

Tasting Monterey

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



STORE HOURS

A Taste of Monterey
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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, 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 Tuscans, 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.

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.

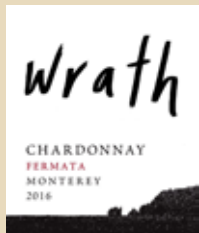
Blending Otherwise

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.

We've already mentioned that certain varietals are blended with others to enhance aromas, *Continued Inside*

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

WRATH - 2015 *Fermata Chardonnay*



Winery: Wrath represents a nexus of nature and an unbridled passion for winemaking. They produce site-driven Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Falanghina and Sauvignon Blanc from their estate vineyard and respected properties in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Their production is small, their distribution is limited and their wines reveal attitude, passion, and an inherent respect for what a vineyard can give us.

Vineyard: Wrath Estate San Saba Vineyard is set in a sheltered nook just below the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The estate consists of 72 acres of which 67.75 are planted to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Falanghina. This is a cool site with little rainfall and one of the longest growing seasons in the world. The soils, Arroyo Gravelly Loam and Hanford Gravelly Sandy Loam, provide a low-vigor, well-draining, disease- and pest-free medium for their vines.

Tasting Notes: This Chardonnay from Wrath's Estate vineyard is consistently rich and luxurious. This wine features powerful aromatics ranging from lemon and lime to toast and crème brûlée. The palate delivers viscosity, structure and minerals.

Wrath
2015 Chardonnay

Alcohol
13.4%

AVA
Monterey

Composition
100% Chardonnay

Aging Potential
6-8 years

DE TIERRA - 2016 *Syrah*



Winery: De Tierra creates delicious, award-winning, and sustainably harvested wines to share from the unique terroir of Monterey County. De Tierra, as their name suggests, focuses on providing the best representation 'of the land'. Great wines begin in the vineyard, and it is their goal to translate the defining flavors of place into great wine.

Vineyards: This Syrah was grown on the Coast View and Chalone vineyards. Both of the vineyards lay on the Gabilan Mountains which yields wines of unusual minerality. These vineyards have sparse and rocky soils and warm winds that blow through the afternoons; much like the Côte-Rôtie. Although the days are warm, the nights cool off to produce Syrah of uncommon complexity and richness. oak with less stirring. They allow full malolactic fermentation for richness and depth of character

Tasting Notes: Classic Rhone aromas of hard spices, white pepper, cassis and raspberry join with vanilla and smoky oak flowing behind. Full and intense in the mouth, rich fruit flavors are joined by hints of succulent meats. Balancing acidity keeps this wine focused and produces a lush finish full of minerality. With twenty four months of bottle age, this wine is drinking quite well and its structure and intensity would indicate many years of enjoyment to come.

De Tierra
2016 Syrah

Alcohol
14.0%

AVA
Monterey

Composition
100% Syrah

Aging Potential
8-10 years

LE MISTRAL - 2017 *Joseph's Blend*



Winery: The name, Le Mistral, comes from the name for the winds of the Rhône Valley in France, where blustery afternoons cool vineyards quickly and produce similar flavors in their native varietals like Syrah and Grenache. They are proud to farm the Le Mistral Vineyard in a sustainable way. This combines the best management practices from other farming systems, like organic and biodynamic, to positively impact the bottom line, environment and society.

Winemaking: Their winemaking team is led by David Baird, who works closely with their growers to realize a style of wine that fully expresses the terroir of Monterey County and all its diversity. Folktale wines express beautiful acid and minerality of Monterey's cool climate and rocky soils.

Tasting Notes: This vintage of Joseph's Blend is juicy, spicy, and well structured thanks to a subtle addition of Petite Sirah. Fruit forward with luscious notes of cherry and raspberry, the bouquet opens to reveal black pepper, cured meat, and Herb de Provence with rich and creamy vanilla and toasty crème brûlée to round out the spiciness.

Le Mistral
2017 Joseph's Blend

Alcohol
14.4%

AVA
Monterey County

Composition
64% Grenache
33% Syrah
3% Petite Sirah

Aging Potential
10-12 years

Cover Article Continued



improve color and add or soften tannins—but there are 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 offset 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 us 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.

RECIPE

Prawns Sambuca

Ingredients:

16	fresh Monterey Bay prawns
3 oz.	Chardonnay or dry white wine
1 T.	fresh shallots, chopped
4 oz.	sweet butter
1 T.	fresh garlic, chopped
4 oz.	olive oil
¼ cup	fresh tomato, diced
16 oz.	angel hair pasta
1 T.	fresh tarragon, finely chopped
2 tsp.	salt and pepper
2 oz.	Sambuca liqueur
2	chives

Method:

Heat oil in sautee pan, add garlic, shallots and prawns. Cook for 1 or 2 min.

Add wine and Sambuca. Flambé.

Add tomatoes, tarragon, salt and pepper, then cook for 2 more min.

Add butter and reduce.

Place over individual servings of pasta.

Garnish with tarragon leaves and chives.



VISITING Varietals



SAUVIGNON BLANC

Pronunciation: SOH-vihn-yohn BLAHN

Sauvignon Blanc is one of the most popular white wines in the U.S. Often referred to as "grassy," it is known for its refreshing crispness, which is due to its high levels of acidity and low amounts of sugar.

The Sauvignon Blanc grape originated in the same region as America's two most popular red grapes, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, the Bordeaux region of France. In Bordeaux, it is believed that the grape was given the name Sauvignon Blanc from the French word *sauvage*, which means wild, because the grape grew like a weed throughout the region. Instead of being fermented and bottled on its own, winemakers in Bordeaux chose to use Sauvignon Blanc in their white blends and to make the desert wine Sauterne.

From Bordeaux the grape traveled north to the appellation of Sancerre in the Loire Valley region of France. In Sancerre, Sauvignon Blanc was planted and cultivated in order to make a wine for which it would be the only ingredient. However, instead of naming the new wine Sauvignon Blanc, after the grape the wine had come from, the French chose to name the wine Sancerre ("San-SER"), after the region where it was born. In the twentieth century, Sancerre became incredibly popular in Paris bistros and bars because of its ability to go extremely well with or without food. Sancerre wines were easy to drink and the public fell in love.

From the nightlife of Paris, Sauvignon Blanc traveled around the globe and found another champion in New Zealand, who would finally make the grape's name known worldwide. In the 1980s, few had still heard the actual name Sauvignon Blanc, even though many were drinking it regularly every time they drank Sancerre. It was then that New Zealand wines hit the international market, debuting wines that were bright, crisp, refreshing and, best of all, incredibly affordable.

Whether called Sancerre or Sauvignon Blanc, it is known as a refreshing dry wine that has a great minerality, aromas and tastes of herbs and grasses and a nice crisp pucker. Across the world, including in France, the wine is hardly ever aged in oak, with the winemakers preferring to exhibit the bright and fruity characteristics of the grape.

CHEESE

Varietals



RACLETTE

Raclette is part of the culinary heritage of both the French and Swiss Alps with references dating as far back as the 1200s. Traditionally, the French and Swiss cow herders carried the Raclette with them when they moved their cows to and from the mountain pastures. In the evenings they would place their Raclette next to the camp fire, often times on a large rock, and once it had reached the perfect softness, the herders would then scrape the Raclette onto their bread or potatoes.

These days, unless you're really into roughing it, no campfires or rocks are needed! Raclette can be melted and served more handily with modern appliances designed specifically for gathering friends around to enjoy Raclette.

A modern way of serving raclette involves an electric table-top grill with small pans, known as coupelles, in which to melt slices of raclette cheese. Generally the grill is surmounted by a hot plate or griddle. The cheese is brought to the table sliced, accompanied by platters of boiled or steamed potatoes, other vegetables and charcuterie. These are then mixed with potatoes and topped with cheese in the small, wedge-shaped coupelles that are placed under the grill to melt and brown the cheese. Alternatively, slices of cheese may be melted and simply poured over food on the plate. The emphasis in raclette dining is on relaxed and sociable eating and drinking, the meal often running to several hours.

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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.

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 De Tierra 2016 Syrah		\$39.00	\$29.25	\$31.20
 Le Mistral 2017 Joseph's Blend		\$50.00	\$37.50	\$40.00
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