

# Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

## COMING EVENTS

**Friday, March 4, 2011**

### First Fridays Art Walk

A Taste of Monterey  
Old Town Salinas  
5:00pm-8:00pm\*  
Stop by A Taste of Monterey  
in Old Town Salinas on your  
journey through the First Fridays  
Art Walk. Enjoy art from a  
featured local artist, while we  
stay open later!

**Thursday, March 24, 2011**

### Thirsty Thursdays

A Taste of Monterey  
Old Town Salinas  
4:00pm-7:00pm\*  
Join us on the last Thursday  
of every month from 4pm to  
7pm. A Taste of Monterey,  
Oldtown Salinas is keeping its  
doors open later and offering  
special wine by the glass prices.  
Featured Winemaker, local food  
products and 30% Off wine  
and gifts (discount for club  
members only).

**Friday, March 25, 2011**

### Last Fridays Wine Bar

A Taste of Monterey  
Cannery Row  
6:00pm-9:00pm\*  
Join us on the last Friday of  
every month from 6pm to 9pm.  
A Taste of Monterey, Cannery  
Row is keeping its doors open  
later and offering special wine  
by the glass prices. Start your  
weekend off with a relaxing  
view and a glass of Monterey's  
finest.

\* No new tastings after 5:45pm

## MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION

*It's a Bacteria Thing*



In last month's newsletter, we had a brief overview of the *Vine to Bottle* process that produces our most praised libations. This month, we would like to delve a little further into an area we skimmed over last time: Malolactic fermentation. Malolactic fermentation is a naturally occurring and tricky area of the winemaking process; you'll soon see why we've dedicated a separate article on this one small, yet vital component.

Malolactic fermentation is not technically "fermentation," even though it occurs during the secondary fermentation period for most wines, and "malolactic" by itself doesn't mean much on its own. To make things even more confusing, winemakers often refer to this process as "MLF," "Malo," or "ML," and although it is a natural process, winemakers have ways to manipulate it in order to produce desired traits in wines. Whew...let's pour a glass of buttery Chardonnay before we continue.

In fact, the topic of buttery-tasting Chardonnays is a perfect exhibit for this discussion of...perhaps to make things easier we'll just refer to it for now as *malolactic conversion*, which is actually another way to reference it anyway. But, we'll get back to "malo" and Chardonnay a little later. For now, just take a sip and ask yourself where that butter flavor comes from???

Malolactic conversion is the process in winemaking where malic acid is converted to lactic acid. In more detail- lactic acid bacteria consumes malic acid and carbon dioxide is released as a result. This normally occurs while wine is barreled in whatever form for its secondary fermentation period, and during this phase, the release of carbon dioxide can sound like popcorn in the barrels (and can also smell like it).

Malic acid is tart to our senses- imagine biting into a Granny Smith apple; lactic acid is softer tasting and reminiscent of butter or cream. As previously mentioned, it is a process that naturally occurs with most wines after they have undergone their primary fermentation, but a goal of a winemaker is to achieve a balance of this chemical evolution in order to encourage certain flavors in the wine and/or to ensure that it occurs at the right time during the winemaking process.

A winemaker will test and monitor wines as they move throughout the winemaking process for various reasons. One is to gauge sugar levels, which can assist to provide an indication of when malo will occur in the wine. Curiously, malo is most commonly associated with white wines, but we should mention that it occurs with nearly all red wines and with most white wines (e.g. not with very crisp white varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc).

If malo is expected to happen, a winemaker will want to make sure that it occurs near the fermentation period of the wine. If malo doesn't take place with a wine until after its been bottled, which is possible, it's not a good thing- you'll have a cloudy wine smelling like old buttered popcorn sprinkled with chopped salami. Mmmm, yummy!

Malolactic conversion may be encouraged by a winemaker, but at times it can also be discouraged if not desired. For *Continued Inside*



## MARCH REFERRALS



Refer a friend to the Monterey Wine Club and after they join you get a \$20.00 Gift Card!

# MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

## GRAFF FAMILY VINEYARDS - 2007 *Viognier*



Created from 100% Chalone Viognier grapes made famous from their Rhone Valley heritage in France. The grapes are grown on the Head Vineyard originally planted by Dick Graff on the Chalone bench in Monterey County. A long ripening season results in a rich and opulent wine. Aromas of apricots and tangerines combine with sweet vanilla from 9 months of aging in 10% new and 90% used French oak barrels. A perfect lunch wine with quiche, pasta or grilled fish. Excellent with Chinese or Thai cuisine. This is a serious Viognier which will complement a wide variety of cuisine.

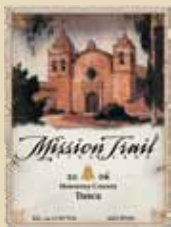
100% Viognier

14.7% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2010

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## MISSION TRAIL VINEYARDS - 2006 *Tusca*



Inspired by the powerhouse wines of Tuscany's "Super Tuscan", Tusca is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon from San Lucas and Sangiovese from Arroyo Seco. The two base wines, on their own, were promising. But, when brought together in this blend, a very special wine resulted. The Cabernet Sauvignon provides the backbone, the tannin structure. It also lends copious amounts of black cherry and cassis fruit varietal characteristics. The Sangiovese brings the brighter fruit of raspberry, wild cherry and hints of exotic spices like nutmeg, dried orange peel and vanilla.

While both the Sangiovese and Cabernet components of the wine showed rich aromas and flavors distinctive to the respective varietals, the smooth tannin, silky mouth feel and lingering finish were achieved by careful blending. The wine's final blend worked out to be half of each varietal. Much work went in to find the right blend by working through 1, 3 and 5% increments in either direction. Tusca is an excellent example of the beauty and balance that blending can bring to a wine. Said to go with anything from marinara to meatloaf, Tusca is "go to" wine that will delight a wide range of palettes.

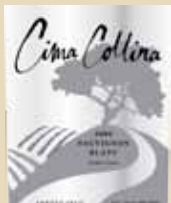
50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 50% Sangiovese

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## CIMA COLLINA - 2008 *Sauvignon Blanc* (Club Blanc)



The Sauvignon Blanc, all Musque clone, was harvested by hand in September 2007 and was the first fruit to come into their winery. They received a total of 10 tons between two days of harvesting. The grapes were carefully pressed in small batches and then 50% of the juice was fermented in a stainless steel tank, and the remainder was fermented in old French oak barrels. As a result of this handling, it is characterized by floral, tropical and grapefruit aromas and has a rich mouthfeel while maintaining a crisp, food-friendly acidity. This Sauvignon Blanc is unfiltered, and you might notice some haze toward the bottom of the bottle as a result. This is normal and typical of unfiltered Sauvignon Blancs. We feel, as many other winemakers do, that it is difficult to filter Sauvignon Blanc and maintain its delicate nature and aromas. If you notice that the sediment has made the wine cloudy during shipment, it will settle out after about 24 hours of refrigeration.

100% Sauvignon Blanc

13.1% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2011

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

## CIMA COLLINA - 2005 *Hilltop Red* (Club Red)



Monterey County is easy to understand. The further north you are, the cooler the climate. Head south, and you find progressively warmer temperatures. As a result, the varietal mix in the vineyards of Monterey tend to change along this north/south line. The 2005 Hilltop Red has, at its heart, Bordeaux varietals. They found them, as you would assume, in the southern part of the Monterey region where the warmer climate allows them to achieve full ripeness. A small portion of Petite Sirah lends a touch more color to the wine as well as slight spice hints. They picked at peak ripeness, sorted the grapes to assure only the best and most consistently ripe bunches made their way into the wine, and finally aged the blend in French oak barrels for 10 months. Fifty-percent of the barrels were new. The result is a rich, dark wine, luscious in character and sporting silky, rather than harsh, tannins. Black currant, spice, vanilla and coffee notes rise up in the aromas. The taste of the Hilltop Red is infused with brambly blackberry fruit, more black currant, cocoa and mocha. The wine is rich,

and the finish long.

55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petite Sirah

14.7% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2015

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



example, a winemaker may restrict malo in a Chardonnay wine in an effort to showcase the fruit's characteristics or perhaps to amplify oak-aging characteristics of the wine. Encouraging malo is nowadays done by simply adding freeze-dried bacteria culture into wines...it's kind of like if you are making chili, and if you don't think it is spicy enough, you add some chili powder. In the case of wine, if malo is not transpiring as you would like to see it- you toss in some more bacteria, and BAM, you have your spicy chili...uh...I mean malo!

While the winemaker may encourage malo for the now obvious reason of not producing a bottled wine with aromatics of corn-on-the-cob and beef jerky, they may also enhance the conversion in order to off-set undesirable flavors that they notice early on in the winemaking process.

And now we can finally get back to that "buttery Chardonnay" comment from earlier...I hope you still have a taste or two remaining in your glass!

The maloactic conversation can be greatly manipulated in the production of Chardonnay wines in order to achieve that creamy buttery flavor some people cannot imagine not being present in their Chardonnays. In this time of the rising popularity for the opposite end of the Chardonnay spectrum (i.e. stainless-steel, no-malo Chardonnays), we're seeing less of these buttery-rich Chards; but, I personally believe they have a strong enough following to endure. I also think that experimentation with maloactic conversion by winemakers is certainly here to stay.

*Bryce Ternet*

Contributing author for *A Taste of Monterey* and is the author of three books.

See [www.mbryceter.net](http://www.mbryceter.net) for more.

A YEAR  
*In the Vineyard*



In this month's newsletter we're introducing a new segment that we believe will be of interest to our wine club members. We often write about wines and the winemaking process, but perhaps it's time to also include a monthly segment devoted entirely to the vineyards themselves. Our goal is to provide an annual overview through monthly updates of what is occurring in Monterey County vineyards that are the source for the many exceptional wines we represent.

As we are now in the month of March, we have a little catch-up to do in this initial installment, so let's rewind a bit back to January. Fortunately for the amount of space we have here today- there's not too much happening in the months of January and February. However, as we'll see together over the next nine months: There's always something going on with a vineyard.

January and February fall into the period of "winter dormancy." This is a period where in the heart of winter the vineyard succumbs to the shortened days and takes a long winter's nap. Although the vines are napping, it doesn't mean our vineyard manager or viticulturalists are sleeping as well. An activity that may be supported during winter is the pruning of the vines, which may ameliorate growth in the spring.

You'll see bud break for yourself if you drive by any of our Monterey County vineyards around this time of year. The "bud" actually refers to a small area of the vine where the vine stem and the leaf stem meet that slightly swells just before the "break." The buds, which began growing the summer before and turn brownish over the winter, will normally have three shoots begin to sprout from them. The shoots will be the first sign of "green" on the vine for the year...and our year in the vineyard is now well underway!

We'll keep an eye on the vineyards and get back together again in April. Cheers until then!

RECIPE

Tomato Artichoke Soup

Courtesy of:



at the Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa

Ingredients:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 4 cups     | diced fresh vine ripe tomatoes                    |
| 2 stalks   | diced celery                                      |
| 1 large    | carrot diced                                      |
| 1 large    | onions diced                                      |
| 1 tbs      | chopped garlic                                    |
| 2 oz.      | olive oil   |
| ½ cup      | sherry wine                                       |
| 1½ cup     | chopped fresh cooked artichoke bottoms and hearts |
| 2 ounce    | tomato paste                                      |
| 1/2 gallon | heavy cream                                       |
| 1 qt       | water   |
| ¼ cup      | chopped herbs, parsley, basil, thyme, oregano     |



No Corkage Fee program participant!

Method:

In a heavy sauce pot, sauté onions, celery, carrots in olive oil for 10 minutes until vegetables are soft, then add garlic, artichokes and cook for 5 minutes. Add sherry, tomatoes and cook for 10 minutes over medium heat. Then add tomato paste, water and simmer again for 5 minutes. Add heavy cream and bring to simmer, season with some salt and pepper, add the herbs and blend well in large blender. Place back in heavy pot and reheat. Season again to taste with salt and pepper. If puree is too thick add water. Pairs well with Tusca and Vioginer.



**PRIVATE RESERVE**  
Monterey Wine Club

3 Reserve Wines / Quarterly  
For More Info, Call:  
(888) 646-5446

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

In order to better serve our members, we need to receive any new info and changes regarding your status (i.e., change of address, new credit card number, etc.) by the 20th of each month.

PLEASE NOTIFY US BY CALLING  
(888) 646-5446.

Any information received after the 20th of each month will not take effect until the following month. Change of address updates, for the upcoming shipment, called in after the 20th, may be subject to a special handling fee.

**PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:**

A Taste of Monterey  
Attn: Elaine Hewett  
127 Main Street  
Salinas, CA 93901  
(888) 646-5446 Ext. 13  
club@tastemonterey.com

**CLUB SAVINGS**

Remember, as a Club Member, you receive a 15% discount on all purchases (20% for Quattro and Cellar members) and a weekly complimentary tasting.

**NEWSLETTER STAFF**

















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WWW.TASTEMONTEREY.COM

# MIX & MATCH

ANY OF THE CURRENT OR PREVIOUS CLUB WINES TO RECEIVE **25% OFF 12 BOTTLES** OR **20% OFF 6**

MARCH SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 05/30/2011	REGULAR PRICE*	12-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*	6-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*
 Graft Family Vineyards 2007 Viognier		\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
 Mission Trail Vineyards 2006 Tusca		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Cima Collina 2008 Sauvignon Blanc		\$17.00	\$12.75	\$13.60
 Cima Collina 2005 Hilltop Red		\$22.00	\$16.50	\$17.60
FEBRUARY SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 04/30/2011			
 Yosemite View 2008 Chardonnay		\$14.00	\$11.20	\$10.50
 Cru 2007 Vineyard Montage Pinot Noir		\$23.00	\$18.40	\$17.25
 Muirwood 2009 Reserve Zanetta Vineyard Chardonnay		\$22.00	\$17.60	\$16.50
 Pierce Ranch Vineyards 2006 Tourbillon		\$18.00	\$14.40	\$13.50
JANUARY SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 03/31/2011			
 Line Shack Winery 2009 Roussanne		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Sycamore Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$24.00	\$18.00	\$19.20
 Sycamore Cellars 2008 Chardonnay		\$26.00	\$19.50	\$20.80
 Line Shack Winery 2008 Syrah		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
PRIVATE RESERVE CLUB	PRICES EXPIRE 05/31/2011			
 Cobblestone 2007 Chardonnay		\$29.00	\$21.75	\$23.20
 San Saba 2006 Pinot Noir		\$35.00	\$26.25	\$28.00
 Pelerin 2007 Les Violettes Syrah		\$36.00	\$27.00	\$28.80
 Mission Trail Vineyards 2004 Zinfandel		\$38.00	\$28.50	\$30.40

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\*PRICES LISTED REFLECT PRICE PER BOTTLE. NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.