

Wine tasting in Paso Robles

Asher Tishler

The wine tasting in Paso Robles (about three hour drive south from San Francisco) was conducted by Marshall Polk and Asher Tishler during May 2016. The Paso Robles wine country features more than 200 wineries located in the San Luis Obispo County. It has approximately 26,000 vineyard acres, and is well known for its heritage varietal Zinfandel, Rhône-style wines and, starting in the 1980s, Bordeaux varieties. In this trip we tasted the current releases and some older vintages of two high-quality wineries (more detailed tastings in a larger number of wineries is detailed in our 2014 and 2015 tasting trips to this region).

High quality mature wines from Paso Robles are usually unavailable for purchase in the wineries and should be purchased in professional outlets (specialized wine stores, internet stores, auctions, etc.), since most of their high-end production is pre-sold in advance. Wines from the latest 1-3 vintages are sometimes available in some, but not all, wineries.

There are several hotels, B&Bs, quality restaurants and wine stores in Paso Robles. Booking a hotel or B&B well in advance is highly recommended, particularly during the high season. In this short trip we visited only two high quality wineries. Thus, no wonder that we ranked many of the wines that we tasted as 'very good' or even 'excellent'. Almost all of these high quality wines will age and continue to develop, most of them for 5-20 years.

Finally, there are numerous sources of information on Paso Robles wines, wineries, history, climate and geography. Wikipedia and the references therein is a good place to start.

Tablas Creek

Esprit De Tablas Blanc, 2012. \$45. 13.5% alcohol. Close to full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Fresh. Light wine. Drink now up to 5-8 years. Very good wine.

Esprit De Beaucastel Blanc, 2008. \$60. 14.5% alcohol. Close to full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Less fresh but more complex than Esprit De Tablas Blanc 2012. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Very good wine.

Esprit De Tablas, 2012. \$55. 14.5% alcohol. 40% Mourvedre, 30% Syrah, 21% Grenache, 9% Counoise. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 15 years. Very good wine.

Esprit De Tablas, 2013. \$55. 14.5% alcohol. 40% Mourvedre, 30% Syrah, 21% Grenache, 9% Counoise. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 15 years. Better than the 2012. Very good wine.

Esprit De Tablas, 2011. \$55. 14.5% alcohol. 40% Mourvedre, 21% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 9% Counoise. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Elegant. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Noticeable soft tannins. More body and more powerful than the 2012. Better than the 2012. Drink now up to 15 years. Very good wine.

Esprit De Beaucastel, 2008. \$70. 14.5% alcohol. 38% Mourvedre, 26% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 6% Counoise. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Soft tannins. Somewhat too high acidity. Drink now up to 10 years. Very good wine.

Panoplie, 2013. \$95. 14.5% alcohol. 75% Mourvedre, 10% Syrah, 15% Grenache. Full body. Complex. Balanced. Powerful. Elegant. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Soft tannins. Drink in 2-3 years up to 20 years. Excellent wine.

Additional varieties:

Cote de Tablas, 2014. \$35. 14.1% alcohol. 44% Grenache, 8% Mourvedre, 36% Syrah, 12% Counoise. Close to full body. Somewhat complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 6 years. Good wine.

Counoise, 2014. \$28. 14.1% alcohol. 100% Counoise. Close to full body. Somewhat complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Somewhat too high acidity. Soft tannins. Light wine. Drink now up to 6 years. Good to very good wine.

Full circle, 2013. \$36. 14.5% alcohol. Pinot Noir. Less than full body. Complex. Balanced. Not elegant. Round. Somewhat crispy. Soft tannins. Hard to judge (too young?). Drink now up to 10 years. Reasonably good wine.

Terret Noir, 2013. (Not for sale). 12.2% alcohol. 100% Terret Noir. Close to full body. Fairly complex. Balanced. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Very pale red color. Drink now up to 6-10 years. Good wine.

A mid-size and interesting winery. Great hospitality. The winery resides in a beautiful hilly area and produces high quality wines. We very much enjoyed the GSM (or, more precisely, the MGS) wines. Visiting the winery is highly recommended.

Daou

Daou Rose, 2015. \$38. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Grenache. Light body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Right sweetness. Lingering finish. Good wine.

Estate Sauvignon Blanc, 2015. \$55. 13.5% alcohol. Less than full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Light. Nice finish. Drink now up to 4-5 years. Very good wine.

Lizzy Cuvee, 2014. \$75. 13.7% alcohol. 54% Malbec, 27% Cabernet Franc, 19% Petit Verdot. Close to full body. Balanced. Complex. Soft tannins. Smooth. Fairly elegant. Young. Will improve. Start to drink in 2-4 years. Very good wine.

Estate Cabernet Franc, 2014. \$85. 15.2% alcohol. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Smooth. Round. Some zest at the end. Nice finish. Desirable bitterness at the end. Will improve. Drink now up to 10-15 years. Very good wine.

Soul of a Lion, 2013. \$125. 14.7% alcohol. 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 8% Petite Verdot. Full and powerful body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Lingering finish. Drink in 3-20 years. Very good wine.

Soul of a Lion, 2014. (from a barrel). \$125. 14.7% alcohol. 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Cabernet Franc, 6% Petite Verdot. Full and powerful body. Balanced. Complex. Elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Lingering finish. Better than the 2013 Soul of a Lion. Drink in 4-20 years. Very good to excellent wine.

A mid-size interesting and unusual winery. Great hospitality. The winery resides in a beautiful hilly area and produces high quality wines. Visiting the winery is highly recommended.