

Tasting Monterey

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

COMING EVENTS

Friday, March 29, 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.

Extended Hours
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 11:00am-7:00pm**
 Our tasting room is now open 1 hour later on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

* No new tastings after 5:45pm
 ** No new tastings after 6:00pm



Don't Say "No" to

Merlot

"I'm not drinking any \$#@% Merlot!" Sure, this was a humorous line from a popular movie a few years ago. Merlot has battled an image issue for decades and the film did little to help its perception. But still



we ask: Why say no to Merlot?

Merlot plays a dominant role in global red wine production, including within that coveted bottle of Cheval Blanc showcased in the afore-referenced movie. And you may have heard of Chateau Petrus wines before? Yup, almost all Merlot. Speaking of these famed Bordeaux wines, do you know what is the most widely planted varietal in Bordeaux...? Cabernet Sauvignon? No, but good guess.

It is in fact Merlot; and it's also the most planted varietal in all of France. Merlot is actually also the third most planted varietal on the planet, with its acreage projected to continue growing.

Bordeaux is the varietal's homeland and it's believed to have originally been an offspring of Cabernet Sauvignon and shares some similarities with the varietal Carmenere. Although, as is the case with all Bordeaux wines, you won't find a 100% bottle of Merlot from the region; a wine may be predominantly Merlot, but it will be blended with another varietal(s).

Speaking of Bordeaux, Merlot is one its five principal red varietals, along with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, and Petit Verdot (these are also the five varietals used in our "Meritage" wines). With these varietals, and others, Merlot is blended to add softness to wines with its medium tannins and smooth mouthfeel.

Merlot wines are known for being softer than other reds, making them a popular choice for those just getting into red wines or those who are not fans of big reds. Being medium bodied and lower in tannins than other red wines also help make them more approachable for many.



Flavors/aromas of Merlot wines range widely, depending on its growing climate. These range from strawberry to tobacco to chocolate. But typical noticeable traits are plum, berries, and currant.

As for growing conditions, Merlot is one of the survivor grapes that, while showing best in certain conditions, can be grown pretty much anywhere wine grapes are grown. And it can be grown across the spectrum of climates; in cool, warm, and hot growing environments-this explains that wide spectrum of aromas mentioned earlier.

The grapes themselves are large berries with thin skins and are lighter in their blue/black tones than Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot is early ripening and although not considered to be a difficult varietal to grow, how a

grower treats the vines can make vast differences in eventual wines from the fruit.

So getting back to its versatility, two thirds of the entire global Merlot production is in France...that's quite a large percentage! And it's not just grown in the Bordeaux area; recent years have seen a large increase in Merlot production from the Languedoc-Roussillon growing region. Throughout France you'll see it often blended, increasingly with Syrah.

Merlot has made its way into Italy in a big way as well. It's the fifth most planted varietal there and is blended with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and even Sangiovese. Spain, Hungary, Austria and others all grow and make

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MARCH REFERRALS



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MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

PUMA ROAD - 2009 Chardonnay



The 2009 Puma Road Chardonnay was made in a combination of stainless steel tank and neutral French oak; the tank for purity of fruit and the barrels for complexity and enhanced mouth-feel. The aromas of tropical fruits and subtle smokiness leap out of the glass. The flavors in the mouth continue on with densely packed ripe stone fruits and high toned mandarin orange and banana followed by a flush of vanilla and oak on the finish.

This wine has enough bottle age to bring out not only the primary flavors but also the subtle increases in mouth-feel and aromas that only time can evolve. Ripe for drinking in the near future, pairing this wine with lighter fowl dishes, shellfish offerings and creamy young cheese will be a rewarding experience.

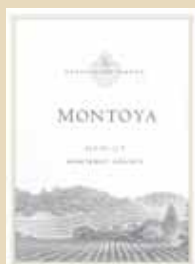
100% Chardonnay

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2013

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

MONTOYA - 2010 Merlot



The Montoya Merlot is made from grapes grown on their family vineyards and other select Monterey County appellations. The subtle influences of these different microclimates add depth and complexity to the final blend.

The Montoya Arroyo Seco Merlot has been skillfully blended from several of our vineyards located in the diverse terroirs of Monterey County. The Montoya Merlot is blended to deliver the dark cherry and berry flavors Monterey is known for. These are framed in cedary oak with tones of tea and spice. This is a supple wine that a red wine lover will enjoy with or without food.

100% Merlot

13.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2016

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

TALMADGE - 2008 Pinot Noir (Club Red)



Talmadge sources their grapes, for this wine, from Paraiso Vineyards's 400-acre estate vineyard which lies at the southern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA in Monterey County, California. Winegrape pioneers of the region, Rich and Claudia Smith began planting this property in 1973. Today, Rich and his son Jason manage almost 150,000 vines in 16 different blocks. The land provides varying soils, elevations and microclimates, producing grapes uniquely expressive of their individual sites.

A blend of four different clones, the focus of this wine is decidedly Burgundian. Flavors of red cherry and ripe raspberry are backed by soft acidity and a nice juicy mid-palate. It is youthful and approachable, enjoyable on its own or with a wide range of dishes.

100% Pinot Noir

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

LOREDONA - 2011 Pinot Grigio (Club Blanc)



San Bernabe Vineyard in Monterey County, part of the San Bernabe AVA, is the most diverse single vineyard in the world, with more than 20 grape varieties planted in 21 different microclimates. This area is one of the coolest growing regions in California, perfect for developing excellent flavor concentration and balance in white wine varietals. The grapes for the Loredona Pinot Grigio are from the oldest Pinot Grigio blocks on San Bernabe Vineyard. Grown on Block 65 in the southern end of the vineyard, these vines are managed with a fairly open canopy for good sun exposure and are planted in an area of predominantly sandy soils.

The 2011 Loredona Pinot Grigio features a melange of tropical and spicy aromas including pear, pineapple, and ginger. The flavors are rich and intense, with ripe pear and Fuji apples. The wine finishes with strong hints of vanilla.

100% Pinot Grigio

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

wines with Merlot. Outside of the Old World, Merlot has found its way to Chile, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and even Mexico.

Here in the States, Merlot is grown all over, most significantly in New York State, Virginia, Oregon...but the vast majority of Merlot vines are in California and Washington State. It is the most widely grown varietal in Washington and makes up a fifth of the state's annual production.

As for California, it's planted throughout our state, but there are three counties considered to be the most important for Merlot; those two counties north/northeast of San Francisco and then...our very own Monterey County. Merlot here is no different from other wine regions of the world: it's used in various blends or as a varietal wine of its own. Varietal wines produced from it range from simple, fruity wines to complex multi-layered delectable creations sharing similarities with fine Cabernet Sauvignon wines. You'll notice this wide range even amongst our selection of Merlots here at A Taste of Monterey.

So let's take it easy on the varietal and stop saying no to Merlot.

Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of the just released novella: "The Yellow House on Maloney Grove." See <http://www.mbryceternet.com/> for more.).



VISITING Varietals



PINOT NOIR

Pronunciation: Pee-noh-n'wah

Definition: Pinot Noir may be the toughest grape to grow, but the effort is often well worth the constant care and investment. It is a fickle grape that demands optimum growing conditions, opting for warm days consistently supported by cool evenings. As for style, Pinot Noir is typically a lighter-medium bodied, fruit-forward red wine

Flavor Profile: Pinot Noir is a dry, red wine that typically exhibits fruit-forward character with strawberry, cherry, raspberry and blackberry fruit taking the cake for palate presence. Notable earth-driven layers are also quite common in a glass of Pinot, with herbal, mushroom, leather, and game-like qualities being fairly familiar. Warm spice notes also make their way into the Pinot Noir palate profile, often in the form of cinnamon, clove and smoky, tobacco nuances.

Food Pairing: Enjoying a red wine palate profile in a white wine style, the lighter-bodied, rich fruit character components of many Pinots give it a step up in the glasses of both red wine and white wine drinkers. Pinot Noir is well-suited to pair with a wide variety of ethnic dishes, classic cuisines and traditional foodie favorites, thanks in large part to its consistent acidity, subtle, silky tannins and lighter-bodied style. Perfect Pinot pairings include pork and poultry, beef and bacon, cheese and chocolate, fish, lamb, mushrooms, fresh herbs, and wild game. Pinot Noir plays well with creamy sauces, spicy seasonings and is considered by many to be one of the world's most versatile food wines.

RECIPE

Chocolate Cherry Merlot Brownies

INGREDIENTS

1 1/4 cups	6-oz. pkg. dried sweet cherries, chopped
1/2 cup	Merlot wine
2 bars	8 oz. dark chocolate baking bar, broken into small pieces
1 1/3 cups	all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon	salt
1 cup	granulated sugar
1/3 cup	butter, softened
2	large eggs
1 teaspoon	vanilla extract



DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease 9-inch-square baking pan. Microwave dried cherries and wine in small, uncovered, microwave-safe bowl on high (100%) power for 1 minute. Set aside for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain cherries; discard wine. Microwave chocolate in small, uncovered, microwave-safe bowl on high (100%) power for 45 seconds; stir. If pieces retain some of their original shape, microwave at additional 10- to 15-second intervals, stirring just until melted; cool to room temperature. Combine flour and salt in small bowl. Beat sugar and butter in medium mixer bowl until well mixed. Add eggs and beat until light and fluffy. Beat in melted chocolate and vanilla extract. Stir in flour mixture until blended. Stir in drained cherries. Spread into prepared pan. Bake for 33 to 37 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out slightly sticky. Cool completely in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars.

Note: Sweetened dried cranberries can be substituted for the dried cherries.



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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:

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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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 Montoya 2010 Merlot		\$16.00	\$12.00	\$12.80
 Talmadge 2008 Pinot Noir		\$28.00	\$21.00	\$22.40
 Loredona 2011 Pinot Grigio		\$14.00	\$10.50	\$11.20
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