

Tasting Monterey

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

COMING EVENTS

Friday, Nov 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!

Saturday, Nov 12, 2011
Best of the Blue
 Del Monte Aviation Hanger
 Monterey
 1:00pm-4:00pm
 This exciting post-harvest event features over 50 wineries showcasing their best wines from the Blue Grand Canyon™. The region will be featuring the abundance of Monterey County with a "Try & Buy" Wine Marketplace, Gourmet food, Captivating artwork and a incredible and exclusive venue.

Visit: www.montereywines.org
 for more details.

Friday, Nov 28, 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.

Friday, Dec 3, 2011
Holiday Port Party
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 7:00pm-9:00pm*
 Enjoy Chocolate and Cheese tastings to complement some wonderful Monterey Ports! More details coming soon.

* No new tastings after 5:45pm

NOVEMBER REFERRALS



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

To Blend or Not to Blend?

To blend, or not to blend, that is the question. Although this may initially seem like a simple matter in the wine world, we assure you that it is no minor subject. Of course, we all know that different varietals are often combined together to make wines, but it may be surprising to hear that the varietal wine you are sipping on, for example, likely has a small percentage of another varietal's juice blended into it.

You may not necessarily taste it, and there is no indication on the bottle's label that informs you of this, but there's more to it all than you may realize. From this day on, unless a bottle's label proclaims a wine to be 100% of a particular varietal, don't believe there is only what is listed within it.

But why would a winemaker conduct such apparent trickery? Well...it's truly in your, as the end consumer of the wine, best interest. There are many reasons why a winemaker will blend juice from different varietals, and "blending" can even refer to combining the same varietal in a vintage year from various vineyards. Obviously, this topic is multi-tiered, so let's delve deeper into it.

Stylistic Blends



Meritage, Bordeaux, Rhône, Aussie Cab-Shiraz, Super Tuscan, Rioja's Tempranillo-Garnacha: What do they all have in common? They are stylistic wine blends of various varietals with some sort of regional distinction that is recognizable and often mimicked around the world. Another style we'll add to this group is "experimental" blends (i.e. the wines that servers may occasionally jokingly refer to as everything but the kitchen sink wines, which truthfully, does not imply any negative connotation). These blends may not have the historical grounding of the above mentioned wines, but the ultimate goal of the winemaker remains constant—to combine different attributes of specific grapes in order to create a particular blend that will develop into an outstanding wine.

Let's consider some pointed examples. We'll start with red Bordeaux-style wines; this includes the U.S. designation of Meritage blends as well. Although the blending of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec has been traditionally conducted for ages in the Bordeaux region of France, there is more than mere custom to consider, which is confirmed by the wine style being replicated elsewhere in the world.

Why do winemakers combine these specific varietals? Cabernet Sauvignon provides the structure, backbone and tannins; Cabernet Franc adds aromas; Petit Verdot gives color; Malbec increases complexity; and Merlot softens the overall body of the wine. Voila. *(Special note to our Wine Club members: Keep an eye on our website's upcoming events section for information on our next "Meritage Mission," where you will have the opportunity to join us and experience first-hand the process of blending these varietals!)

As for Rhône-style blends, such as the famed Châteauneuf-du-Pape or Côte du Rhône wines, the principal varietals of Syrah (structure and tannins), Grenache (body, fruitiness and spice), Mourvedre (softening qualities and aromas), Cinsault (bouquet) and Counoise (spice and acidity) are combined together, amongst others, as red blends. Grenache blanc (aromas), Marsanne (body and aromas), Roussane (complexity and depth) and Picpoul blanc (acidity) are some of the white Rhône varietals often used for white Rhône-style blending.

Blending Otherwise

The aforementioned "regional" style wines are examples of traditional blends using specific varietals and can be expanded to any winemaker's planned combination of grape types. We are now going to move on to the other form of blending...the form that is not described on a bottle's label and perhaps not even within the wine's tasting notes.



Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

HAMMOND VINEYARDS - 2006 Grenache



Just released January 2011, Hammond Vineyards is the culmination of many years of winemaking in Monterey. Specializing in Rhone and Burgandy varietals, Hammond Vineyards strives to produce wines with a sense of place, showing all the character and flavor of each individual wine.

The 2006 Grenache has very dense aromas of plum, graphite, blackberry, white pepper and lighter floral hints. Very full bodied on the palate with well balanced acid and big ripe tannins. Sweet blackberry and vanilla with long lingering roasted cocoa beans in the finish.

100% Grenache

14.3% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2013

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

SCHEID VINEYARDS - 2008 Gewürztraminer



The grapes for their 2008 vintage were sourced from their Viento Vineyard. Scheid has been growing Gewürztraminer on Viento since 1972 and not-so-humbly believe it to be the best spot in all of California for this unique varietal. The name Viento is the Spanish word for wind, and this brisk vineyard is aptly named, as the dependable winds for which Greenfield is known come howling down the vineyard corridor every afternoon about 2 p.m. The cool and windy conditions allow for slow ripening and the cultivation of top-notch Gewürztraminer. The fruit is characterized by small berries and clusters and a unique tan-pink color.

The Scheid Vineyards 2008 Gewürztraminer is a fragrant wine, with vibrant aromas of rose petal and lime jumping from the glass. Fresh, bright fruit flavors of apple, mango and pineapple and a lovely spice note make this a delicious wine to serve as an apéritif, but don't miss out on serving it with spiced food or Thanksgiving dinner. A perfect balance of just-a-hint-of-sweetness at 0.7% residual sugar and great acidity make this a terrific food match.

100% Gewürztraminer

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2012

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

CHESEBRO WINES - 2009 Vermentino (Club Blanc)



Vermentino is a variety most often associated with Sardinia, Corsica and Liguria. It has appealing aromas of pears, green apple and citrus and a smooth palate balanced by mouthwatering acidity. It is late ripening in this cool site allowing the development of complex and elegant flavors. The grapes were picked based on flavor and acidity levels, in several passes during October. The grapes were then whole cluster pressed together. Fermentation and aging took place stainless steel, both tanks and barrels. Chesebro tries to manipulate the wine only enough to achieve stability, not to dictate style or character.

100% Vermentino

13.8% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2013

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

SCHEID VINEYARDS - 2007 Syrah (Club Red)



The grapes were picked by hand in October from three different sites: Mesa del Rio and Scheid Vineyards in the north and San Lucas Vineyard in the south. Syrah from Mesa del Rio and Scheid, both in a cool climate zone, has a subtle spiciness and real depth and concentration. The result is an inky Syrah of plum and black raspberry jam with layers of complexity. San Lucas is the warmer site, producing a Syrah that is lively and bursting with ripe, fleshy fruit. The 2007 growing season produced a lighter-than-average crop, resulting in a ramped up intensity.

Scheid's 2007 Syrah is an expressive wine that is jam-packed with ripe black fruit. The full-bodied, velvety mouthfeel moves seamlessly into a supple, spicy lingering finish with notes of mocha, vanilla and smoke. It is lush and juicy and food-friendly, and is equally comfortable with Saturday night filet mignon as it is with Tuesday night tacos.

100% Syrah

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2014

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



We've already mentioned that certain varietals are blended with others to enhance aromas, improve color and add or soften tannins—but there other reasons. The juice from different varietals may be combined in order to downplay strong aromas of others, to adjust sweetness, to raise or lower alcohol levels, to off-set overly oaked characteristics, to lower or raise acidity or to adjust the pH of a wine.

And, this is not limited to blending red with red. A winemaker once told me how he blended a bit of Chardonnay in with his Petit Verdot varietal wine! This actually exemplifies a point that blending small percentages of different grapes can be used to elevate the overall presentation of a varietal wine.

The concept of blending grapes expands even further. In the U.S., and similarly in other countries, only 75% of a wine labeled as a single varietal is required to be of that specific varietal. Therefore, unless the label or tasting notes state a wine to be 100% of one varietal, it's safe to assume that other varietals are present in the wine as well. Additionally, unless a 100% varietal wine states that it is entirely sourced from a single vineyard...chances are quite good that it is produced with fruit sourced from multiple vineyards.

As for Monterey County, our local vintners have remarkable opportunities to blend delicious wines. This is due to the wide breadth of Monterey's Wine Country with over 40 different varietals thriving in our valleys and foothills.

In closing, it is important to realize that the winemaker's intention is not some sort of veiled deceit in all of this blending business; it is only to make as enjoyable of a wine as possible. Mankind has been coaxing grape juice into wine for centuries, and winemakers will continue using blending techniques to create delectable wines for us all to savor.

-Bryce Ternet

(Bryce Ternet is a contributing editor and is the author of three books.

Find him at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/M-Bryce-Ternet/124070024286223>)



Now that most of the grapes have been picked in Monterey County, we thought it would be an appropriate time to reflect on the year's harvest.

As Richard Smith, owner of Paraiso Vineyards, graciously shared with us in summation for the 2011 growing season: "Tough times for growers often result in outstanding opportunities for winemakers—I think this will be a winemaker year." What he means by this is that overall crop levels are down, but this misfortune for farmers will ultimately benefit winemakers as they will have much more concentrated fruit (e.g. intense aromas, structure, etc.) to work with at the winery.

The hardest hit vineyards by the late 2011 season frosts, and a cooler average overall temperature in general, were those located nearest the ocean, such as those in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Other growing areas weren't as negatively impacted, and the expectation is that overall County yields will be only slightly less than average as a whole.

In comparison, the 2010 growing season was also cooler than normal; however, growers didn't have the added complication of late frosts to contend with. The cooler 2010 season affected 2011's fruit bed development (new "shoots" on the vines). Based on this year's repeated cool growing season, it looks like there's already ample opportunity that 2012 could very well be yet another winemaker year. But, we'll just have to keep an eye on our Monterey County vineyards!

RECIPE

APPLE CRANBERRY CURRANT CRUMBLE PIE Serves: 12

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| ¼ cup | brandy |
| ¼ cup | dried currants |
| 1 ½ cups | fresh or thawed frozen cranberries, rinsed and drained |
| 1 cup | granulated sugar |
| 6 Tbsp plus 1 cup | all-purpose flour |
| 1 Tbsp | finely grated orange zest |
| ¾ teaspoon | ground cinnamon |
| ⅛ teaspoon | nutmeg |
| ¼ teaspoon | salt |
| 6 cups | sliced peeled Granny Smith apples (about 2 1/4 pounds) |
| 10-inch | pie pastry for a single-crust pie |
| ⅔ cup | firmly packed brown sugar |
| ½ cup (1 stick) | unsalted butter, cut into chunks |



Method:

1. Combine the brandy and the currants in a small bowl. Let sit for at least an hour, until currants are plump.
2. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl mix 1 cup white sugar with 6 Tbsp flour, orange zest, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Use a slotted spoon to transfer currants from brandy (reserve the brandy) to the sugar mixture. Add cranberries and apples and mix well. Pour filling into unbaked pie pastry and drizzle with the reserved brandy.
3. In another bowl mix 1 cup flour with 2/3 cup of brown sugar. Add the butter and cut in with a pastry blender or rub with your fingers until the mixture forms small lumps. Sprinkle topping over the filling. Set pie in a foil-lined 10x15 inch baking pan (to catch the juices).
4. Bake on bottom rack until juices bubble, 55 to 65 minutes. If pie browns too quickly, cover loosely with foil.
5. Set pie on rack, uncovered, to cool for 2 to 3 hours.

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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:

A Taste of Monterey
Attn: Elaine Hewett
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(888) 646-5446 Ext. 13
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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.

NEWSLETTER STAFF

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NOVEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 01/31/2012	REGULAR PRICE*	12-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*	6-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*
 Hammond Vineyards 2006 Grenache		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Scheid Vineyards 2008 Gewürztraminer		\$17.00	\$12.75	\$13.60
 Chesebro Wines 2009 Vermentino		\$16.00	\$12.00	\$12.80
 Scheid Vineyards 2007 Syrah		\$26.00	\$19.50	\$20.80
OCTOBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 12/31/2011			
 Line Shack 2009 Petite Sirah		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Joullian Vineyards 2008 Chardonnay		\$23.00	\$17.25	\$18.40
 Muirwood Vineyards 2010 Chardonnay		\$16.00	\$12.00	\$12.80
 Joullian Vineyards 2009 Stas Cuvée Zinfandel		\$26.00	\$19.50	\$20.80
SEPTEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 11/30/2011			
 Graff Family Vineyards 2008 Mourvèdre		\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
 Carmichael Vintners 2010 Grigio e Bianco		\$16.00	\$12.00	\$12.80
 Graff Family Vineyards 2008 Pinot Blanc		\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
 Carmichael Vintners 2008 Sur Le Pont		\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
PRIVATE RESERVE CLUB	PRICES EXPIRE 11/30/2011			
 Michaud 2005 Chardonnay		\$38.00	\$28.50	\$30.40
 Estancia 2006 Reserve Pinot Noir		\$36.00	\$27.00	\$28.80
 Galante Vineyards 2005 Blackjack Cabernet Sauvignon		\$50.00	\$37.50	\$40.00

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