

Tasting Monterey

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



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A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-6pm
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

DECEMBER REFERRALS



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



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SYRAH, GRENACHE AND POPES:



Introducing the Rhône

"This is a Rhône-style wine." You've heard this line before, but the definition of a Rhône-style wine can vary and calls for some background discussion. As always, we're here to bolster your knowledge. So grab your corkscrews, and let's go Rhône!

The Rhône Valley wine region, often simply referred to as "the Rhône," is located in the Rhône River valley in southern France. It's believed that vines were first planted by the Greeks here around 600 BC... that's a long time ago!

The region borders the Mediterranean Sea, west of the Côte d'Azur (i.e. the French Riviera), and is south of Burgundy. The Rhône is divided between two sub-regions: the Northern Rhône and the Southern Rhône. Although there is a distinct geographical difference between the two sub-regions, there is also a distinct difference in climate, and consequently, a variance in grapes grown and wine produced.

The Northern Rhône has a continental climate - a considerable winter and a hot summer. The sub-region's weather is coerced by mistral winds, which also influence the climate of nearby Provence. Although relatively warm, the north is cooler than its southern counterpart.

Syrah is the king varietal in the Northern Rhône, and it is considered by many to be the varietal's ancestral homeland (note: opinions vary on this subject). Other red varietals are grown, but Syrah plays such an important role that the others aren't worth discussing in their detail. The world-renowned red wines of the Hermitage AOC (AVA) come from the Northern Rhône; these wines are comprised primarily of Syrah (a touch of Marsanne or Roussanne may be added) and are considered by many to be the boldest, meatiest reds produced in all of France.

Marsanne, Roussanne and Viognier are the most widely planted white varietals. Viognier can be a stand-alone varietal wine (Condrieu and Chateau-Grillet AOCs) and is also a vital blending component. The wines of Côte-Rôtie are produced here; a blend of Syrah and up to 20% Viognier. Famed varietal white wines of Marsanne and Roussanne are produced in the Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph AOCs.

The Southern Rhône sub-region has a Mediterranean climate - mild winters and hot summers. Growers in the south are also well-known for gathering large pebbles at the base of their vines to absorb as much sun as possible during the day, and this helps keep the vines warm at night (the south is rarely cloudy, and at certain times of the year can experience vast overnight drops in temperature).

The landscape of the north is hilly with steep slopes; the Southern Rhône is flatter with broad plains. The south offers far more planted acreage of grapes with not as many famed appellations as its northern neighbor. This is illustrated by the fact that although the Côtes du Rhône AOC could be used for grapes sourced from either the north or south, these wines are almost universally entirely comprised of Southern Rhône fruit.

The most esteemed wine produced in the Southern Rhône is by far Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It has its own AOC and is a blend of up to 13 different varietals (eight red, five white - although is often made with far less). The name literally translates as the "the pope's new castle," which, without a brief history lesson, really doesn't make a shred of sense. It originates from the fact that the nearby city of Avignon temporarily was home of the papal court in the 14th century.

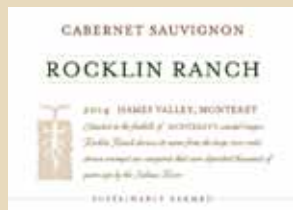
White wine grapes are grown in the south, such as Ugni Blanc, Roussane, Viognier and Bourboulenc, but red varietals play the dominant role. While Syrah is king in the north, Grenache plays a similar role in the south. Syrah, Mourvedre, Carignan and Cinsault are the other most widely-planted red varietals.



Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

ROCKLIN RANCH - 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon



The grapes for the 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon were grown on their estate vineyards located in Hames Valley. The sub-appellation of Hames Valley is located in the southernmost tip of Monterey County, just north of the San Luis Obispo county line, and sits at the foot of the Santa Lucia Range. Although the Hames Valley AVA does experience a cooling effect from the Pacific Ocean, its geographic location shelters the vines from the afternoon winds coming down the Salinas Valley corridor. This gives Hames Valley a warmer climate compared to Monterey vineyards to the north. Daytime highs are similar to the Paso Robles growing region, but as the sun goes down, temperatures drop dramatically. In fact, a variation of up to 50 degrees is quite common. The long, warm days make this an ideal area for tannin-rich reds, while the temperature differential preserves balance between ripe fruit and acidity.

The 2015 Rocklin Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon is bold and structured, brimming with flavors of black plum, blackberry and blueberry. Layered with notes of dark mocha and toasty vanilla, it is a rich wine with integrated tannins. This full-bodied yet approachable Cabernet is immediately enjoyable.

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2022

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

GARNET - 2013 Chardonnay



Every Garnet wine is firmly rooted in select cool-climate vineyards. This level of artistic control allows Winemaker Alison Crowe to manage the winemaking process from grape to bottle. Planted on benchlands and sandy, well-drained sites in Monterey County, their vineyards dip in and out of the fog line during the ripening season.

This Chardonnay has appealing aromas of ripe pear, lemon zest and honeysuckle, with bright Meyer lemon and fresh peach flavors. It's a Chardonnay with roundness but with focused fruit and bright acidity.

100% Chardonnay

13.6% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

GARNET - 2014 Pinot Noir (Club Red)



Garnet wines are firmly rooted in award-winning vineyards, and each is a pure expression of its origins due to their minimalist winemaking practices. Garnet's Monterey Pinot Noir is blended from a few acres in each of four vineyards scattered along benchlands near the Santa Lucia Highlands that are subject to the cool, foggy influence of Monterey Bay.

The Garnet fulfills the promise that the perfect growing season made. The aroma of this wine shows amazing depth as it opens up with blackberry and macerated cherry notes followed up by layers of clove, vanilla and perhaps a little duck fat. An earthy smokiness is offset nicely by the richness of fruit on the palate and juicy mouthfeel. Undertones of toasted oak add to the richness of the long and delicious finish.

100% Pinot Noir

13.8% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

ROCKLIN RANCH - 2014 Chardonnay



The grapes for the 2014 Chardonnay were grown on their estate vineyards located in the Arroyo Seco appellation of Monterey which has one of the coolest and longest growing seasons in the state. This micro-climate is noted for its moderate weather conditions and brisk afternoon winds, and is ideal for cool-climate varieties. 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. The long growing season also ensures intense fruit flavors and an ideal balance of acidity. The 2014 growing season was perfect in every way, with mild temperatures throughout the spring, a warm but not overly hot summer, and temperate conditions that held until the last grape was picked.

The 2014 Rocklin Ranch Chardonnay exudes bright fruit balanced with refreshing acidity and just the right amount of creaminess. Aromas of fresh apple and citrus with hints of tropical fruit lead into flavors of pear and Meyer lemon. The rich texture and touch of butterscotch on the long finish add up to a classic, elegant Chardonnay.

100% Chardonnay

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2019

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

Other significant AOCs in the south include Côtes du Rhône Villages, Vacqueyras and Gigondas. The Southern Rhône also offers fortified wines (“vin doux naturel,” en français) from Muscat de Beaumes de Venise AOC and a princely Rosé produced in the Tavel AOC.

Rhône varietals and methods of blending have been exported around the world, and it is in certain Californian and Australian growing areas where arguably the best Rhônes are made outside of France.

Australian winemakers love the Syrah grape (even if they do call it Shiraz), but they also produce a wide range of Rhône blends. These red blends are often called GSM or SGM, referencing Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre, with the most prominent varietal listed first. As for whites, Marsanne and Roussanne are also bottled as varietal wines and white blends. Australian Rhônes differ in approach and style to their French cousins, as they are fruitier and intended for opening while young.

In California, Rhône-style varietal wines and blends, both red and white, are generally considered to be of a style somewhere between the fruity Australian-style and the subtle refinement of the motherland. Although you’ll find Rhône-style wines throughout California’s growing regions, premier regions include Paso Robles, Sonoma, Santa Barbara and...yes, you guessed it - our very own Monterey County. Paso Robles was first to heavily invest in Rhônes and is by far leading the way; however, outstanding Rhône wines from other growing regions are not hard to find these days.

So now that you’re filled with knowledge, we suggest you fill your glass with one of Monterey County’s own fine Rhône varietals. We offer quite a few (check out our inventory online or our tasting room), and we know you won’t be disappointed!

-Bryce Ternet

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



VISITING Varietals



ALBARIÑO

Pronunciation: al-bah-ree-nyoh

Albariño is a high-quality, light-bodied white wine that grows primarily in Spain and Portugal. It’s loved for its high acidity, refreshing citrus flavors, dry taste, and subtle saltiness. For seafood lovers, Albariño is a fantastic choice for food pairing with exquisite dishes like ceviche, fish tacos, seafood pasta, and shrimp.

Albariño is a wine that deserves extended sniffing in your glass. It has a dramatic aromatic intensity as a result of the higher levels of two aromatic compound groups called terpenes and thiols. Expect aromas of lemons, limes, pear, grapefruit, honeysuckle, nectarine, and occasionally orange zest and beeswax, supported by subtle smells of freshly wetted granite and Thai basil when sniffing your glass. When you taste Albariño, you’ll instantly delight in its mouth-watering acidity, somewhat weighty mid-palate, saltiness, and long tingly finish that often has a subtle bitter note (almost like grapefruit pith).

Albariño is an excellent cocktail/aperitif and also works marvelously well alongside light intensity foods. Serve Albariño cold, in a white wine glass, but don’t be afraid to let the wine warm up! As Albariño increases in temperature, it changes dramatically from more mineral, beeswax, and citrus flavors to those with richer apricot, pear, and apple-like notes.

While many Albariño wines are known to age for 5–7 years, this wine is usually best consumed a year or two after the vintage. This ensures that the wine will maintain its trademark acidity and bold, fruity aromas.

RECIPE

ALASKA SALMON BAKE

with Pecan Crunch Coating

Ingredients:

3 tablespoons	Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons	butter, melted
5 teaspoons	honey
1/2 cup	fresh bread crumbs
1/2 cup	finely chopped pecans
3 teaspoons	chopped fresh parsley
6 (4 ounce)	fillets salmon
6	lemon wedges
	salt and pepper to taste



Method:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. In a small bowl, mix together the mustard, butter, and honey. In another bowl, mix together the bread crumbs, pecans, and parsley.

Season each salmon fillet with salt and pepper. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Brush with mustard-honey mixture. Cover the top of each fillet with bread crumb mixture.

Bake for 10 minutes per inch of thickness, measured at thickest part, or until salmon just flakes when tested with a fork. Serve garnished with lemon wedges.

CHEESE

Varietals



FONTINA

Fontina is a classic Italian cheese made in the Aosta Valley since the 12th century. There are many Fontina cheeses made with alternative names such as "Fontinella", "Fontal", and "Fontella" but the Italian Fontina, Fontina Val d'Aosta, identified by a Consorzio (Consortium) stamp is the original and most famous. The other versions are much milder than the original Fontina. There is also a Danish version which can be recognized by the red wax rind. Italian Fontina has a natural rind that turns tan to orange-brown with aging.



Fontina Val d'Aosta is traditionally made from unpasteurised milk of the Valdaostan Red Spotted cows grazing on the plains of Aosta Valley. The texture and flavour of Fontina depends on how long it has been aged. The texture can vary from semi-soft to firm and the flavours from mild and rich to more robust and overpowering. Usually, fontina is aged for 90 days.

The interior of fontina is pale cream in colour and riddled with holes known as "eyes". With a fat content of 45%, the cheese is very rich and creamy which gets nuttier with aging. This versatile cheese can be used to make fondues, and similar Italian dishes. Nebbiolo, a red wine with wild cherry and truffles is a match for Fontina.

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	Garnet 2013 Chardonnay	\$19.00	\$14.25	\$15.20
	Garnet 2014 Pinot Noir	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
	Rocklin Ranch 2014 Chardonnay	\$19.00	\$14.25	\$15.20
NOVEMBER SELECTIONS		PRICES EXPIRE 01/31/2017		
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	Montoya 2015 Chardonnay	\$17.00	\$12.75	\$13.60
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	Scheid Vineyard 2014 Pinot Blanc	\$26.00	\$19.50	\$20.80
OCTOBER SELECTIONS		PRICES EXPIRE 12/31/2017		
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	Joullian 2015 Chardonnay	\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
	Joullian 2013 Sias Cuvée Zinfandel	\$29.00	\$21.75	\$23.20
	Robert Mondavi 2015 Private Selection Chardonnay	\$17.00	\$12.75	\$13.60
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	Joullian 2014 Family Reserve Syrah	\$40.00	\$30.00	\$32.00
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