



Good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used.

-William Shakespeare, Othello

When we initially introduced the Red Rogues Club at PlumpJack, we did so to explore alternative types of red wine with a theme. This quarter's theme is Grenache. Called Garnacha in Spain or Alicante in France, Grenache is thought to have originated in the Northern Province of Aragon in Spain in the 17th Century. From Spain it migrated to the vineyards in the Mediterranean region of Southern France. Viticulturists find it interesting that when the European phylloxera infestation occurred in the late 19th century, the replantings of the vineyards in both Spain and France were of Grenache, not the native varietals of Tempranillo or Mourvedre.

Today Grenache is the 2nd most widely planted varietal in the entire world—second to Syrah. The reasons for the large plantings of Grenache are numerous: it is thick-skinned and prolific and, more importantly, it can flourish in vineyards that are drought-stricken and dry.

In the Southern Rhone area of France, Grenache is the key varietal for Chateauneuf du Pape. Because of its soft tannins and easy drinking, Grenache frequently gets consumed early, although it also has the potential to age for years.

In California, Grenache was heavily planted in the early 19th century. Although Mourvedre took the spotlight for Rhone varietals in field plantings, it eventually gave way to the more popular Cabernet Sauvignon. After searching for six years for a perfect site for growing Rhone varietals, California's Rhone Ranger pioneer, John Alban (some call him the Rhone's Johnny Appleseed), pursued his dream of planting and growing Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, and other Rhone varietals. In the 1980's he opened his winery in the Central Coast of California avoiding the more current craze of planting Cabernet, Merlot, and Pinot Noir. Because there were so few quality Rhone varietal clones available at that time, Alban went to France to get premium cuttings to start his own nursery.

The three wines that we have chosen for this quarter are predominantly Grenache-based, and they are extremely different in taste, and age of vines. This quarter's selections are from three different parts of the world: 2003 T-Vine from Napa Valley, 2002 Trevor Jones Barossa Valley, and 2004 Domaine Gramenon from the Southern Rhone.

Common descriptors of Grenache: Leather, tar, supple fruit, gamey, toasted nuts, ripe blackberry, ripe cherry, jammy, violets, dark chocolate, menthol, black pepper aromas, licorice.

Five Reasons Why PlumpJack Loves Grenache:

1. You can drink it young or aged.
2. We like exploring wines that are off the chart.
3. Food pairings can vary from rustic game dishes to simple Italian.
4. Each and every Grenache has distinctive flavors—no two taste alike.
5. Grenache is affordable.

Just the Facts:

2002 Trevor Jones, Boots, Barossa Valley, Australia

\$16.99

Wine Maker: Trevor Jones

Winery Location: Barossa Valley

Acres: Unknown, but the vineyards are a part of the small, family owned winery at Kellermeister

Alcohol: 15%

Cases Produced: Less than 4,000

Vines: 60-85 years old

Varietal: 85% Grenache, 8% Merlot, and 7% Cabernet Franc

Aging Potential: Drink now or hold for another 2-3 years

Food Pairings: Light salads, pasta, and spicy Asian cuisine

Descriptors: Light to medium-bodied, ripe cherry, dark chocolate, violets, jammy, soft tannins

Interesting Fact: Robert Parker, Jr. gave two of Trevor Jones wines a perfect score of 100 points—Old Barossa Tokay and the Barossa Liqueur Shiraz Tawny

2004 Domaine Gramenon, Côtes-du-Rhône, France

\$20.99

Proprietor/Winemaker: Michele Laurent

Winery Location: Monbrison, located at high altitude

Acres: 14

Alcohol: 14%

Cases Produced: Less than 5,000

Vines: 25 year old vines

Varietal: 90% Grenache 10% Syrah

Aging potential: It's great now but will age 5-7 years.

Food pairings: Simple light meals such as salads, cold cuts, grilled meats or fish.

Descriptors: Fresh dark cherry fruit, medium bodied, long finish with hints of pepper, complex, vibrant.

Interesting Fact: When Michele's husband died suddenly in 1999, winemaking friends around the area helped Michele with her wines. The winery is biodynamic, using no pesticides or inoculations of yeast. The wine is fermented and aged in cement vats.

2003 T-Vine, Napa Valley

\$26.99

Proprietor/Winemaker: Greg Brown

Winery: Located in Calistoga

Vineyards: 40% old vines from Larkmead Vineyard and 60% young vines from Frediani Vineyard

Barrel Program: 12 months in 3-year old French—no new oak used

Alcohol: 14.5%

Cases Produced: 384 cases

Varietal: 100% Grenache

Aging Potential: Delicious now but can be cellared for 3-5 years.

Food Pairing: Grilled lamb chops, lasagna with béchamel, or roasted tri-tip.

Descriptors: Full-bodied, slightly oaked, hints of vanilla, dark berry flavors, rich, leathery, with a long finish.

Interesting Fact: There are so many interesting facts about Greg Brown, it is impossible to list one. Simply read the back label on the bottle as he dedicates the Grenache to his late wife, Yvonne, or go to the following link: <http://www.savorwinecountry.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050911/SAVOR01/50904018/1163/SAVOR02>.