

# TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



**The VINformer**  
**Vol. 5, No.2**  
**May 2006**

## State of the Vineyard

Spring is in full swing, and the vineyard is vibrantly green. This year we've had very late rainfall, lasting until the first week of May, and the cool weather in April has contributed to a very late budbreak.

Overall, the vineyard received just over 26 inches of rain this winter. While this amount is average for this area, the timing of the rain was unusual. Save for a very large storm in late December, most of the rainfall came in the late spring, in the form of several weeks of mild showers. We even had a few days of snowfall at the vineyard, an event which occurs approximately every five years. About an inch of snow fell in mid-February, with another inch or so coming a month later. It lasted long enough to be quite picturesque, and kept the vines in dormancy for a few extra weeks.

The first vines began budding in late April, almost a month later than normal. Cool weather in the spring usually brings concerns about frost, but since the vines were still dormant during most of the cold weather, we seem to have escaped the worst of the frost threats. As of early May, we had not even used our frost-prevention fans.

Now that the vines have budded, they are growing voraciously, and we expect that they will quickly catch up to the normal growing schedule. The constant watering they received in March and April was very timely, and the vines are setting big fruit crops.

In the vineyard, we've been largely focusing on organic weed control and fertilization. The steady rains have encouraged the cover crop to thrive, and it's now time to disk under the crop, to return nutrients to the soil. We've been particularly focused on our newly planted vines on Scruffy Hill, where we planted Roussanne, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Counoise vines in January. They were planted when dormant, and buried in

*See VINEYARD on page 3*



## Wine 101: Winery Wetlands Project

Although a vineyard's water demands are obvious, it is less well known that wineries themselves are major users of water. Especially during harvest, wineries use significant amounts of water to clean the barrels, tanks, presses, pumps, hoses and bins that contain and move grapes and juice in their transition into wine. Thorough cleanliness is essential to keep bacteria from taking hold in the winery, and to ensure an appropriate environment for the action of yeasts. Because grapes and wine are highly acidic, winery runoff water is often too acidic to safely release directly into the environment.

The state of California recognized the environmental pressures that winery wastewater was creating in wine producing regions, and mandated that wineries treat their wastewater rather than releasing it either into a septic system (as we formerly did) or into town sewer systems. The state allows wineries to choose from a number of different treatment systems, ranging from the traditional to the experimental. One option, which we found appealing for its environmentally sensitive approach, was to create a wetlands area, where acid-tolerant water plants and the bacteria that grow in the roots of these plants do the work of filtering water as it passes through a series of treatment pools and channels. We received approval from the state for our wetlands design in early 2005 and began its construction in May. It was completed this winter, and is active for this year's activities in the cellar.

*See WETLANDS on page 4*

**Featured Wine:**  
**2004 Grenache Blanc**

**Details on page 6.**

# Focus Varietal: Grenache Blanc

**G**renache Blanc is the fourth most widely planted white grape in France. It produces rich, full wines with bright flavors and crisp acidity and is a key element in our *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*. As the name suggests, it is related to the more widely known Grenache Noir. Many grape varieties have both red and white variants; the best known is Pinot, which has Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris variations. Grenache Blanc, like Grenache Noir, is drought-resistant, vigorous, easy to graft and ripens fairly early in the cycle.

Since we brought Grenache Blanc into our nursery, we have sold budwood and grafted vines to a number of other Rhône-producing vineyards in California. The California climate of hot days and cool nights seems to be perfect for the varietal and encourages its two prime qualities: richness with crisp acids.

## Early History

Grenache Blanc originated in Spain, and still plays a role in the wines of Rioja and Navarre. From Spain, it spread to France, and has thrived in the vineyards of the Rhône valley and Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the crisp acidity of Grenache Blanc is used to balance the honeyed richness of Roussanne, and white *Château de Beaucastel* is roughly 80% Roussanne and 20% Grenache Blanc.

## Grenache Blanc at Tablas Creek

We imported cuttings of Grenache Blanc from Beaucastel in 1992, and the vines spent three years in quarantine at the USDA station in Geneva, New York. In

1995, the cuttings were declared virus free and released to Tablas Creek Vineyard. These vines were received into our nursery and the first grafted vines went into the ground in 1996. The first significant harvest of the varietal was 1999. For the



next three years (up to and including the 2001 *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*), we could only refer to the varietal as Grenache on our label because Grenache Blanc was not yet recognized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Not surprisingly, many people found this nomenclature confusing and we were regularly asked why we added a red varietal into our white blend; in 2002 we petitioned the BATF to recognize Grenache Blanc as a separate varietal.

## Labeling Grenache Blanc

Having gotten COUNCIL approved in 2000, we were familiar with the process. We compiled literature on Grenache Blanc to show that it was a recognized varietal in other countries, and we compiled descriptions of its characteristics to show that it had positive value as a wine grape in the United States. In February 2003, our petition was approved, and Grenache Blanc now appears on the front labels of the *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and the *Côtes de Tablas Blanc* wines. We are also now able to bottle the single varietal *Grenache Blanc*.

## Aromas and Flavors

Grenache Blanc is straw-colored and produces wines that are high in alcohol, with crisp acids. The nose has bright green apple and mandarin orange aromas, with clean flavors of more green apples, mineral and a touch of peach. It has a long, lingering finish with a hint of licorice. Although it can stand confidently on its own, its crispness and long finish make it a tremendous blending component.

The crispness of Grenache Blanc shows well at low temperatures, whereas many white Rhône varieties shut down when served too cold. In our *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc*, the Grenache Blanc allows the wine to show well, even highly chilled (as many restaurants often serve all white wines). As the wine warms up in the glass, the other varieties unfold, and the full richness of the wine is displayed. 🍷

**Now's your chance to try Grenache Blanc, if you haven't already! It is the Featured Wine for May 2006, and is an additional 15% off for the entire month. See page 6 for details.**

## VINEYARD , from page 1

mounds of earth to protect them from frosts. All of the vines on Scruffy Hill will be completely dry-farmed, and it is now important to control the weeds, so they don't rob moisture from the growing vines. In early May, the crew began disking and hoeing the vines, as well as unburying them. We've also begun brewing the organic compost tea used to control powdery mildew, and preparing our organic fertilizer, made primarily from fish.

In mid-March, we grafted a few acres of Roussanne to Picpoul Blanc. Picpoul has thrived here, and its bright acidity makes a nice addition in our Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc blend. The crew first cut the Roussanne vines about a foot from the surface, and then field grafted the Picpoul budwood on to the already planted vine. The graft site was then wrapped with tape for support and sealed with grafting paint to prevent infection and keep the new grafts from drying out. Field grafting like this accelerates the growth of the vine (compared to pulling plants out and replanting) by harnessing the new budwood to the pre-existing root system. We expect to get a crop from these Picpoul vines in two years, instead of the three years it takes a newly planted bench-grafted vine to be strong enough to produce fruit.

In the winery, spring is the time for blending and bottling. At the end of February, Francois Perrin was at the vineyard to assist in composing the 2005 white blends, including the *Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc* and the *Côtes de Tablas Blanc*. The *Côtes Blanc* and the varietal whites (*Viognier*, *Grenache Blanc*, and *Picpoul*) have been bottled, and the *Esprit Blanc* and *Roussanne* will be bottled in June. The 2004 reds, including the *Esprit de Beaucastel* the *Panoplie*, will also be bottled in June. Like the whites, they will rest in bottle for several months to give them a chance to come out of bottle shock before they are released. 🍷



Jason and Eli Haas enjoy the March snowfall at the vineyard.

## 2005 Rosé Released

The onset of summer marks the return of one of our most popular wines, the Rosé, which we released May 1. The wine is a dry Mourvedre-based blend with white plum aromatics and ripe strawberry flavors. It pairs terrifically with a wide variety of foods, from elegant Mediterranean preparations to good old fashioned barbecue. It's the perfect wine for dining al fresco. This wine generally sells out before the summer's over, so don't wait too long to get your hands on some! You can sample this year's vintage at the vineyard on the Sunday of the Paso Robles Wine Festival, when we'll be pairing it with a selection of smoked and cured salmons. More details about the event are on page 7.

## Shipping Update: Florida, New York and Michigan

We're thrilled that New York and Florida have permitted regulated shipments from wineries around the country. These states now join recent additions Texas and Ohio in permitting direct shipping. New Yorkers and Floridians are now eligible to order wine or sign up for VINsider Wine Club membership.

In addition, Michigan recently passed legislation opening its borders to direct shipping. We're in contact with the state government, and have been told that they are working on licensing forms. We hope to begin shipping at the end of the month.

## Windrose Farm Open for Business

Now that spring is here, it's time to start planting your garden. What better way to begin than with a stop at Windrose Farm? The Tablas Creek greenhouses are full of wonderful organic vegetable and herb plants, including over 200 different varieties of tomatoes. While you're out at the tasting room, stop by the Windrose Farm to browse their selection, and pick up some delicious additions to your garden.



We are thrilled to announce that we have renovated our tasting room. In mid-February, we reconfigured and expanded the tasting room space to include three new tasting bars, new lighting, new inventory display space, and a new color scheme. Stop by and see it for yourselves!

## WETLANDS , from page 1

The Tablas Creek wetlands area consists of a series of holding ponds and connecting channels to the east and south of the winery. The water moves through the system by gravity, and at each state is cleaned by the roots of the plants that live in that part of the system, as well as by the bacteria that develops around the plants' roots. Each step further cleans the wastewater, until at the end we can either allow it to evaporate or use it for irrigation.

The water's journey begins in the winery, where water used to clean tanks and equipment flows through drains in the floor of the winery and into the north end of two large holding tanks just east of the winery. As the water makes its way toward an exit pipe at the south end of the tanks, any solids in the water that have passed through the screens in the drains (such as grape skins, seeds, and bees) sink to the bottom of the tank. This slow settling prevents the pipes and ponds downstream from becoming unnecessarily gummed up.

From the south pipe on the holding tanks, the water flows south (down hill) through a series of pipes to an entrance on the east edge of our first reed pond. This rectangular pond is lined with an impermeable material to prevent the water from passing into our soil, and has a 30,000 gallon capacity. It is filled with gravel and a selection of water filtering plants, including reeds, irises, and cattails, and set at a five percent slope toward the west to move the water through the gravel and the plants it contains. The plants in the pond were chosen to grow vigorously and thrive with their roots in standing water. The roots of the plants, as well as the naturally occurring bacteria that co-exist with the reeds and cattails, act as filters for whatever impurities the water contains.

From the western edge of the reed pond, a pipe drains into a gravel-lined channel leading down to the second holding pond. We control the flow of water into the channel (and therefore the level of the water in the reed pond) with a series of vertical pipes at the entrance to the gravel channel. Water splashes out of whichever pipe we've opened, oxygenating it for the next stage of its treatment. By this time, the water is noticeably cleaner than it was at the beginning. The gravel-lined channel stretches south from the entrance pipe, then turns east and surrounds the lower holding pond. This forces the water to flow all the way around the holding pond



*The completed upper pond.*



*The upper reed pond, under construction*

before it enters through pipes at the pond's eastern edge. The gravel channel is, like the reed pond above, planted with various water plants, and surrounded by water-loving willows.

The lower lined pond holds the treated water, which can be used for irrigation in the vineyard, or returns to the atmosphere through evaporation. To keep the system dynamic, and to ensure that the reed pond is filled even when there is little flow of water out from the winery, we have installed a solar-powered pump in the lower pond that pumps two gallons of water per minute back up to the reed pond, where the cycle begins anew.

Although they are not an essential part of the water treatment system, we have stocked the lower holding pond with mosquito fish, which eat any insect larvae that are laid into the pond.

We are among the first wineries on the Central Coast to implement a winery wetlands for wastewater treatment, and we expect to fine-tune the system over the coming years as the wetland ecosystem develops. The system should become more and more effective as the plants become better developed, and the colonies of bacteria that surround their roots become established. If you are interested in taking a look at the project, you can see it to the left of our driveway, next to Adelaida Road. Although it is clearly visible now, we expect it to be more and more hidden from view as the plants (particularly three large willow trees we planted) grow to maturity. 🌱

## FEATURED WINE: 2004 GRENACHE BLANC

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 2004 Grenache Blanc, featured from May 1 through May 31, 2006.**

**Tasting Notes:** The 2004 *Grenache Blanc* is Tablas Creek's first national release of its 100% Grenache Blanc. The Grenache Blanc grape, a little-known but widely-planted Southern Rhône varietal, produces wines with tremendous body, good acidity, and flavors of citrus, anise, and green apple. Aromas of lemon and anise are followed by full body, flavors of green apple and marzipan, zesty acids and a long, elegant lemon drop finish.

**Suggested Food Pairings:** The 2004 *Grenache Blanc* is a lovely food wine. It is particularly good with Asian

dishes, such as lemongrass beef, sushi, and spicy preparations of fish and chicken, but is also delicious when paired with Mediterranean seafood preparations, such as shrimp scampi.

### Wine Pairing: Farmer's Market Tomato Salad with Orange Zest Crackers

Jill Ogorsolka, of Trumpet Vine Catering, provided this delicious summer recipe. The sweetness and acidity of the tomatoes make it a wonderful pairing for the *Grenache Blanc*.

#### TOMATO SALAD

- 3 Farmer's Market tomatoes, medium sized, multi-colored if possible
- 4 to 6 tablespoons crème fraiche
- 1 tablespoon basil, thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons Pasolivo Orange Olive Oil
- Freshly cracked peppers and kosher salt to taste

Slice tomatoes ¼ inch thick and fan onto serving platter.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

Spread crème fraiche over tomatoes.

Drizzle olive oil over tomatoes and crème fraiche and spread basil over the top.

Serve with the Orange Crackers.



For more information about Trumpet Vine Catering, visit [www.trumpetvinecatering.com](http://www.trumpetvinecatering.com)

#### ORANGE ZEST CRACKERS

- ½ cup unbleached all purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated orange rind
- 2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon sour cream
- 1 ½ teaspoons fresh orange juice
- Coarse salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Blend the flour, pepper, orange rind and butter until the mixture resembles meal, add the sour cream and the orange juice and combine, adding 1 teaspoon of water if necessary, until it just forms a dough.

Gather the dough into a ball and chill it, wrapped in plastic, for about 15 minutes.

Roll out the dough 1/16 inch thick on a lightly floured surface and with a 2-inch round cutter cut out 16 rounds.

Place rounds on an ungreased cookie sheet, sprinkle with coarse salt and bake for 12 minutes, or until they are golden. Transfer crackers to a rack and cool for 5 minutes.



# WINE ORDER FORM

## MAY 2006

### 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, FL, IA, IL, MI, MN, MO, NC, NH, NY, 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]

GRENACHE BLANC 2004	_____	\$27.00*	_____
---------------------	-------	----------	-------

### WHITE WINES

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

CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2004	_____	\$22.00	_____
----------------------------	-------	---------	-------

ROUSSANNE 2004	_____	\$27.00	_____
----------------	-------	---------	-------

ANTITHESIS 2004 (4 bottle limit)	_____	\$27.00	_____
----------------------------------	-------	---------	-------

BERGERON 2004 (6 bottle limit)	_____	\$27.00	_____
--------------------------------	-------	---------	-------

VIOGNIER 2004	_____	\$27.00	_____
---------------	-------	---------	-------

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2003	_____	\$35.00	_____
---------------------------------	-------	---------	-------

ROUSSANNE 2003	_____	\$27.00	_____
----------------	-------	---------	-------

### ROSÉ WINES

Rosé 2005	_____	\$27.00	_____
-----------	-------	---------	-------

### RED WINES

PANOPLIE 2003 (VINsiders Only; 2 bottle limit)	_____	\$95.00	_____
--	-------	---------	-------

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

MOURVÈDRE 2003	_____	\$35.00	_____
----------------	-------	---------	-------

SYRAH 2003	_____	\$35.00	_____
------------	-------	---------	-------

CÔTES DE TABLAS 2003	_____	\$22.00	_____
----------------------	-------	---------	-------

TANNAT 2003	_____	\$35.00	_____
-------------	-------	---------	-------

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

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

## Tablas at Home: Coming Events at the Vineyard

### Sunday, May 21 Wine Festival Open House

10:00 AM

On the Sunday of Wine Festival, we will be welcoming Chef Jeff Scott back to the vineyard for a cured salmon tasting. Come early on Sunday and enjoy different cured salmons, homemade bread, and pair them with the newly released 2005 *Rosé*. We will serve the fish until it's gone, but we don't expect it to last past 11AM, so come early! No reservations are necessary, and the event is free with your tasting fee.

### Saturday, July 8 Midsummer Night Mozart

6:00 PM

Celebrate the rich tradition of the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival with an outdoor dinner at Tablas Creek. Chef Tom Fundaro of Villa Creek will pair his exquisite cuisine with organic seasonal vegetables from Windrose Farm and the wines of Tablas Creek. Dine under the stars and enjoy Tablas Creek's fine wines at the Mozart Festival's most elegant event. The cost is \$125 per person (\$60 tax deductible) or \$900 per table. For reservations or more information, contact the Mozart Festival at 805.781.3009 or [mozartfestival.com](http://mozartfestival.com).

### Saturday, August 19 Pig Roast

6:00 PM

At Tablas Creek, we love terrific parties -- especially when they involve great food, charming company, and, of course, wonderful wine. To that end, we're hosting our third annual pig roast to celebrate the beginning of harvest, our partnership with Windrose Farms, and the newly released 2004 *Mourvèdre*. Join us for roast pork and all the accompaniments. This will be a casual, outdoor party, just right for summer at the vineyard. The cost is \$50 for VINsiders and \$70 for guests. Space is limited and reservations are essential -- this event sells out quickly!

### Saturday, October 21 Best of the West V: Far Out Wineries Tasting

10:00 AM

Join us for a celebration of the Paso Robles west side! Wine-makers 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, and tickets will be available toward the end of the summer. This event sells out quickly! For more information, call 805.238.8593 or visit [www.opolo.com](http://www.opolo.com).

## Tablas on Tour: National Events

### 🍷 June 4, 2006

A Celebration of Wine  
Fresno, California  
[www.acelebrationofwine.com](http://www.acelebrationofwine.com)  
559.244.5741

### 🍷 June 10, 2006

Pine Mountain Wine Festival  
Fort Tejon State Historical Park, California  
[www.pinemountainwinefestival.com](http://www.pinemountainwinefestival.com)  
661.242.3788

### 🍷 June 24, 2006

Atascadero Wine Festival  
Atascadero, California  
[www.atascaderowinefest.org](http://www.atascaderowinefest.org)

### 🍷 July 13-16, 2006

Central Coast Wine Classic  
Shell Beach, California  
[www.wineclassic.org](http://www.wineclassic.org)  
805.544.1285

### 🍷 July 22, 2006

California Wine Festival 2006  
Santa Barbara, California  
[www.touringandtasting.com](http://www.touringandtasting.com)  
805.850.4370

### 🍷 July 26, 2006

Rhone Rangers Tasting  
Seattle, Washington  
[www.rhonerangers.org](http://www.rhonerangers.org)  
707.462.5943

### 🍷 August 20, 2006

Family Winemakers of California  
Northern California Tasting  
San Francisco, California  
[www.familywinemakers.org](http://www.familywinemakers.org)

### 🍷 August 24, 2006

Paso for Paso  
San Jose, California  
[www.passionforpaso.com](http://www.passionforpaso.com)

### 🍷 September 27-30

Santa Fe Wine and Chile Fiesta  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
[www.santafewineandchile.org](http://www.santafewineandchile.org)  
505.438.8060

### 🍷 October 20-22, 2006

Harvest Wine Tour  
Paso Robles, California  
[www.pasowine.com](http://www.pasowine.com)  
805.239.8463