

Tasting Monterey

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

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* No new tastings after 5:45pm
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TERROIR... *A Sense of Place*

In past articles, we've covered various aspects of where grapes are grown having direct implications on wines eventually made from those grapes. These factors include climate, geology, topography, geography, and other plants growing in the general vicinity of a vine. When you are sipping on a glass of wine, it can be possible to have your senses taste the place where the wine has originated. This is tasting terroir (pronounced ter-wahr). And, this doesn't just occur for wines (although it is arguably more pronounced) but for other agricultural products that have distinct regional and sub-regional characteristics as well.

This regional and sub-regional classification movement of agricultural products (e.g. wine, cheese, ham, peppers, cherries, etc.) is recognized as having begun in France and since quickly spread out into Europe and subsequently around the globe. It continues to expand every year, as a desire to distinguish local products with unique characteristics also widens its reach. With wine, this categorization is displayed and conveyed through the French classification system of Appellation d'Origine Controlée (AOC), which we find reflected in our own Agricultural American Viticulture Area (AVA) system.

Terroir is loosely translated as a "sense of place" or as the sum influence a local environment has on an agricultural product. The base premise is that the land from which grapes are grown imparts specific characteristics on wines that are uniquely qualified to that specific region or sub-region.

Although popularized and officially regulated by the French, the concept of recognizing regional characteristics for wines goes all the way back to Ancient Greece (for those who didn't pay attention in history class – that was a long time before even the Roman Empire...yeah, that's a long time ago!)



In France, however, the concept began in the region of Burgundy, where centuries ago monks (who owned all of the vineyards for some time) began developing the system of distinguishing terroir. It's still reflected there today, not only through the general regional AOC of Bourgogne, then more distinctly through a village designation such as Pommard, but then even more definitively through designation of specific Premier Cru vineyard and Grand Cru vineyards; the latter of which can refer to a single row in a vineyard!

As with most things, we humans can manipulate terroir elements in wine. For instance, the initial decision of which grape varietal to plant in a vineyard will have huge implications as different varietals will develop more fully in certain conditions. Although less noticeable, even a winemaker's decision to use wild yeast strains instead of cultured ones during the fermentation of a wine can have an influence on how terroir characteristics may or may not be on display in a wine.

However, the most controversial aspect in this regard is a winemaker's use of oak in the process, as some argue that exposure to oak assists in showcasing terroir elements, and others claim that the oak masks terroir characteristics (making wines indistinguishable from others). Another winemaking technique, known as micro-oxygenation, is also a hot topic when the subject of terroir arises.

There are other decisions that can be made during the winemaking process which may influence terroir elements in one way or another, but the basic premise is that a wine can be produced that is terroir-driven, or a wine can be made with little-to-no regard for unique terroir characteristics. This humble point essentially explains why there is so great of a variance between wines in distinction and quality (and, ultimately...price).



Continued Inside

RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

LUCIENNE - 2010 Pinot Noir



Vineyard: The Lone Oak Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands is positioned to take advantage of some of the best grape growing conditions in California for ultra-premium Pinot Noir. The southeast facing slopes sit above the fog, allowing the vines to take full advantage of the sun. This long sun exposure, combined with the cool temperatures from the Monterey Bay, create a longer growing season which, in turn, increases the complexity in the fruit.

Winemaking: The grapes were harvested the morning of September 28, 2010 and then hand-sorted, de-stemmed and loaded into 3-ton fermenters where they were cold soaked for 3 days to allow for greater color and flavor extraction. RC12 yeast was used for fermentation which was kept at 85 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit while the winemakers manually punched down the grape must three times per day. This vintage of Lucienne Lone Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir, comprised of 2A and Pommard clones, was barrel aged for 14 months in a combination of 35% new French oak barrels and neutral oak barrels sourced from the coopers of Francois Freres, Seguin Moreau, and Darguad & Jaegle prior to bottling in December of 2011.

Tasting Notes: Dark ruby in color, this wine's varied aroma ranges from the mineral stoniness of graphite and slate to rich black cherries and raspberries with hints of licorice. On the palate, a ripe, full-bodied texture is accented by overtones of vanilla, cinnamon and subtle tannins. The long finish recalls red fruits and hints of allspice.

Lucienne
2010 Pinot Noir

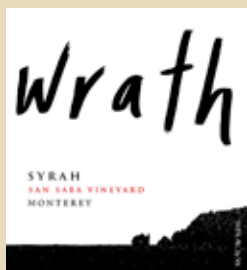
Alcohol
14.5%

AVA
Santa Lucia Highlands

Composition
100% Pinot Noir

Aging Potential
5-7 years

WRATH - 2010 San Saba Syrah



Winery: Wrath represents a nexus of nature and an unbridled passion for winemaking. Wrath produces site-driven Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, 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 them.

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 Muscat. 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. They also impart a subtle mineral quality to their wines.

Tasting Notes: Wrath's estate vineyard is a remarkable place for Syrah. It has all the necessary ingredients to make this noble Rhone variety happy: wind, aridity, cool temperatures and porous soils. The 2010 is blackness followed by a barrage of tar, wet sand, leather, river stones, plums and smoked meat. The palate is voluptuously ripe and round balanced by a flash of chalky tannins in the finish.

Wrath
2010 San Saba Syrah

Alcohol
14.4%

AVA
Monterey

Composition
100% Syrah

Aging Potential
6-10 years

BOËTÉ WINERY - 2008 Cheval Rouge



Winery: In 1994, John Saunders and his wife Jana traded their 250-acre citrus orchard in Soledad for 15 acres in Carmel Valley. In early spring 1997, they planted their first vineyard on their sun-drenched hillside. The result is the Saunders Vineyard and his own label - Boete (Bwah-tay). The secret of the wine, Saunders says, is in the quality of the grapes, and old world wine making techniques that utilize French Oak barrels. "Winemaking to me, is art," Saunders says. "If the wine isn't good, I'll run it back down the hill and into the ground, where it came from. But when I hear about people who enjoy it, that's when I really feel wonderful."

Boete winery was named in honor of John Saunders' grandparents, Francois and Jeannie Boete, from the little town of Le Juch in the Brittany Region of France.

Winemaking: Cheval Rouge is Boete Winery's signature blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc & Merlot. All of their wines are estate grown on their property in Carmel Valley. Warm summer days and crisp cool nights combine to produce a long growing season that yields intense and concentrated fruit flavors. Boete Wines are grown to full maturity, reaching for the big fruit flavors and deep aromas that only come from fruit picked at the peak of ripeness. 80-100% new French oak shows through beautifully with a velvety mouth feel and classic Cabernet fruit flavors.

Tasting Notes: The nose speaks Bordeaux showing dark fruit, chocolate & coffee. The palate is lush & fruit forward showing black & red fruit on the finish.

Boëté Winery
2008 Cheval Rouge

Alcohol
14.0%

AVA
Carmel Valley

Composition
75% Cabernet Sauvignon
19% Cabernet Franc
6% Merlot

Aging Potential
6-10 years

Cover Article Continued

So, how do we display terroir here in the States? In California? In Monterey County? Well, aside from offering it through the quality of our wines, we have our AVA system, which distinguishes terroir on a regional and sub-regional level, very similar to the French AOC system. And as les Français do, we also indicate specific single vineyard sourced wines...the very definition of narrowing down a terroir-driven wine.

For example, a Pinot Noir from Garys' Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands is about as fine of an example of a terroir wine as any to be found on the planet. Due to skilled and adaptable growers and winemakers, there will always be exceptions, but other Monterey County examples for pristine terroir conditions for specific grape varieties includes Bordeaux varietals from Carmel Valley, Bourgogne varietals from the Santa Lucia Highlands, Rhône varietals from Arroyo Seco, and Spanish/Portuguese varietals from the San Antonio Valley AVA.

Once again, we stand in awe and appreciation of the truly incredible amount of diversity and vastly different possibilities we have for terroir-driven wines here in Monterey County.

Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of the just released novella: "The Yellow House on Maloney Grove." See <http://www.mbryceter.net.com/> for more.).



VISITING Varietals



SANGIOVESE

Pronunciation:

San-joe-Vay-say

Definition:

Italy's most commonly planted red grape varietal, boasting over a dozen distinct clones, is a thin-skinned grape that tends to linger longer on the vine, takes its time to mature. Central Italy, specifically the region of Tuscany, is the agricultural heartland of the Sangiovese grape. Monterey also has several outstanding examples of this varietal.

Italian Chianti and Chianti Classico wines are prime examples of popular wines produced predominantly from Sangiovese. Typically Sangiovese grapes make medium to full-bodied wines with tannin structure ranging from medium-soft to firm.

Flavor Profile:

Dominate flavors associated with Sangiovese derived wines include: cherry, plum, strawberry, cinnamon and vanilla. There is often an herbaceous quality associated with Sangiovese wines. As for acidity levels, Sangiovese leans towards medium to high acidity content. The finish can range from elegant to bitter.

Food Pairing:

Well-matched for the flavors of chicken, red meat, fish, lamb, pork, pastas, stews or well-aged cheeses.

RECIPE

Gingerbread People

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	Melted butter, to grease
1/2 cup	butter, at room temperature
1/2 cup	firmly packed brown sugar
1	golden syrup
1	egg, separated
2 1/2 cups	plain flour
1 Tbs	ground ginger
1 tsp	mixed spice
1 tsp	bicarbonate of soda
	Plain flour, to dust
1 cup	pure icing sugar, sifted
8-10 drops	red liquid food colouring
8-10 drops	green liquid food colouring
	Smarties, to decorate



DIRECTIONS

Step 1 - Preheat oven to 350°F. Brush 2 baking trays with melted butter to lightly grease.

Step 2 - Use an electric beater to beat the butter and sugar in a bowl until pale and creamy. Add the golden syrup and egg yolk and beat until combined. Stir in the flour, ginger, mixed spice and bicarbonate of soda. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth. Press dough into a disc. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the fridge for 30 minutes to rest.

Step 3 - Meanwhile, place egg white in a clean, dry bowl. Use an electric beater to beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add icing sugar and beat until stiff peaks form. Divide icing among 3 bowls. Cover 1 bowl with plastic wrap and place in the fridge. Add red colouring to 1 bowl and stir until combined. Add green colouring to remaining bowl and stir until combined. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the fridge.

Step 4 - Place the dough between 2 sheets of baking paper and roll out until about .25 inches thick. Use a 3.5 - 4 inch gingerbread man cutter to cut out shapes. Place on trays about .25 inches apart. Repeat with any excess dough.

Step 5 - Bake in oven for 10 minutes or until brown. Remove from oven. Transfer to a rack to cool.

Step 6 - Place prepared icings in small plastic bags. Cut a small hole in a corner of each bag. Pipe icing over gingerbread men to decorate. Finish with Smarties or other candy of choice.

THE Monterey Grapevine

O-N-L-I-N-E

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PLEASE SEND QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO:

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









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