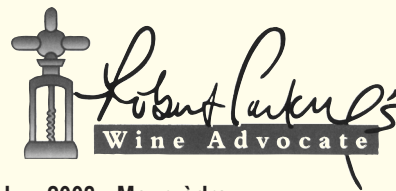


# Tablas Creek Vineyard



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Tablas Creek	2009	Antithesis Chardonnay	White	(91-93)
Tablas Creek	2008	Côtes de Tablas	Red	88
Tablas Creek	2009	Côtes de Tablas Blanc	White	(89-91)
Tablas Creek	2008	Côtes de Tablas Blanc	White	91
Tablas Creek	2008	Esprit de Beaucastel	Red	(91-93)
Tablas Creek	2007	Esprit de Beaucastel	Red	95
Tablas Creek	2009	Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc	White	(92-94)
Tablas Creek	2008	Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc	White	94
Tablas Creek	2008	Grenache	Red	88
Tablas Creek	2007	Grenache	Red	92
Tablas Creek	2009	Grenache Blanc	White	(87-89)
Tablas Creek	2008	Grenache Blanc	White	91

Tablas Creek	2008	Mourvèdre	Red	87
Tablas Creek	2007	Mourvèdre	Red	91
Tablas Creek	2008	Panoplie	Red	(93-95)
Tablas Creek	2007	Panoplie	Red	98+
Tablas Creek	2009	Rosé	Rosé	91
Tablas Creek	2009	Roussanne	White	(89-91)
Tablas Creek	2008	Roussanne	White	90
Tablas Creek	2008	Syrah	Red	89
Tablas Creek	2007	Syrah	Red	92

"Robert Haas, the iconic French wine importer, who was one of the first to bring estate-bottled French wines into the United States, continues to go from strength to strength at Tablas Creek. His partner remains the Perrin family of Château Beaucastel in Châteauneuf du Pape. They have had three tiny vintages in a row, all producing very small yields, but the quality of their 2007s is the best in the history of the winery, and 2008 is certainly a strong vintage as well. These are wonderful, food-friendly wines with considerable complexity. While they do some varietal naming, the strength of Tablas Creek is their extraordinary Rhône Ranger blends, whether white or red.

Take, for example, the **2008 Côtes de Tablas Blanc**, a sensational blend of 42% Viognier, 26% Roussanne, 21% Marsanne, and the rest Grenache Blanc. This seems to be a winner every year. From the hilly limestone soils of their vineyard, this blend seems to take on far more minerality and delineation than in many places in California. The good news is that there are 3,000 cases of this wine, which displays nice hints of quince, crushed rock, citrus, honeysuckle, white currant, and white peach. Beautiful fruit, good delineation, medium body, and lots of freshness make for a zesty, personality-filled dry white wine to drink over the next several years. A few wineries make 100% Grenache Blanc, but Tablas Creek may produce the best. The **2008 Grenache Blanc**, which tips the scales at 14.3% natural alcohol, exhibits loads of white flowers intermixed with hints of honeyed citrus, white currant, and stones. It is fresh, full-bodied, but at the same time, lively, vibrant, and concentrated. Drink it over the next several years. The unctuous texture and more waxy, heady thickness of the **2008 Roussanne** is almost a shock to the palate after the first two dry whites. This oily, full-bodied, pedal-to-the-metal dry white needs to be matched up with rich fish and poultry dishes. It should drink well for 2-3 years, possibly even longer. Their flagship white is the **2008 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc**, a blend of 65% Roussanne, 30% Grenache Blanc, and a rarity of 5% Picpoul. This is really great stuff in the 2008. The wine displays plenty of honeyed citrus, spring flowers, white peach, apricot, quince, and loads of wet rocks, giving a steely definition to its opulent, full-bodied, yet fresh flavors. This is a *tour de force* in dry white and Rhône Ranger blends. It's impossible to know how long it will last, but I would drink it sooner rather than later.

The 2009 vintage turned out to be an even smaller crop than 2008 and 2007 as a result of spring frost. The **2009 Côtes de Tablas Blanc** is another unqualified success. A blend of 45% Viognier, 28% Roussanne, 20% Marsanne, and the rest Grenache Blanc, nectarine and flower notes combined with wet rocks, honeyed grapefruit, and white peach are all present in this medium-bodied, richly fruity, yet very well-defined wine. The **2009 Grenache Blanc** displays honeyed quince and tropical fruit blossoms in an interesting, medium-bodied, luscious style. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. The more unctuously textured, honeyed, waxy, thick and juicy **2009 Roussanne** is still very primary and needing more time to sort itself out. This is the full-bodied blockbuster of the group and probably a love-it-or-leave-it wine for most consumers. The pick of the 2009s, not surprisingly, is the **2009 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc**, a blend of 62% Roussanne, 12% Picpoul, and the rest Grenache Blanc. Great fruit in the aromatics and on the attack (honeysuckle, white peach, apricot, and quince) is followed by a full-bodied, dense, yet at the same time, elegant, refreshing, well-delineated wine. It is a superb example of how well these grapes can be blended together by a competent viticultural and winemaking team. Lastly, the **2009 Antithesis Chardonnay** may turn out to be even better than the 2008. It is opulent, full-bodied, and rich, but again has that grand cru Chablis style with loads of fresh citrus, crushed rock and white flowers.

One of the best dry rosés in California is Tablas Creek's Bandol look-alike. The **2009 Rosé** (screw-cap finished) is a blend of 46% Mourvèdre, 39% Grenache, and the rest Cunoise. Dark in color for a rosé, but with loads of plum, black cherry, and black currant fruit, this seriously packed-and-stacked rosé is a full-bodied, beautiful wine to

drink over the next year or more. Unlike the wimpy, light rosés that are an afterthought from most wineries, this is the real deal, and a very serious, dry, fuller rosé.

As I reported last year, the 2007s are the finest red wines Tablas Creek has produced since its inception. The **2007 Grenache**, which is blended with 10% Syrah, tips the scales at 15.3% alcohol. It displays loads of kirsch and *garrigue* notes, with unmistakable minerality, full-bodied, deep strawberry and black cherry flavors, and lots of texture and richness. This is a stunningly hedonistic wine that should drink well for 5-7 years. The **2007 Mourvèdre** is one of the best examples from California, but that is to be expected given the fact that both Robert Haas and the Perrin family have long believed in the greatness of this grape. Blended with 10% Syrah, and coming in at 14.5% alcohol, the wine is dense and full-bodied, with loads of blue fruits, hints of fresh mushrooms and meat juices, and a smoky, gamey nose that suggests a tea-smoked or Peking duck. With lovely fruit, dense, sweet tannins, and silkiness, this beauty should drink well for 7-10 years. The **2007 Syrah**, which is blended with 10% Grenache, is the best varietal Syrah Tablas Creek has yet made. Full-bodied and meaty, with notes of lard/bacon intermixed with blackberry, cassis, licorice, and a hint of camphor, the wine is full-bodied, luscious, and ideal for drinking over the next decade. The prodigious **2007 Esprit de Beaucastel** is a blend of 44% Mourvèdre, 29% Grenache, 21% Syrah, and the rest Cunoise. A very great wine, very much in the mold of its French cousin, Château Beaucastel, the wine has a saturated ruby/purple color and a gorgeous nose of melted licorice, charcoal, blueberry, and blackberries intermixed with freshly sliced mushrooms, tree bark, and pepper. Spicy, dense, full-bodied, and extraordinarily complex, yet at the same time well-delineated and fresh, it should drink well for 10-15+ years. The limited-production (around 450 cases), compelling **2007 Panoplie**, is a real connoisseur's pick. A blend of 60% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, and 10% Syrah, tipping the scales at 14.5% alcohol, the wine has notes of graphite, camphor, acacia flowers, and black currant as well as hints of blueberry and coffee bean. The wine is very rich, full-bodied, but at the same time, the limestone soils at Tablas Creek seem to impart a definition and structured style that provide uplift to what is a very powerful, rich, full-bodied wine. It should drink well for 15 or more years.

The **2008 Côtes de Tablas** has already been bottled. This California Côte du Rhône look-alike, made from 42% Grenache, 21% Syrah, 20% Cunoise (which must be an all-time high for that varietal in a Rhône Ranger blend), and 17% Mourvèdre, displays the earthier side of Rhône Rangers. Spicy, dark berries intermixed with underbrush, forest floor, pepper, and soy are followed by a medium-bodied, earthy wine in contrast to the more fruit-driven 2007. Drink it over the next 3-4 years. The same earthiness, underbrush and Provençal herbs/*garrigue* notes are found in the **2008 Grenache**. It is medium-bodied, not as lush and textured as the 2007, but very well made. Spice, tree bark, porcini mushroom, herb and earth notes along with blue fruits are all present in the medium-bodied **2008 Mourvèdre**. This is an attractive wine to drink over the next 7-8 years. Elegant, deep black currant and black cherry notes with some licorice, forest floor, and herbs are present in the **2008 Syrah**. This wine displays good complexity, and like most of the 2008s from Tablas Creek, is far more evolved and on a faster maturity track than any of the 2007s. Drink it over the next 3-4 years. A blend of 38% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, 26% Syrah, and the rest Cunoise, the **2008 Esprit de Beaucastel** has notes of graphite, damp earth, forest floor, underbrush, and loads of blue and red fruits. A distinctively peppery, spicy, earthy wine with medium to full body, this will be an early drinker and best consumed in its first 5-7 years of life. Their luxury wine, the **2008 Panoplie** (54% Mourvèdre, 29% Grenache, and 17% Syrah) is seductive, round, and rich, with a velvety texture, loads of black raspberry and blueberry fruit, and medium to full body. Surprisingly evolved and complex already, it should be drunk over the next 7-8 years."