



Red Rogues June 2006  
“Laissez le bon temps rouler!”

The theme for this quarter is McCrea Cellars, from Washington State, a producer of miniscule quantities of Rhone varietal wines. Counoise, Grenache, and Mourvedre are a few of the 13 varietals\* that can be a part of the blend for Chateauneuf du Pape. In the Southern Rhone, each producer of Chateauneuf du Pape has his/her own style and recipe determining which varietals to use in producing the best possible wine.

Doug McCrea, of McCrea Cellars near Seattle, has chosen to make Chateauneuf du Pape-style wines, labeling them by their varietal name instead of a proprietary name. To call a wine by its varietal name, there must be at least 85% of that varietal in the blend. We are excited to feature the 2004 Mourvedre and the 2004 Counoise, both from Ciel du Cheval Vineyard in the Red Mountain Appellation near Yakima Valley, and a 2004 Washington State Grenache.

In 1981, after a career as a jazz-and classical-woodwind player, Doug and his wife Susan decided to move from the San Francisco Bay Area to Washington State to be closer to his parents, who were retiring. Shortly after he arrived in Washington, Doug started reading extensively about wine, working for several Seattle area wineries, and took several courses from U. C. Davis.

While most wineries in Washington State were focusing on and producing only Bordeaux varietals, Doug, a pioneer for planting Rhone varietals in Washington, was convinced that Eastern Washington had the perfect terroir for Rhone varietals. In Washington there are several wet-side wineries (those who are near Seattle and the Puget Sound) who get fruit from the dry-side vineyards (those in Eastern Washington where it is inland and away from the oceanic weather influence).

Doug and Susan's first vintage was a 1989 Grenache made from 20-year-old Grenache vines that he discovered at Don Graves' vineyard in the Columbia Gorge. At the same time, Doug was so assured and passionate that Syrah was the perfect varietal to plant, that in 1994 he persuaded Jim Holmes, of the renowned Ciel du Cheval Vineyard, and Dick Boushey, of Boushey Grand Cote Vineyard, to plant Syrah. Today, there are more than 3,000 acres of Syrah planted in Washington, largely due to Doug McCrea's passion, perseverance and vision.

McCrea makes vineyard-designated wines featuring the Boushey Vineyard, near Yakima Valley in Eastern Washington, and the Ciel du Cheval, in the Red Mountain Appellation, near Yakima Valley. The cool growing climate in the Yakima Valley Grand Cote Vineyard offers Old World characteristics of smoky, peppery qualities and a subtle fruit profile, while the warmer growing climate of the Red Mountain AVA for the Cote du Ciel vineyards offers the New World characteristics of jammy, deep berry flavors. It is this combination of New World and Old World components that make the McCrea wines unique and delicious.

McCrea Cellars now produces the following red wines: 5 different Syrahs, Grenache, Counoise, and Mourvedre. McCrea also produces 2 white wines: Roussane and Viognier.

\*The 13 varietals that can be used in Chateauneuf du Pape are: Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Muscardin, Counoise, Clairette, Bourboulenc, Picpoul, Roussanne, Terret Noir, Picardan, Vacciarese.

Five Reasons Why PlumpJack Likes McCrea Cellars:

1. It's one of a few select producers we know that produces Counoise.
2. McCrea Cellars produces a mere 4,000 cases annually.
3. Learning about grape-growing in Eastern Washington is cool!
4. Since McCrea is a cutting edge pioneer, we like the association.
5. Cliché or not, these are great food wines.

Just the Facts:

### 2004 Counoise, Ciel du Cheval Vineyard, Red Mountain

(Pronounced Coon-wahz)

\$28.99

First Vintage Produced: 2002

Vineyards: Ciel du Cheval, Red Mountain near Yakima Valley

Origin of Cuttings: Through Tablas Creek from Chateau Beaucastel

Cases Produced: 181

Alcohol: 14.8%

Blend: 87% Counoise and 13% Syrah

Counoise: The grape is normally used as a blending grape due to its moderate alcohol and tannins. The history of the grape is unknown although it has been in France since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and has been legally accepted by the governing bodies as a grape for Chateauneuf du Pape. Jacques Perrin of Chateau Beaucastel increased the plantings of this varietal in France as a complement to Syrah.

Common Descriptors for Counoise: Counoise typically is a deep, purple-red, and has a rich, spicy character, with flavors of anise, strawberries, and blueberries

Tasting Notes: Deep red color, medium-bodied, spicy, slight tannins in the back palate, round and flavorful, rustic, semi-ripe strawberry flavors. Bright tart fruit like raspberries, cranberries, and pomegranates.

Aging Potential: Drink now or possibly hold up to 2 or 3 years

Food Pairings: Grilled salmon, roasted chicken, or marinated pork loin

**Interesting Fact:** It took two years of documentation in both French and English to get the BATF to recognize that Counoise was a grape—even though not widely recognized.

### 2004 Mourvedre, Ciel du Cheval Vineyard, Red Mountain

(Pronounced Moor-ved)

\$28.99

First Vintage Produced: 2002

Vineyards: Ciel du Cheval, Red Mountain near Yakima Valley

Origin of Cuttings: Through Tablas Creek from Chateau Beaucastel

Cases Produced: 202

Alcohol: 14.8%

Blend: 89% Mourvedre and 11% Syrah

Mourvedre: In the Middle ages the cuttings were brought to France from Spain, where it was known as Monastrell.

Mourvedre came to the New World as Mataro (a town near Barcelona), and until recently has been used as a blending grape.

Jacques Perrin of Chateau Beaucastel has made Mourvedre a primary grape in his Chateauneuf du Pape wines.

Common Descriptors for Mourvedre: Intensely purple and garnet color, gamey, animal, leather, forest, truffles.

Tasting Notes: Deep ruby with hints of purple, wild and smoky with bright forward fruit. Tart blueberry and ripe strawberry flavors. The mid palate is meaty and medium-to full-bodied.

Food Pairings: Duck, game, grilled mushrooms and vegetables

Aging Potential: Drink now in its youth or hold for just a few years

**Interesting Fact:** There are now only 400 acres planted of Mourvedre in California and less than 100 in Washington.

Currently this Mourvedre by McCrea is the only bottling of its kind in the entire state of Washington.

### 2004 Grenache, Washington

(Pronounced grin-Osh)

\$28.99

First Vintage Produced: 1989

Vineyards: Elerding Vineyard, Yakima Valley and Destiny Ridge Vineyard, Horse Heaven Hills Appellation, Columbia Valley

Origin of Cuttings: Through Tablas Creek from Chateau Beaucastel

Cases Produced: 185

Alcohol: 14.8%

Blend: 87% Grenache and 13% Syrah

Grenache: Grenache in all likelihood originated in the northern province of Aragon in Spain. From Spain it spread through the Mediterranean and into Provence. Grenache is now the most widely planted grape in the world, and was brought to California as early as the 1860's and finally to Washington in the late 1960's.

Common Descriptors for Grenache: Brilliant red colors, with flavors of currant, cherry, and raisin. Also, there are usually notes of black pepper, mint, and licorice.

Tasting Notes: Beautiful floral aromas of violets and roses, with deep, ripe strawberry flavors. There are hints of earth and leather along with English tea. Medium-bodied and the most fruit-forward of the 3 wines.

Aging Potential: Drink now or in the next 1 or 2 years

Food Pairings: Hearty seafood stew, Asian spicy foods, or roasted vegetable pasta.

**Interesting Fact:** Due to the big freeze in 1996, all of the 27-year-old Grenache vines were lost. McCrea Cellars didn't produce another Grenache until 2000.