

Tasting Monterey

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

COMING EVENTS

Friday
March 28, 2014
Last Fridays Wine Bar
 A Taste of Monterey
 Cannery Row
 6:00pm-8:00pm*
 Join us every Friday evening from 6pm to 8pm. Start your weekend off with a relaxing view, live music, great food and a glass of Monterey's finest.

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MINERALS & CHALK

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF SOIL SCENTS



Minerality and chalkiness are terms one often hears as descriptors for wines, but what do they really mean? Are they saying that there are mineral components or somehow actual chalk imparted from soils within the wines? Well, not really. At least, not in the way you would normally think of it. It's actually a bit more complicated and many consider both terms to be often improperly-used. It's also agreed that these terms are poorly-defined, even in the wine world. So we'll delve into the subject for our Wine 101 course of the day.

Chalk, flint, saltiness, oil, soil, oyster shell, iodine, the smell of two rocks being rubbed together - these are all terms used to describe a minerality or chalkiness sensation in wines. Mineral sensation in wine is often assumed to be from minerals in the rocks and soils where the vines are grown. This

theory suggests that vine roots absorb minerals which eventually end up in wines down the road. However, plant scientists adamantly claim that minerals are in fact not absorbed by vine roots. So what's going on?

When asked if mineral taste in wine and actual minerals in a vineyard are connected, plant scientists will tell you that they are not actually directly connected. Minerality is considered a useful tasting description for wines, but it's often the underlying explanation which is misunderstood. The assumption that there are actual minerals in wine is where things go astray. There are miniscule amounts of soil mineral ions which are absorbed by the vines, but these are not the same thing as geological minerals in soils, as vine roots cannot absorb complex geological compounds. Even if they could, these minerals would be largely tasteless anyway.

The term mineral can have two meanings in this discussion. Geologists talk about geological minerals, while plant scientists refer to mineral ions, which are also called mineral nutrients. Geologic minerals are chemical compounds. They are present in vineyard rocks and soils. Mineral nutrients, on the other hand, are compounds of the geological minerals. Grapevines never take up a mineral, only the compounds of minerals. However, these concentrations of mineral nutrients in wines are too low to taste, at approximately 0.2% of the wine. So where are those mineral taste sensations coming from?

Have you ever tasted a wine that produced a sensation of smelling wet rocks after a summer rain? If you've tried enough wines in your lifetime, chances are very good you've come across this one. But...rocks don't have odors, so what are we really smelling? What you are actually smelling in these instances is the scent of organic compounds that were released from plants and fell on the rocks and soils during dry periods.

So it's not the rocks themselves you are smelling/tasting, but a combination of all the plant life in the surrounding vicinity of the rocks. And these scents will obviously vary greatly, depending on surrounding plants, in relation to rocks and soils. For Wine 101 course credit: who knows what this is leading too? Yes, you in the back with your hand up sipping the Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir - "terroir" is the correct answer!

But, we're not done with today's course, as there's still more to it. The term "mineral" can also often be applied to wines with high acidity. For example, colder climate growing regions develop grapes at times with under-ripe vintages. This results in wines with high acidity levels and can often be interpreted as having a high mineral quality in wine. So it's the taste sensation of high acidity and under-ripeness that you're noticing in the wine, not potassium, calcium, magnesium, or any other mineral.

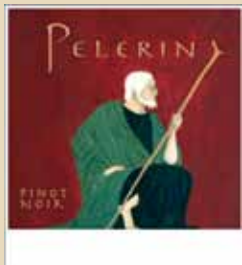
It's been proven that grape variety can make a difference in this area as well. Rieslings, in particular, are often described as having high minerality. Although let's connect the dots a little. What kind of climate does Riesling tend to thrive in? Yes, the lady in the front row on her second Arroyo Seco Chardonnay is correct - cool growing regions is the correct answer. Now remember, as we discussed earlier, these regions tend to lead to under-ripe vintages, which lead to high acidity levels, which in turn leads to the perceived presence of minerality in wines. We're bringing this thing full circle now!



Continued Inside

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

PELERIN - 2009 *Pelio Pinot Noir*



Vineyard: Pelio sits just eight miles off the ocean, along a secondary ridge, at elevations of 800 to 1,000 feet above Carmel Valley. Due to the fog, wind, and generally cool weather, fruit can be difficult to set, and yields are often miniscule. The vines are quite stressed owing to a pure base of uplifted seafloor, or chalk rock- sandstone, with only a marginal amount of soil on the top. Aiding the cause of fruit maturity, during the core months of summer, is a seasonal inversion layer which helps to retain some of the previous day's warmth overnight, advancing acidity respiration and ripening the skins to just the right degree.

There are two sections planted to Pinot Noir. Both face west-southwest, with the primary one set into a cup-like, terraced bowl. Pelio Vineyard is planted to several clones, and our 2009 version is composed from Pommard 5 (approx. 33%), as well as equal amounts of clones 667 and 777 (about 33% each).

Winemaking: A total of 2.07 tons of three mixed clones: 667, 777 and the Pommard 5, was hand-picked and sorted, destemmed, and fermented in two small lots. The wine remained on its lees, unracked, until blending in late August. It was minimally handled throughout its élevage, received neither fining nor filtration.

Tasting Notes: The 2009 Pelio Vineyard' Pinot Noir presents intense aromas of dark cherries and spiced plums. The flavors reflect those same tones overall, but have the added dimensions of Pelio's characteristic minerally, terroir note, along with some vanillin and a touch of smokiness from the barrels. This wine is showing well now, but will certainly reward short to medium term cellaring.

Pelien
2009 Pelio
Pinot Noir

Alcohol
13.5%

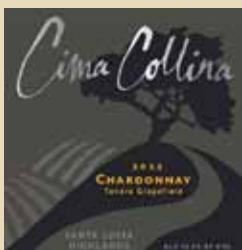
AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Cases Produced
122

Composition
100% Pinot Noir

Aging Potential
4-6 years

CIMA COLLINA - 2012 *Tondre Chardonnay*



Vineyard: Tondre Grapefield has skillfully grown Pinot Noir for a long time but they have recently branched out by planting other varietals. Located on the eastern side of River Road, this site offers well-draining sandy-loam soil with southwestern exposure (not to mention a resplendent view of the Salinas Valley below). 2012 vintage offered a largely cool ripening season – perfect for developing complex flavors in white wine.

Winemaking: These grapes were hand-picked and then pressed whole-cluster. The juice was settled for a short time and then racked off of the lees into French Oak barrels. It fermented in barrel and was aged sur lies.

Tasting Notes: This is Cima Collina's most opulent, complex California-style Chardonnay yet, but still retains balanced acidity and offers aromas and flavors of toasty oak, vanilla, butterscotch, melon and sports a lengthy finish. Enjoy chilled on its own or with Dungeness crab cakes, fillet of sole or herb roasted chicken.

Cima Collina
2012 Tondre
Chardonnay

Alcohol
14.3%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Cases Produced
191

Composition
100% Chardonnay

Aging Potential
5-7 years

TRAVISO - 2008 *Amaranta Syrah*



Vineyard: All vineyard contracts are set up by the acre, to allow Travieso control of the vineyard management, minimizing yields and maximizing quality. Travieso utilizes aggressive crop thinning, lowering yields to between 2 and 3 tons per acre, limiting fruit to two or even one cluster per cane to ensure flavor concentration. To create fruit of even ripeness, they painstakingly trim all wings and shoulders off each grape cluster, and perform hand-sorting on the vine prior to hand harvesting.

Winemaking: Sourcing fruit from superb single vineyards from varying appellations, the Winery is in the heart of Silicon Valley in Campbell. They use meticulously grown fruit, make wines with minimal intervention, open-top fermentation, aged in up to 1/3 to 1/2 new French oak barrels, and bottle without fining or filtration, intentionally avoiding over-manipulation or "UC-Davisized" techniques

Tasting Notes: Dark, dense and super-concentrated, it is richly textured, brimming with lots of new oak, and smoky spice, black fruit, blackberries, bacon fat and blackberry cheesecake, creating what Robert Parker calls a "bigger than life style of Syrah."

Traviso
2008 Amaranta
Syrah

Alcohol
16.4%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Cases Produced
300

Composition
100% Syrah

Aging Potential
6-10 years

Cover Article Continued

Let's take it a step further and bring it back to our own Monterey County growing regions. It's accepted that perceived mineral characteristics in wines is most frequently noted for wines grown in limestone-rich soils which tend to impart chalkiness in wines. Furthermore, favorable terroirs for the appearance of minerality tend to be growing climates and conditions which combine: 1) a cooler growing climate, and, 2) the potential for a later growing season, and, 3) alkaline soil types (chalk and limestone being two prominent alkaline soils types). Last question of the day for our Wine 101 course: Can anyone venture to guess which Monterey wine growing region falls into all of these three categories?

We're delighted to see that you all have your hands raised, as many growing areas of Monterey County fit all three categories. Class dismissed!

Bryce Ternet - contributing editor and author of the recently released: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula." See <http://www.mbryceter.net.com/> for more.



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Special



*Asparagus Wrapped in
Goat Cheese and Prosciutto*

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offered to our wine club members.
Enjoy with one of your favorite
Monterey wines (or beer!) at our
tasting room on Cannery Row.

RECIPE

Dungeness Crab Cakes

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	lump crabmeat
½ stick (¼ cup)	unsalted butter (divided, 1 and 3 tablespoons)
½ cup	chopped shallots
1 teaspoon	kosher salt
2	large eggs
1½ teaspoons	Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon	sweet paprika
½ teaspoon	freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons	prepared tartar sauce
1 teaspoon	lemon zest
¼ teaspoon	Tabasco
2 tablespoons	chopped fresh parsley
4 slices	white bread, crusts removed, torn into small pieces
⅔ cup	fresh bread crumbs



DIRECTIONS



1 Heat one tablespoon of butter in a small skillet over medium high heat. Add the shallots and a half teaspoon of salt. Cook until the shallots are translucent, a couple minutes. Do not brown. Let the shallots cool.

2 Whisk together the eggs, Worcestershire sauce, remaining half teaspoon of salt, paprika, freshly ground black pepper, tartar sauce, lemon zest, Tabasco, parsley, and the cooked shallots. Gently fold in the crabmeat and torn bread, taking care again to not break up the lumps of crab meat. The mixture will be very wet. Using your (clean) hands, take a scoop of the crab mixture and gently form it into a patty form about 2 1/4 inches across and 3/4 inches thick. Continue until you've made 12 crab cake patties. Line a rimmed tray with a piece of wax paper just large enough to hold the cakes and sprinkle the bottom of the tray with half of the bread crumbs. Set the crab cakes in one layer on the top of the layer of bread crumbs and sprinkle them with the remaining bread crumbs. Cover the crab cakes loosely with another sheet of wax paper and chill in the refrigerator for at least one hour.

3 Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter in a large non-stick skillet on medium high heat. The butter will melt and foam up. When the foam subsides, working in batches, place the crab cakes in the pan (do not crowd the pan), and cook until golden brown, about 3 minutes on each side.

THE Monterey Grapevine

O-N-L-I-N-E

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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

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club@tastemonterey.com

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