitat for beneficial insects such as ladybugs and lacewings, which in turn eat the insects that could potentially damage the grapevines.

Weed Control

A tractor attachment called the Tournesol (after the sunflower-like arrangement of its cultivating heads) is our primary method of in-row weeding. A circular duo of blades is dragged behind the tractor, rotating a few inches below the ground to uproot weeds in the vine rows. A rubber sensor arm in front of the cultivator alerts a computer to the presence of an obstruction, and rotates the cultivator head around the vine, post or wire. Thus, the weeds can be uprooted without damaging the grapevine. Other methods of weed control we've used include hand hoeing in between the rows and mulching (using shredded rootstocks and other



The Tournesol in-row cultivator in action

organic materials) around the vines.

Fertilization

Compost is another crucial component of our organic program. We compost vine cuttings, leaves, and by-products of the winemaking process, such as stems, grape skins and

seeds. Most of the compost is used for spreading in the vine rows, usually in October. We have enough compost for a few acres of vineyard, and it is used in the areas that need an intensive dose of nitrogen. The compost pile is also used to brew compost tea. Composted material is placed in a sack made of cheesecloth, much like a tea bag, and warmed well water is bubbled through it for two to four hours. The resulting liquid is a highly enriched organic brew that can be sprayed directly on the leaves and bunches to combat mildew or can be run through our irrigation drip lines to directly fertilize the roots.



Brewing compost tea

Pest Control

Our organic pest control is done primarily by encouraging a sustainable population of a diverse array of insects, including lacewings, ladybugs, predatory wasps, thrips and insectivorous mites. Cover crops are a large part of this effort, but we also plant sections of the vineyard with insect-friendly, flower-rich cover crops, which thrive throughout the year. Because we don't spray any pesticides or herbicides, each year the beneficial insect population builds and becomes more effective. We can also intervene as necessary by releasing beneficial insects in response to specific threats. Leafhoppers are our most common threat, sucking liquid from the vines and sapping vine strength, and we control their population by introducing their natural predator, lacewings. When necessary in the summer, we place tabs containing roughly 10,000 lacewing eggs every 100 meters along affected vine rows. They hatch and augment the existing population, bringing the leafhoppers under control. For more severe outbreaks, we have at our disposal organic soaps and oils which we can spray on vines.

Organic Grapes, Not Organic Wines

Although all the grapes that go into our wines are organically grown, we do not make organic wines. The distinction is one that is confusing to many people. At issue is the use of sulfites in wine. Sulfites have been used for centuries to discourage the formation of vinegar and inhibit oxidation. A certain level of sulfites occurs naturally in grapes, and additional sulfites are traditionally added in winemaking. The USDA, through its National Organic Program, has defined organic wines to be wines made with organically grown grapes, and without any added sulfites. At Tablas Creek, we use 100% organically farmed grapes, and just enough sulfites to ensure that the wines are stable and can age gracefully. ☺

In the vineyard, the rains from last winter have allowed the vines to flourish. Unique in our experience, the vines are still growing new foliage in September, and we have had to be vigilant in canopy management to expose the grapes to light and air. The ground water also increased the likelihood of mildew, but between spraying with compost tea and the traditional "Bordeaux mixture" we have had no problems with mildew at Tablas Creek.

Finally, we are in the process of building a wetlands area to treat the wastewater from our winery operations. This area, above Tablas Creek and below the rootstock fields, will provide a watery habitat for plants, animals and insects while it treats the water that we use to keep the cellar clean. Look for more details in upcoming newsletters. ☺

Tablas Cuttings...

☺ 2003 Esprit de Beaucastel Released!

The 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel* will be released nationally on October 15th. It is 50% Mourvèdre, 27% Syrah, 16% Grenache and 7% Counoise. The 2003 vintage was tremendous, and the wines have concentrated flavors and a distinctive minerality. The wine is dark black-red in color, with a rich briary nose of blackberry and rare steak. The layered palate shows spicy plum and cherry fruit, smoky flavors, ripe tannins, and long elegant finish. The wine is showing remarkably well now, but should evolve elegantly in bottle for 10-15 years or longer.

☺ Shipping Update: Texas, Ohio, New York and Connecticut

As the ramifications of the recent Supreme Court decision filter through the various state legislatures, we've been updating our shipping policies. We are happy to announce that we can now ship to Texas and Ohio. And we are in the process of obtaining the necessary state permits for New York and Connecticut. We hope to be able to ship to those two states by the end of October.



Tablas Creek supporter Joel Peterson enjoys Chef Jeff Scott's creations at the Wine and Sushi Seminar at the vineyard on July 23.

Recent Press

Tablas Creek and Paso Robles have attracted a great deal of press attention in the past several months. Stephen Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, in an article dedicated to California's Central Coast, gave the vineyard a glowing review, stating that Tablas Creek produces "some of the very few California wines that can beat France at its own game." He also remarked that the, "wines are clear, bright and delineated, as refined as wine gets in this part of the world." The newly released 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel* received a 92, the 2003 *Panoplie* a 94, and our dessert wine, the 2003 *Vin de Paille Quintessence* received a 94.

We've also received terrific reviews from Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate* (95 for the 2003 *Panoplie*, 92 for the 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel*, and 91 for the 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*) in the June 2005 issue and from *Wine & Spirits* (91 for the 2003 *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*) in the June 2005 issue. The 2004 Rosé received a 90 from the October 2005 *Wine Enthusiast*, accompanied by a glowing review in which it was described as, "a beautiful... wine." Finally, the "outstanding" 2003 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* won a Decanter award of excellence (June 2005).

The Paso Robles area and its wineries have also gained the national media spotlight with profiles in *Decanter* (Summer 2005), *Bon Appetit* (October 2005), and the *Wine Enthusiast* (October 2005).

The October 2005 issue of the *Wine Enthusiast* also featured Jeff Morgan's excellent profile of Bob Haas, celebrating his 50 years in the wine industry.

Our website, www.tablascreek.com/InTheNews.html contains links to a complete list of articles and reviews featuring Tablas Creek. We update the list weekly; if you see us mentioned somewhere, please let us know!



WINE ORDER FORM

OCTOBER 2005

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

CA

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

CO, ID, NM, NV, OR, WA, WY

1-6 bottles: \$20.00
7-12 bottles: \$30.00

AK, IA, IL, MN, MO, NC, NH, OH, TX, VA, VT, 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.

An adult signature is required at delivery for all shipped wine orders.

WINE

QUANTITY

PRICE

TOTAL

FEATURED WINE [*15% DISCOUNT WILL BE REFLECTED IN FINAL CHARGE]

LAS TABLAS ESTATES *GLENROSE VINEYARD 2002* _____ \$32.50* _____

VINSIDER EXCLUSIVES

VERMENTINO 2004 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$27.00 _____

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2004 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$35.00 _____

WHITE WINES

GRENACHE BLANC 2004 _____ \$27.00 _____

CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2004 _____ \$22.00 _____

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2003 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$35.00 _____

ANTITHESIS 2003 (4 bottle limit) _____ \$35.00 _____

VIIGNIER 2003 (4 bottle limit) _____ \$27.00 _____

ROUSSANNE 2003 _____ \$27.00 _____

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2002 _____ \$35.00 _____

ROUSSANNE 2002 _____ \$27.00 _____

ROSÉ WINES

ROSÉ 2004 _____ \$27.00 _____

RED WINES

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2003 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$40.00 _____

SYRAH 2003 _____ \$35.00 _____

MOURVÈDRE 2003 _____ \$35.00 _____

CÔTES DE TABLAS 2002 _____ \$22.00 _____

SUBTOTAL _____

DISCOUNT _____

7.25% TAX (CA ONLY) _____

SHIPPING _____

ORDER TOTAL _____

BILLING & SHIPMENT: *EITHER*

VINSider Name: _____

VINSider Number: _____

Signature: _____

Bill to my credit card on file Ship to my address on file

OR

BILL TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

SHIP TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

CREDIT CARD:

MC/Visa #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

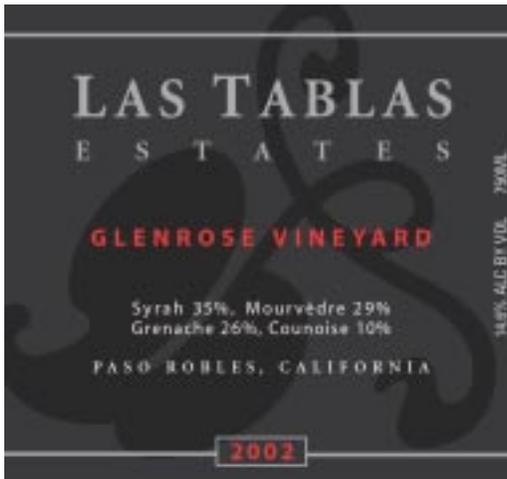
Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

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

FEATURED WINE: 2002 LAS TABLAS ESTATES GLENROSE VINEYARD

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 2002 Las Tablas Estates Glenrose Vineyard, featured from October 1 through October 31.

Tasting Notes: The *Glenrose Vineyard* is our first wine in the Las Tablas Estates project. Las Tablas Estates wines are single-vineyard expressions of the characteristic varietals of the Southern Rhône. All the estates are planted with cuttings from vines imported from Château de Beaucastel by Tablas Creek Vineyard. All Las Tablas Estates wines are fermented using only indigenous yeasts, and are vinified, blended and bottled at Tablas Creek. Glenrose Vineyard, in west Paso Robles, California, is over 2000 feet in elevation, and planted on very chalky, steep and deeply terraced soils. These conditions stress the vines, which average only about two tons yield per acre. The resulting wines are intense and flavorful, with excellent minerality and lush fruit. This 2002 Las Tablas Estates *Glenrose Vineyard* has a deep red color, displays copious aromas of ripe cherries and raspberries, leather and peppery spice. In the mouth, it displays tremendous intensity, minerality and depth, with a velvety feel on the palate and a long elegant finish. It is ready to drink now, or over the next 2-3 years.

Suggested Food Pairings: The Syrah-based *Glenrose* is quite versatile, and pairs wonderfully with red meats. It is particularly good with roasted meats and game, such as pork and venison, but is also delicious when paired with pastas with rich sauces, and barbecues.

Wine Pairing: Pork Chops in Balsamic Cherry Sauce

The fruit of the cherries and the natural earthiness of the pork in this delicious recipe call for a wine with both intense fruit and spicy, smoky flavors. The 2002 Las Tablas Estates Glenrose is a perfect match. You can substitute 1/4 cup of dried cherries, if fresh ones are not in season. If you do, increase chicken broth to 1/3 cup, and reduce cherry cooking time to 5 minutes.

Serves 2.

Ingredients

- 2 5-ounce boneless pork chops (each about 1 inch thick)
- 1/3 cup bottled balsamic vinaigrette
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 large shallot, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup low-salt chicken broth
- 1/2 cup fresh cherries
- 1/3 cup red wine

- ⑥ Place pork and vinaigrette in pie dish; turn to coat. Let marinate 10 minutes.
- ⑥ Melt butter in a heavy, medium skillet over high heat.
- ⑥ Using tongs, lift pork from vinaigrette and place in skillet, reserving marinade.
- ⑥ Sprinkle pork with pepper, and saute until brown, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer pork to a plate.
- ⑥ Add shallots to skillet, and stir until softened (about 1 minute). Add red wine to deglaze the pan and stir about a minute to soften cooked bits.
- ⑥ Add cherries, broth and reserved marinade, and bring to a boil. Cook gently for about 10 minutes until cherries are soft and sauce is syrupy.
- ⑥ Return pork to skillet, and simmer until pork is cooked through, cherries are tender and sauce is lightly reduced, about 2 minutes per side.
- ⑥ Season with salt and pepper, and serve pork topped with sauce.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

🕒 **October 7, 2005**

Rainforest Action Network Benefit
San Francisco, California
www.ran.org
415.398.4404 x337

🕒 **October 9, 2005**

Celebrate the Craft
Lodge at Torrey Pines
San Diego, CA
www.celebratethecraft.com
858.777.6635

🕒 **October 11, 2005**

Winemaker Dinner at Moose's Restaurant
San Francisco, California
www.mooses.com
1.800.28.MOOSE

🕒 **October 14-16, 2005**

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

🕒 **October 21, 2005**

Winemaker Dinner at Cambria Pines Lodge
Cambria, California
www.cambriapineslodge.com
805.927.4200

🕒 **December 9, 2005**

Winemaker Dinner at Birch Ridge Inn
Killington, Vermont
www.birchridge.com
802.422.4293

🕒 **December 19, 2005**

Winemaker Dinner at Stonehedge Inn
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts
www.stonehedgeinn.com
978.649.4400

🕒 **January 12, 2006**

Winemaker Dinner at Simon Pearce
Quechee, Vermont
www.simonpearce.com
802.295.1470

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

Saturday, October 15 10:00AM
Best of the West IV: Far Out Wineries Tasting

Join us for a celebration of the Paso Robles west side! Winemakers and owners from each of the fourteen Far Out Wineries will showcase their signature wines and discuss how these wines reflect the unique soils of the "far out" hills west of Paso Robles. The seminar will be held at Opolo Winery and Vineyard. The event is \$50 per person, and will include a selection of cheeses, breads and other treats. Seating is limited and reservations are required -- this event will sell out quickly. Tickets are available through Opolo Winery and Vineyard. Call 805.238.8593 or visit www.opolo.com.

Saturday, October 29 7:00 PM
Hurricane Katrina Benefit Dinner

Join Tablas Creek and the rest of the Far Out Wineries to help raise donations for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief. Local chefs will be making their favorite dishes using Cajun and Creole flavors, and each of the Far Out Wineries will be donating their time and their wines for a wonderful event in support of a great cause. The event will be held at Carmody McKnight Winery. Tickets are \$85, and all proceeds will be donated to the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity and the ASPCA Disaster Relief Fund. For reservations or more information, contact Kathleen at Carmody McKnight at 805.238.9392.

Friday and Saturday, November 25 & 26 1:00 PM
Holiday Gift Showcase

After having eaten your fill at Thanksgiving dinner (accompanied by Tablas Creek wine, of course!) come out to the Tablas Creek tasting room to sample an assortment of gift ideas for the holidays. We have Provençal linens and pottery, wine books for the most discriminating connoisseur, Rebecca Haas jewelry, a selection of clothing and many other gifts grand and frivolous. We will be serving festive hors d'oeuvres, and of course, pouring Tablas Creek wine. The gift showcase is free to all, and no reservations are necessary.

Saturday, December 3 1:00-4:00 PM
En Primeur Offering and Futures Tasting
VINsiders Only

VINsiders are invited to join Tablas Creek's winemakers for the third annual barrel tasting and sale *en primeur* of Tablas Creek's two remarkable red wines from the outstanding 2004 vintage: *Esprit de Beaucastel* and *Panoplie*. 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.