



## PASO ROBLES - RHÔNE VARIETIES



While the history of Paso Robles wine sits with Zinfandel and its associated hearty red varieties, such as Petite Sirah, its contemporary fame begins with Cabernet Sauvignon established in large plantings from the 1960s through the 1980s, and turns more recently to the varieties of the Rhône. Across varieties, the region

is known for producing ample wines – wines with a profound concentration of flavour almost regardless of cellar technique.

The region's single-vineyard wines that so clearly offer site expression even at higher alcohol seem a blunt reminder that terroir can make its presence felt even over 14% alcohol. As Turley's Paso Robles' winemaker Karl Wicka points out, to achieve an approachable balance of acidity to alcohol to flavour to tannin from any of their single-vineyard Zinfandel sites without having to intervene in the cellar demands additional hang time. Vines of the Central Coast – not only in Paso Robles but also in the other subzones of this part of the state as well – tend to hold on to their acidity. Winemakers are left, then, waiting for acidity to drop to a palatable level even while sugars climb. Wines from the deftest winemakers can offer harmony of expression.

While the original Paso Robles AVA was instituted in 1983, 2014 brought 11 new sub-AVAs, or districts, within the original boundaries of the region. Additionally, York Mountain stands as its own appellation sitting adjacent to Paso in the mountains along the ocean, approved simultaneously with Paso Robles in 1983. Wineries can now label their wines with any of the 11 sub-AVAs as long as they retain the name Paso Robles on the label. So far, producers in the best-known districts – Adelaida, Templeton Gap and Willow Creek – all on the western side of Paso, have been quickest to adopt the new joint naming. Rhône varieties are planted in the Paderewski vineyard below farmed by Epoch in western Paso.



The Central Coast remains one of the more Rhône-focused regions of California. While Rhône-inspired winemakers can be found throughout the state, the Central Coast hosts one of the largest proportions of Rhône varieties. This can be largely attributed to the efforts of Tablas Creek winery in the Adelaida District. The partnership between Robert Haas and the Rhône Valley's Perrin family of Château

de Beaucastel has led to the introduction of numerous Rhône vines into California. Robert's son Jason is seen above right in Tablas Creek vineyards.

Tablas Creek has done the hard work of bringing these varieties through quarantine, resulting in their being concentrated in Paso Robles although they have since been disseminated throughout the state. Most recently Tablas Creek successfully established the Languedoc variety Terret Noir. They have just bottled a varietal example for the first time although the small quantity produced is not yet on sale. More common, of course, are Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre, as well as Roussanne and Viognier, with newer vineyards of Piquepoul Blanc now starting to produce wine as well.

The following tasting notes focus on Rhône-variety wines produced throughout Paso Robles tasted during an intensive week of research on the region late last summer.

### WHITE

Tablas Creek, Patelin de Tablas 2014 Paso Robles  
49% Grenache Blanc, 31% Viognier, 12% Roussanne, 8% Marsanne.  
Zesty aromatics, smooth wax mouthfeel. A touch of heat through to the finish. Lots of persistence. (ECB) 13.3% Drink 2015-2020 16.5

Tablas Creek, Côtes de Tablas 2013 Paso Robles  
39% Viognier, 29% Grenache Blanc, 20% Marsanne, 12% Roussanne.  
Muted aromatics. A kiss of sweet floral lift, notes of clementine and almond. Chalky saline and white pepper throughout. (ECB) 13.5% Drink 2015-2020 16.5

### RED

Tablas Creek, Patelin de Tablas 2013 Paso Robles  
45% Syrah, 29% Grenache, 22% Mourvèdre, 4% Counoise.  
Dark and feral. Muted right now. Notes of violet, and meaty iron and herbs. (ECB) 13.9% Drink 2015-2025 16.5

Tablas Creek, Côtes de Tablas 2012 Paso Robles  
60% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 10% Counoise, 5% Mourvèdre. Mixed red fruits spiced throughout. Crushed quartz crunch. Fine-grained, persistent tannin. Will open more with air and time in bottle. (ECB) 14.5% Drink 2015-2025 16.5

Tablas Creek, Esprit de Tablas 2012 Paso Robles  
20% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 21% Grenache, 9% Counoise.  
Violet and mixed black fruits with dusty earth accents. Fine-grained tannin. Long drying finish. Nice flavour. (ECB) 14.5% Drink 2015-2025 17