



# International Wine Cellar

the consumer's passport to fine wine

## TABLAS CREEK VINEYARD

“With new Central Coast producers emerging every year with high-quality wines, especially in the southern half of the region stretching from Santa Barbara County northward to Paso Robles, this part of California is a growing source of full-flavored and user-friendly wines, most of the best of them red. While I still taste many bottles whose creators are obviously alumnae of the “too much ain’t enough” school, the best-balanced of the big Rhône blends from Paso Robles, for example, offer the voluptuous texture and uncanny depth of fruit that are making new friends on both coasts. I compare some of these wines to high-end shiraz bottlings from Australia, except that the better American versions have more fruit and are less manipulated.

At the same time, however, I am astounded to see rave reviews for wines that are clearly flawed (oxidative, volatile, cooked), out of balance (hugely alcoholic, crushed by unsubtle new oak, dangerously low in acidity) or just plain over the top. (Of course, it goes without saying that my top may be lower than your top.) Ninety-plus scores for wines that are out of whack has a way of cheapening the fine work being done by Southern California’s best growers and winemakers (names like Tablas Creek Vineyard, Alban Vineyards, Saxum Vineyards and Sine Qua Non come to mind here).

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Côtes de Tablas Blanc Paso Robles 89** (55% viognier, 29% marsanne, 8% grenache blanc and 8% roussanne) Pale gold. Subtle aromas of stone fruits, minerals and nuts. Ripe, fresh and succulent, with lively, fruit-driven flavors of peach, apricot and bitter orange. Supple, smooth wine with a fruity, persistent finish. A very successful blend.

**2005 Tablas Creek Vineyard Rosé Paso Robles 88** (60% mourvèdre, 30% grenache and 10% counoise) Cherry-pink color. Delicate aromas of strawberry, cherry skin, celery seed and mint, with more pungent notes of rhubarb and pomegranate emerging with aeration. A round, easygoing rosé with supple fruit and spice flavors and a hint of tree bark. Could use a bit more verve and lift but this is fat and easy to drink.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Grenache Blanc Paso Robles 89** Pale straw-gold. Intriguing nose melds baking apple, white pepper, licorice, nuts and marzipan. Juicy, spicy and light on its feet, with quince, apple and pear flavors complicated by anise, spices and flowers. This doesn’t have the texture or concentration for a 90-point rating but is very easy to drink. I never would have guessed this was carrying 15+% alcohol (actually 15.3%).

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Roussanne Paso Robles 91** Bright yellow. Poached pear, menthol, spices and a resinous nuance on the nose. Rich, moderately dense and honeyed, but at the same time mineral and bright. Flavors of dried nuts, dried fruits and brown butter linger on the fresh finish. In comparison to most roussannes from the Northern Rhône, this is fruitier and more vibrant, and less obviously alcoholic.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc Paso Robles 92** (65% roussanne, 30% grenache blanc and 5% picpoul) Straw-gold color. Retentive but complex nose offers lemon, resin and minerals, along with a note of iodine. Rich and sweet but at the same time penetrating and cool, conveying a strong impression of energy. Offers lovely fruit and palate feel and finishes smooth, rich and long. This, too, strikes me as a better version of a Northern Rhône white.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Côtes de Tablas Paso Robles 90** (a Southern Rhône blend based on 64% grenache) Medium red with a pale rim. Aromas of strawberry, cherry skin, tree bark, flint and nutty oak. Wonderfully sappy and juicy in the mouth, with vibrant, spicy flavors of cherry, raspberry and cranberry. Finishes firmly tannic, spicy and long, and not at all dry. This boasts terrific energy.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel Paso Robles 92(+?)** (50% mourvèdre, 27% syrah, 17% grenache and 6% counoise) Bright, deep ruby-red. Enticing aromas of black raspberry, plum, chocolate, flint and licorice. Juicy, chewy and packed with sappy flavors of red fruits, red licorice and minerals. Lovely framing acids. Dense, sweet and very long wine, finishing with firm tannic backbone.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Esprit de Beaucastel Panoplie Paso Robles 94** (69% mourvèdre, 21% grenache and 10% syrah) Ruby-red. Deep, musky aromas of black fruits, leather, espresso and flowers. Fat, lush and sweet, with super-concentrated kirsch-like flavor offering outstanding volume as well as great creamy depth. I would have picked this blind for grenache. Finishes impressively long, with fine, dusty tannins. Even sweeter than the Esprit normale, and showing more early sex appeal.

**2004 Tablas Creek Vineyard Syrah Paso Robles 88** Deep, bright ruby-red. High-toned aromas of black raspberry, black cherry, pepper, tar, chocolate and flowers. Sweet and concentrated but slightly gritty flavors of dark raspberry and maraschino cherry showed a growing tartness with aeration. A bit youthfully stunted and musclebound, offering less give and complexity today than this estate’s red blends. Finishes with a sour cherry flavor and a mounting dryness.”

<http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer>