



Le Journal du Vin

An Occasional Publication of California Wine Touring



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Vol. 13 No.2 - August '05

Central Coast

Vineyard & Winery Visits -

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Journal and tasting notes from visits to several California wineries and vineyards. The main focus of our trip was to attend the **Clos Pepe** BBQ and futures roll-out at the CP vineyard on Saturday, August 6th. But, this merely gave us an excuse to repeat what we did last year -- visit a few other wineries and vineyards on the Central Coast over the weekend. We'd planned to spend Friday in Paso, then head south to the Santa Barbara County for Saturday and the early part of Sunday. Riding shotgun on this trip was **GrapeRadio's** Jay Selman, plus we were scheduled to meet up in Paso Robles with several folks from the Bay Area (Bob Summers, Ken Zinns, Al Osterheld, Ken Emory, Eric Lundblad, and Alan Garretson), AKA, the 'usual suspects.'

Thanks: A special thanks to Terry Culton at Adelaida, who tasted us through everything from Pinot Noir to Touriga Nacional. Thanks also to Terry and Jennifer Hoage, who are embarking on one of the most ambitious expansion projects on the Westside. And finally, thanks to Gary Gibson, who has his vineyard in Paso, lives in San Luis Obispo, makes wine in Santa Maria, and still has a day job!

In Santa Barbara County, a special thanks to Peter Cargasacchi for the Jalama tour, and both he and Brian for sharing their wines with us. Thanks again to Wes Hagen and family - they put on quite a bash. Thanks also to Barry Torres for guiding us around the emerging Ambullneo winery at their open house. Finally, many thanks to Paul Lato for arranging his schedule to meet with us at the Solomon Hills vineyard, to see first hand his fruit source, and taste his beautiful wines on site.

Barrel Tasting: even though barrel tasting is one of the most instructive ways to sample wine, it is also something that causes more than a little angst among winemakers. The fact is that the wines being sampled from barrel haven't finished their infancy yet - they are still going through growth and development in the barrel, and haven't reached the point of bottling. Therefore, winemakers are often reluctant to expose their barrel samples to the public - concerned the wines may be misjudged or unappreciated by tasters during this growth stage. Since the tasting notes in this report contain many barrel samples, please note that my impressions relate only to the wine at its current stage of development.

Paso Robles

Friday, August 5, 2005

In order to beat the L.A. traffic out of town, Jay and I left Irvine early enough to beat the sunrise as well. Our goal was to get to Paso Robles about 9:30am for some coffee and Danish at *Dining with Andre*, where we'd meet up with six friends who'd come down from the Bay Area for the weekend. We were all staying at the same motel, so after a little coffee, we headed over to check-in and leave our wine and luggage in some air-conditioned rooms (it was due to be 104 degrees). Afterward, we doubled back to *DwA* again for a quick lunch, and then finally headed out for our first stop of the day.

Adelaida Cellars

Selected Tasting Notes:

...from bottle...



2003 Adelaida Chardonnay - Chamisal Vnyd, SLO. Barrel fermented, sur lee aged, and 100% ML. Nice light smokiness throughout, with lots of clean fruit and a long smooth finish, punctuated by some grip on the back palate.

2004 Adelaida Viognier - Paso Robles. 100% neutral barrel fermented. Floral and flinty, with nice minerality and touch of lime zest and honey. Lots of pure fruit throughout, and nice long finish.

...from barrel...

2004 Adelaida Pinot Noir - HMR Vnyd, Paso Robles. Mt. Eden clone, 100% whole cluster fermentation, 30-40% stem inclusion, 20-30% new oak. Nose of black cherry and floral notes, with a lesser amount of herb and forest floor aromas. Full on the palate, good texture, obvious floral undertones - almost as if were co-fermented with a floral white. Delicious!

2004 Adelaida Pinot Noir - HMR Vnyd, Paso Robles. Completely destemed. Significantly more black cherry aroma and taste over the previous wine -only slightly less complexity. Very nice.

2004 Adelaida Grenache - Glenrose Vnyd, Paso Robles. Tablas clone. Loads of intense strawberry-raspberry and orange zest in the nose. Slightly sweet mouthfeel, with lots of sweet-sour fruit, very nice balance and finish.

2004 Adelaida Mourvedre - Paso Robles. New François Freres barrel. Meaty-scented nose of dark berry, chocolate, and floral tones. Roasted meats and dark fruit on the palate, lighter on the cocoa in mouthfeel, and long smooth finish. Will go into the Rhone blend, rather than bottled separately.

2004 Adelaida Counoise - Paso Robles. Very floral in aroma, with roses, gardenia and a touch of lavender. Light in mouthfeel, with juicy mouthfeel, touch of blueberry and floral on the palate, nice finish.

2004 Adelaida Cinsault - Paso Robles. Peppery and meaty in aroma. Slightly sweet in mouthfeel, lightly extracted, touch of candied zest, and a bit of grip on the finish.

2004 Adelaida Syrah - Glenrose Vnyd, Paso Robles. Aged in 500L Hungarian barrel. Big, rich, ripe blackberry nose. Blueberry and blackberry on the palate, loads of fruit throughout, nice long finish.

2004 Adelaida Syrah - Viking Vnyd, Paso Robles. Nose of pure blackberry, a bit riper and fuller than the Glenrose. Thick and full on the palate, not quite as ripe/sweet in taste as the nose might have foretold. Delicious long finish.

2004 Adelaida Nebbiolo - Paso Robles. Nose of rhubarb pie. Huge tannins and plenty of acids assure its ability to cut through Mama Mia's marinara sauce. Fascinating, if a bit austere.

2004 Adelaida Touriga Nacional - Paso Robles. Lightly sweet and smoky-ripe in nose. Very drying on the palate, with plenty of herbaceous qualities on the palate, and a grippy finish.

2003 Adelaida Cabernet Sauvignon - Viking Vnyd, Paso Robles. Taransaud barrel for 24 months, with 3 rackings. Lightly sweet and ripe blackberry nose. Touches of black forest cake and accent the predominately dark cherry-cassis taste, with a tasty long finish.

2003 Adelaida Cabernet Sauvignon - Viking Vnyd, Paso Robles. François Freres barrel. Very similar in mouthfeel to the wine above, but there's more of a pronounced cherry Kirsch and chocolate mint aroma.

2003 Adelaida Zinfandel - Martinelli Vnyd. From tank, just before bottling. Nose has a old-vine quality to it, though the fruit is from a newer section of the vineyard. Lots of boysenberry and a touch of raspberry. Nice flavor profile and long finish. Well done!

2003 Adelaida Zinfandel - Martinelli Vnyd. Similar to above, but with lots more of the vineyard's older fruit, and more of a melting of flavors and aromas.

2004 Adelaida "Cryogenique" - Paso Robles. This "Ice Wine" knockoff is an interesting blend of Muscat (92%) and Viognier. The

grapes were frozen (hence the name), and processed normally. This got a little dryer than Terry wanted, hence it is less viscous and sweet, with more of a pronounced muscat - not surprising, considering the blend.

Arriving at **Adelaida Cellars**, we checked in at the spacious new tasting room to see about our appointment with winemaker Terry Culton. During HdR week, a few years back, we were on the way to Tablas Creek and figured we'd just stop by Adelaida for a quick taste of the Zin and the Cab. I met Adelaida's National Sales Rep, Paul Sowerby on that particular day, and he was really excited about their current harvest - 2002 at the time. I ran into Paul again at the 2005 HdR, and he seemed very eager to have us try the '02s that he had spoken about before, as well as the new '04 whites - Viognier, and a Grenache Blanc-Roussanne blend - all of which he was pouring that day. The wines were all quite good - especially the whites, and I asked if we could set up a visit with Adelaida's winemaker sometime in the next few months. Although he couldn't be there too, Paul arranged for us to meet with Terry Culton, for a closer look at Adelaida's wines.



Terry Culton

Terry met us in the tasting room, and after the round of introductions, mentioned that all of his '04 whites had just been bottled within the last two weeks, and might not be showing well. So, he poured us an '03 Chardonnay from bottle, and then after some coaxing, he agreed to pour us an '04 Viognier. From there, we followed Terry outside and over to the barrel room to try a full range of things - from Viognier to Touriga Nacional, from destemmed to whole cluster, and from Hungarian to French oak.

Established in 1981, Adelaida first earned its reputation as the home of full-throttle, highly extracted Zinfandels and Cabernets. Through the '80s, and into the early '90s, winemakers John Munch (now *Le Cuvier*) and Neil Collins (now *Tablas Creek*) were producing some very big wines - even for the times. Acquired by the Van Steenwyck family in 1991, there seems to have been a steady momentum over the last 10 years to producing more balanced wines.



Located in the rolling hills of Paso's westside, Adelaida is about 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean. At an elevation of 1,700 feet in the Santa Lucia mountain chain, the weather here consists of hot days, contrasted with afternoon coastal breezes which significantly cool the vineyards in the evenings. The hillside vineyards are filled with High pH limestone and shale. The calcareous, chalky, rock soils of the West Side, coupled with abundant rainfall and steep terrain results in lots of small berry clusters of highly concentrated grapes. About 80% of the planted acreage is to Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot and Zinfandel, with various other varieties making up the balance.

Adelaida sources fruit from its own Estate vineyards, as well as a small group of contracted local vineyards. The two Estate vineyards, Viking Vineyard and HMR Vineyard are the flagship properties. The historic HMR Vineyard (Hoffman Mountain Ranch) had originally been planted by Dr. Stanley Hoffman in the early 60's. Hoffman hired the late Andre Tchelistcheff to advise him on the potential of his acreage, and Tchelistcheff enthusiastically recommended planting a vineyard of, among other things, Pinot Noir. Tchelistcheff continued consulting for a few years, and helped to produce some vineyard successes through the early-'70s. However, over the subsequent years, the property fell into a state of benign neglect, and the HMR label and reference to the vineyard was gone from the marketplace for over a decade. In 1994, Adelaida owners Don and Elizabeth Van Steenwyck, heard that HMR Vineyard, just a couple of miles from their Estate, was for sale and purchased a 400-acre portion of the Hoffman Mountain Ranch, including all of the original Pinot Noir plantings. The 64-acre vineyard is currently planted to Pinot, Chardonnay, and a bit of Cabernet.

The 20-acre Viking Vineyard was planted in 1992. It's location is considerably warmer in temperature than the HMR Vineyard, making it more ideal for producing Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Though the daily temperatures are higher here, the nights are significantly cooler, due to the influences of the Templeton Gap (a natural gap in the Santa Lucia coastal range that creates an 'air conditioning' effect). Overnight temperatures here drop by as much as 50 degrees, making it one of the greatest diurnal variations in the state - something that also helps a needed natural acidity develop in the fruit.

Arriving in the Paso Robles area in 1991, winemaker Terry Culton worked his first harvest that Fall at Creston Manor, and from there moved to Wild Horse. After attending extension classes at UC Davis, he became cellar master at Edmeades Winery in Mendocino County, and then assistant winemaker at Calera in San Benito County, working with Josh Jensen for 3-1/2 years. Terry heard from departing winemaker Jon Priest that the winemaking position at Adelaida was open. He immediately expressed interest, was hired and began with Adelaida at the '03 harvest.



As with many of his contemporaries, Terry feels wines are made in the vineyard, and thus embraces a non-interventionist style of winemaking. He uses native yeast to start fermentations, then ages the wines for 14 to 24 months in French and/or European oak barrels (20% to 30% new oak, depending upon the varietals). Terry likes to use oak as a spice rack, to accent the wine, rather than dominate it. Everything is bottled unfiltered and unfinned. We talked about bottle closure issues and he mentioned that he hadn't seen much of a problem with TCA, but that he would consider screwcaps for his white wines, but not the reds. Adelaida's production is about 15,000 cases annually.

The visit to Adelaida was illuminating. All of the wines were fruit-filled and well-balanced, with a modest amount of oak. Whether it's Pinot Noir or Cabernet or Syrah, Terry is obviously a talented winemaker, and the fact that he appears to have full control of both the vineyards and winemaking, bodes well for Adelaida's future.