

Tasting Monterey

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

COMING EVENTS

**Friday, March 2, 2012
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!

**Friday, March 30, 2012
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

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DIVERSIFYING Monterey County's VINEYARDS

When you're considering investing, you are often told that it's a good idea to diversify your portfolio, as you'll be able to spread out your funds a little by speculating on risks and falling back on a few safe bets. A comparison to a wine growing region provides an illustrative analogy and Monterey County is a perfect example to explore further. We have our staples that will never go out of style, such as the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays sourced from the Santa Lucia Highlands, but we also have growers cultivating varieties that are not such safe bets. Tannat, anyone?



True, differing conditions can drastically alter the varietal landscape of any wine grape growing region, but unique regions such as Monterey County offer opportunities for growers and winemakers to hedge their bets and risk planting varieties that would be scoffed at by others.

So, is there diversification in Monterey County's varieties? You betcha! The Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association (MCVGA) states on their website that 42 different varieties are currently grown in County vineyards, 24 red varieties and 18 white varieties. Trust us...42 different varieties for one county is impressive (and there are even a few not included on MCVGA's list).

Just how diverse are we? Let's consider the reds first. What are some of the most delicate varieties to grow? That group labels Pinot Noir and Malbec, amongst others, as such. A list of relatively durable grapes to grow includes Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Zinfandel. Yup, Monterey County has them all.

How about Italian red varieties? We've got Barbera, Nebbiolo and Sangiovese. Portuguese? We have Tinta Cao, Touriga Nacional and Touriga Francesca. Other wide-ranging varieties? Well, to name just a few...Carignane, Petit Verdot, Tempranillo, Valdiguie...and we're leaving out numerous others. Yeah, we've got the red varietal spectrum pretty well covered.

Moving on to white varieties...we have just a couple to offer here in the county. Of course, you already know our most popular: Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. And perhaps you are aware of the County's more historic varieties such as Chenin Blanc, Pinot Blanc and different variations of Muscat. But how about some of the lesser-known off-varieties such as Albarino, Marsanne, Roussanne, Semillon, Tocai Fruilano or Viognier? Yup, we have them too!

The reason we are able to have such diversity in our county is attributable to a canyon and not just any canyon. We're talking about a sub-marine canyon underneath Monterey Bay, the canyon that causes the phenomena dictating our climate, the canyon that provides the opportunity for our varietal diversity - the "Blue Grand Canyon."



If you've spent much time on the Peninsula, living or even just visiting, you have probably heard of the Grand Canyon-sized expanse beneath Monterey Bay. Like many, you probably initially just thought the locals telling you this was exaggerating, but they were not. The canyon out there really is comparable in size and depth (60 miles long and 2 miles deep- fourth largest marine canyon on the planet) to Arizona's famed canyon and it is one of the world's deepest.

The deep and cold waters of the Bay have direct effects on the weather patterns throughout Monterey County, thereby impacting the wine growing areas (namely through fog, wind, lack of rain in the growing

season and moderate temperatures year round). The Blue Grand Canyon is also unique, as it's the only marine canyon to directly influence weather patterns of a major wine growing region. Good stuff! But, let's get a little more into how it influences weather patterns in the county.

The impact of the Blue Grand Canyon on Monterey County has been named the "Thermal Rainbow." The coolest areas of the county are those nearest the Bay in the north, while the warmest areas are farthest away from the Bay towards the south. It's not odd for there to be a 40 degree temperature variance between the north and south of the county on a summer day...a 40 degree difference in the same county!

Continued Inside

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

BOËTÉ - 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon



Vineyard: The first step in achieving wines of interest and excellence is finding a site that can produce them. The Boëté Vineyard in Carmel Valley is planted mainly with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc grown on decomposed granite and limestone. Warm sunny days and crisp cool nights combine to produce a long growing season that yields intense and concentrated fruit flavors and preserves firm and balanced natural acidity. The sparse soil provides for a naturally limited crop and imbues the wines with an profound minerality and sense of place: the elusive terroir.

Winemaking: The Cabernet Sauvignon was picked in late November after a long and beautiful growing season. Patience was rewarded with perfect ripeness that was extracted into the wine during two week small lot fermentations that were punched down by hand three times per day. No cold soaking or extended maceration was used, as they wanted to express the natural balance of the vineyard site. This wine was aged

in 60% new French oak in the finest Francois Frere, Seguin Moreau and Mercier cooperage for 20 months. The wine was racked twice prior to bottling to achieve excellent clarity while still retaining intensity of fruit concentration.

Tasting Notes: Aromas of cherry, blackberries and currants on the nose leap to burst of fruit flavors on the palate, tempered by soft expressive tannins forming into a long pleasant finish.

Boëté
2004
Cabernet Sauvignon

Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Carmel Valley

Composition
100% Cab. Sauvignon

Aging Potential
8-10 years

SCHEID - 2007 Reserve Chardonnay



Winemaking: Upon arrival at the winery, the grapes were gently whole-cluster pressed and racked to oak barrels. The juice was inoculated with select strains of yeast and barrel-fermented to gently extract oak flavors and add body. After primary fermentation, chosen Chardonnay lots were inoculated to go through malolactic fermentation for added complexity and butterscotch aromas. Aging continued sur lie (on the lees) for about 20 months with minimal stirring to achieve a softer, rounder mouthfeel. The 2007 Chardonnay Reserve is made with a light touch, the fruit perfectly married with the oak, allowing floral, mineral and flint notes to interplay.

Vineyard: Riverview Vineyard is Scheid's northernmost vineyard in Monterey County. Located two miles southeast of Soledad and adjacent to the Pinnacles, this 215-acre vineyard is nestled on a bench overlooking the Salinas River and is an ideal Chardonnay location. The bench location aids in creating excellent air flow, and the southwestern exposure maximizes available sunlight and allows the fruit to ripen slowly and evenly. The 2007 growing season was fairly mild throughout, and temperatures were cooler than normal, resulting in overall yields that were down about 15% from average. Across the board, Scheid's white grape varieties exhibited intense aromas and super-concentrated flavors.

Tasting Notes: Aromatics of pear, pineapple and vanilla crème brûlée frame dramatic tropical fruit flavors. This is an elegant, rich style of Chardonnay that has a lingering, silky smooth texture on the palate and a mouthwatering finish.

Scheid
2007 Reserve
Chardonnay

Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Monterey

Composition
100% Chardonnay

Aging Potential
4-5 years

AIENA - 2008 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir



Winery: Winemaking is the same as the other Pinot Noirs that Aiena makes (B Kosuge, Miura, McIntyre): native yeast fermentations, moderate use of oak and minimal handling. The usual high-end Pinot stuff. While careful not to make all the wines in exactly the same way, they always try to put the fruit and the vineyard first. In other words, they try to stay out of the way and let the wine speak for itself.

Vineyard: McIntyre Estate Vineyard is in the "sweet spot" of the Santa Lucia Highlands, Clone 115. Sand clay loam soil, similar to Garys' and Rosella's. In fact, the vineyard is about a quarter mile north of Rosella's, so it is very similar. Yields were very light in 2008, about 2.75 tons to the acre. Clusters were small with a mixture of normal size and small berries. The winemaker at Aiena remembers being struck, as the fruit came across the sorting line at the winery, by how little the clusters weighed. Not good for quantity but excellent for quality. This vineyard is being reborn; it was originally planted to sparkling wine Pinot, and is now being redeveloped to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for high-end still-wine production.

Tasting Notes: Wines from this part of the Santa Lucia Highlands always have a bright, lively core of fruit and a perfume that is sometimes reminiscent of orange rind mixed with red fruits – raspberries and strawberries. We hesitate sometimes to use the expression "fruity" when describing a wine, but that's what this wine is – tastes like Pinot Noir. There is some sweetness (fruit sweetness, not residual sugar) on the mid-palate and enough acidity to keep it fresh. It should age well.

Aiena
2008 Santa Lucia
Highlands Pinot Noir

Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Composition
100% Pinot Noir

Aging Potential
5-6 years

Cover Article Continued

This rainbow provides for cool evenings and mornings throughout the county. Warming temperatures then occur as the day progresses, with the interior regions of the county experiencing a much more significant increase in temperature (as those living nearer the coast and those living in the interior both know very well!).

Cooling air from the bay is drawn inland and the guardian mountain ranges of the Salinas Valley, the Gabilans (eastern border) and Santa Lucias (western border) create a wind tunnel effect. These afternoon winds are persistent and can approach up to 30 miles an hour. During the warmest summer months the winds provide a form of air conditioning which cools down the fruit and extends the growing season... explaining why Monterey County has one of the longest growing seasons anywhere (this applies for all other fruits and veggies as well).

Even though the impacts of the Thermal Rainbow are encountered in every AVA in the County (the Chalone AVA arguably being the least touched based on its somewhat isolated and protected location), each AVA experiences slightly different effects. This can dictate which varietals will be planted in each AVA, although through various vineyard management techniques and practices, such as grafting certain clones of varietals, our growers are constantly striving to diversify their vineyards.

As comprehensive as our list of varietals grown in the county truly is, there are still many other varietals from around the world that could be planted...let's hope that our growers and winemakers keep experimenting!

-Bryce Ternet

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



VISITING *Varietals*



MERLOT

Pronunciation: Mer-Low

Definition: The classic Merlot grape originated from the Bordeaux region of France. It typically produces a soft, medium-bodied red wine with juicy fruit flavors. Merlot is a red wine grape that is used as both a blending grape and for varietal wines. The name Merlot is thought to derive from the Old French word for young blackbird, merlot, a diminutive of merle, the blackbird (*Turdus merula*), probably from the color of the grape. Merlot-based wines usually have medium body with hints of berry, plum and currant. Its softness and "fleshiness", combined with its earlier ripening, makes Merlot a popular grape for blending with the sterner, later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon, which tends to be higher in tannin.

Flavor Profile: A range of fresh flavors such as plums, cherries, blueberries and blackberries mixed with cocoa and blackpepper tones, often dominate this type of red wine. The tannin levels are typically lower than a Cabernet Sauvignon and the fruit flavors are typically forward - making this a prime wine candidate for consumers just "getting into" red wines. Merlot is often used to blend with other varietals, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. By blending Merlot with these wines, a symbiotic relationship can exist. The Cabs are softened, mellowed a bit, and the Merlot enjoys more structured and defined backbone.

Food Pairing: Fairly versatile when it comes to food pairing options. Poultry, red meat, pork, pastas, salads - Merlot can handle them all well.

RECIPE

Shrimp Croquettes

Crispy shrimp cakes. Great served with a horseradish aioli but they could also go well with a simple cocktail sauce or remoulade

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| 2 lbs. | chopped shrimp |
| 5 Tbsp. | Pommery Mustard |
| 1 bunch | scallions |
| 3 Tbsp. | sauteed garlic |
| 3 Tbsp. | sauteed shallots |
| 5 Tbsp. | mayonnaise |
| 1 handful | parmesan |
| 20 dashes | Tabasco |
| 1 Tbsp. | Worcestershire |
| 1 c. | bread crumbs |
| 1 | egg |
| 2 Tbsp. | lemon juice |
| 1 | red pepper, finely chopped |
| 2 t. | lemon pepper |
| | flour |

Method:

- Mix all ingredients together.
- Shape into 3 ounce cakes.
- Bread first in flour, then eggs, then bread crumbs.
- Pan fry in vegetable oil until golden brown.



THE Monterey Grapevine

O-N-L-I-N-E

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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

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