

Rhone Varietals



in California

BACKGROUND

Tablas Creek is the realization of the combined efforts of two of the international wine community's leading families, the Perrin family, proprietors of Château de Beaucastel, and Robert Haas, founder of Vineyard Brands. They had since the 1970s believed the California climate to be ideal for planting Rhône varietal grapes. In 1987, they began the lengthy process of creating a Châteauneuf-du-Pape style vineyard from scratch in the New World. The Tablas Creek Vineyard Partnership was born, with the Perrin and Haas families as majority partners, and French and American wine loving friends as minority partners.

THE WINES

The "Tablas Creek Vineyard" label debuted with the construction of the estate winery for the 1997 vintage. Beginning with the 2001 whites and the 2000 reds, the wines were named Esprit de Beaucastel and Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc.

Tablas Creek Vineyard follows the centuries old Châteauneuf-du-Pape tradition of blending chosen varietals, which produces wines that are more complex and elegant, better balanced, richer and deeper than single varietal wines. Blending, estate terroir, and the use of native yeasts give Tablas Creek Vineyard a unique style that places it among the best vineyards on the world stage.

The red wines, comprising about two thirds of the vineyard's production, are made from Mourvèdre, Grenache Noir, Syrah, and Counoise. The white wines are made from Roussanne, Viognier, Marsanne, and Grenache Blanc. Total quantity produced should grow to about 14,000 cases by 2005 and 22,000 by 2009.

The vineyard's signature wines, Esprit de Beaucastel and Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc, are blended for richness, balance, and ageability. The Cotes de Tablas and Cotes de Tablas Blanc wines are designed to be clean, bright expressions of fruit, ready to drink younger and very approachable in price. Read more about the wines.

2002 Côtes de Tablas Blanc

The Tablas Creek Vineyard Côtes de Tablas Blanc is a blend of four estate-grown white Rhône varietals: Viognier, Marsanne, Grenache Blanc, and Roussanne. The wine, like most wines of the Southern Rhône, is a blend of varietals, featuring the aromatics and fruit of the Viognier, the clean minerality of the Marsanne, and the crisp acids and rich mouthfeel of the Grenache Blanc.

The 2002 Côtes de Tablas Blanc is Tablas Creek's first national release of its Viognier-based white blend, made in a rich and aromatic style, yet with a clean minerality in the mouth and a very long finish. Like our Côtes de Tablas red, this wine is designed to be ready to drink young: at its peak from the moment of its release.

All varietals for the Côtes de Tablas Blanc were whole cluster pressed, and fermented in stainless steel to emphasize the clean crisp flavors and preserve the aromatics. Only native yeasts were used. After fermentation, the wines were racked and blended, and bottled in April 2003. The wines underwent only a light cold stabilization before bottling.

Character Profile:

The 2002 Côtes de Tablas Blanc is an excellent expression of the terrific 2002 vintage, featuring a bright Viognier nose of peaches and minerals, followed in the mouth by flavors of mango, melon and wet rocks, moderate acids and a long peachy finish.

TECHNICAL NOTES

36% Viognier
30% Marsanne
26% Grenache Blanc
8% Roussanne

Cheese Pairing: California Goat Cheese

Fog Lights by Cypress Grove

Created exclusively to honor Whole Foods Market's 25th anniversary, Cypress Grove Chevre Fog Lights Aged Goat Milk Cheese will light up any celebration. Ash covered and ripened for an earthy, creamy and multidimensional taste treat, Fog Lights is the perfect cheese to share at special times.



presented by:



Grenache Blanc is a relatively new arrival into the Tablas Creek Vineyard pantheon of grapes. It produces rich, full wines with bright flavors and crisp acidity and is a key element in both our Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc and Cotes de Tablas Blanc. As the name suggests, Grenache Blanc is related to the more widely known Grenache Noir. Many grape varietals 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. Look for this to spring up in the future...

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. It is the fourth most commonly planted white grape varietal in France, comprising over 37,000 acres in Roussillon alone. In Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the crisp acidity of Grenache Blanc is used to balance the honeyed richness of Roussanne, and white Chateau de Beaucastel is roughly 80% Roussanne and 20% 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. 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 varietals 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 varietals unfold, and the full richness of the wine is displayed.

2003 Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc

The Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc 2003 is a blend of three estate-grown varietals, propagated from budwood cuttings from the Château de Beaucastel estate.

The 2003 vintage was tremendous: warm and sunny, with cool nights that prolonged the hangtime of the grapes and led to wines with excellent acidity. A relatively early flowering, combined with a warm but not overly hot summer produced unusually long hangtime, and grapes with concentrated flavors and a distinct minerality.

The fruit was whole cluster pressed, and fermented with native yeasts. The Roussanne was fermented half in stainless steel fermenters and half in small oak "pieces", while the other varietals were fermented 100% in stainless steel. All the wines went through malolactic fermentation. The varietals were blended in late April, after which the wines were racked, blended, cold stabilized, and bottled in June 2004.

Character Profile:

The 2003 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc is a tremendous expression of the outstanding 2003 vintage. Rich aromas of honeysuckle, lemon drop, meringue and spice are followed by intense flavors of honey, caramel apple and lemon, and a long mineral finish. Best served slightly chilled, but not ice cold.

TECHNICAL NOTES

68% Roussanne
27% Grenache Blanc
5% Viognier
14.5% alcohol by volume
1350 cases produced



Viognier (VEE-ohn-yay) forms an important component of this Roussanne-based Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc, and the base (along with Marsanne) of our Cotes de Tablas Blanc. Whether in the Esprit Blanc or the Cotes de Tablas, Viognier contributes intense aromatics of peaches, apricots, and violets, as well as a clean chalky crispness in the mouth.

Early History

Viognier is historically grown in the Northern Rhône valley, and reaches its peak in the tiny appellations of Condrieu and Château Grillet. The precise historical origin of the varietal is unknown, but many believe it dates back to the Roman Empire. According to one story, Emperor Probus imported Viognier into Condrieu from Dalmatia (in present-day Croatia) in 281 AD as a means of replacing the vineyards destroyed by Emperor Vespasian. Legend has it that Vespasian tore up the Condrieu vineyards after the locals revolted, a revolt which he attributed to drinking too much of the native wine.

Viognier in California

Once found almost exclusively in the northern Rhône appellations of Condrieu and Château Grillet, Viognier is becoming increasingly popular around the world. American growers, led by pioneers such as Calera and Joseph Phelps, brought Viognier into the United States in small quantities in the late 1980s. Almost simultaneously, other American growers brought over what they thought were Roussanne cuttings from the Rhône Valley, which were then propagated and planted in vineyards all over California. Years later, in 1998, those vines were identified as Viognier, not Roussanne—a discovery which led to confusion, relabeling, and several lawsuits.

Flavors and Aromas

The distinctive aroma of peaches, apricots, and violets is a hallmark of Viognier. Its highly aromatic nose is complemented by moderate acidity and flavors of peaches and minerals in the mouth. The varietal has thrived in the warm climate and limestone-clay soils of Tablas Creek. On the nine acres we had in production in 2002, we harvested approximately 17 tons of Viognier, which is about 20% of our white Rhône production.



Cheese pairing:

Chevre de Poitou - French Goat Camembert

Chevre De Poitou that is soft and camembert style. Goat's milk. Soft-ripened, camembert style. Subtle, crisp notes of goats milk overlay earthy camembert undertones. A lovely, snow-white cousin to brie.

2002 Tablas Creek Vineyard Roussanne

The Roussanne is Tablas Creek's first national release of its 100% Roussanne, following a highly successful 50 case experiment in 2001. The wine is exuberantly and elegantly Roussanne in character, with honey, honeysuckle, and pear aromatics, a rich, viscous mouthfeel with just a hint of oak, and a long, lingering finish.

The Roussanne grapes were whole cluster pressed, and fermented using native yeasts half in stainless steel and half in small French oak barrels. The wine was left on its lees for 6 months, and allowed to complete malolactic fermentation. After fermentation the wines were blended, and bottled in April 2003. The wines underwent only a light cold stabilization before bottling.

Character Profile:

The 2002 Roussanne is a rich, concentrated expression from the outstanding 2002 vintage, featuring a rich nose of sweet oak, honeysuckle and rose petals, flavors of honey, toast and pear, crisp acids, and a long finish.

Cheese Pairing:

Tomme de ma Grand Mere. France. Pasteurized goat's milk. Rich and full bodied goat cheese with delicate tones of citrus.

Viticulture Model

Send in the Clones

We believe strongly that in order to make great grapes, you need the right vines. We imported our vines from Beaucastel, shepherded them through the 3-year USDA-mandated quarantine, and propagate them on our on-site nursery. These clones were hand-selected for intensity of flavor and true varietal character. Some varietals had never been brought into the United States before, and we brought in new clones even of the varietals that existed here previously. You can learn more about the varietals.

Stressed Grapevines Make Great Grapes

Our viticulture model is designed to produce grapes with concentration, intensity, and a true character of place. We densely plant the vines (1600 to 1800 per acre) to create competition, and trellis them low to the ground to take advantage of the radiant heat from the rocky soil. The competition between the plants, as well as the rugged terrain and limited water, creates intense small clusters of grapes with thick skins. Each vine is limited to 8-12 bunches each year.

Organic Vineyards

Our organic vineyard practices following the lead of the Beaucastel estate in Chateauneuf du Pape. Like Beaucastel, we use no herbicides or systemic pesticides in the vineyard. We rely on cover cropping, hand hoeing, burning, and mulching to suppress weeds in the rows. Cover crops minimize erosion, host beneficial insects, and return nitrogen to the soil. We use extensive composting, and use compost tea to control mildew in the vineyard and reduce our need for sulfur. We received our organic certification in January, 2003.

Work the Land by Hand

We prune and harvest by hand. The pruning is done both to promote the general health of the vine and to minimize crop load, and we regularly thin our crop to improve the quality of the fruit. All grapes are harvested by hand at optimum ripeness, and brought into our estate winery for vinification.



The varietal ROUSSANNE takes its name from "roux", the French word for "russet" – an apt description of the grapes' reddish gold skins at harvest.

Roussanne in France

Although no one is precisely sure where Roussanne originated, it seems likely the varietal is native to the Rhône Valley and to the Isere Valley in eastern France. The varietal has not ventured far from its origin; most of the world's Roussanne is grown throughout the Rhône, where it is traditionally used as a blending grape. In the Southern Rhône, Roussanne is one of four white grape varietals permitted in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and it is often blended with Grenache Blanc, whose richness and crisp acids highlight Roussanne's pear and honey flavors. In the Northern Rhône, Roussanne is frequently blended with Marsanne in the appellations of Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage, and Saint Joseph to provide acidity, minerality and richness. As a single varietal wine, it reaches its pinnacle as the sole component of Château de Beaucastel's Roussanne Vieille Vignes.

Roussanne is also found the Savoie region of France (where it is known as Bergeron), and in limited quantities in Australia and Italy. In the United States, Roussanne is planted in the Central Coast and Sonoma regions of California, as well as in the Yakima Valley of Washington State.

Flavors and Aromas

Wines made from Roussanne are rich and complex, with distinct honey, floral and apricot flavors. At Tablas Creek, we ferment and age about half of our Roussanne in one- to five-year-old French oak, which provides a structured richness and enhances the flavors of honeyed peach and apricot fruit. Unlike most white wines, Roussanne ages very well due to its unusual combination of richness and crisp acids;

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2003 Tablas Creek Vineyard Rosé

The Tablas Creek Vineyard Rosé 2003 is a blend of three estate-grown varietals, propagated from budwood cuttings from the Château de Beaucastel estate. The blend is traditional of the southern Rhône, though the blend of grapes is predominantly Mourvèdre, and therefore more like the solid, dry rosés of Bandol than the lighter Grenache-based Tavel.

Each year, we take the grapes for our Rosé from the oldest section of French source vines at Tablas Creek. When we first received our vines from France, we had just enough to plant a few rows of each varietal on a hill overlooking our vine nursery. Over the next few years, we used cuttings from these plants to plant the rest of our 120-acre vineyard.

These few rows of high-quality vines ripen later than the rest of the vineyard, so we harvest the Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Cunoise together and co-ferment them (on their skins) in a single stainless steel fermenter. After 72 hours, we draw about 800 gallons of juice off the blend, and ferment it dry away from the skins.

Character Profile:

The 2003 Rosé is rich, ripe, and full of fruit. It has aromatics of white plum, watermelon and spice, flavors of ripe strawberries, fresh acidity and a lingering finish. Pair it with Mediterranean cuisine, Spanish tapas, preparations with garlic and olive oil... or just enjoy it outside on a sunny day.

TECHNICAL NOTES

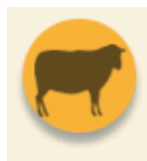
64% Mourvèdre
28% Grenache
8% Cunoise
14.5% alcohol by volume

Cheese Pairing:

Brin d'Amour

To find this cheese one has to go to Corsica, an island that lies 170 kilometres from the French Cote d'Azur and about 83 kilometres west of Piombino on the Italian coast. This artisan cheese is relatively recent. Its natural rind is covered with rosemary thyme, coriander seeds and savoury, aromatic herbs that are found in the rocky, brambly underbush landscape one finds on the island. It is an uncooked and unpressed cheese that requires a maturing period of at least a month.

The dried herbs give the Brin d'Amour an original and subtle flavor. The pate is ivory white with a fine texture. The taste is slightly sour.



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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 Mourvedre in France and Australia, and with Tempranillo in Rioja), but reaches its peak in the wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

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.

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.

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 steep hillsides preclude cross cultivation, so we cultivate it 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.

2001 Côtes de Tablas Rouge

The Tablas Creek Vineyard Côtes de Tablas is a blend of four estate-grown Rhône varietals: Mourvèdre, Syrah, Grenache and Counoise. Like most wines of the Southern Rhône, it is a blend of varietals, featuring the meatiness of Mourvèdre, the spice and structure of Syrah, and the generous fruit of Grenache and Counoise.

The 2001 Côtes de Tablas is Tablas Creek's second release of its Côtes de Tablas red blend, made in the style of a full-throttle Côtes du Rhone. All varietals were fermented in stainless steel with the use of native yeasts: the Syrah in open-top fermenters, punched down manually, and the other varietals in closed fermenters with pump-over aeration. After pressing, the wines were racked, blended, aged for a year in 1200-gallon French oak foudres, and then bottled in June 2003. The wines underwent only filtration before bottling.

Character Profile:

Updated February 2005: showing a beautiful balance of earth, spice and fruit, soft, generous tannins, and excellent length. It is just at its peak, and should drink well for the next 3 to 5 years. Try vegetables, rich stews, and pastas.

TECHNICAL NOTES

38% Mourvèdre
34% Syrah
24% Grenache
4% Counoise

14.5% Alcohol by Volume
2900 Cases Produced

Cheese Pairing:

Reblochon

Reblochon was the first cheese of the Savoie region to be granted the AOC certification, in 1976. The cheese is made by mixing the milks of three different breeds of cow : abondance, tarine, and montbéliarde. The birth of this fascinating cheese is due to the ingenuity of the Savoie herdsmen. In the 13th century, the farmers were completely dependent on landowners who insisted that all the herd's milk was their property. At milking time, the herdsmen did not quite complete the milking. After the controllers had left, the herdsmen finished the milking. They "re-blochaient". From this the cheese was named Reblochon, made with the creamy milk of a second milking. The cheeses are put into a cellar to dry, and are turned every 2 days and washed with whey.

Reblochon is a well-proportioned cheese with a nutty aftertaste that contrasts with a strong odour of the cellar. The creamy cheese often has a herbal aroma. From this process, the rind turns an orange-yellow with a velvety texture.



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Mourvèdre, with its meaty richness and wonderful longevity, forms the backbone of this wine. The intense animal quality of Mourvèdre is often improved by the rich fruit of Grenache and the structure, spice, and power of Syrah.

Early History

Mourvèdre is native to Spain, where it is known as Monastrell and is second only to Grenache (Garnacha) in importance. From the Spanish town of Murviedro, near Valencia, Mourvèdre was brought to Provence in the late Middle Ages where, prior to the phylloxera invasion at the end of the 19th century, it was the dominant varietal.

Mourvèdre came to the New World as Mataro (a name taken from a town near Barcelona where the varietal was grown) in the mid to late 1800s. In Australia, it found a home in the Barossa Valley and in California it was first established in Contra Costa County. Until recently, the grape was rarely bottled by itself, and was instead generally used as a component of field blends. The increasing popularity and prestige of Rhône varietals and a return to the French Mourvèdre name has given the varietal a new life. Currently about 400 acres are planted in California.

Mourvèdre at Tablas Creek

Mourvèdre is a late-ripening varietal that flourishes with hot summer temperatures. As such, it is beautifully suited to our southern Rhône-like climate at Tablas Creek, where its lateness in ripening makes it less vulnerable to late spring frosts. In the vineyard, Mourvèdre is a moderately vigorous varietal that does not require a great deal of extra care. The vines tend to grow vertically, making Mourvèdre an ideal candidate for head-pruning (the method traditional to Châteauneuf-du-Pape), although vines can also be successfully trellised. When head-pruned, the weight of the ripening grapes pulls the vines down like the spokes of an umbrella, providing the ripening bunches with ideal sun exposure.

Flavors and Aromas

Wines made from Mourvèdre are intensely colored, rich and velvety with aromas of leather, game, and truffles. They tend to be high in alcohol and tannin when young, and are well-suited to aging. The animal, game-like flavors present in young Mourvèdres can be so strong that they are occasionally mistaken for the bacteria Brettanomyces. In a well-made Mourvèdre, these flavors should resolve into aromas of forest floor and leather with aging. Although it is occasionally bottled as a single varietal, the intense animal quality of Mourvèdre is often improved by the warmth and fruit of Grenache and the structure, spice and tannin of Syrah. Mourvèdre-based wines, pair well with grilled and roasted meats, root vegetables, mushrooms and dark fowl such as duck: flavors that harmonize with the earthiness of the wine.

2002 Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel

The Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel is a blend of four estate-grown varietals, propagated from budwood cuttings from the Château de Beaucastel estate.

The 2002 vintage was tremendous: warm and sunny, with cool nights that prolonged the hangtime of the grapes. The warmth and long hangtime led to grapes that were concentrated, rich, and ripe, but with good balance as well as ripeness. The grapes were fermented using native yeasts in open and closed stainless steel fermenters. After pressing, the wines were moved into barrel, blended, and aged in 1200-gallon French oak foudres before being bottled in April, 2004. The wines are unfinned and unfiltered.

We lost one of the five foudres containing the preliminary blend of the 2002 Esprit de Beaucastel in our December 2003 earthquake, reducing our production by 500 cases.

Character Profile:

The 2002 Esprit de Beaucastel is a powerful expression of the excellent 2002 vintage, featuring a ripe, spicy nose of raspberries and blueberries backed by aromas of smoke and saddle leather, an elegant palate of red fruits laced with nutmeg and pepper and a long beautiful finish.

TECHNICAL NOTES

57% Mourvèdre

27% Syrah

10% Grenache

6% Counoise

14.4% alcohol by volume

2000 cases produced

Cheese Pairing:

Blue d'Auvergne A.O.C. [France]

Origin: It was born one day in 1854 when a peasant auvergnat had the idea to sow his curd using a mushroom which it had seen developing on rye bread. Little by little, others auvergnats used the process and manufactures became that of an area. Four weeks of refining in the black fresh and wet cellars of this cheese force its consistency.

Making: The making of this cheese is relatively recent, only appearing in the markets in the middle of the last century. The story goes that an Auvergnat farmer sprinkled mould from rye bread on his milk curd and then pierced the curd with a needle. This allowed the air through and the curd developed blue veins. In 1975 it was granted an AOC certification

Blue d'Auvergne is produced from milk from the area of Auvergne, where the cheese has been made for a very long time. The milk is inoculated with Penicillin Roquefort, and later as the cheese develops, it is pierced with needles with the strain on them. This cheese has an intense pattern of bluing with a moist, crumbly texture. The flavor is a balanced spicy and salty combination.

Milk: Cow

Aged: A minimum of 4 weeks

Region: Auvergne



Syrah, also known as Shiraz in Australia, is the noble red grape of the northern Rhone Valley. It is a key component of both our Esprit de Beaucastel and Cotes de Tablas. Depending on the vintage, it forms 20-35% of the final Esprit de Beaucastel blend, donating dark fruit, structure, a deep blackish-purple color, minerality, and longevity. It can give mid-palate richness to Mourvedre-based blends, and structure and tannin to Grenache-based wines

Early History

Syrah is one of the oldest established grape varietals in the Côtes du Rhône region of southern France, and competing stories abound about its origin. Whatever its origin, Syrah was well established in the vineyards surrounding the Rhône village of Tain l'Hermitage by the 13th century.

Syrah Around the World

Syrah is most closely associated with the Northern Rhône appellations of Hermitage and Côte-Rotie, where it produces wines of phenomenal elegance and longevity. It is tremendously flexible, and can make elegant and restrained wines as well as wines bursting with fruit and oak, in locations as diverse as France, California, South Africa, and Australia.

Syrah in the Vineyard & Winery

Syrah is quite vigorous and thrives when given warm days, poor soils, and sun. Because it is so vigorous, it requires extra canopy management (to expose the fruit to the sun for ripening) and aggressive crop thinning. It ripens earlier than any of the other red southern Rhône varietals, and its small clusters and small berries produce juice with concentrated flavors and significant tannin. During vinification, we ferment Syrah in large open-top tanks, a process that exposes the juice to more oxygen and thereby softens the tannins and compensates for Syrah's tendency toward reduction.

Flavors and Aromas

The Syrah grape itself is thick-skinned and dark, almost black. Its wines are intense with a dark purple-black color. The wines taste of blackberry and currant fruit, smoke, tar and black pepper, and have a smooth supple texture. Syrah reflects minerality well, and the chalky character of the tannins provides a wonderful backbone to softer, fruitier varietals such as Grenache and Counoise. In our blends, Syrah provides structure, a deep blackish-purple color, minerality, and longevity.

