



WINERY PROFILE: Truchard Vineyards of Carneros

by Charles M. Bear Dalton



After he was transferred from San Antonio to Reno (narrowly missing a stint in Korea), then Army doctor Tony Truchard and his wife Jo Ann purchased a 20-acre abandoned prune orchard in Carneros in Napa Valley in 1974. They converted it into a vineyard and began selling the fruit to local wineries. Over time, Truchard developed a reputation as one of the outstanding vineyards in Carneros. Gradually, they grew what became the "Truchard Estate Vineyard" to 383 contiguous acres, of which 270 acres are now planted. The Truchards sell grapes to over 20 wineries, many of which vineyard designate their wines as Truchard Vineyard.

Located just north of the Hyde Vineyard, the Truchard's estate vineyard consists of a series of hills and valleys containing a hodge-podge of soils: clay, shale, sandstone, volcanic rock and ash. The varied terrain and geology along with the cool to cold wind blowing off of San Pablo Bay (the northern extension of San Francisco Bay) make for unique winegrowing conditions. The Truchards currently grow 10 different grape varieties which make theirs one of the most diverse vineyards in Carneros.

In 1989, the Truchards began making wine for themselves using only their estate-grown fruit. The old barn on the property was renovated into a winery and a 10,500 square foot wine cave was dug for barrel aging. Over time, the winery has become a beautiful spot that is host to visitors for tours and tastings as well as for special events. Truchard now makes 11 different wines totaling about 16,000 cases-a-year. The winemaking is traditional and the winemaker Sal De Ianni does everything he can to stay out of the way and let the vineyard and the grapes speak in the finished wines.

As the Truchards still sell most of the grapes they grow to other wineries, they consider themselves "a big vineyard and a small winery". As the wines of both Truchard and the wineries they sell to demonstrate the concept of terroir, they consider that they make "wines with a sense of place".

I met with Tony and Jo Ann Truchard – quite the charming couple – along with my friend Tim Rondou in my office on Thursday July 29, 2010. The facts above don't do them justice but the wines do. Here are my notes on the five Truchard wines Spec's currently carries ...

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS Roussanne, Carneros, Napa Valley, 2008

12x750ml \$15.59 \$175.53

Tech: 14.1% Alcohol. 100% Roussanne. All of the fruit was whole cluster pressed and fermented in French oak barrels (20% new), given a partial malo-lactic fermentation (30%) and aged sur lie with regular stirring for 6 months. Pale yellow straw in color with well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and very light (but present) phenolics. Lovely juicy ripe tropical fruit with a strong note of citrus. Rich and complex without being oaky. Utterly delicious. Vivid and delicious.

Excellent. BS: 92. (All this from someone – me - who professes not to like "these sorts of wines.")

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley, 2008

12x750ml \$23.99 \$270.69

Tech: 14.1% Alcohol. 100% Chardonnay. All of the fruit was whole cluster pressed, barrel fermented in French oak barrels (33% new) given a partial malo-lactic fermentation (30%) and aged sur lie for 10 months. Pale straw in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with fresh acidity and a long finish. Supple and juicy but in balance. Classic Carneros Chardonnay. The oak and earth (hint of mushroom) are complements but the fruit is the thing. Lovely texture, feel, and flavor. This is Chardonnay I can drink. **Excellent. BS: 92+.**

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS Pinot Noir, Carneros, Napa Valley, 2007

12x750ml \$23.99 \$270.69

Tech: 14.1% Alcohol. 100% Pinot Noir (from a parcel that used to go to Robert Mondavi winery for their Carneros Pinot). All of the fruit was destemmed and crushed into open top fermenters with approximately 20% whole berries. After "cold soaking" for up to 5 days, the wine was given three daily punch downs. After completing fermentation, it was aged for 10 months in all French oak barrels (35% new). Purple-deep red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and slightly chewy phenolics. Supple earthy, somewhat juicy dark red fruit with a well-integrated mix of earth and dusty oak. Lively but ultimately satisfying. **Excellent. BS: 92.**

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS Merlot, Carneros, Napa Valley, 2007

12x750ml \$24.99 \$281.38

Tech: 14.2% Alcohol. A very St. Emilion-style blend of 76% Merlot, 24% Cabernet Franc. All of the fruit was gently destemmed, crushed and then fermented with twice daily pumped-overs for up to 28 days. The wine was aged for 20 months in French oak barrels (35% new) with rackings very 4 months. Deep purple in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with freshly balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Fine focused, fresh red offering a mix of more red than black fruit. Fresh and charming. Offers notes of tobacco, cedar, and black pepper. Resolves to red fruit with well integrated oak and earth. Delicious and fresh. What Merlot should be. **Excellent. BS: 93+.**



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**TRUCHARD VINEYARDS Cabernet Sauvignon,
Carneros, Napa Valley, 2006**
12x750ml \$32.99 \$368.41

Tech: 14.2% Alcohol. A blend of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot, all of the grapes were gently destemmed, crushed, and fermented in closed tanks with were pumped-over twice daily for up to 30 days. The wine was aged for 20 months in French oak barrels (45% new) with rackings every 4 months. Inky purple-black in color Cabernet flavors with rather more red than black fruit. Lots of juiciness. Notes of dark red and black berries with hints of tobacco and tea. Quite chewy. Fine freshness with some real charm. This is Cabernet for game birds, roast beef, or maybe a rack of lamb. **Excellent. BS: 92+.**

A Final Note:

In the spirit of my last article, I will relate to you that I am finishing this profile at 12:35am at my kitchen table at home. While I was writing, my dog Connor and my wife Carol were buzzing about. Connor put himself to bed (sensible dog that he is) about an hour ago and Carol soon followed. Once I get this emailed off to our crack Spec's graphics team, I will soon follow. Be on the look out for notes on the two Paradise Ridge Zinfandels (Honselaars Vineyard in the Russian River Valley and "The Convict" from the Rockpile AVA in northernmost Sonoma County) I have been sipping on (yes drinking rather than tasting) while writing up the Truchard wines. Although they are quite different, both were excellent and quite delicious. All in a day's work ... 🍷

Tony Truchard driving that most essential of all winemaking tools: The Forklift.



Tony Truchard on the crush pad at Truchard Vineyards.



Tony and Jo Ann Truchard

