

Tasting Monterey

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

STORE HOURS



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OCTOBER REFERRALS



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Veraison THE TURNING POINT



If one compares the wine grape growing process to a novel, the harvest is by far the denouement of the story. This is the point where the developing plot of the story (in our analogy here, this would be the development of the grapes on the vines) fully comes to light (seen here as the picking of the grapes that will ultimately be turned into wine).

There's no disputing that in both novels and on grape vines, this is a very important time. After all, you've been waiting for this moment while reading a novel or waiting for grapes to ripen. No wonder this point in the process for both receives most of the attention.

However, there's another time often overlooked, or at least downplayed in importance, at times. This is the period in the wine grape growing experience can be compared to the literary equivalent of a climax in a story. This period in winemaking is called veraison.

Veraison is a French term to describe the onset of ripening in the wine grapes on the vine. The official definition for it is the changing of the color of the grape berries. However, there's a lot more to this time on the vine. Veraison represents the transition from berry growth to berry ripening, and there are many changes occurring in the development of the berries during this period. As in a novel, this is the time of building momentum reaching a zenith.

This critical phase is a physiological stage in the vine life cycle marked by a change in appearance and hardness of the grape berry. From a technical standpoint, the onset of veraison for wine grapes marks the end of the grape skin cell division. Once veraison is finished, the grape skin cell number is fixed. Chemically, this is also a time when there is a change in the acids and sugars of the grapes. Basically, what occurs is that acidity in the grape decreases and there is an increase in sugar concentration. So the grapes are starting to ripen at this time of the growing process.

Physically, the grapes are changing color – even the white wine grapes. Of course, the onset of veraison is more prominent with red wine grapes changing from green to purplish. But the grape clusters do not change color uniformly, so often there will be a period of semi-coloration in the clusters. And the color variation occurs in white wine grapes as well. They change from green to a golden yellow hue.



But there's more to veraison than just changing colors. This is also a time of change of berry hardness. At the start of veraison, the berries are very firm and hard. At the end of the process they will be plump and pliable enough that you can squeeze them between your fingers.

And as with a climatic revelation in a novel, veraison is also the time in the process when the grapes will develop their most complexity, which will result in characteristics of wine to be made from them. Ask any winegrower or winemaker, and they'll tell you that mid-summer, which is when the veraison stage occurs, is an exciting

time for them. As they see the evolution of the grapes and begin to taste them, they are already able to envision the wines they will soon be crafting.

However, each grape variety will ripen through veraison at different rates, which also directly impacts when grapes will be harvest. For example, Sauvignon Blanc is one of the earlier grape varieties to experience *Continued Inside*

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

RANCH 32 - 2013 *Vintner's Reserve Meritage*



Nestled on the west side of the fertile valley lies Ranch 32, where warm sunny days are tempered by the cool coastal conditions of Monterey County. This environment allows the fruit to hang on the vine and develop complex flavors and intense varietal character. The grapes for this wine were crushed and fermented in stainless steel with each variety fermented separately. The grapes were pressed and the wine left to settle in stainless steel. The wine was racked off heavy lees and aged in a topped tank. The wine was inoculated for malo lactic fermentation and the individual lots were blended just prior to bottling. This wine was aged with 15% American oak and 10% French oak for 18 months prior to blending.

Aromas of blackberries and dark plums with overtones of mocha, tobacco and dark chocolate. The palate shows soft well integrated tannins with a long finish.

47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot,
23% Petit Verdot

2,540 Cases Produced

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

LONG VALLEY RANCH - 2013 *Chardonnay*



Located in the Central Coast region of California, the Salinas Valley is also known as the Long Valley, a name coined by writer John Steinbeck due to its 100-mile length. Their estate vineyards in Monterey County offer ideal growing conditions for Burgundian varietals such as Chardonnay. The cool ocean air that comes sweeping down the valley each day lengthens the growing season and allows the grapes to ripen slowly and evenly. The grapes were harvested during the night and early morning to keep the fruit cool in order to preserve the delicate nuances of flavor.

Aromas of juicy red apple, grapefruit and tropical mango are supported by light notes of vanilla. This wine is a medium-bodied and refreshing Chardonnay with a rich, soft mouthfeel.

100% Chardonnay

1,200 Cases Produced

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

MARILYN REMARK - 2012 *GSP* (Club Red)



Joel Burnstein and Marilyn Remark have been producing Rhône wines under Marilyn's namesake label since 2003. Together for eleven years, they share a passion for wine and travel. Their visit to the Rhône Valley left them smitten and it defined the direction for their joint venture. They produce approximately 2,000 cases annually from Monterey-grown Rhône grapes: Grenache, Marsanne, Petite Sirah, Roussanne, Syrah and Viognier

A masterful blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Petite Sirah that on the palate is surprisingly smooth. This silky wine fills your mouth with ripe jammy fruit. Strong flavors of chocolate covered Bing cherries and blackberries are followed by Tahitian vanilla bean and a light dusting of white pepper. This special blend has developed extremely well over the last few months since the initial tasting, and so look forward to enjoying this one for at least 3 more years. Classic pairing with red meats or even a nice grilled pork chop, and will even

hold up to a bittersweet chocolate tart for dessert.

45% Grenache, 40% Petite Sirah, 15% Syrah

350 Cases Produced

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

CRU - 2012 *SLH Chardonnay* (Club Blanc)



The 2012 CRU Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay was harvested 10/8/2012. The fruit was handpicked and transported in a refrigerated truck to maintain the integrity of the fruit. The fruit was then whole cluster pressed to a settling tank for 24 hours. The juice was racked off the solids and inoculated with CY3079 and D-47 yeast. The following morning after inoculation the juice was transferred to barrels for barrel fermentation. The barrel composition consisted of 25% New French oak from Sirugue, Damy and Marsannay cooperages. The wines were elevage, or stirred, through the barrel aging process. All the barrels were inoculated for Malo-Lactic fermentation at the end of primary fermentation.

On the nose, this wine gives off notes of green apple, nectarine and honeydew. With great balance of fruit and acidity in the mouth, one will be met with white peaches, fig, melon, and layers of subtle oak and minerality.

100% Chardonnay

308 Cases Produced

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

veraison and ultimately ripen. Therefore it will end up being one of the first varieties to be harvested at the end of the growing season, in late summer or early fall, depending on the year. Pinot Gris is another early ripening variety, followed by Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The later ripening varieties are those you would probably expect when you consider their concentrated compositions. Merlot, Zinfandel, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon all experience veraison later and end up being the last grapes to be harvested.

The harvest is the time in the wine grape growing process which receives most of the glory and attention, and it's wrapping up in Monterey County at the time you are reading this article. But it was the veraison phase a few months ago that advanced the 2016 wine grape story to a conclusion.

Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula."



VISITING Varietals



PETIT VERDOT

Pronunciation: peh-tee vur-doe

Petit Verdot hails from Bordeaux, where it is most often used in the region's famous red blends to add dark violet color, stouter tannins and impart concentrated fruit flavor on the palate. However, because Petit Verdot tends to ripen later in the season it carries a "hit or miss" reputation, depending on the vintage, as to whether or not the fruit will actually make it to harvest and be a viable addition to a Bordeaux blend.

The secret to growing Petit Verdot are long days and lots of sun.

With this in mind, New World growers have given Petit Verdot a second chance to shine in regions with consistent, extended growing conditions. The results have been stunning. Case in point, not only do these warm weather regions, like Argentina, Australia, California, Chile and Washington, give Petit Verdot a chance to completely mature, they also afford it the opportunity to shine front and center. As such many producers have bottled the grape on its own, effectively forsaking the historic blend, where it only played a minor role.

Petit Verdot is a highly concentrated grape, exuding abundant color, structure and flavor. Classified as a red wine, the intense hues lean well into the blue-black range, often with a fuller body, higher alcohol content, and decidedly dry taste profile. With remarkable tannic structure, medium to high acids, (depending on the region) and black fruit dominating the aromatics and palate flavors, Petit Verdot can be a loud, rambunctious wine that may well be softened by age or blending.

Due to the rigid tannin structure and concentrated nature of this wine, foods with plenty of weight, protein and fat are your best bets. Consider rich cuts of red meat, well-aged cheese (like Stilton) or wild game. Barbecue, beef stew, roasted rack of lamb and game birds all stand up well to the rich appeal of Petit Verdot.

RECIPE

Pumpkin Lasagna

Ingredients

1 cup	pumpkin puree
1 1/2	tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium	onion, chopped
4 to 6	cloves garlic, sliced
1 pound	spicy Italian sausage, casings removed
1/2 cup	red wine
1	28 -ounce can tomato sauce
1/4 cup	chopped fresh basil
1/4 cup	chopped fresh parsley
1/2	teaspoon dried oregano
	salt and freshly ground pepper
1	16 -ounce box lasagna noodles
1 large	egg
2 1/2 cups	ricotta cheese
2 cups	shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup	shredded romano cheese
1 large	zucchini, very thinly sliced



Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the pumpkin puree in a fine sieve over a bowl; set aside to drain while you make the sauce.

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a medium pot over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until translucent, 6 to 7 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, 2 more minutes. Add the sausage and cook until brown, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Pour in the wine and cook until reduced by half. Stir in the tomato sauce and herbs and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Season with salt and pepper, cover and reduce the heat to low. Simmer 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the lasagna noodles and cook as the label directs. Drain and toss with the remaining 1/2 tablespoon olive oil.

Mix the strained pumpkin puree with the egg in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. In a separate bowl, mix the ricotta, 1 cup mozzarella and the romano.

Build your lasagna in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish: Start with a layer of sauce, then top with a layer of noodles. Evenly spread half of the pumpkin filling, then half of the zucchini, over the noodles. Top with half of the cheese mixture and cover with some of the sauce. Repeat the layers, finishing with noodles and sauce; sprinkle with the remaining 1 cup mozzarella. Bake, uncovered, 35 to 40 minutes, or until bubbly. Let cool 15 minutes before slicing.

CHEESE

Varietals



LIMBURGER

Pronunciation: LIM-buhr-guhr

Limburger is a semi-soft, washed rind cheese that originated in the historical Duchy of Limburg, now divided among three countries; Germany, Belgium and Netherlands. The cheese is popularly known for its stinky aroma which has been compared to foot odor. Today, most of the cheese is exclusively made in Germany, making them the sole producers in Europe.

Artisanal cheese makers prepare this cheese from pasteurized cow's milk sourced from local, organic farms. As a result, the flavor of the cheese is mild despite the stinky aroma.

The exterior of the cheese is covered with a thin pale, orange-brown rind, an effect of regular washings.

In the initial month of ripening, Limburger is firmer and more crumbly, but starts to become chalky and soft at the end of six weeks. After two months, the cheese is much smoother and creamy. At three months, Limburger finally acquires the infamous aroma due to smear-ripening with solutions of bacteria.

The interior is a soft and yielding, straw-colored pate that becomes runnier with age. This cheese has a significant grassy and mushroomy taste underlined by delicate tang at the end.









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