

# Tasting Monterey

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

**COMING EVENTS**

**Friday, March 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!

**Thursday, March 24, 2011**

**Thirsty Thursdays**

A Taste of Monterey  
Old Town Salinas  
4:00pm-7:00pm\*  
Join us on the last Thursday of every month from 4pm to 7pm. A Taste of Monterey, Oldtown Salinas is keeping its doors open later and offering special wine by the glass prices. Featured Winemaker, local food products and 30% Off wine and gifts (discount for club members only).

**Friday, March 25, 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.

\* No new tastings after 5:45pm

## THE FRENCH-AMERICAN-HUNGARIAN CONNECTION

Why does my wine taste like I'm chewing on an oak tree? Ever found yourself asking this question at some point in your wine journey? Chances are pretty good that you have. It's also likely that you took your inquiry a step further and began to wonder why some wines taste "oakier" than others. A step more would lead you to question how the flavors imparted on wine could differ between new or seasoned oak barrels. And, why oak anyway? Perhaps we should take a closer look...



**History of the Barrel** - One of the earliest historical references to wine barrels comes from our friend Herodotus, the Greek historian, who recorded that the ancient Mesopotamians used barrels to transport wine along the Euphrates River. He noted that palm wood was initially used, however our crafty Mesopotamians soon realized the faults in this material for barrels and began testing different sources.

We know that by the time of the Romans that oak had become a preferred barrel material, and even that Roman vintners were aware that using oak barrels could result in adding new and improved qualities to wine. Centuries later, Robert Mondavi, a pioneer of Californian and U.S. wine production, continued the legacy of experimenting with barrel techniques. Amongst other discoveries, this resulted in his introduction of a Sauvignon Blanc aged in oak, now known as Fumé Blanc.

**More than Storage** - The use of oak in the winemaking process can have major influences on a wine by affecting color, texture, flavor, and tannin structure. Wine can be introduced to oak in either the fermentation or aging stages. Due to lessened exposure and contact, wine that is fermented in oak will receive less of the impact than wine that is aged in it...makes sense, right? But the technical explanation is not so simple- it's actually due to a reaction between the yeasts in the wine and the chemicals in the wood.

But, did you know that a typical 60 gallon barrel can lose a few gallons of wine in the aging phase and that this is not uncommon? It's true, as with the porous nature of an oak barrel small levels of evaporation and oxygenation occur with the wine inside, but not enough to cause oxidation or spoilage. Evaporation actually results in a concentration of the wine's flavors.

Chemical properties of oak also play a role, as mentioned earlier. They interact with the wine and produce those lasting impressions you notice when sipping from your glass. That toastiness you've tasted in wines before? How about vanilla, caramel, cream, toffee, mocha, smoke, spice, coconut, cinnamon, tea, cloves... Yup, all these can derive from a wine's contact with oak.

**Why Oak?** - As it turns out, the answer is fairly simple: Oak just works best! Chestnut, pine, redwood and acacia are other wood types that have been used in the winemaking process either as aging vessels or larger fermentation vats, but none of these seem to offer the water tightness and slightly porous storage that oak does. Plus, oak has unique flavor characteristics that blend with wine so well.



**Look to the Trees** - The United States, France, Hungary, Croatia...what do they all have in common? They all have species of oak trees that are used to produce wine barrels.

The way to think of the differences in oak sourcing regions is almost similar to growing grapes for wine. The same way that a grape varietal grown in one place can have noticeable differences from the same grape grown somewhere else is similar for oak trees from different spots of the planet. For example, American oak is regarded as imparting more intense flavor to a wine than French oak and even barrels from different regions of France offer different characteristics...in fact, in France barrel regions are pretty much divided into specific appellations.

In the United States, the species of oaks most popular for cooperage are white oaks mostly found near the East Coast, but there are some populations in other places of the country used as well.

**Barrels Today** - Oak trees used for barrel production are normally on average a hundred years old when harvested in winter months. One tree can typically provide enough wood for two large barrels (typical size of large wine barrels used for aging are the Bordeaux style at 59 gallons and the Burgundy style at 60 gallons). Let's get out our calculators and see how much wine comes out of 60 gallons...One bottle of wine is 750 ml, or 1/5 of a gallon; therefore 60 gallons will produce 300 bottles of wine (25 cases).

If you traveled to France over the weekend, you would probably remark how a lot of things seem to be more expensive there than in the States...with oak barrels it's the same. American oak barrels cost about half as much as French barrels and other European-produced barrels of good quality are pricey as well, especially considering that a new American oak barrel will easily be in the \$300-\$500 price range. Added to the fact that barrels tend to only impart overtones for about five years, *Continued Inside*

**MARCH REFERRALS**



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

# RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

## COBBLESTONE - 2007 Chardonnay



Their elegant and extremely versatile food-pairing Chardonnay returns with a remarkable showing in the 2007 vintage.

**Vineyard:** The first Cobblestone estate began in 1971 in what has become the Arroyo Seco appellation in central Monterey County. This 50-acre property, planted exclusively to Chardonnay, is where their wine got its name. The soil is densely packed with cobblestones (known locally as 'Greenfield Potatoes'), which have a positive effect on drainage and temperature.

**Winemaking:** The 2007 vintage is a blend of our two Chardonnay clones: the Wente Traditional and the French ENTAV 809. At fourteen percent of the blend, this uncommon clone delivers some bright fruit and complexity, further supporting our Old World, well-balanced style.

**Tasting Notes:** High complexity. The Wente clone delivers lemon, green apple and banana with traces of chalky minerals and flint. The ENTAV 809 contributes subtle jasmine aromas along with tangerine and stone fruits on the palate. Long dry finish enhanced by spicy oak flavors. Crisp and well-balanced with zero percent Malolactic fermentation.

**Cobblestone**  
2007 Chardonnay

**Alcohol**  
14.4%

**AVA**  
Arroyo Seco

**Composition**  
100% Chardonnay

**Aging Potential**  
2-3 years

## SAN SABA VINEYARDS - 2006 Pinot Noir



**Vineyard:** The San Saba Vineyard is sheltered in a nook just below the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, roughly 25 miles southeast of the city of Monterey. The climate is heavily influenced by the morning fog and afternoon winds from the nearby Pacific Ocean. This is a cool site with little rainfall and one of the longest growing seasons in the world. The unusual climate allows San Saba to produce ripe, concentrated wines of exceptional balance. All estate grown, the second release of San Saba Pinot Noir includes all four producing clones in their vineyard (115, 667, 777 and Pommard 4).

**Winemaking:** Each lot was fermented separately in small bins and treated gently, caps were pushed down by hand. Closely monitored and minimally handled, finished batches were placed in an assortment of new and neutral French oak barrels for 9 months before final blending.

**Tasting Notes:** Richer and more complex than their first release, this wine still maintains a stylistic appeal that is classic French in its delicate balance of weight and flavor. The bouquet has dark chocolate covered cherries with touches of spice and cedar. Violets in the nose and mouth also contribute interest. Flavors of cherry fruit and a little meatiness make this wine intriguing. There's a vibrant acidity that adds energy and brightness within the framework of a smooth texture.

**San Saba Vineyards**  
2006  
Pinot Noir

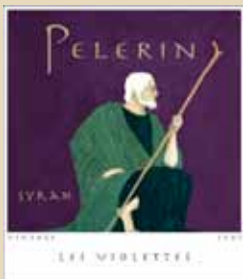
**Alcohol**  
14.0%

**AVA**  
Monterey

**Composition**  
100% Pinot Noir

**Aging Potential**  
3-5 years

## PELERIN - 2007 Les Violettes Syrah



**Vineyard:** The vast majority (91%) of the fruit is sourced from two parcels in Paraiso Vineyard on the southern end of Santa Lucia Highlands, and a small amount (9%) is from Mesa del Sol Vineyard in Arroyo Seco. Of the Paraiso fruit, 70% comes from newer parcels planted specifically for us, of clones 174 and 383, in 2001. The remaining 30% originates on their 'Wedding Hill' terraces, planted to the Estrella clone in 1990. All three locations are decidedly cool climate, however they are sheltered from the wind on slopes of 20 to 25 percent. The soil is shallow, decomposed granite, which keeps vine vigor in check and yields low. The farming practices are certified "sustainable". The Mesa del Sol Vineyard fruit is organically farmed, and serves nicely to amplify the fruit dimension and texture.

**Winemaking:** For the 2007 year, the Les Violettes is composed entirely of Syrah. In all other years Pelérin has added Viognier to this bottling, as whole clusters co-fermented at the vat, to add dimension and structure. However, the character of the fruit at pick seemed perfect in 2007. The wine received neither fining nor filtration and was aged for 21 months in 30% new and 70% old French oak.

**Tasting Notes:** Lovely aromas suggesting spiced plums, white pepper and mocha. The flavors are very well integrated, fusing elements of dark cherries, currents, licorice and cedar. A long finish, framed with a shot of vanillin from the barrels around the core fruit and moderate tannins, completes the profile. Medium-full bodied and quite intense, and possessing a good sense of elegance and balance on the palate, this wine has excellent aging potential.

**Le Mistral Vineyards**  
2007 Monterey County  
Red Wine

**Alcohol**  
15.0%

**AVA**  
Monterey County

**Composition**  
51% Syrah  
42% Grenache  
5% Alicante Bouschet  
2% Petite Sirah

**Aging Potential**  
5-7 years



*Cover Article Continued*

we're talking an investment. After roughly five years, they are mostly considered to be neutral (which doesn't mean "useless," but at this point they have definitely lost the ability to achieve a primary purpose as we don't need barrels to transport our wine down the river like the Mesopotamians anymore).

**Barrel Construction** - After oak staves are split and seasoned, the next step is to heat the staves either over an open fire or with steam to the point that they are pliable and can be bent into the shape of a barrel and clamped together with iron rings.

The downside of using steam instead of fire is that the staves will not receive a "char" that is desired by many winemakers. The char characteristic is very prevalent in some wines....remember that super smoky-finishing red wine you tasted recently? Some winemakers will even order the staves of barrels to be medium or heavily toasted, which will not only enhance the smokiness of a future wine to be aged in the barrel but also can add other characteristics such as spiciness.

**Oak Alternatives** - Oak can be added alternatively by adding oak wood chips or staves into wine that is fermenting or aging in stainless steel tanks. This form of oak was in the past forbidden in commercial wine production in some countries; however, it is growing in popularity based on the cost of oak barrels and the flexibility offered by it (one can achieve oak characteristics in wine much quicker by introducing chips or staves as opposed to waiting many months or even years for the same effects from barrels). We'll note though that although increasing in popularity, oak alternatives have not proven to impart as everlasting flavors and aromas to wines as those aged in oak barrels.

And so, that's the "oak" of it! We now know the basics of how oak plays into the wines we drink, and we hope this brief tutorial has enhanced your appreciation of the grape. Oak barrels may be the only thing that the adjectives American, French and Hungarian share in common outside of NATO negotiations, but we epicureans now know of their lasting relationship!

**Bryce Ternet**

*Contributing author for A Taste of Monterey and is the author of three books. See [www.mbryceternet.com](http://www.mbryceternet.com) for more.*

## THANK YOU

Every once in a while a wine comes along that is so special that you want to hang on to and never see it go away. This, in my opinion, is one of those wines. A Sonoma Valley wine is an odd one to have in the Monterey Wine Club. But I can justify its placement in this quarter's selection as a bonus bottle and a special thank you for being a member of the Private Reserve Club. I really enjoy Zinfandel as a varietal, but it has trouble growing consistently well in Monterey County. I figure this will be the only opportunity to sample a very nice Zinfandel in this club.

The opportunity came up, several years back, to source some fruit from Gundlach Bundschu's highly acclaimed Sonoma Valley vineyard. Most of the production has been sold to another high end national club program. But just enough cases remain to share with you, as I can only drink so much. It has been stored in a perfect climate-controlled environment, resulting in a wine that has been aged to perfection. Simply stated, it is wonderful. This wine is silky smooth, while still possessing the varietal spice. It is not an over-the-top or in-your-face kind of wine as many Zinfandels can be. I hope you enjoy this special treat.

*Ken Rauh, President-A Taste of Monterey & Proprietor-Mission Trail Vineyards*

### MISSION TRAIL VINEYARDS - 2004 Zinfandel



**Vineyard:** Rhyolitic Ash and Alluvial Wash soils at 220 feet elevation. Single eight-and-a-half-acre block planted 1976. La Paz clone. Yield 2.1 tons/acre.

**Tasting Notes:** This wine possesses intense aromas of black cherry, rhubarb, leather and black and white pepper. The varietal that is true black cherry flavors on the palate give way to dark plum, blackberry, clove spice and cocoa. The extended barrel aging and cellar time has transformed this hearty and robust medium- to full-bodied wine into something that is incredibly elegant. The tannin structure is refined and adequate making for a very well balanced wine. The ideal time to drink is now.

**Double Gold-Best of Appellation (Appellation America):** "It was indeed, and earned a

Double Gold. We not only loved it, but found it dead nuts on the money for the region. It was actually kind of amazing, as the panel remarked on."

**Sonoma Valley:** Aroma Deep, multi-dimensional. Fresh cherry, nectarine and bramble, tea leaves, oak spice. Flavor- Lush and feminine with solid, unobtrusive tannins, generous fruit and warm cocoa. "This is more or less an exact description of the 2004 Mission Trail Zinfandel."

#### Gold-Sommelier Challenge



A YEAR

## In the Vineyard



In this quarter's newsletter we're introducing a new segment that we believe will be of interest to our wine club members. We often write about wines and the winemaking process, but perhaps it's time to also include a seasonal segment devoted entirely to the vineyards themselves. Our goal is to provide an annual overview through quarterly updates of what is occurring in Monterey County vineyards that are the source for the many exceptional wines we represent.

As we are now in the month of March, we have a little catch-up to do in this initial installment, so let's rewind a bit back to January. Fortunately, for the amount of space we have here today- there's not too much happening in the months of January and February. However, as we'll see together over the next nine months: There's always something going on with a vineyard.

January and February fall into the period of "winter dormancy." This is a period where in the heart of winter the vineyard succumbs to the shortened days and takes a long winter's nap. Although the vines are napping, it doesn't mean our vineyard manager or viticulturalists are sleeping as well. An activity that may be supported during winter is the pruning of the vines, which may improve growth in the spring.

You'll see bud break for yourself if you drive by any of our Monterey County vineyards around this time of year. The "bud" actually refers to a small area of the vine where the vine stem and the leaf stem meet that slightly swells just before the "break." The buds, which began growing the summer before and turn brownish over the winter, will normally have three shoots begin to sprout from them. The shoots will be the first sign of "green" on the vine for the year...and our year in the vineyard is now well underway!

We'll keep an eye on the vineyards and get back together again in the summer. *Cheers until then!*

# THE Monterey Grapevine

O-N-L-I-N-E

## E-mail Newsletter

Visit:

www.tastemonterey.com  
& sign up for FREE

### 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.

### PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

A Taste of Monterey  
Attn: Elaine Hewett  
127 Main Street  
Salinas, CA 93901  
(888) 646-5446 Ext. 13  
club@tastemonterey.com

### CLUB SAVINGS

Remember, as a Club Member, you receive a 15% discount on all purchases and a weekly complimentary tasting.

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

Elaine Hewett - Club Manager  
Robyn Rauh - Executive Editor  
Ken Rauh - Creative Director  
Bryce Ternet - Contributing Editor

### VISIT US ONLINE

WWW.TASTEMONTEREY.COM

# MIX & MATCH

ANY OF THE CURRENT OR PREVIOUS CLUB WINES TO RECEIVE **25% OFF 12 BOTTLES** OR **20% OFF 6**

PRIVATE RESERVE CLUB	PRICES EXPIRE 05/31/2011	REGULAR PRICE*	12-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*	6-BOTTLE DISCOUNT PRICE*
 Cobblestone 2007 Chardonnay		\$29.00	\$21.75	\$23.20
 San Saba 2006 Pinot Noir		\$35.00	\$26.25	\$28.00
 Pelerin 2007 Les Violettes Syrah		\$36.00	\$27.00	\$28.80
 Mission Trail Vineyards 2004 Zinfandel		\$38.00	\$28.50	\$30.40
MARCH SELECTIONS		PRICES EXPIRE 05/30/2011		
 Graff Family Vineyards 2007 Viognier		\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
 Mission Trail Vineyards 2006 Tusca		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Cima Collina 2008 Sauvignon Blanc		\$17.00	\$12.75	\$13.60
 Cima Collina 2005 Hilltop Red		\$22.00	\$16.50	\$17.60
FEBRUARY SELECTIONS		PRICES EXPIRE 04/30/2011		
 Yosemite View 2008 Chardonnay		\$14.00	\$11.20	\$10.50
 Cru 2007 Vineyard Montage Pinot Noir		\$23.00	\$18.40	\$17.25
 Muirwood 2009 Reserve Zanetta Vineyard Chardonnay		\$22.00	\$17.60	\$16.50
 Pierce Ranch Vineyards 2006 Tourbillon		\$18.00	\$14.40	\$13.50
JANUARY SELECTIONS		PRICES EXPIRE 03/31/2011		
 Line Shack Winery 2009 Roussanne		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
 Sycamore Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon		\$24.00	\$18.00	\$19.20
 Sycamore Cellars 2008 Chardonnay		\$26.00	\$19.50	\$20.80
 Line Shack Winery 2008 Syrah		\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40

TO ORDER, CALL TOLL-FREE: 888-646-5446

\*PRICES LISTED REFLECT PRICE PER BOTTLE. NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.