

Houston Chronicle

Fine wine till the creek runs dry

Vineyard adds to its notable stock a new musqué

by Michael Lonsford -June 27, 2005

The house is an idyllic California setting. There's a vineyard on one side, a stream behind. In the shade of a large tree is a small bamboo hut complete with myriad bottles of tequila and rum and a neon sign that says, "Parrot Bar."

Is someone a Jimmy Buffet fan?

Don Wallace is. He and his wife, Kim Stare Wallace, run Dry Creek Vineyard in the heart of Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley. They took over from founder Dave Stare (also Kim's father) a short time back. Stare founded the winery in 1972, and being a lover of wines from France's Loire Valley, he immediately planted sauvignon blanc, which he called fumé blanc after the Loire's famous pouilly-fumé wines. In keeping with the Loire connection, he made a serious chenin blanc, too.

His other wines included Dry Creek Valley's main claim to fame, zinfandel, as well as cabernet sauvignon, merlot and chardonnay.

Today, of course, Dry Creek Valley is practically synonymous with sauvignon blanc, although when they planted it, Stare was told it would never take. Too hot, you know.

The Wallaces, two of the nicest, sharpest people in the wine business, have made a few changes of late. They hired Bill Knuttel, who hit one out of the park in his first at-bat, elevating the 2003 chenin blanc to near perfection.

Another was the introduction of a new clone of sauvignon blanc called musqué (moos-KAY). It may be the first released in Sonoma County, although



Dry Creek Vineyard

AMERICAN IDYL: Dry Creek Valley, 2 1/2 hours north of San Francisco, remains a bucolic paradise for fine wines, including an intriguing clone of sauvignon blanc called musqué, being pioneered by Dry Creek Vineyard.

other wineries, including Silver Pines, have planted it.

With its fumé (sauvignon) blanc, Dry Creek Vineyard has segued from "reserve" to single-vineyard designation. Thus, in addition to the "regular" fumé blanc, there's also the DCV3, the estate wine, as well as the new musqué fumé blanc called Taylor's Vineyard, for the Wallaces' daughter.

What separates the musqué clone from the regular clone is its less grassy, more lemon and honeysuckle quality, and perhaps a more robust body.

To experience the variety of sauvignon blancs from Dry Creek Valley, start with the regular Dry Creek Vineyard bottling, move to the DCV3 and end with the Taylor's Vineyard musqué. For sauvignon blanc lovers, it'll be an enjoyable journey.

2003 Dry Creek Vineyard Fumé Blanc

★★★★— "classic California sauvignon blanc, nuances of mown grass and a touch of citrus; good acidity." \$14

2003 Dry Creek Vineyard Estate Fumé Blanc

★★★★ 1/2— "richer, more complex, with good fruit and hints of citrus and minerals." \$25

2003 Dry Creek Vineyard Taylor's Vineyard Sauvignon Musqué

★★★★— "hint of exotic fruit, plus apples, lime." \$25

2002 Dry Creek Vineyard Heritage Zinfandel

★★★★— "fairly rich, good red and black fruit, with a ribbon of chocolate running through it; good value." \$15

2002 Dry Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

★★★★— "fairly ripe and rich, with chocolate undertones to go with the fruit and a hint of anise." \$22.50

2001 Dry Creek Vineyard Meritage

★★★★— "a red-Bordeaux blend that's half cabernet, the rest mostly merlot; fairly soft but complex, with ripe fruit." \$30

2000 Dry Creek Vineyard Endeavour

★★★★ 1/2— "DCVs' knockout of a cabernet, rich, dense, but also well-balanced and complex." \$55

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