

Tasting Monterey

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



STORE HOURS

A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-7pm
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

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Monterey Wine Club, and
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Welcome to Fabulous Gambling in the Vineyards

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.

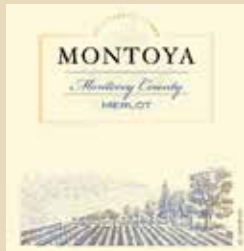
And now perhaps potentially the trickiest factor of all - climate. As far as viticulture is concerned, there are three levels of climate: Macroclimate, Mesoclimate and Microclimate. Macroclimate describes what you would think, the climate of a regional area. However, it's not usually defined as broad 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

Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

MONTOYA - 2016 Merlot



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. It 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

14,5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2022

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

BERNARDUS - 2017 Griva Sauvignon Blanc



Beginning in 2014 Bernardus has chosen to bottle only grapes from the Griva Sauvignon Blanc vineyard. Michael Griva has planted a special block of the celebrated "Musqué" clone of SB uniquely for Bernardus. It is widely recognized as the most expressive clone of Sauvignon Blanc. With its perfect combination of sandy, well-drained soils and a warm, breezy climate, Michael's vineyard has proven to be the ideal place to grow Sauvignon Blanc. They also incorporate a small amount of Griva Semillon which provides an extra note of richness and complexity.

The 2017 Griva Sauvignon Blanc exhibits beautiful aromas of tropical fruits with gooseberry and subtle hints of grass. The flavors are remarkably rich in texture with a very fruit-forward expression. This is one of Bernardus' most appealing Griva Sauvignon Blancs yet!

100% Sauvignon Blanc

13,3% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2021

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

METZ ROAD - 2015 Pinot Noir (Club Red)



Metz Road runs alongside Riverview Vineyard. Located adjacent to the Pinnacles, nestled on a bench overlooking the Salinas River, it is a Burgundian landscape dramatically influenced by the proximity of the Monterey Bay. The Metz Road label was born from the passion to express the unique terroir of this single vineyard site and craft a Pinot Noir that is authentic in style and exemplifies this complex, ethereal varietal. Riverview Vineyard is our northernmost estate in Monterey County. The micro-climate is noted for its moderate conditions and cold afternoon winds, ideal for cool-climate varietals such as Pinot Noir. Evening coastal fogs in the spring and summer often linger until mid-morning the following day. This natural cooling effect slows photosynthesis and causes a unique lengthening of the growing season.

Aromas of ripe cherries, red fruit and blood orange are intermingled with subtle notes of vanilla and butterscotch. The palate is supple and layered with vivid flavors of black cherry and raspberry. Silky and elegant, the balance of tannin, acidity and intense

fruit truly captures the beauty of Pinot Noir.

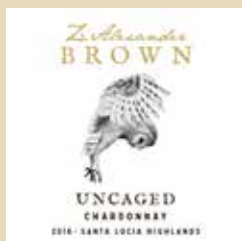
100% Pinot Noir

14.0% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2022

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Z. ALEXANDER BROWN - 2016 Uncaged Chardonnay (Club Blanc)



The Santa Lucia Highlands is a cool climate highly regarded for producing complex and intense Chardonnays. This year was no exception with the fruit ripening slowly all summer, finally being picked in the first two weeks of October. After several years of drought we finally had above average rains, which rinsed the soils and led to healthy, early season canopy development. The growing season started out on the cooler side but by August, temperatures had climbed to about average, which pushed harvest right along. This season produced very concentrated flavors, yielding complex and beautifully balanced wines.

Honey-colored in the glass, Z. Alexander Brown Chardonnay exudes bright aromas of White peach, floral orange blossom with hints of honey and baking spice. A rich, velvety mouthfeel is supported by core flavors of juicy stone fruit, vanilla and toasted oak. These complex, layered flavors extend into the finish. This Chardonnay is well-balanced and full bodied with a bright acidity, making it a perfect pairing with a wide range of fare.

100% Chardonnay

14,5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2021

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



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.

This 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

Spanakopita Greek Spinach Pie

Ingredients:

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 3 tablespoons | olive oil |
| 1 | large onion, chopped |
| 1 | bunch green onions, chopped |
| 2 | cloves garlic, minced |
| 2 pounds | spinach, rinsed and chopped |
| 1/2 cup | chopped fresh parsley |
| 2 | eggs, lightly beaten |
| 1/2 cup | ricotta cheese |
| 1 cup | crumbled feta cheese |
| 8 | sheets phyllo dough |
| 1/4 cup | olive oil |



Method:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly oil a 9x9 inch square baking pan.

Heat 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Saute onion, green onions and garlic, until soft and lightly browned. Stir in spinach and parsley, and continue to saute until spinach is limp, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

In a medium bowl, mix together eggs, ricotta, and feta. Stir in spinach mixture. Lay 1 sheet of phyllo dough in prepared baking pan, and brush lightly with olive oil. Lay another sheet of phyllo dough on top, brush with olive oil, and repeat process with two more sheets of phyllo. The sheets will overlap the pan. Spread spinach and cheese mixture into pan and fold overhanging dough over filling. Brush with oil, then layer remaining 4 sheets of phyllo dough, brushing each with oil. Tuck overhanging dough into pan to seal filling.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 to 40 minutes, until golden brown. Cut into squares and serve while hot.

VISITING Varietals



UNOAKED CHARDONNAY

Pronunciation:

shar doh nay

Imagine a Chardonnay with no butter, no vanilla and no cream. Forget lattes, cappuccinos and all the creamy business... we just want black coffee. For those who've elevated their wine tasting chops to something beyond milk fat, unoaked Chardonnay sounds pretty compelling. There's a couple of other things that make unoaked Chardonnay delicious, sustainable and even technically more affordable than the oaked version.

Unoaked Chardonnay was popularized by Chablis, a region about 80 miles Northwest of Dijon, France in Burgundy. Since the wines from Chablis traditionally are made with stainless steel, concrete or neutral oak, they do not have the buttercream style. Chablis popularized this style and soon everyone around the world started labeling their no-oak Chardonnays with the word "Chablis" until France complained. Unoaked Chardonnay tastes only of the varietal characteristics of Chardonnay which are green apple, lemon and sometimes pineapple with a long tingly finish.

What is MLF and how does it affect Chardonnay? Sometimes wine producers put Chardonnay through malolactic fermentation (happens in tank after the first fermentation) which alters the acids in the wine from the harsher malic acid (same acids found in green apples) to oillier lactic acid (a bacteria that is more common in sour cream). What's important to note is that not all unoaked Chardonnays go through MLF whereas most oaked chardonnays do, so it's hard to tell the difference between the oily texture of malo versus the buttery-vanilla flavor of oak.

Unoaked Chardonnay is cheaper to produce. Yep. It's true. Take out the cost of paying for and shipping new oak barrels all over the world, year in and year out, and winemakers have a cheaper long-term solution. Thus, a lot of unoaked wines tend to fly into the marketplace at a much more affordable price point (and more sustainable).

CHEESE

Varietals



STILTON

Pronunciation: STILL-tuhn

This is one of the best British cheeses, worthy of a sonnet. It is a quintessential English cheese, suitable not only for celebrations, but also to perk up everyday dishes. It is the only British cheese to have a Certification Trade Mark and an EU Protected Name.

The Stilton cheese can only be produced in the three counties of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. The cheese is made from locally produced cow's pasteurised milk. It is made in a cylindrical shape and allowed to form its own coat or crust. The distinctive feature of this cheese is magical blue veins radiating from the centre of the cheese.

Traditionally, this cheese has been paired with sherry and port wine. It is also a good choice to go with walnuts, crackers, biscuits and breads.

It is smooth and creamy with complex, with a slightly acidic flavour when young. As it matures so the texture becomes softer and creamier with a mellow flavour. It makes an excellent dessert cheese and is traditionally served with Port at Christmas. However, it can be enjoyed all year round and is worth trying with a dark cream sherry or a sweet dessert wine. It is also very versatile and can be used in hot or cold recipes.

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.

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| | Montoya 2016 Merlot | \$17.00 | \$12.75 | \$13.60 |
| | Bernardus 2017 Griva Sauvignon Blanc | \$25.00 | \$18.75 | \$20.00 |
| | Metz Road 2015 Pinot Noir | \$35.00 | \$26.25 | \$28.00 |
| | Z. Alexander Brown 2016 Uncaged Chardonnay | \$18.00 | \$13.50 | \$14.40 |
| MARCH SELECTIONS | | PRICES EXPIRE 05/31/2019 | | |
| | Robert Mondavi Private Selection 2017 Bourbon Barrel-Aged Cabernet Sauvignon | \$20.00 | \$15.00 | \$16.00 |
| | Bravium 2017 Santa Lucia Highlands Rosé of Pinot Noir | \$20.00 | \$15.00 | \$16.00 |
| | DeTierra Vineyards 2015 Puzzler | \$26.00 | \$19.50 | \$20.80 |
| | Robert Mondavi Private Selection 2017 Bourbon Barrel-Aged Chardonnay | \$17.00 | \$12.75 | \$13.60 |
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