

Focus Varietal: Vermentino

Vermentino, with its bright acidity, aromas of citrus leaf and mineral, and refreshing finish, has become a favorite of Tablas Creek VINSiders and restauranters alike. Its story, however, does not originate in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and unlike most of Tablas Creek's white varieties, it is a grape that is more commonly seen on its own than in blends.

Vermentino in the Old World

Vermentino is commonly thought to be Spanish in origin. Although it is currently grown in several countries around the Mediterranean, its best known examples come from northern Italy (particularly in the region of Liguria) and the island of Sardinia, where the wines are crisp, citrusy and generally un-oaked. It is also the most widely planted white grape on the island of Corsica, where high altitude and hot climate vineyards produce more full-bodied wines with heady floral aromas. On the French mainland (where the grape is known as Rolle), it is found in Côtes de Provence and, increasingly, in Languedoc.

Although it makes excellent wine, for many years Vermentino was best known for producing table grapes. The grapes are large with a good sugar/acid balance, making them a perfect choice for sweet snacking.

Vermentino at Tablas Creek

Although Vermentino is not a Châteauneuf-du-Pape grape variety, we imported it at the recommendation of the Perrins' French nurseryman, who believed it would thrive in the rocky limestone soils of Paso Robles. We brought the cuttings in and entered them into quarantine at the USDA station in Geneva, New York. In 1993, they were declared virus free and released to us. We propagated the vines in our nursery, and planted about an acre of Vermentino on an east-facing slope near Adelaida road in the northern portion of the property. As the nurseryman predicted, it has indeed thrived here.

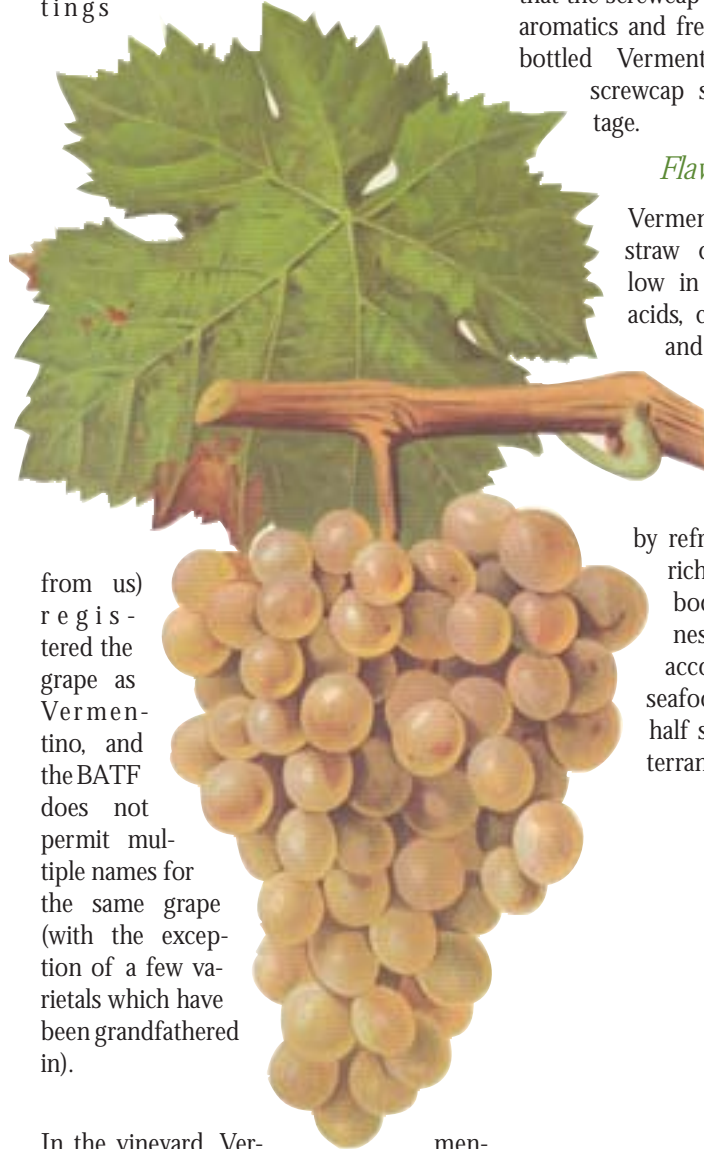
Small quantities of Vermentino were included in our early white blends. However, we found it too distinctive to fit seamlessly into our blends, and since 2002 we have bottled it on its own. We used the Italian name for the grape instead of the French one because Wild Horse Winery (who bought cuttings

retain its bright citrus character of the wine.

As part of our ongoing research on Stelvin screwcaps, we bottled half of the Vermentino in screwcap and half in cork in 2002. We were so convinced that the screwcap preserved the wine's aromatics and freshness that we have bottled Vermentino exclusively in screwcap since the 2003 vintage.

Flavors and Aromas

Vermentino wines are a pale straw color and relatively low in alcohol, with crisp acids, citrus-leaf aromatics, and pronounced minerality. In the mouth, Vermentino shows flavors of green apple and lime, heightened by refreshing acidity, good richness and medium body. The wine's crispness makes it a delicious accompaniment to fresh seafood, oysters on the half shell, or grilled Mediterranean vegetables.



from us) registered the grape as Vermentino, and the BATF does not permit multiple names for the same grape (with the exception of a few varieties which have been grandfathered in).

In the vineyard, Vermentino is one of the easiest varieties to grow. It is a vigorous grower, resistant to drought, and usually ripens towards the middle of the harvest cycle. In the cellar, we ferment it in stainless steel tanks and prevent it from completing malolactic fermentation. Both procedures serve to emphasize the grape's natural minerality and