

Tasting Monterey

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

COMING EVENTS

Friday, March 2, 2012
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!

Friday, March 30, 2012
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



Picture this: a vineyard has gravelly soil with plenty of drainage, and it's not the warmest of climates... which varietal should be planted? Surely there's some sort of universal standard formula that is applied in order to determine where certain varietals should be planted, right? Yes...and no. Certainly, there are equations that traditionally indicate which varietals have proven to develop successfully in certain specific growing conditions; however, for as much as these equations may apply, there is always a chance for variance.

As people have figured out in numerous categories throughout our history, traditional accepted knowledge is not always the only possibility for anything. Every vineyard in the world offers differing terroir conditions and adventurous growers/winemakers will often take risks and plant varietals in locations that would not be considered, by the general consensus, as safe bets - but that's the whole idea. Growing wine grapes can be as risky as placing one's life savings on a roulette bet in Vegas.

There are numerous elements that need to be considered, but let's begin with the most basic of all agricultural concerns: earth. Of course, as for any fruit or vegetable proposed for cultivation, the overall fertility of the ground itself is an initial factor requiring evaluation. (Let's keep things simple and assume that rainfall is sufficient or irrigation is feasible in our little envisioned scenario.) Within Monterey County, there are eight optimal soil types for growing wine grapes. These soils share qualities of being alluvial (highly fertile soil that has been transported via a river), porous (loose, permeable to fluids) and rich in granite and/or limestone.



Planting certain varietals in specific soil types is one consideration, as a grower may attempt to break from tradition and plant a varietal that is not typically grown in a particular soil type. Why would they do this? We can assure you - it would not be based on the soil and varietal alone; other factors would be calculated before taking the risk...factors such as drainage of the soil of a vineyard.

Yes, the type of soil itself can definitely play a large role in the drainage capacity of a vineyard, but another very important factor can be the slope of the vineyard. At first hearing "slope", you may believe there's something much more technical than your first association with the word, but in reality, there's not. Slope in vineyard terminology, at its most basic level, really does refer to the angle of the ground of a vineyard...simple as that!

Just think about it for a moment, as this may be something you've always known, yet your mind never really called it into recognition: You tend to see a lot of vineyards on hillsides. The carpet of vineyards bordering our own River Road comes to mind. The point is that well-drained vineyards (i.e. those with slopes/good drainage) tend to produce superior quality grapes, and this goes well beyond Monterey County.

And now perhaps potentially the trickiest factor of all - climate. As far as viticulture is concerned, there are three levels of climate: Macroclimate, Mesoclimate and Microclimate. Macroclimate describes what you would think, the climate of a regional area. However, it's not usually defined as broad of an area as say, the State of California, but normally more so on the scale of an American Viticultural Area (AVA) - though, as you undoubtedly already know, AVAs can significantly vary in size (e.g. Central Coast AVA vs. Chalone AVA). Mesoclimate is a little more defined, as it references specific vineyards. Microclimate gets very specific, referring to actual rows of vines within the vineyards.

So, the risks associated with these three levels of climate? Macroclimate is normally viewed as the broadest of the group, which may not always be exactly precise, but global wine grape production is defined by three relatively distinct growing climates: Mediterranean, Maritime and Continental. Mediterranean is often associated with growing regions such as the Rhône region of France, Maritime with areas similar to Bordeaux and Continental with regions such as the Columbia Valley of Washington State. But from a general view, grapevines tend to thrive in temperate climates with a prolonged period of warmth during the critical vine development stages of flowering, fruit set and ripening.

Continued Inside

MARCH REFERRALS



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MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

BERNARDUS - 2010 *Griva Sauvignon Blanc*



Michael Griva planted this special vineyard for Bernardus in the Arroyo Seco appellation which sits next to the renowned Santa Lucia Highlands in the Salinas Valley. The soils are very sandy and rocky which, along with the sunny, breezy climate, produce exceptional grapes with pronounced varietal character accented by a note of minerality. The Griva Sauvignon Blanc vineyard is planted exclusively with the Musqué clone of Sauvignon Blanc which is highly prized for its intense aromatic and flavor expression. Bernardus is now very happy to be able to include a small Semillon component coming from our recent planting at the Griva vineyard. Although only 5% of the blend, they feel that this adds an extra note of richness and complexity to the finished wine.

Their 2010 Griva Sauvignon Blanc exhibits particularly bright gooseberry, grapefruit and fresh grass aromas, accented with flinty mineral notes. The palate shows intense flavors of lime and grapefruit along with grassy notes and a crisp, refreshing acidity.

95% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Semillon

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

BOCAGE - 2010 *Merlot*



Heading along the base of the foothills of the Santa Lucia Highlands, you pass by large tracts of row crops until you come to 75 acres of grapevines marking the driveway to Wrath Vineyards. The newly built stucco-sided winery and tasting room stand out on the floor of the flat, fertile Salinas Valley. Take the path to the right through the wooden doors that lead you into their expansive entry patio; there you will find a small attractive pond with water plants and the occasional goldfish to entertain you.

A pleasurable wine to drink, this fruit forward Merlot exhibits lots of bright cherry and fresh plum flavors. French and American oak add vanilla, spice, dill and coffee. The medium-fine tannins compliment the fruit in the mouth along with spicy cocoa oak flavors.

95% Merlot, 5% Malbec

14.4% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2016

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

PARROT RANCH - 2004 *Cabernet Sauvignon* (Club Red)



Parrot Ranch is a new addition to the Bernardus family. This newly released selection is named for the road that is their winery address in Carmel Valley. The site is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. As this vineyard is more youthful, as compared to Marinus it produces an elegant Cabernet Sauvignon that is approachable in its youth while providing the consumer with an exceptional value.

Superb aromas of ripe plums and cherries accented with notes of cedar, coffee, toasty oak and spice beautifully express the excellence of the terroir of Carmel Valley. Full, rich flavors of dark cherry and cedar with mineral notes are concentrated and well-focused.

Their 2004 Parrot Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon is drinking wonderfully now, but the freshness of flavor and fine tannins on the finish promise a rewarding future for several years to come.

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

14.1% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

MARIN'S VINEYARD - 2010 *Viognier* (Club Blanc)



This small family owned vineyard is located in southern Monterey County overlooking the beautiful studded oak valley of Lockwood. The vineyard was developed a little over 12 years ago with plantings of Syrah, until 2007, when the first plantings of Viognier took place leading to the release of this wine in the fall of 2008. Crisp, tropical and very fruit forward, this wine has only a slight hint of oak. Tastes great by itself and also pairs well with spicy foods and pasta dishes. Try this wine instead of your traditional Chardonnay and become hooked on the 2010 Marin's Vineyard Viognier.

100% Viognier

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2013

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



Can you guess which one we have in Monterey County? Of the three, Mediterranean is most applicable, as it is defined by ocean-influenced factors in a climate that experiences warm days and cool nights during the growing period and mild winters during the vine dormancy period.

Which factors absolutely determine which varietal should be planted? There are two answers to this question - all of them and none of them. All of the factors discussed so far can in fact be followed for "traditional" methodology. But, as mentioned earlier, growing wine grapes can be a risk, and many growers/winemakers have a bit of gambler in them.

They may take risks based upon what is believed to be controllable as far as the growing environment and plant varietals completely opposite from their neighbors. Or, they may use the practice of grafting clones that offer specific characteristics that may be viewed as advantageous to a certain growing environment (review your February newsletter article again on this subject for a refresher). Do these risks always result in positive harvests and wines? No, but sometimes they do, which is why you will find fantastic wines sourced from growing areas that would not seem appropriate for a varietal. To exemplify this point, try a Syrah from the Santa Lucia Highlands sometime. Trust us...

We hope that this summary has provided an overview of the complexity of risks associated with growing wine grapes. Of course, as with all agricultural practices, there are traditional factors that can be measured by growers and winemakers when deciding which varietal to plant in their vineyards. But the beauty of winemaking brilliantly shines through, as throughout the growing regions around the globe, we continue to see and savor the results of bold experiments that fill our glasses.

-Bryce Ternet

Contributing editor and author of three books. See <http://www.facebook.com/pages/M-Bryce-Ternet> for more.

RECIPE

Salmon Chowder

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

1 lb.	fresh salmon, cubed (large pieces)
1 lb.	new potatoes, peeled and sliced
1	medium white onion, finely chopped
2 T.	brandy
1 T.	minced garlic
4 cups	half & half
1/2 lb.	unsalted butter
2 cups	fish stock
1/2 cup	flour

Method:

Melt butter in a heavy, 3-qt. saute pan. Reserve 2 oz. Saute onion and garlic until translucent.

Add brandy and cook 3-4 min. Add stock.

Poach salmon for 5-6 min.; remove slightly undercooked. Set aside.

Add potatoes and simmer until just tender.

Return reserved butter to another saute pan. Make a roux by allowing melted butter to simmer and adding flour, 1 T. at a time. Add flour until absorbed, and cook slowly for 3-6 min.

Transfer some soup mixture into roux. Stir until smooth. Pour into soup and stir until soup thickens.

Add half & half. Adjust flavor with salt and pepper to taste.

Gently fold in salmon. Let simmer for 15-20 min.

Garnish with fresh chives. Serve immediately.



VISITING Varietals



MERLOT

Pronunciation: Mer-Low

Definition: The classic Merlot grape originated from the Bordeaux region of France. It typically produces a soft, medium-bodied red wine with juicy fruit flavors. Merlot is a red wine grape that is used as both a blending grape and for varietal wines. The name Merlot is thought to derive from the Old French word for young blackbird, merlot, a diminutive of merle, the blackbird (*Turdus merula*), probably from the color of the grape. Merlot-based wines usually have medium body with hints of berry, plum and currant. Its softness and "fleshiness", combined with its earlier ripening, makes Merlot a popular grape for blending with the sterner, later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon, which tends to be higher in tannin.

Flavor Profile: A range of fresh flavors such as plums, cherries, blueberries and blackberries mixed with cocoa and blackpepper tones, often dominate this type of red wine. The tannin levels are typically lower than a Cabernet Sauvignon and the fruit flavors are typically forward - making this a prime wine candidate for consumers just "getting into" red wines. Merlot is often used to blend with other varietals, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. By blending Merlot with these wines, a symbiotic relationship can exist. The Cabs are softened, mellowed a bit, and the Merlot enjoys more structured and defined backbone.

Food Pairing: Fairly versatile when it comes to food pairing options. Poultry, red meat, pork, pastas, salads - Merlot can handle them all well.

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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

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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.

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	Bocage 2010 Merlot	\$16.00	\$12.00	\$12.80
	Parrot Ranch 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon	\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
	Marin's Vineyard 2010 Viognier	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
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