

This article was published in *The 30 Second Wine Advisor* on Monday, Nov. 16, 2009 and can be found at <http://www.wineloverspage.com/wineadvisor2/tswa20091116.php>.

Rule-breaking blend

Some people love Chardonnay, while others remain card-carrying members of the "Anything But Chardonnay" Club. Among those who shun Chardonnay, many favor Sauvignon Blanc; on the other hand, scratch a Chardonnay-lover and chances are you'll find a taster whose attitude toward Sauvignon Blanc is a not-so-gentle "Meh."

What's your pleasure? Rich, full-bodied Chardonnay with its range of flavors from tart green apples to luscious tropical fruit? Or leaner, meaner Sauvignon Blanc with its flavor spectrum reaching from citrus on the sunny side to herbal, "grassy" aromatics in the shade?

Or perhaps you're a fence-sitter who doesn't take sides in this combat? You'll enjoy this, then. Here's an odd, affordable alternative: A Chardonnay-Sauvignon Blanc blend from a Southwestern French winery that glories in its historic preference for disobeying the rules.

Famille Grassa, a producer in the Bas-Armagnac region of France's Gascony (imagined home of Dumas's fourth Musketeer, D'Artagnan), defies the conventional wisdom by growing - and blending - an assortment of white varieties not normally scene or grown in Gascony. And if today's tasting report on their 50% Chardonnay and 50% Sauvignon Blanc serves as evidence, they do it very well.

Here's what the Grassa family has to say about their philosophy on an English-language page of the winery Website, in an essay charmingly titled, "[In Praise of Disobedience ... Breaking the rules.](#)"

*"... The fact that **Tariquet** wines and Bas-Armagnacs brandies have been acclaimed with the best of their class is due largely to the boldness of one man, **Yves Grassa**, now an internationally renowned winemaker from Gascony, began 25 years ago by breaking the rules of traditional winemaking, proposing white wines that were consistently characterised by a fresh finesse and fruity elegance.*

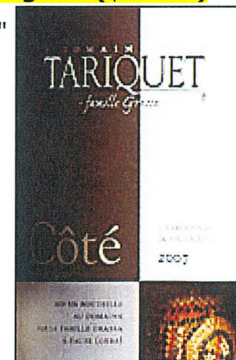
"He was the first in the region to dare to plant Chardonnay, Sauvignon or Chenin grapes, which were far from popular in those days. Worse still, he conjured up combinations of sworn enemies such as Chardonnay with Sauvignon or Chenin with Chardonnay. The Tariquet brand was born of contemplation, rebellion and reason, followed by continuous observation and improvement. ... Defying his detractors, Yves Grassa took on the challenge of producing white wine and was duly rewarded for his work by being selected as Winemaker of The Year in 1987."

Crisp and refreshing, the "Côté" Chardonnay-Sauvignon is a fine value in the \$10 to \$12 range, but not a wine for keeping. With its slick-sleeve synthetic label, the producer recommends storing it upright, not on its side, and drinking it up within a year or two after the vintage. Here's my tasting report:

Tariquet 2007 "Côté" Gascogne 50% Chardonnay - 50% Sauvignon (\$12.99)

Transparent straw color. Apples and a hint of grapefruit and "sappy" herbal notes combine in the nose, pleasant enough if not really strongly recognizable as either Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc. Mouth-filling and tart, green-apple and grapefruit, just a hint of fresh-fruit sweetness and the faintest touch of spritz, with a light 11.5% alcohol to make it a pleasant aperitif or dinner wine. U.S. importer: **Robert Kacher Selections**, Washington, D.C. (Oct. 23, 2009)

FOOD MATCH: An attractive aperitif, as the label suggests, and



certainly passable with fresh fish, chicken or - my choice - a fresh, natural locavore pork chop braised with onions.

WEB LINK: Famille Grassa, the producer, has its Website in French, English, German, Spanish and Italian. [Click the tiny flag icon for the language you prefer.](#)

[Click here for a fact sheet on the C Chardonnay-Sauvignon Blend.](#)

FIND THIS WINE ONLINE:

[Look for vendors and compare prices for Tariquet "Côté" on Wine-Searcher.com.](#)

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