

TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD



The VINformer
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State of the Vineyard

Spring has most emphatically sprung at Tablas Creek, after a somewhat warmer than usual winter with average rainfall concentrated later in the season than normal. A huge Pacific storm in early January dropped just over six inches of rain on the vineyard in a single day – the most rain we’ve received in one day in the seven years the weather station has been on site. The ground was so dry that even after the much-needed rain, Tablas Creek was still dry. Only after another large rainstorm in late January did the creek start running. Mid-February brought our first warm spell, and the next six weeks saw moderate additional rainfall and only a few nights below freezing. As of the end of April, we’ve received just over 24 inches of rain at the Tablas Creek weather station.

The warmer weather spurred bud break at the end of March, a little more than a week earlier than usual. Our earlier-sprouting varieties (Grenache and Viognier) pushed first, particularly those vines at the tops of the hills that are less often frosted as cold air slumps down hillsides and settles in low-lying areas. Our hilltops tend to receive their last frosts in early April, while our valleys are prone to frosts all the way into May. Many mornings the temperature difference between the hilltops and the valleys is as much as 8 degrees!

The early budbreak brings with it the risk of frost, and the weather turned sharply cooler as we neared April. The night of March 30 saw temperatures down to 27 degrees at the weather station in the center of the vineyard, which means that the coldest spots were a couple of degrees colder than that. Fortunately, much of the vineyard

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Wine 101: Sulfites in Wine

by Jason Haas

In the tasting room and in the market, I’ve recently answered several questions about sulfites in our wines. There are two phrasings to this question, both getting at the same issue. One phrasing runs along the line of “Oh, you farm organically. Does this mean that your wines are sulfite-free?” The other phrasing is “I get headaches from the sulfites in wine. Does the fact that you’re organic mean I can drink your wines?”

The confusion surrounding the issue would be farcical if it didn’t negatively impact the acceptance of organic wines in the marketplace. The punch line of the joke (which no one I know really finds funny) is that sulfite sensitivities don’t typically cause the headaches that most people who believe they suffer from sulfite allergies describe as their principal symptom. Those who report headaches are far more likely to be reacting to the histamines (or, more rarely, the tannins) in wine. Or the alcohol.

As for us, yes, we use sulfites. If we didn’t, our wines would be unstable to a degree we’re not comfortable with, and we’re making wines for aging over the long term. We do what we can to minimize the concentration to under 100 parts per million (the average American wine is about 350 ppm). Still, if there is a top winery

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Featured Wine:

2005 MOURVÈDRE

Details on page 6

Focus Varietal: Grenache Noir

Grenache, (also known as Grenache Noir, to distinguish it from its white counterpart Grenache Blanc) is the most widely planted *cépage noble* in the southern Rhône Valley, and the second most widely planted varietal in the world. It is most often blended (with Syrah and Mourvèdre in France and Australia, and with Tempranillo in Rioja), but reaches its peak in the wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where it comprises 70% of the appellation's acreage. Château de Beaucastel uses between 35 and 50% Grenache in its Beaucastel red, and some producers (most notably Château Rayas) produce Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines that are virtually 100% Grenache.

Early History

Grenache appears to have originated in Spain, most likely in the northern province of Aragon, and ampelographers believe that Grenache was the foundation of Aragon's excellent *vin rouge du pays*. From Aragon, it spread throughout the vineyards of Spain and the Mediterranean in conjunction with the reach of the kingdom of Aragon, which at times included Roussillon and Sardinia. By the early 18th century, the varietal had expanded into Languedoc and Provence.

The phylloxera epidemic of the late 19th century indirectly increased European plantings of Grenache. In Rioja, for example, vineyards were replanted not with the native varieties but with the hardy, easy to graft Grenache. A similar trend occurred in southern France, as the percentage of Grenache plantings after the phylloxera infestation increased significantly, replacing the previously abundant Mourvèdre.

Grenache was brought to California in the 1860s, where its erect carriage, vigor and resistance to drought made it a popular planting choice. It came to occupy second place in vineyard planting after Carignan

and was an element in wine producers' branded field blends. Unfortunately, this usage encouraged growers to select cuttings from the most productive vines, increasing grape production but reducing the overall quality of the vines. In recent years, Grenache plantings in California have declined, as the varietal is replaced

by the more popular Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot;



currently there are 9,600 acres planted in California. However, while overall Grenache acreage has declined (largely low quality plantings in the Central Valley), the varietal has at the same time undergone something of a resurgence in popularity. Newly available high-quality clones, including those from Tablas Creek, have encouraged hundreds of new plantings in California, with the greatest number concentrated in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties.

Grenache at Tablas Creek

When we began Tablas Creek Vineyard in 1990, we were not completely satisfied with the quality of California Grenache vines. As a result, we imported our Grenache Noir cuttings (along with its close cousin, Grenache Blanc) from France, where Jacques Perrin at Château de Beaucastel had worked tirelessly to regenerate high quality Grenache vines.

Grenache is a vigorous variety with upright shoots that lends itself to "gobelet" or "head pruning"; it is widely cultivated in this manner in France and in Spain. At Tablas Creek, our new Grenache plantings on Scruffy Hill are head pruned; elsewhere on the vineyard, the varietal is cultivated in double cordon fashion with six fruiting canes, each with two buds. The varietal's vigor gives it the potential to be a heavy producer. Despite our shoot thinning, we are usually obliged to fruit-prune during the growing seasons to keep the bunch count to ten or twelve clusters per vine. This practice means that we harvest approximately three tons of fruit per acre of vines.

Flavors and Aromas

Grenache produces wines with high concentrations of fruit, tannin, and acids. Its flavors are most typically currant, cherry, and raisin, and its aromas are of black pepper, menthol, and licorice. Although many California Grenache clones produce simple, fruity wines which tend to be pale in color, our French clones produce brilliant ruby red wines which are heady in alcohol (usually 15% or higher), and intensely fruity and fat.

For our signature *Esprit de Beaucastel*, we combine Grenache with Syrah and Mourvèdre to open up those more closed varieties. The varietal can also make a delightfully fruity and forward wine as in our Grenache-based 2005 *Côtes de Tablas*. This summer, we will be bottling our first varietal Grenache from the 2006 vintage. 🍷

VINEYARD, from page 1

wasn't out yet, but we did see some damage in all the sections of the vineyard that had sprouted. Even the tops of the hills, which normally avoid our radiation frosts, saw some damage. Overall, we'd classify this as having a mild impact. We'll see some effects from this throughout the growing season, but it doesn't look like it will seriously cut down either on production or on the quality of the growing season this year. A few warm weeks in mid-April (topping out at 89 degrees at the vineyard on April 12 and 13) led to budbreak throughout the vineyard by the week of April 14.

The nights of April 21, 22, and 23 we experienced the same extreme cold that caused widespread frost damage from Napa to Santa Barbara. Still, we came out better than most, as temperatures bottomed out each night between 28 and 29 degrees. One element we have in our defense against frosts is our frost-protection fan system. Curtains placed across valleys redirect cold air toward horizontal fans, which blow that cold air up a small chimney and prevent it from collecting in dangerous quantities. Instead, it is replaced by warmer air that may be just a few feet above. As we experience another warm stretch at the very end of April (with our first 90+ temperatures) we hope we're

largely past the period of greatest frost risk.

In the vineyard, we spent January and the first half of February pruning. The cover crop and wildflowers are lush and vibrant, as a result of the late winter rain, and we began disking in the warm interlude in early March, both to return the cover crop nutrients to the soil and to prevent the weeds from robbing the vines of necessary moisture.

We are continuing our five year plan to plant a few acres of new vineyard each year. Last year, we finished the head-pruned vines on Scruffy Hill, on the south banks of Tablas Creek. This year we are planting an approximately nine-acre block on the western edge of the property with two ridges that run north-south surrounding a shallow valley. The ridge slopes provide nice east- and west-facing hillsides, and the ridge tops are packed with calcareous deposits. This spring we've been prepping the land for



the vines (hammering end posts for trellises, digging irrigation ditches, adding interior posts and stringing training wires). After that is completed, we'll start planting the vines; we expect them to be in the ground in early summer. Vermentino and Grenache Blanc will go on the east-facing slope, and Mourvèdre will go on the south-west facing slope.

In the cellar, we bottled the 2007 *Rosé*, the 2006 *Côtes de Tablas*, the 2006 *Counoise* and the 2007 *Vermentino* in late March. The *Rosé* will be released in time for Hospice du Rhone in early May, and the *Counoise* and *Vermentino* will be included in the fall wine club shipment. The rest of the 2006 reds (including the *Esprit de Beaucastel*) will go into bottle later this spring. Finally, Francois Perrin joined us in late April as we completed the blending for the 2007 whites. These will be bottled in early summer. 🍷

2007 *Rosé* Released

We're thrilled to announce the newest release of the much-anticipated 2007 *Rosé*, just in time for the first warm weather of the year. The 2007 *Rosé*, as in previous vintages is Mourvèdre-based, with healthy additions of Grenache and Counoise. It's rich, ripe, and full of spice and fruit and perfect for sipping outdoors on a sunny day. Stop by and taste it in the tasting room, or order online at <https://www.cleverconcepts.net/tablascreek.com/order.php>



Three Generations of Haas Men: Tablas Creek founder Bob Haas with sons Jason and Danny Haas, and grandsons Sebastian (8 months) and Eli (3).

SULFITES, from page 1

anywhere in the world who does not use any sulfites in the winemaking process, I am unaware of it. Sulfites have been used since Roman times in wine. The fact that (unlike in other countries) United States regulations prohibit us from calling our wines organic is an unfortunate consequence of the widespread fear in America that many, many people are allergic to sulfites. Fortunately, sulfite allergies are quite rare, and wine contains small quantities of sulfites compared to other common foods.

Important fact #1: If you (other than wine) eat quite normally, and wine (particularly young, red wine) gives you headaches, you almost certainly are not allergic to sulfites.

Sulfur occurs in many foods, including (according to WebMD):

- * Baked goods
- * Soup mixes
- * Jams
- * Canned vegetables
- * Pickled foods
- * Gravies
- * Dried fruit
- * Potato chips
- * Trail mix
- * Beer and wine
- * Vegetable juices
- * Sparkling grape juice
- * Apple cider
- * Bottled lemon juice and lime juice
- * Bottled Tea
- * Many condiments
- * Molasses
- * Fresh or frozen shrimp
- * Guacamole
- * Maraschino cherries
- * Dehydrated, pre-cut or peeled potatoes

Particularly common sources of sulfites are dried fruit, potato chips and french fries, and condiments. Three ounces of dried apricots, for example, contain 175mg of sulfur dioxide. By contrast, a four ounce glass of Tablas Creek wine (at 100ppm of sulfites) contains about 12mg. Even a glass of wine with average

sulfite levels would contain about 40mg of sulfur dioxide. You'd need to drink half a bottle to get the same sulfites as that handful of apricots.

The FDA estimates that about 500,000 people in the United States have sulfite allergies (about two-tenths of one percent of the population). Those who do, need to be very careful about what they eat and drink, as exposure to sulfites can cause respiratory reactions. Six people have died in the last 30 years in the United States due to sulfite reactions (none traceable to wine). The reactions to a sulfite allergy are typically wheezing, coughing, hives, abdominal pain, and difficulty swallowing -- the same reactions you'd expect from, say, a medical allergy (and, in fact, those with allergies to Sulfa drugs are much more likely to have other sulfite allergies).

Headaches, on the other hand, are not mentioned in the literature on sulfites, but are common reactions to an excess of histamines. Many more people have sensitivities to histamines, which are common in pollen and many other plant materials. Reactions to histamines include headache, itchy eyes, runny nose and flushed skin... the common symptoms of hay fever. It's less well known that histamines are also common in the skins of grapes. This explains why many people are sensitive to only red wines (which spend time in fermentation next to grape skins) or only to young wines (histamines break down over time in bottle).

Important fact #2: As with seasonal allergies, sensitivities to the histamines in wine can be treated with an over-the-counter antihistamine such as Benadryl or Claritin.

So why does the government mandate that wines display "CONTAINS SULFITES" on the back of nearly every label, but make no mention of histamines, when histamine reactions are much more common than sulfite allergies? Essentially, histamine reactions are not particularly dangerous. Inconvenient, sure,

but not life-threatening. However, from the number of questions I get, it's clear that the government-mandated warning has convinced many people that they're allergic to something they're not, and obscured the easy steps people could take to minimize their reactions. It's just another example of the unintended consequences of even well-intentioned government. 🍷

Award Winning Blog!

Congratulations to Jason Haas and the Tablas Creek Vineyard blog, which was named the Best Winery Blog in the 2008 American Wine Blog Awards! The awards were determined by a panel of judges and by public voting, and reflect the increasingly rich and diverse world of wine blogs.



As posted on the awards website (fermentations.com), "Tablas Creek has one of the longest running winery blogs. Any really good winery blog must impart the experience of working at a winery and running a winery. The Tablas Creek blog not only does this but is able to do so by also imparting the excitement they possess for being in the business, the seriousness with which they take their efforts and with the occasional self deprecating approach. It is a joy to read that takes one inside the head of someone who thinks clearly and communicates clearly about the business and fun of growing grapes and making wine."

The blog is updated regularly, and covers a wide range of wine-related and Tablas Creek-specific topics (such as the sulfite article appearing here). Check it out at <http://tablas-creek.typepad.com>



WINE ORDER FORM

MAY 2008

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: \$15.00
7-12 bottles: \$25.00

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

AK, FL, IA, IL, MI*, MN, MO, NC*, NE*, NH, NY*, OH*, SC*, TX*, VA*, VT*, WI, WV*
1- 6 bottles: \$35.00
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]

MOURVÈDRE 2005 _____ \$29.75 \$22.75 _____

VINSIDER ONLY WINES

ROUSSANNE 2006 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$27.00 \$21.60 _____

BERGERON 2006 (3 bottle limit) _____ \$27.00 \$21.60 _____

ANTITHESIS 2006 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$27.00 \$21.60 _____

TANNAT 2005 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$35.00 \$28.00 _____

PANOPLIE 2005 (2 bottle limit) _____ \$95.00 \$76.00 _____

WHITE WINES

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2006 _____ \$40.00 \$32.00 _____

CÔTES DE TABLAS BLANC 2006 _____ \$22.00 \$17.60 _____

VERMENTINO 2006 _____ \$27.00 \$21.60 _____

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL BLANC 2005 _____ \$35.00 \$28.00 _____

GRENACHE BLANC 2005 _____ \$27.00 \$21.60 _____

RED WINES

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2005 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$45.00 \$36.00 _____

CÔTES DE TABLAS 2005 _____ \$22.00 \$17.60 _____

SYRAH 2005 _____ \$35.00 \$28.00 _____

ESPRIT DE BEAUCASTEL 2004 (6 bottle limit) _____ \$45.00 \$36.00 _____

SUBTOTAL _____

DISCOUNT _____

7.25% 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:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____

SHIP TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

CREDIT CARD:

MC/Visa #: _____

Exp. Date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

FEATURED WINE: 2005 MOURVÈDRE

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 2005 Mourvèdre, featured from May 1 through May 31, 2008.

Tasting Notes: The 2005 Mourvèdre is Tablas Creek's third varietal bottling of our most planted grape. The wine shows rich cherry, fig, mocha and spice flavors, medium to full body, and a spicy, appealing finish of saddle leather and loam. We expect it to drink well for a decade or more.

Suggested Food Pairings: The 2005 Mourvèdre is a terrific food wine. It is particularly good with any red meat, particularly game, and is also delicious when paired with Asian beef stir fries.

Wine Pairing: Tablas Creek Vermentino and Grilled Cream of Asparagus Soup With Prosciutto "Tartare" and Truffle Oil

This recipe, provided by Chef Jeff Massey at Stone Brewing World Bistro and Gardens, in Escondido, California, was part of a delicious Tablas Creek wine dinner in late April. Asparagus is notoriously difficult to pair with wine, but grilling it eliminates the bitter character it imparts to wine, and the soup is a beautiful match with the 2006 Vermentino.

Ingredients

(serves 6-8)

3 to 3 1/2 pounds fresh asparagus
2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
6 cups chicken or vegetable stock
2 cloves garlic, whole
½ medium onion, chopped
1 cup heavy whipping cream (more may be needed for a creamier style soup)
8 ounces prosciutto, thinly sliced
Salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste
Truffle oil

Trim the woody ends from the bottom of the asparagus. Place in a large mixing bowl with the olive oil and toss to coat. Lightly season with salt and fresh ground pepper. Place the spears evenly on a hot grill; be careful not to burn the spears, but some charring is good. Watch for flare up from the dripping oil.

Note: If you do not have a grill, place the spears on a cookie sheet and roast in a 350 degree oven for 5-10 minutes.

In a large saucepan, combine the stock, garlic and chopped onion with the grilled asparagus. Bring to a boil and simmer until the asparagus is tender. Pour the mixture into a food processor and set the saucepan aside. Blend until it reaches the consistency of puree, then pass the mixture through a strainer back into the saucepan.

Cut the prosciutto slices in half and place in a food processor. Pulse in 3 to 4 second bursts until the meat is finely chopped, then form into one ounce "tartare" meatballs and set aside.

Return the stock mixture to a boil and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes to thicken. Stir in the heavy whipping cream, bring the soup back to a boil then remove it from heat.

Season with salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste.

Place one "tartare" meatball in each bowl and ladle soup into bowls. Drizzle a little truffle oil in each, and serve.

Stone Brewing World Bistro and Gardens

1999 Citracado Parkway, Escondido, CA

760-471-4999

www.stonebrew.com

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

Sunday, May 4 **10:00 AM to Noon**
Far Out Rhones with the Far Out Wineries

Rhone wines are made for food, and the Far Out Wineries will share their food pairing secrets with you! Join the sixteen Far Out Wineries at Halter Ranch Vineyard to welcome Chef Charles Paladin Wayne for a morning of cooking, wine pairing and discussion. Chef Charlie will prepare three Mediterranean dishes, each of which will be paired with a flight of Rhone-style wines: One of Rhone whites, one of Syrahs, and one of red Rhone blends. The owners and winemakers of the Far Outs will join you to speak about their wines and enjoy the food. The cost is \$75 per person and seating is extremely limited. For reservations or more information, contact Judy at Norman Vineyard at 805-237-0138.

Sunday, May 18 **10:00 AM**
Wine Festival Open House

On the Sunday of the Paso Robles Wine Festival, we will be welcoming Chef Jeff Scott back to the vineyard for our fourth annual cured salmon tasting. Come early on Sunday and enjoy cured Scottish salmon with other goodies including organic potatoes Provençal, farmers' market strawberries with basil syrup, and fresh local ricotta and goat cheeses and pair it all with the newly released 2007 *Rosé*. We will serve the fish until it is gone, but we don't expect it to last past 11 AM, so come early! No reservations are necessary, and the event is free with your tasting fee.

Sunday, July 20 **10:00 AM**
The French Connection: Château de Beaucastel and Tablas Creek Wine Seminar

One of the treats of being associated with a great French winery is the opportunity to learn from the experience of tasting wines with a history that stretches back more than 100 years. At this second annual seminar, we open up that experience to you. Château de Beaucastel has sent over four different Beaucastel wines (two whites, two reds) from great recent and classic vintages, and we will be pouring current and library examples of red and white *Esprits*. Winemaker Neil Collins and General Manager Jason Haas will lead the discussion and tasting. This event will sell out extremely quickly. Reserve your spot now by contacting Nicole Getty at events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39. The cost is \$70 for VINsiders and \$85 for guests.

Saturday, August 16 **6:00 PM**
Pig Roast

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 fourth annual pig roast to celebrate the beginning of harvest and the newly released 2006 *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! Reserve now by contacting Nicole Getty at events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39.

Saturday, September 13 **9:00 AM**
Harvest and Winemaking Seminar

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; contact Nicole Getty at events@tablascreek.com or 805.237.1231 x39.

To make reservations or get more information about any of these events, please contact Nikki Getty at 805.237.1231 x39, or ngetty@tablascreek.com.

Tablas on Tour: National Events

May 8 - 10, 2008

Charlotte Wine and Food Weekend
Charlotte, North Carolina
www.charlottewineandfood.com
704.338.9463

May 16-18, 2008

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

May 17, 2008

A Culinary Evening with California Winemasters
Los Angeles, California
www.californiawinemasters.org
323.655.8525

May 24-25, 2008

New Orleans Wine and Food Experience
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.nowfe.com
504.529.9463

June 21, 2008

Atascadero Wine Festival
Atascadero, California
www.atascaderowinefestival.com
877.905.9463

June 21, 2008

"L'Chaim to Life"
Napa Valley Center for Jewish Culture
Napa, California
www.napavalleycjc.org
707.968.9944

July 10-13, 2008

Central Coast Wine Classic
Shell Beach, California
www.centralcoastwineclassic.org
805.544.1285

July 8-9, 2008

Northwest Rhone Rangers Tasting
Seattle, Washington
www.rhonerangers.org

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



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9339 Adelaida Road
Paso Robles, CA 93446



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