

THE TORRES FAMILY IN 2045 ✕ CUENTAVIÑAS ✕ TAKING A WINE TOUR AROUND ZAMORA

planet*V*ino

THE MAGAZINE OF WINE, DRINKS AND QUALITY PRODUCTS

THE NEW
CORK
STOPPERS

TWO DECADES
THAT HAVE
CHANGED WINE

THE WINE OF THE FUTURE

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FUTURE

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE DICHOTOMY AMONG LEADING FIGURES IN THE WINE WORLD IS QUITE STRANGE. ON THE ONE HAND, THEIR WORDS SOUND PESSIMISTIC, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE ACTUALLY CONVINCED THAT THEY WILL SURVIVE, CONVEYING THAT FEELING OF WINNING THROUGH THAT PREVAILS IN HUMAN NATURE. THE PEOPLE IN WINE CIRCLES DO NOT SAY "IF WE GET THROUGH THIS", THEY SAY "WHEN WE GET THROUGH THIS". PURE, DEEP-ROOTED OPTIMISM. LET'S HOPE IT BLOSSOMS, IF POSSIBLE BEFORE THE SPRING, AND DOES NOT LEAVE TOO MANY BEHIND.

» In today's world we see the future as a bleak bank of dark clouds. We are in the midst of an epidemic that cannot be considered extremely lethal, particularly if you compare it with cancer, Ebola or what measles or TB meant to half the world before Fleming came along. Nevertheless, this epidemic has changed our world and taken us to extremes we never imagined. And more difficulties are expected.

"In tertio vita praesens, praeteritum et futurum. Quorum praesentia valde brevis posterum dubium praeterita vero". This Latin phrase, which I remember word for word, by heart, is by Seneca. This and the Catiline Orations by Cicero (that very relevant phrase *"quosque tandem, Catilina, abutere patientia nostra?"* or, in other words, *"for how long, Catilina [read here Ayuso, Sánchez. Casado, Torra], will you abuse our patience?"*, were part of the teenage nightmares of yours truly, who actually managed to pass Latin in the 5th grade *Bachillerato* (now, you can see what a veteran I am!) at the fifth attempt. I think that Seneca's phrase was translated as follows: *"life is divided into three parts: what was, what is and what shall be. Out of these three periods, the present is short, the future is doubtful and the past alone is certain"*. Today's present actually seems fairly long and the fear of the future makes us nostalgic about a past that we actually rejected until only recently. There are a lot of questions waiting to be answered, yet we have to try and remain optimistic, just not like the one (it's impossible to remember who exactly) who was *"optimistic about the future of pessimism"*... It could have been Groucho Marx, Woody Allen or any other genius with a paradoxical view of life.

In this edition of PlanetAVino, which bridges two decades, there are several references to the future. There is a journey through the evolution of Spanish wine during the first two decades of this century. There is also a forecast for the decade beginning in January, provided through the opinions of professionals from different sectors in the wine world, i.e. production, marketing and communication. Also, Miguel Torres Maczassek gives us an insight into what wine may be like in 25 years, through the predictable evolution of the family firm he runs.

Throughout these articles there is, understandably, a current of concern for our immediate future, but there is also a feeling of

optimism in the medium to long term. All the reports predict the future as a continuation, with the expected corrections and uncertainties, of the evolution in recent years in various wine segments, from production to drinking. During these years, wine has experienced its fair share of upheavals, both negative, like its demonisation as if it were a drug or the forgotten interest in its cultural aspect, and positive, such as the general increase in the quality and the interest it arouses among people and in areas where they did not used to drink wine.

These reports raise interesting reflections on the changes needed on the path ahead for both wine and wine professionals. There are references to the current situation, but almost as if it were a kind of parenthesis; a slight stumble along the way that is not going to affect the expected trajectory which, yes, does look like it is going to accelerate some predictable changes and perhaps impose some other unexpected ones.

Generally speaking, it looks like certain concepts are gaining ground, such as sustainability, environment, landscape, local varieties and wines with personality. Wines that express the unique features of their origin and are drinkable and pleasant on the palate for consumers who seem to want more and better information, but are less willing to pay for it, which implies certain risk. There will be changes in drinking habits, with higher figures for home drinking, albeit with a slight recovery in the catering industry. Distribution will also change, with sales teams requiring greater skills, both those working in wineries and distributors and those who sell directly or via different home deliveries, like online sales, which are expected to rocket.

As for the specialised information, those who survive will have to make an effort in various ways: to try to reach those new consumers by whatever means, but with correct and objective information; to defend the professional status of communicators and to fight for their independence, which is an essential element for inspiring trust. Consumers (of both information and wine) hold the key to everything, and they must be given arguments for choosing between reliable prescribers and bloggers who just relay or repeat the winery press release. We have to learn to safeguard our readers' critical spirit. Our future depends on it. ■

SUMMARY



TWO DECADES THAT HAVE CHANGED WINE

There is a lot you can do in twenty years, and Spanish wine has accelerated the changes that began during the two preceding decades. New wineries, new areas, new philosophies and new leading names that have altered the scene. **PAGE 34**



Learning More THE NEW CORK STOPPERS

The problems with corky smells, which are not always the fault of the stopper, have stimulated cork manufacturers to research and develop new stoppers that overcome this hazardous contamination. **PAGE 52**

THE WINE OF THE FUTURE

The trends that have emerged in the first two decades of this century and which will, or will not, last into the third decade starting now. The climate and its consequences are the main factors to be considered when looking for freshness. **PAGE 24**



History THE TORRES FAMILY

The large winery in Vilafranca is celebrating its 150 Anniversary. A long and well-documented history, with plenty of landmarks in different areas. However, it is worth considering what it will be like in 25 years' time. Looking into the future with Miguel Torres. **PAGE 46**



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Proensa Guide 2021

The same size

THE PROENSA GUIDE 2021 IS NOW ON SALE. DESPITE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS STILL THE SAME SIZE AND READY FOR ITS ANNUAL APPOINTMENT, AT THE END OF NOVEMBER, EVERY YEAR SINCE 2002. EXCEPT FOR A FEW TOUCHES HERE AND THERE IN DESIGN, IT MAINTAINS THE SAME LAUNCH DATE, PHILOSOPHY, LAYOUT AND STYLE AS USUAL. ONCE AGAIN, THE AUTHOR MAINTAINS THAT THE SELECTION PROCESS IS MORE AND MORE DEMANDING EACH YEAR, AND YET SEVEN WINES HAVE REACHED THE TOP RANK OF VERY EXCITING WINES, WITH 100 PROENSA POINTS.

» If PlanetAVino readers are reading these lines, it is very likely that during the days between November to December, the new annual edition of the Proensa Guide has been delivered to their door. The bizarre, uncertain and changing (according to the latitudes) situation we are currently experiencing, has had many consequences, and one of them is that nobody can be sure whether their plans will be fulfilled. And this drives our editor-in-chief crazy, as he is also the director of this magazine and author of the guide, and remains obsessed with punctuality.

Everyone says that it has been a strange year. In the case of wine journalism, it was amazing how agendas were wiped clean in the blink of an eye, as appointments, fairs, exhibitions and presentations were cancelled. The companies and media, distributors, wineries, etc. that did not close (either temporarily or definitively) during lockdown, were forced to switch to remote online working (insofar as it was possible, because you can't do pruning on the internet). Face-to-face work was reduced to a minimum, as was the general rhythm, as if having a lulled attitude were one of the side effects of the virus.

At VadeVino Editorial, we tried to maintain the usual schedule of events, but it was impossible. Due to closures, we had to miss out one magazine edition (the subscription term is extended one bi-monthly edition more, but the costs cannot be extended or deferred) We were also forced to delay the release of the annual monograph, which appeared in September, three months late.

However, the working schedule for the Proensa Guide has been maintained, as it was completed more or less on time,



- 19TH ANNUAL EDITION.
- 669 WINES FROM 241 WINERIES DESCRIBED AND WITH A SCORE OF 90 TO 100 POINTS

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despite the difficulties in transferring the necessary samples for the tastings, since wineries are working at half throttle, and transport is disrupted too, although to a lesser extent. There has also been a noticeable slowing down in the launch of new vintages, which is not necessarily a bad thing for some wines, because it means that more mature, drinkable wines will reach the market, and also some new labels.

As for the presentations, they have switched to online, which has required an

extra effort. Tastings have been online too, with samples being shipped in advance, although there was also a dry tasting; in other words, somebody explained it on screen and the rest watched and nodded yes or no. It has been pointless for those who are hidden away in the vastness of Spain, where there is no mobile service, let alone fibre optics, and emails are painstakingly slow. All in all, it makes us feel like second or even third-rate citizens.

Nevertheless, the author has tasted a similar number of wines, around three thousand, and has selected about 669 with 90 points or more, which is usual. There has also been forty percent more wines than the five hundred cut-off point set each year. That makes a total of 669 extraordinary wines, with 66 at the top that the author describes as exciting wines: 28 wines with 98 points, 31 with 99 points, and seven at the very top, with the full 100 points, namely: Amancio '17, Barón de Chirel '16, Cirsion '17, Do Ferreira Cepas Vellas '19, Lalomba Finca Valhonta '17, Tío Pepe Tres Palmas and Torre Muga '16. Six very exciting reds, with some of them repeating their ranking because they maintain the same vintage, and the celestial Tres Palmas, pure Jerez magic.

This is the guide's new content, as it still maintains its general layout; an initial chronicle summarising the year's events and the most important milestones not highlighted in the information on areas, wineries and wines, which occupies more than ninety percent of the guide. As always, with one chapter per denomination of origin, and two chapters at the end featuring plot denominations of origin, *vinos de la tierra* and without any geographical indication.



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DON ALEJANDRO

» Without a doubt, the best Spanish wine historian is Alain Huetz de Lemp. I do not think anyone has analysed the activity in our vineyards as much as he did. To understand Spain, you have to read his work, *Les Vins d'Espagne*, and his thesis, *Vignobles et Vins du Nord-Ouest de l'Espagne*. However, in the conclusions to his work, in 1967, he predicts the decline of the Ribera del Duero wines, with the eternal exception of Vega Sicilia. His reason was unbeatable competition from the wines made in Castilla La Nueva, which were more reliable and had better quality. This was not just because Ribera wines were not sold in Madrid, but also because most of the wine drunk in Valladolid and Burgos came from the south.

Huetz de Lemp worked in an isolated, poor Spain, without the technical capacity to make good wines: he said that wine making in Ribera was very picturesque but incredibly outdated... An elegant way of saying that the wine was horrible. To make sure that Huetz de Lemp's prediction did not come true, and that Ribera del Duero developed the unbeatable quality it has today, something specific had to happen, which at that time was unthinkable. What occurred is, in my opinion, the most important landmark in the three thousand years history of Spanish wine: Spain entered the EU.

Out of the many consequences of this development, I am going to talk about three which I consider particularly relevant. The Common European Market gave Spanish wines free access to other European countries and, also entrusted European institutions with the task of negotiating international trade agreements. Spanish wines benefitted from Europe's better negotiating capacity to open up new markets. Since then, the potential market for our wines has been the whole world.

Also, Spain received a whole wealth of money to invest in infrastructures, which drastically transformed accessibility to the whole country. The Spanish mountains, the origin of both diversity and conflict, were now surmountable. Today you can go from Madrid to Valladolid in less than an hour. We have a network of motorways, ports and airports only surpassed by China.

European support meant that wines from inland Spain were no longer isolated wines. Madrid, the city that had quenched its thirst with wines from La Mancha, could now receive wines from the Duero.

The third consequence is a little more subtle, but equally important. The mediocre gregariousness of Franco's time gave way to individual freedom, and with democracy and free companies, it was possible to be different and introduce new trends. Previously discrete producers reappeared as wine heroes, the ones who stood apart from standard production and embarked on more ambitious projects, changing a complete a region thanks to

their individual initiative. Luckily in Spain we have many heroes.

One of these was Alejandro Fernández, a producer in the then second-rate Ribera del Duero, who went on to make the name of his village, Pesquera de Duero, a leading reference in the US and other major wine countries. He was one of the first to trust in the quality of his vineyards, acquiring his knowledge from the leading wineries, and he was proud of what he had and did not need to offer any of the senseless gimmicks (which in refined language are called quality/price ratios) that are so typical in Spain.

Today's Ribera del Duero is nothing like the area Alain knew, and it has very little to do with the land that don Alejandro started to change. Now it has incredible diversity and a large number of unbeatable wines, a true luxury. Everyone is

singing the praises of its soils, the glorious Tinta Fina, the goblet style vineyards, and no end of charming naturalist stories which are true, but not entirely true.

What is true, however, is that it is important to recognise and respect people like don Alejandro Fernández, because they are the ones who caused these plants, these soils and these climates to stir our emotions and our wallets.

We must appreciate their efforts without creating ridiculous, mean or trivial images of one of the greatest figures in Spanish wine. I do not know you personally, don Alejandro, but from here, I would simply like to say, Thank you! ■



Juan María Torres A discrete ambassador

This very bleak and black year, 2020, is resisting putting an end to its long list of sad news. With this publication already at the printer's, Miguel A. Torres, chairman of Familia Torres, announced the death of his brother, Juan María Torres, a member of the fourth generation of the family running



Fourth generation: Juan María, Marimar and Miguel Torres Riera.

the winery. Another reason that has prevented them from celebrating the winery's 150th anniversary. He was a discrete man with a public role, and the least known of the three Torres siblings, including Marimar Torres, despite the distance imposed by her living in California. Juan María was vice-president, shareholder and board member of Familia Torres, and also the group's institutional representative, something like the family's ambassador. This tied in with his work over many years in world markets, in both exports in one of Spain's most international companies (where he followed his father's doctrine), and as the chairman of Torres Import. He was also on the management board in various entities. He passed away on 12 November at the age of 85.

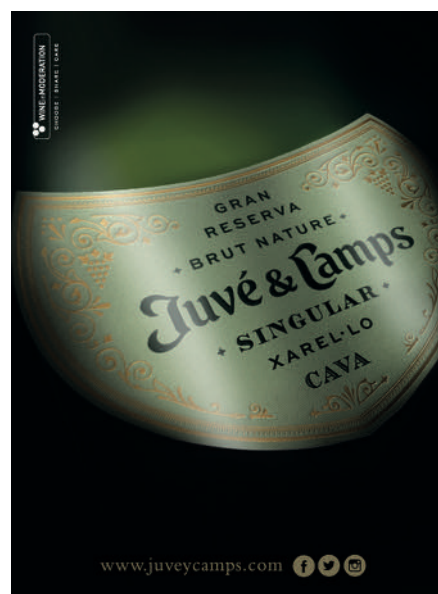
First edition of the Atlantic competition A fresh Atlantic breeze

After necessarily being postponed and then overcoming nearly all the problems associated with the pandemic, the first edition of Atlantic was held in September, in Cangas de Narcea (Asturias). This is the *Concurso de Vinos de Influencia Atlántica* organised by DO Cangas. It was originally

planned for June and finally took place from 19 to 21 September in the Corias Parador. A total of 130 wines competed from the western half of Spain, Portugal, the west of France

and southern England. They were classified into eight categories, and the main prizes went to Terras de Compostela '19, from the winery of the same name (DO Rías Baixas), as the best young white; Renacido '17, from Vinos con Personalidad (DO Ribeiro), the best mature white; Ama '15, by Gorka Izaguirre (DO Bizkaiko Txakolina), the best aged white; Ostatu '19, from Bodegas Ostatu (DOC Rioja), as the best rosé. In the red category, the best young wine was Penderuyos '19, from Bodegas Antón Chicote (DO Cangas). The award for

the best mature red went to Komokabras Rojo K-ño '18, by Adega Entreosríos (VT Barbanza e Iria); and the best aged red was Tebaida '15, by Casar de Burbia (DO Bierzo). Finally, the Amontillado Olvidado, by Bodegas Sánchez Romate (DO Jerez-Xérès-Sherry) was declared the best *vino generoso*.





WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

»» This situation of lockdowns and restrictions on our most basic freedoms will eventually pass. Although it is very possible that our lives will not be the same in the short to mid-term, our craving for social contact will lead us to fill up the bars and restaurants again, share good times with friends and make wine a very important part of those moments.

The Spanish wine sector has the obligation to make the most of this delicate situation we are going through, since bars and restaurants are closed, tourism has been lost and people are spending less, to introduce deep-rooted changes that will help to recover part of the consumption lost over these last few decades and give value to its products.

Recessions are the best times for turning things around; making the most of the good part, and changing what has become obsolete.

The wine sector has major shortcomings and significant structural problems mainly caused by fundamental changes in society and the actual conception of wine. The consequences are clearly visible in the significant drop in earnings for everyone in the value chain. This situation causes continual conflicts between the various operators, and this only makes it harder to implement combined measures for adapting to the changes imposed by reality and demanded by markets.

The idea that wine is a food element that is part of our daily diet, has been completely overcome and accepted by everyone: endocrines and sociologists... and also vine growers, producers and government offices. Therefore, insisting on using the methods that worked when this concept was true and believing that they are still valid today, verges more on the side of absurd than utopia.

Even so, wine is still part of our traditions, cultural heritage and customs, to the extent that we cannot imagine any celebration without it. Mind you, none of these arguments make it

exempt from having to adapt its communication codes to today's society which, even before this damned virus, had evolved much more than the sector had managed to do.

In the same way that lockdown has meant a strong boost for digitalising our society, exposing shortcomings we imagined overcome, the wine sector has had to battle with its own failings and accelerate winery investments in everything related to online content and digital sales platforms.

The wine sector must make the most of the meagre recovery in food consumption over the next few months. It is fundamental that to narrow the huge gap between the little more than one billion litres drunk in Spain per year and the four and a half million litres we produce, and which we are forced to export at such low prices that they cannot be compared with any other wine prices in the world.

Neither would it be a bad thing if we finally accepted that when talking about wine, we are actually referring to an alcoholic drink which must have a content of at least eight and a half percent in order to be considered such. Also, its image as a food element, or even a medicine which some people use to try and prevent certain illnesses, is just an anecdotal feature that should not detract us from what is truly important, and that is wine's ability to help people enjoy themselves and share unforgettable

moments with their loved ones. You see that is another one of wine's main features, its social aspect, because it is difficult to drink wine alone.

So, society will not be the same again, but neither will wine disappear.

Working to take advantage of the chances that these changes are creating on a worldwide level is a huge opportunity that some are already making the most of and which, we hope, many will end up doing. ■



PHOTO: ALEX MIHALIC

NEW IN VT DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN

Ten new grape varieties have been included in the catalogue of IGP Vinos de la Tierra in Castilla y León. Seven are classified as recovered local varieties, two come from La Rioja and another one from Portugal. Research at the *Instituto Tecnológico de Castilla y León* has recovered the following grapes, Rabigato or Puesta en Cruz, Rufete Serrano Blanco, Estaladña, Gajo Arroba, Mandón or Garro and Tinto Jeromo, and considers them useable. Also, they have added Maturana white and red from Rioja, and the Portuguese variety, Touriga Nacional. As a result, this IGP catalogue, which spans the full territory in the autonomous community, now has 47 types of grapes, that is, 25 reds and 22 whites.

LEADERS IN RESEARCH

Unusually for the Spanish science world, at least in the field of wine and health, Spain is the world leader in publishing scientific research on how drinking wine can affect your health, according to a study by the *Fundación para la Investigación del Vino y la Nutrición* (Fivin). This entity calculates that in the last twenty years, a total of 48,235 research studies associated with wine have been published. Out of these, nearly 10 percent refer to wine and health, and nearly 23 percent have been published in Spain. There are 767 research studies financed mainly by the Spanish Government (20 percent), the EU (13 percent) and the Instituto de Salud Carlos III (8 percent).

43 MILLION HECTOLITRES

With the harvests now finished throughout Spain, the forecast indicates a final figure of 43 million hectolitres of wine and must. This represents a 14 percent increase with respect to the still provisional figures for 2019, and despite the initiatives to limit production (subsidies for green harvests during the summer), the resulting volume is more than normal. Once again, the overall quality has caused a good impression, and in this case, it is well-founded.

R.I.P.

Simple notifications announced the passing of three figures from three leading wineries. On 17 August, Javier Lorenzo López died from an accident at work, at the age of 57. He was the oenologist at the family winery, Ángel Lorenzo Cachazo (DO Rueda). A few days later, it was announced that the neurologist, Emeterio Fernández Marcos, founder of the Bodega La Legua (DO Cigales) had passed away at the age of 90. Finally, on 8 October, José Luis Ruiz Santos, the oenologist at Bodega Otazu (Navarra) passed away "due to natural causes". He was only 45.

OWN NAMES

In October, César Saldaña (Jerez de la Frontera, 1961) took over as the new chairman of the DOs Jerez-Xérès-Sherry, Manzanilla de Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Vinagre de Jerez. After developing his career in wineries, like Sandeman and González Byass, he was appointed director general of the Regulating Council in 2000. He replaces Beltrán Domceq, who retired after eight years in the position.



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FINO
BODEGA SAN FRANCISCO JAVIER.
 AREA: DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY.
 VARIETIES: PALOMINO.
 AGEING: SYSTEM OF CRIADERAS Y SOLERA.
 EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2021-2022. PRICE: €38.

99 The Fino made by Peter Sysseck is one of the long-awaited wine launches in Jerez and the surrounding areas. The creator of Pingus has arrived in the south in good company: he has joined forces with Carlos del Río González-Gordon, director and member of the González Byass family before joining Bodegas Hacienda Monasterio, the Ribera winery where Sysseck has been working for the last thirty years. This is a small winery with plenty of solera, or good stock: on the one hand, it is in the centre of Jerez and used to be the home of the Camborio Fino, and it is these criaderas are the basis of Sysseck's Fino; and on the other hand, it is composed of wines produced from the ten hectares under their own vineyard. They do not intend making anything other than Fino, and their newly released production is very attractive. It is a revolutionary Fino with a classic profile, golden colouring, elegant bouquet and well-rounded mouthfeel. Well-defined ageing aromas with a hint of raw almonds, marshland and hydrocarbons, together with a touch of chalk, all combined in an elegant, generous and powerful ensemble. Excellent mouthfeel and a harmonious blend of components with a medium-light body, and very soft and dry, with powerful flavours and a bitter, saline touch. Very generous and persistent, with subtle aromas and elegance.

SIAH '19



WHITE. BODEGAS SIAH (ISABEL SALGADO FAMILY ESTATE).
 AREA: DO RIBEIRO.
 VARIETIES: TREIXADURA, ALBARIÑO AND GODELLO.
 AGEING: WHOLE BUNCH PRESSING, WITHOUT DESTALKING;
 FERMENTATION AND 9 MONTHS IN FRENCH OAK 500 L
 OPEN BARRELS. EVOLUTION: 2024-2025. PRICE: €22.

94 After more than a quarter of a century making Albariño, most of this time in Bodegas Fillaboa, Isabel Salgado has decided to start her own personal project, and she has gone to Ribeiro, where her ancestors were from, to make wine with a minimalist approach: buying the grapes, producing on rented premises; however, the 500 L open vat is hers, the sign and experience of a great oenologist. This is a modern Ribeiro with personality, freshness and good ageing capacity. It is generous and straightforward with very fine aromas, fruit, flower and grasses enriched with discrete ageing and a unique musky background. It is solid and serious in the mouth, with certain structure, body and nerve. Lively with good flavour.

LA MARQUESA '18



RED. VIÑEDOS Y BODEGAS DE LA MARQUESA.
 AREA: DOC RIOJA.
 VARIETIES: TEMPRANILLO.
 AGEING: 12 MONTHS IN FRENCH OAK.
 EVOLUTION: 2022-2023. PRICE: €7.

91 More than one hundred years ago, María Teresa Solano (the widow marchioness of Socorro and daughter of the marquis de La Solana), took over her father's winery, which, the locals immediately nicknamed the *bodega de la marquesa*. When Juan Pablo de Simón took over the SMS winery and turned it around, he also changed the name. Now, he is paying tribute to this figure with a wine that embraces two trends; the fruity Tempranillo and the new trend that includes time in the barrel. This does not interfere with the wood, on the contrary, it has the fresh, fine fruit expression of a good Tempranillo, with hints of bramble, flowers and low brush, which confirm the overall freshness in the mouth. Balanced, fluid and attractive.

THERASIA '18



WHITE. PROPIETAT D'ESPIELLS (JUVÉ & CAMPS).
 AREA: DO PENEDÉS.
 VARIETIES: 40% XAREL-LO, 30% CHARDONNAY, 30% VIOGNIER.
 AGEING: FERMENTATION IN FRENCH OAK, ACACIA AND
 EARTHENWARE JARS, 6 MONTHS IN THE BOTTLE RACK.
 EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2022-2023. PRICE: €30.

92 Cava, Ribera reds and also still wines from Penedés. Juvé & Camps not only launches many new productions, it also looks like it wants to have a fixed representation in this section. Therasia is proof of the skill this winery uses to treat its still wines, which have always been much more than just the bottled base wine used for Cava, as proved by the ripeness of the fruit and the maturing in the bottle. Here, they have also introduced some new materials, such as the acacia wood and the terracotta. Fine, mature white wine with generous, well-defined aromas of ripe fruit, the sea and mountains, iodine and low brush. Excellent balance, with volume and freshness. Soft with good flavour and expression.

LUIS CAÑAS VIÑAS VIEJAS '19



WHITE. BODEGAS LUIS CAÑAS.
 AREA: DOC RIOJA. VARIETIES: VIURA AND MALVASÍA.
 PRODUCTION AND AGEING: FERMENTATION AND 5 MONTHS
 ON LEES IN FRENCH AND AMERICAN OAK.
 EVOLUTION: 2022-2023. PRICE: €16.

87 This production has gone a little unnoticed in the gallery of new wines made by Juan Luis Cañas and his team, from their unique, qualified vineyards (which we will discuss in greater detail once travelling restrictions are lifted). This is a tribute to the aperitif favoured by Luis Cañas, who recently passed away, as he used to have a (or some) white wine with olives. This reveals the detail the winery has given the wine, before the current white wine trend. As an aperitif, it works very well in the very-much forgotten but important time just before lunch. Its fruit flavours are enhanced with a touch of quality wood that gradually reduces, and it has a persistent, fresh and balanced mouthfeel with certain body and nerve. Dry with a good flavour.



MEDRANO PRIMER '20

RED. BODEGAS MEDRANO IRAZU.
ZONA: DOC RIOJA.
VARIETIES: TEMPRANILLO.
AGEING: CARBONIC MACERATION.
EVOLUTION: DURING 2021.
PRICE: €6.

91 A new label by the ever-occupied Amador Medrano, that adds a new twist to the winery's essential style, the annual red. It is the first shipment of red from the winery harvester and the first tank load to be produced, then it is pampered to make sure it maintains its kick (that is why each batch bottling is separated depending on sales), and it does not have the typical fermentation smells. All the freshness of the fruit comes through in its attractive, clean nose with hints of riverside fruit, flowers and minerals from the carbonic maceration. This freshness continues in the mouth, where it is agile with youthful tannins and fruit. The profile of a repeatedly good harvester.



PAGOS DE ANGUIX BARRUECO '17

RED. PAGOS DE ANGUIX.
AREA: DO RIBERA DEL DUERO. VARIETIES: TINTO FINO.
AGEING: 15 MONTHS IN FRENCH (75%) AND AMERICAN OAK.
EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2025-2026. PRICE: €26.

96 This Ribera project run by the Juvé family and their J&C Prime Brands (three wineries, Juvé & Camps, Propietat d'Espiells and Pagos de Anguix plus the distributor Primeras Marcas) is being dressed up with new accessories, such as advice from José Manuel Pérez Ovejas, in addition to the ones it already had: the two wineries and the 77 hectares under vine (35 grown organically) in the heart of the Ribera country, Burgos. It now looks like this new red is paving the way ahead: developing wines from selected plots. It boasts a good Ribera profile with noble strength that respects the varietal elegance. Generous, deep aromas revealing elegance and freshness. Rounded mouthfeel with a good texture and consistency, without becoming coarse. Fresh, powerful and lively.



VILLOTA SELVANEVADA '18

RED. VILLOTA.
AREA: DOC RIOJA.
VARIETIES: TEMPRANILLO, GRACIANO, GARNACHA AND MAZUELO.
AGEING: END OF FERMENTATION, MALOLACTIC AND 6 MONTHS IN FRENCH OAK.
EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2021-2022. PRICE: €10.

84 This winery emerged from the section of the vineyard where Viñedos del Contino was founded (implemented by CVNE), with the first oenologist, Basilio Izquierdo, managing production, yet the launch received a mixed market response. This is their third wine, after the Villota white and red. The label name sounds like an oxymoron for a wide-spectrum, gastronomy-focused, commercial red. However, it is well exposed in the nose, with fine, simple hints of well-balanced fruit and noticeable but tame barrel ageing. Good balance with medium body and freshness, and occasional tannin peaks are a little stark, but do no damage. Straightforward with plenty of flavour.



ALBERT DE VILARNAU XAREL·LO CASTANYER '16

CAVA BRUT NATURE GRAN RESERVA. VILARNAU.
AREA: DO CAVA. VARIETIES: XAREL·LO.
AGEING: 50% FERMENTED AND 6 MONTHS IN CHESTNUT BARRELS; 36 MONTHS IN STACK.
EVOLUTION: 2023-2024. PRICE: €35.

89 In many farmhouses and old wineries, it is still relatively easy to find chestnut vessels (or ones that have been repaired with chestnut or with other woods), and some are actually still in use, mainly to age the expedition liqueurs for Cava Brut or Semi. Damià Deàs and Eva Plazas have recovered the tradition for a new reference for the label intended for this type of experiments which are not new, but outside the norm. They have applied good criteria, and have limited only half the wine to the chestnut barrels, so as to preserve the freshness of a good Xarel·lo. This is noticeable in its bouquet, which reveals aromas from both ageing processes, and particularly in its lively, balanced mouthfeel and serious elegance.



JEAN LEON CB '19

WHITE. JEAN LEON.
AREA: DO PENEDES.
VARIETIES: CHENIN BLANC.
AGEING: 4 MONTHS IN THE TANK WITH ITS OWN FINE LEES.
EVOLUTION: 2021-2022. PRICE: €17.

88 Mireia Torres has changed the face of Jean Leon. She changed the labels of the traditional line, and has developed two new ones, i.e., the young Jean Leon 3055 and the experimental wines (which stand out thanks to their bottle neck labels). With her fifth experiment, Mireia has taken on the delicate Chenin Blanc, which has attracted many, but usually with standard results. Ageing on the lees seems to work for enhancing the expression of the fresh fruit aromas (citric, like bergamot) and white flowers (citric again, i.e. orange blossom), with hints of grass that reinforce the fresh sensation. Lightweight and soft with an easy, fluid mouthfeel and good acidic balance. Dry with plenty of flavours and fine mouth aromas.



SANSÓN

RED VERMOUTH.
HIJOS DE ANTONIO BARCELÓ (GRUPO BODEGAS PALACIO 1894).
AREA: LAGUNA DE DUERO (VALLADOLID).
PRODUCTION: BASIS OF SWEET WINE AGED IN THE SOLERA AND CRIADERAS SYSTEM.
EVOLUTION: LONG TERM.
PRICE: €6.

85 In the new wave of vermouths that many wineries are launching, it is surprising that they choose an evocative image of old-style products for a style that is very much in vogue among consumers, even young consumers. A paradox similar to reviving these aromatised wines when it seemed there were becoming obsolete, as the tradition of the daily aperitif is disappearing. Old-style images for a new vermouth under an old label. Moderate, pleasant sweetness and distinctive spicy bouquet, which dominates the hints of aromatic herbs, citrus and dairy produce. The overall blend that calls to mind rice pudding.

CUENTAVIÑAS A CREATIVE MINDSET

THE SIXTH GENERATION OF THE EGUREN FAMILY, WHOM WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD A LITTLE BIT ABOUT, ARE NOW COMING INTO THE LIMELIGHT. EDUARDO EGUREN IS LAUNCHING HIS CAREER WITH HIS CUENTAVIÑAS RANGE, OUTSIDE THE FAMILY WINERY, AND REVEALING HIS GENES, OR WHAT TODAY IS KNOWN AS HIS *CHIP*. EDUARDO EGUREN IS CONTINUING THE CREATIVE CHIP OR MINDSET OF THE EGUREN FAMILY, AND, FOR ONCE, WITHOUT ANY FAMILY RIFT.

»» There is a certain tradition in the Eguren family where they pass the baton from grandfathers to grandchildren. The grandfather, Amancio Eguren, is considered to be the first of the wine making dynasty, although there are traces of some earlier members of the family, such as a certain Trifón Eguren who was also a chocolatier. Amancio used to take his grandson, Guillermo, around with him, and passed on his knowledge on vine growing and wine sales, going door to door with his trailer. Naturally, Guillermo has also received the call of the vine. Guillermo Eguren created Sierra Cantabria, and was part of the four decades of famous vine growers, who are today the owners of leading, modern and well-respected wineries. He is also the father of Marcos Eguren, the imaginative creator of great wines. Continuing tradition, Guillermo also took Eduardo, Marcos's son, under his wing, and so, in some way, grandfather



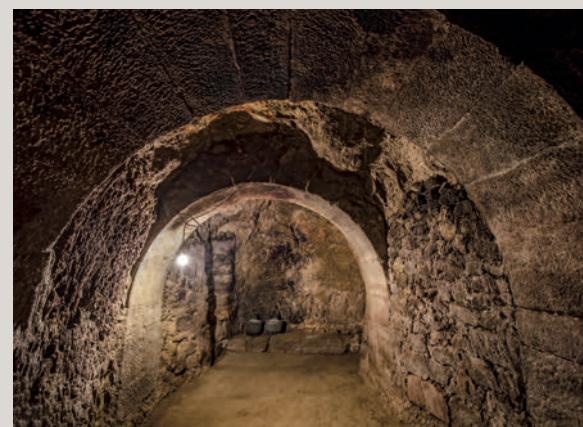
Eduardo Eguren and Carlota González.

Guillermo was responsible for the family's creative mindset lighting up in his grandson's youthful head. The thing is, living in your father's shadow is quite a challenge, particularly if your father is Marcos Eguren, and so Eduardo has started off on his own path, alone. In this case, there was no family rift, which is so unlike what has happened in so many family wineries and in the mother firm itself, when the family split at the end of the 80s, and the older Eguren, Guillermo, went one way, while the others led by his brother Victorino, created their own company. Eduardo Eguren jumped into the deep end with his personal project, because a father is a father and Eduardo is not silly: he accepts the genius's advice,

while maintaining his wines' own personality. He also makes the most of his experience in the family winery, where he helped to develop many of the wines and, particularly, the Teso La Monja range, the branch of DO Toro that comes under the Eguren emporium. Eduardo has also been trained for many years in the same way as young oenologists, who are willing to move around the wine world. After studying Oenology in Logroño, and completing a Master in Universidad del País Vasco, Eduardo Eguren has been seen for fairly long periods in wineries in California, Australia, France, Portugal and in some wineries of Spanish friends, like Artadi.

NEAR HOME

"I spent my childhood in vineyards, with my grandfather, and among the barrels, with my father. That is where I started dreaming about building something of my own, that I could develop from this family heritage and my own ideas and





His personal wines are an example of the Eguren's creative chip or mindset, which is planted deep inside his mind. Cuentaviñas is based in San Vicente de la Sonsierra, although the oenologist has worked in other landscapes, like Cordovín and its old Garnacha vineyards, or the further lying Ribera del Duero. The small winery, covering barely one hundred square metres, is an old 18th century wine press in Peciña, a village in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. It also has a tunnel dating from that same time,

and which is also quite small (barely thirty square metres), dug out of the typical limestone soil in the area. The vineyards are very close by. Traditional vineyards, planted in the goblet style, with each one resulting in one of the three inaugural wines. As the name of the winery suggests, the declared intention is that each wine bears the essence of its original vineyard, that is, the expression of the landscape and the local history and relevant plots. Eduardo usually repeats that "it's not a question of making wine, it's about cultivating it".

And true to this viñista or vintner's opinion, he has chosen to let the vineyard, land and landscape express themselves naturally. He applies the same vineyard techniques as the family firm, with an organic slant and a little of the white magic of biodynamics, yet without any bureaucratic standards or official stamps, which he considers to be "simply general rules to follow". Balance is the key word in his philosophy as a vine grower and oenologist. "I look for excellence through the natural balance of the vineyard, and to do this, I turn to the experience of various generations of my family. All effort is concentrated on maintaining life in the soil, and obtaining a balance between the



the knowledge I've acquired around the world". He has left the nest and has started his solo flight, while still focusing on the same horizons upheld all his life, by himself and his ancestors. The Cantabrian mountains and the Sonsierra hills are the backdrop where he is developing his recently launched project.

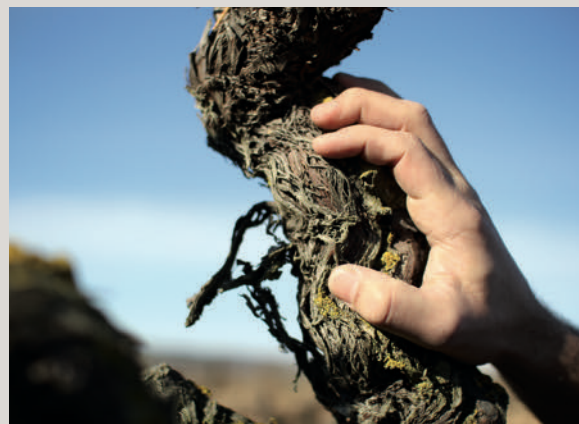
In 2018, he left the family firm to start his own Cuentaviñas project, which he has built up, together with his wife, Carlota González, while also acting as an external consultant for some wineries. Cuentaviñas was created from three small vineyards, inherited from his maternal grandfather, and they have resulted in the three initial wines of his project, already in its early stages.



leaves, the plant and production.” Three wines, three personalities Under these premises, he thinks that the wines express the personality of the vineyard naturally, and in a balanced way. Alomado comes from a vineyard planted in 1960 with ancestral criteria: mainly the Tempranillo grape, mixed with about ten percent Viura, six percent Malvasía and the rest Calagraño. For Eguren, “it’s the most affordable wine, with a distinct Atlantic personality”. Los Yeliones get their name from the term given to the calcareous blocks

found all over the estate. It is a younger vineyard, from 1970, and planted exclusively with Tempranillo. “It represents the magic of a vineyard planted on the highest spot in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. Its fruit and floral expression is enhanced by the yeliones, which give it a fresh, chalky mouthfeel”.

El Tiznado comes from the oldest vineyard, dating back to 1923, which is planted with Tempranillo and has a “great diversity of clones that enrich it, together with the atypical sandy soil



coloured by the iron oxide that is so unusual in this area. A very poor soil that produces more intensely coloured fruit and a wine with an impressive, balanced structure”.

Three wines and three vineyards that would justify their qualification in the new category of singular vineyards. However, this now not such a young producer, has no interest in these bureaucratic classifications: “I don’t believe in singular vineyards, or viñedos singulares”, Eduardo states flatly, and that comes from a creator of some great wines which are in their launching stage, and are very much focused on the vineyard: “everything starts at the origin; without a good origin, it’s difficult to write a good ending”. ■ A Proensa



CUENTAVIÑAS ALOMADO '18

80% TEMPRANILLO, 10% VIURA, 6% MALVASÍA, 4% CALAGRAÑO; FERMENTATION IN SMALL FRENCH OAK VATS; MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION AND 18 MONTHS IN NEW FRENCH 500 L. OAK AND 4 IN THE BOTTLE RACK. 2.000 BOTTLES. €50.

95 Distinguishable by its freshness. Fine aromas of ripe woodland berries, with flowers, wood and low brush against a mineral background. Well-structured in the mouth with medium body and youthful tannin peaks. Fresh and generous, with plenty of fruit and flavour.



CUENTAVIÑAS LOS YELIONES '18

80% TEMPRANILLO; FERMENTATION IN SMALL FRENCH OAK VATS; MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION AND 18 MONTHS IN NEW FRENCH 500 L. OAK AND 4 IN THE BOTTLE RACK. 2.077 BOTTLES. €170.

97 A wine for the future, with distinct personality. Deep nose, with a certain concentration and good expression; riverside fruit and evident minerals, flowers. A hint of leather with a solid, balanced structure and noble strength. Attractive with a good flavour.



CUENTAVIÑAS EL TIZNADO '18

TEMPRANILLO; FERMENTATION IN SMALL FRENCH OAK VATS; MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION AND 18 MONTHS IN NEW FRENCH 228 L. OAK AND 4 IN THE BOTTLE RACK. 866 BOTTLES. €205.

98 Elegant and generous with plenty of personality. Complex aromas on a fruit (black) and mineral base, flowers and evident balsam, with a sensation of freshness. Concentrated and fresh in the mouth. Solid, balanced, lively and attractive.



*Una sola gota es capaç de explicar
no sólo qué hacemos, sino sobre todo,
quiénes somos.*

*DO Penedès, 2700 anys
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Generalitat de Catalunya
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WINE MODERATION

ELIGE | COMPARTE | GUIDA

VIÑA MONTY BACK TO ITS ORIGINS

BODEGAS MONTECILLO LIKES TO HAVE ITS FINGER IN MANY PIES. THIS CENTENARY WINERY IS ALWAYS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE LEADING NAMES FROM THE *GENERACIÓN DEL 70*, AND ONE OF THE SURVIVORS OF THE *JEREZANAS* IN RIOJA. IT IS A REFERENCE FOR CLASSIC WINES AND IS CELEBRATING ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY BY FOCUSING ON THE WINES MADE BY THE FOUNDING FAMILY.

» Three classic Reserva wines, two reds and one white, green labels similar to the original one, and the last bottles of a legendary Gran Reserva are the basis of the Osborne Group's subsidiary in Rioja, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary. They are also marking the event by relaunching Viña Monty, one of the winery's flagship labels. The name of the winery, Bodegas Montecillo, and its main labels, Montecillo and Viña Monty, refer to the El Montecillo estate in the town of Fuenmayor. For more than half a century, the estate belonged to the Navajas family who bought it in 1919 and founded the winery, using the old wine press on San Cristóbal's mount, in Fuenmayor. Osborne joined the winery in 1973, when the Navajas family had been left without an heir after three generations at the head of the firm. Osborne sold the property to the Martínez Bujanda family, who later set up Finca Valpiedra here. In those times, people thought that it was



Bodegas Montecillo, Fuenmayor.



not important for wineries to have their own vineyards, as they could get supplies from local vine growers and harvesters. Osborne has maintained this criterion and, in 2010, they sold their 160 hectares under vine in Jerez to Vicente Taberner, the owner of Huerta de Albalá, in Arcos de la Frontera. The birth of Bodegas Montecillo is estimated at around 1870, but the family of the wife of Celestino Navajas, the founder, already had vineyards and wineries in Fuenmayor. Celestino, the son of emigrants who had returned from Cuba, was a baker and very active in politics, on the liberal side, and this led him to be elected as mayor of Fuenmayor (probably the town's first democratically elected mayor) on



José Luis Navajas.

two occasions. At the same time, he ran the winery, where he immediately implemented the production and ageing systems imported from Bordeaux.



RIISING ENTREPRENEURS

His entrepreneurial drive was maintained and intensified by two of his six children, Gregorio and Alejandro, who continued with the winery. Gregorio stayed in Fuenmayor, and Alejandro went to study in France and upon his return to Spain, set himself up in Bilbao. Here he ran a shipping line, and together with Pedro Chabaud and Eugenio Nobel, he created a dynamite factory (which later became Ercros) and produced electricity.

At the same time, he tended the winery, run by his mother and brother, known then as Viuda de Celestino Navajas e Hijos de Celestino Navajas. In 1919 he bought El Montecillo and another nearby estate, called El Cumbreño, which would lend its name to the winery's third label, Viña Cumbreño. Following the death of his mother and his brother, in the 1920s, which was one of the eras when the winery really expanded, Montecillo became one of the references in Rioja, and changed its company name to El Montecillo Alejandro Navajas Cosechero. Together with his father, he had an active role supporting progressive politics (he was a friend of Indalecio Prieto, who was an important socialist leader during the Second Republic). This actually caused him some discomfort afterwards, and explains why the winery and family were sometimes left out of

the history of Rioja, even though his son, José Luis Navajas who had studied Oenology in France, was considered as one of the best technicians in the area for many years. It was José Luis who mapped out the style of the characteristic wines from Bodegas Montecillo, using production and ageing systems that today's team are trying to reproduce with the commemorative wines they have made for the anniversary. José Luis Navajas did not have any children and, in order that the winery founded by his grandfather could continue, he decided to sell it to



Gonzalo Causapé.

Osborne. The great winery from El Puerto de Santa María was chosen because of its family tradition, which it has maintained since it was founded at the end of the 18th century by Thomas Osborne Mann. Osborne guaranteed continuity more than other more powerful names at the time, like the multinational Martini and the then very powerful Rumasa. Time proved this to be the right choice.

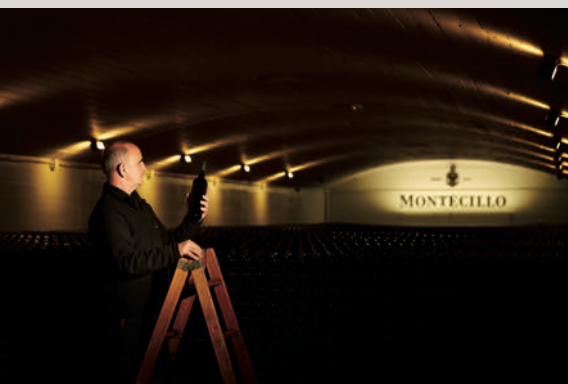
THE JEREZANO IN RIOJA

Neither Osborne or Rumasa would be the only Jerez companies interested in Rioja in the 70s and 80s. However, the Fino Quinta winery blazed the trail for the arrival of what some circles call *el rioja jerezano*, involving historical firms like Montecillo itself, purchased by Osborne, or Lagunilla, part of the Croft group, or Federico Paternina, Berberana and Franco-Españolas, which were acquired by Rumasa (they also tried with Marqués de Murrieta and others). There are other more recent ones, such as, Beronia, which was bought by González Byass, and others created from scratch, like Bodegas Domecq. Out of this whole group, only two remain in the hands of Jerez firms; Montecillo and Beronia. Osborne sold the Bodegas Montecillo vineyard, and moved the firm from Fuenmayor to its current location in a winery built in the 90s on the road

between Fuenmayor and Navarrete. The oenologist and manager there for many years was Gonzalo Causapé, one of the discrete technicians who contributed significantly to setting up the modern Rioja. In his case, from his position in the winery, and also through his institutional role: for 18 years, until he retired in 2006, he was on the DOC Rioja Regulating Council. During the jerezana stage, Bodegas Montecillo gained recognition due to its loyalty upholding the classic profile of Rioja wine. They applied this philosophy, with a couple of nuances, to three complete wine ranges that they have developed under the labels, Viña Cumbre, Montecillo and Viña Monty.



Mercedes García Rupérez.



The third one was dedicated to Reserva and Gran Reserva categories for most of its career, and it is the one the winery managers have focused on now when planning the celebrations for a career spanning one and a half centuries.

The current oenologist at Bodegas Montecillo, Mercedes García Rupérez, has made three new Viña Monty productions, based on a selection of vineyard plots in different areas of DOC Rioja, upholding the old Rioja principle of mixing grapes and wines from different counties in the DOC. These are some of the classic patterns that have given the winery its identity, and which are applied to the wine's profile, reinforced with the image of the three Viña Monty. They have also reproduced the bottles and the distinctive mint green labels closely associated with the history of Bodegas Montecillo and the Navajas family. Production is limited totalling less than eight thousand

bottles of red, and two thousand white, priced at €35.

Alongside these three Viña Monty, they are also launching the last bottles of one of the firm's legendary wines, the Gran Reserva Viña Monty '75. A total of 120 examples still survive, priced at €500, and they have been rescued from the winery bottle racks (an underground cellar where they have been keeping wines since the 1926 vintage) where they have been lying for more than forty years. It is a very special wine in the firm's history, ever since it took part in a blind wine tasting in Amsterdam in 1983, alongside legendary international names, for example from Bordeaux. ■ UPM



Historial cellar, 16th century.



LAVINIA 20 YEARS IS QUITE SOME TIME

WHEN IT WAS FOUNDED IN 1999, IT WAS A REAL REVOLUTION FOR WINE LOVERS, AS IT WAS A KIND OF REFUGE WHERE YOU COULD SPEND HOURS AND HOURS LOST AMONG BORDEAUX CHÂTEAUX LABELS OR EXCLUSIVE CHAMPAGNES. TODAY, TWENTY YEARS LATER, LAVINIA REFLECTS ON ITS HISTORY, ITS HAPPY, AND NOT SO HAPPY, EVENTS. IT IS NOW RUN BY THE SECOND GENERATION AND IT IS RENOVATING THE BUSINESS, WHILE REMAINING FIRMLY COMMITTED TO ITS FOUNDING SPIRIT.



Matthieu Le Priol and Charlotte Servant.



»» “From the beginning, Lavinia has supported artisan wineries, emergent areas, organic agriculture, and even biodynamics, or productions with a low sulphur content in the bottling. All this was new, as well as the fact that all the bottles, including the samples, were laid horizontally, and a range of displays was designed precisely for this purpose. Lavinia also introduced the idea of well-trained staff, and they spend many hours training”, explains the director of Lavinia, Juan Manuel Bellver. The shop is on Ortega y Gasset Street in Madrid, and was founded in 1999 by two visionaries who, in many ways, advanced the concept of the 21st century wine shop, which has become so popular.

And as happens in other parts of this sector, neither Thierry Servant or his friend, Pascal Chevrot, who founded Lavinia in Madrid’s Golden Mile, had any family connections or traditions in the wine world. They were both wine lovers and collectors, as well as successful entrepreneurs (Servant had a good professional career in L’Oreal España and had a helicopter company). They wanted to create a shop that had everything they used to look for as buyers: a multitude of well-displayed wines, full aisles to explore and staff who made every purchase a pleasant experience. Bellver explains that “for me, when they opened this shop on my street, it was

like the Wise Men themselves had brought me a gift”, and he adds that “when a shop opened in my street which suddenly had all the wines that we liked and which my wife and I usually brought back from Burgundy or Bordeaux, of course, we became firm clients, addicts”. About 20 years ago, when he was the editor of the *Metrópoli* magazine and a great wine enthusiast, he did not imagine being at the head of this group, which has five companies in three countries, including a shop, their second, in the Madeleine boulevard in Paris, a distributor (Lavinia Profesional) and the oldest wine shop in París, La Cave Augé, as well as a turnover of more than 35 million euros.



philosophy of transmitting a passion for wine and its family character.

A SHOP OF THE FUTURE, TWENTY YEARS AGO

What is changing at Lavinia, after two decades and since the Servant-Le Priol husband and wife team joined, is its conversion to the digital world. Matthieu explains that “for us, the future lies in managing the digital change within Lavinia, maintaining the development of the shops obviously, but focusing more on our web and IT systems. We want to open in other countries, but instead of going there directly, with physical shops, we will start with websites, and if they work well, we will set up the shops”. Matthieu continues, pointing out that

Neither did Thierry’s daughter, Charlotte Servant, imagine that one day she would be the president of the Lavinia Group, after her father passed away in Switzerland in 2015. Servant (Madrid, 1986), is equally timid as Thierry and like Bellver, she was a student at the Lycée Français in Madrid. When she was just 30 years old, she stood at a crossroads; continuing this family business, where her mother had also been involved, designing the catalogue covers, or continuing with her promising career in International Law, where she was studying for her doctorate. The emotional connection to her father’s firm tipped the scales, and Lavinia has remained in her hands, with her younger siblings. In an interview for the Fuera de Serie supplement (which is curiously



the same publication that covered her father ten years before, on one of the rare occasions he appeared in the press), Charlotte admitted that at the beginning she did not know who to trust, and she relied on the help of her team to understand why they took particular decisions. This took her a year, and then she dismissed the director general, Yannick Branchereau, and contracted her husband, Matthieu Le Priol, who was very clear that Lavinia would continue its

“the Lavinia concept is not sales, it’s experience and sharing wine culture, and this is difficult to achieve with just one web. With a view to opening in other countries, our idea is to perhaps have smaller shops running activities that allow us to share our passion for wine, which was a very important element for Thierry, and with Charlotte and I, these things are not going to change.” Twenty years ago, Servant senior had a very advanced vision in comparison with other wine merchants. With premises

covering 900 sqm., housing 45,000 wines and spirits detailed in the catalogue, Thierry designed somewhere to enjoy buying wine, with all the bottles lying down and well illuminated. There are wines that only cost a few euros (now, you can start at 6 euros), and the prices go up to the legendary labels that are worth thousands. These ones are always kept in an individual room, known as Cava 14 that has a controlled temperature, as its name implies. It can only be accessed by the team sommeliers.

In fact, the idea of introducing sommeliers was also a novel approach, and today they are Lavinia's main asset. They are all trained either in wine making or as sommeliers, and continue their training. Actually, Lavinia has produced professionals who have gone on to important careers in the wine world: Maite Corsín, a journalist and marketing consultant for wine companies and entrepreneurs; César Ruiz, Flequi Berruti and Nacho Jiménez, founders of the vinoteca La Tintorería, and each with his own wine project in different parts of Spain, Germán R. Blanco, who produces in Bierzo and in Ribera del Duero, or sommeliers like Pilar Cavero, who has served wines in El Celler de Can Roca. "For me, Lavinia was the real beginning of my career. I joined when it started and I was one of the sommeliers, and they saw that I had potential and so I was promoted quickly. They took me to France, where I learned about French wines, and I spent some time in La Cave Augé. I think there were less sommeliers in my time, but a more defined spirit", Ruiz recalls. She left the firm in 2006.

THE PRODUCERS ARE THE LEADING PLAYERS

Lavinia's relationship with winery producers and independent wine makers is also part of the shop's origins, as they have created relationships that, in some cases, have lasted for years. This is the precisely the idea that has inspired the wine collection they have launched for their 20th anniversary;



GASTRONOMY, THE UNKNOWN FACE OF LAVINIA

In 2005, they opened the Lavinia restaurant and, to some extent, it is largely unknown, but that is understandable because it is a gourmet corner in the middle of a huge wines and spirits outlet. This additional luxury is run by the young chef, Antonio García, and it can be adapted for holding events and meals with producers, and also serves good tapas on its terrace in Ortega y Gasset. Clients can enjoy a glass of wine from the shop, without any corkage fee, and it is a favourite among enthusiasts for local and foreign wines. People can sit back and enjoy a portion of *ensaladilla* or *callos* (in season), and combine it with the elegance of a Pinot Noir, without any strange looks from the waiter.

six winery labels, some of which have been working with Lavinia since the outset, like the Bordeaux, Saint Émilion Château Le Puy.

"Every time I enter the shop, I'm surprised that my wines are actually here too, alongside such significant labels", says Roberto Oliván, a small vine grower from Rioja Alavesa, who has been working with the shop since 2012. "As a producer, it's like they are part of my family, as I am part of theirs, from the sommelier at the entrance, to the manager", Oliván says. He also sells his wines through their distributor, Lavinia Profesional (created in 2008 as Yvinia), and he only has good things to say about it. As if that were not enough, he also buys bottles through the online shop (which they started in 2001), and he defines the service as "very professional, perfect". In Madrid, they have joined forces with Amazon Prime Now, the commercial giant, so that clients can receive their wine at home in under two hours.

Roberto Oliván only has good words for Lavinia, which has helped his small project grow. While talking to him, he mentions Roberto Aguado, the director of Lavinia profesional: "Tomorrow he's coming with his whole team to have supper at my house". ■

Miguel Z. Sevilla





The wine of the future

TRENDS IN THE 20s

VARIOUS PLAYERS IN CONTEMPORARY WINE CIRCLES HAVE ANALYSED THE SECTOR AND VENTURED ESTIMATES ON WHAT WE CAN EXPECT IN TERMS OF VINE CULTURE, CLIMATE, WINE COMPANIES AND WINE CULTURE AND TRENDS, BEARING IN MIND THAT NOW THE WHOLE WORLD HAS SEEN ITS FUTURE ALTERED, DUE TO THE TRAGEDY OF THE PANDEMIC.

TEXT: RAQUEL PARDO

PHOTOS: LENT

The present climate is one of sincere concern. Experts unanimously agree that global warming is a fact which is already affecting us, and will continue to do so in the future, and that includes the wine sector. Tao Platón points out that, although the impact is on a global scale, it is affecting the wine sector differently, since some regions actually benefit from the situation". Julián Palacios indicates that the effect of increased temperatures means we will experience severe conditions, such as droughts, storms or heatwaves, all of which will make vine growing more complicated because they are so unpredictable. These conditions will also pose serious difficulties for some wine producers who will be forced to look for higher, fresher territories in an attempt to obtain balanced grapes. Ferran Centelles highlights the threats of imbalanced ripeness and fungal pressure which can result from quasi tropical climate conditions in some parts of the planet.

So, what can we do in this situation? "First of all, be very aware of water", says Platón, "and to use it well". Julián Palacios also adds that "reflecting seriously on the natural resources available to us will help us manage them more efficiently", because "there's no point in using a lot of water to produce twenty or thirty thousand tonnes of fruit and then sell them for below-market prices". Platón remarks that "it is socially unacceptable to waste groundwater reserves, as happens in some parts of Spain, just to end up selling the cheapest wine in the world".

There is a general consensus that using water wisely will be the trend for fighting against the effects of the climate change. "It'll be a key factor for developing a good vine culture", OIVE

"Another approach will be to work intensely on site, avoiding excessive defoliation to ensure that the bunches are protected".



ROSANA LISA

confirm. Rosana Lisa also explains that "producers will have to look for vineyards on higher ground, or more resistant grape varieties and longer cycles", agreeing with Centelles point above. "Another approach will be to work intensely on site, avoiding excessive defoliation to ensure that the bunches are protected", Lisa adds.

Platón draws our attention to vineyards with clonal diversity, where each clone provides a complementary advantage each year, or the two-stage harvests that compensate ripeness and acidity. He adds that he would also "like to see introducing new hybrid varieties that are also plague and disease-resistant as one of the final alternatives, not one of the first".

CLEAN VINE CULTURE

When asked, most coincided that we need to be aware, and that means respecting the ecosystem, reducing carbon footprints and waste and using less phytosanitary products. Tim Atkin also calls the sector to lobby the government to take the problem seriously and introduce emission reducing measures.

Generally, people are optimistic about investing in actions to mitigate the effects of the climate change because, as Rodolfo Bastida explains, "it's something that we have to fight against, and we're going to need



"It is socially unacceptable to waste groundwater reserves, as happens in some parts of Spain, just to end up selling the cheapest wine in the world".

TAO PLATÓN

There is a general consensus that **using water wisely** will be the trend for fighting against the effects of the climate change.

resources” despite the healthcare crisis that has halted investment”. However, he does believe that significant investments will be made, and dares to predict a figure of 20 percent in the next decade.

Platón points that, to a certain extent, investments are already being made in the form of the *Wineries for Climate Protection* hallmark, whereby it is mandatory to measure the hydric, waste and carbon footprints and improve results year by year. However, he warns that these ideas “are principles regarding what we want as a firm and as citizens, and it’s difficult to see them leading to any actual economic return. Consumers will have to be more aware about what they buy, and use their demand potential to make wineries “get their act together” with regards to stopping the climate change.

At OIVE, they suggest it is easy to implement certain measures, as they only imply small changes, like irrigation control, while others require more planning to be preventive strategies. Atkin holds a very specific opinion; “many producers choose the ostrich approach, but, in view of what has happened in Australia and the US this year, with all those terrible fires, and the earliest harvests in history in Burgundy and Champagne, I think people are starting to get the message”.

THE VINEYARD OF THE FUTURE

According to OIVE, changes in vine culture will include integrating culture, landscape, biodiversity and sustainability, aided by technology and innovation. As for zonification and giving greater value to the origin of wines becoming more and more established trends, the organisation explains that these concepts have always been around, and that “zonification is just one more strategy for giving value to a wine product, associated with the concept of terrain, authenticity, regional personality, etc., and it can be just as valid as any other strategy”.

For Ferran Centelles, even in the long term, zonification is the right approach because “producers come and go, and labels do too, but the land always remains”, and he adds that “talking about zones and villages is the way to ensure the legacy of a better panorama for future producers”. He thinks that in general producers will tend to seek local varieties, and he is optimistic about Spain becoming a reference for quality wine, instead of cheap ones. “This is actually what most of us are working on, increasing the value of Spanish wine, because we know full well that we already have the quality”.

Julián Palacios also thinks that producers will turn to recovering traditional varieties and wine making practices, coining the

expression *viñadiversidad* (vineyard diversity), as we will start looking back to rural methods and field traditions. He thinks that emphasis and concern over the origin of a wine is going “to become more and more significant”, as well as the preference for local fruit, providing, that is, it adapts to each area. “There’ll be a need for greater lobby pressure for resistant varieties, and we’re actually beginning to see this. I also think the sector has to have a good serious think about what it wants, how and where, about what will happen with genetic erosion, the loss of



FERRAN CENTELLES

“Talking about zones and villages is the way to ensure the legacy of a better panorama for future producers”.

biodiversity, the risks of the future...” and he adds that he sees “more lows than highs in this area”.

Rosana Lisa also believes in local varieties because of their ability to adapt, and she thinks innovation aims at more sustainable vine growing. Tao Platón agrees with her and urges technology to always be at the service of good vine growing. Lisa highlights big data as a tool for learning in-depth about vineyards and allowing us to adopt bespoke vine growing models for each area.

IN ALL SEGMENTS

“I think people will plant at a greater height, and there’ll be a fashion for Mediterranean grapes that manage to endure the heat and drought conditions while maintaining their acidity levels. I can see more Garnacha and Monastrell, and less Tem-



“The quality of the best Spanish wines is on par with leading world wines, but too many consumers view Spain as a country of cheap, fun wines”.

TIM ATKIN

pranillo, perhaps”, Atkin forecasts, and he believes that consumers will be more concerned about the origin of their wine. He also hopes that Spain becomes a country of quality wines, instead of a land of cheap ones, although he does highlight the huge bulk wine volumes sold by the co-operatives, so “we’ll have to keep on trying ...” he confirms.

Andreas Kubach, however, thinks that as a country, Spain already has quality wines, but it is facing many challenges like having many wines without any non-organoleptic qualities, such as cultural, aesthetic and social features, in contrast to the excesses found in the wines “made from an excessively strict, technical point of view. We need to make wines with more personality, particularly in the medium and medium-top ranges. On the other hand, we must find a way to make economical wines more sustainable, both on an environmental and social level. The cheaper wines that Spain produces at the moment are unnecessary and are detrimental both to the environment and the productive fabric of the areas where they are made. However, as a great wine country, Spain can perfectly juggle an offer that covers many price segments, and also successfully convey its own diversity, and prevent the lower ranges bringing down the country’s image”.

There is also going to be room for local grapes alongside imported versions, providing that the local ones prove their quality. “It’s going to be important to discriminate, and not let local grapes become an end in itself”. Meanwhile, according to the MW, sometimes imported fruit can express terroir better than a Spanish variety that extends beyond its optimum consumption area.

“We need to make wines with more personality, particularly in the medium and medium-top ranges”.

ECONOMY AND WINE COMPANY

As for the situation and trends associated with the sector’s economy, Tim Atkin indicates that the recovery in international sales lost because of the pandemic will depend on how long it takes to find a vaccine, if one is actually found, because he points out that “bars and restaurants are essential for the wine sector. The MW emphasises the price of bulk wines in

international markets, the speed at which the climatic change is advancing and Spain’s skill in developing a broader sector of quality wines. These are the factors that will mark the Spanish wine economy over the next few years. “The quality of the best Spanish wines is on par with leading world wines, but too many consumers view Spain as a country of cheap, fun wines”.

Ferran Centelles is pessimistic when reading the data published by Caixabank and IWSR on the huge 70% drop in international sales during lockdown. “Recovery will be slow” he predicts, although for him, contrary to Atkin’s view, Spain has a great price-quality ratio, and this will be an advantage when it comes to recovering sales figures.

Another optimist is the *Observatorio Español del Mercado del Vino*, which believes the competitive edge of Spanish wine lies in the diversity of products available, and this will con-



ANDREAS KUBACH



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El guardián de los aromas

Most coincided that we **need to be aware**, and that means respecting the ecosystem, reducing carbon footprints and waste.

tribute to market recovery. The on-going challenge will be improving the image and price of Spanish wines. The entity explains that “this has a lot to do with recovering the balance between what we produce and what we sell”, without producing excesses.

Andreas Kubach highlights the huge influence of the Spanish hotel industry in comparison with other countries. Due to the healthcare crisis, “international sales and market and sales channel diversification will become even more important than before”.



RODOLFO BASTIDA

“The sales teams should be increasingly better trained so that they can understand the increasingly sophisticated wines they offer”.

PANDEMIC AND TRENDS

Julián Palacios provides another view, and takes a look at the economic models that have benefitted from the current crisis. In the future, he urges producers to look back at rural models and proximity producers and consumption, all of which will help establish village populations and, in turn, raise Spanish wine drinking figures. However, in order to achieve this, he believes that public bodies have to be involved, as they can convey the value of rural heritage to consumers.

Saldón chooses to highlight the importance of supporting international partners (i.e. importers, distributors) because of their solid sales structures. Nevertheless, he admits that there will be a recession and that this will have a negative effect on consumption. He believes the pandemic is acting as a trend cat-

alyst and, for example, he is observing how home drinking is now focusing on wines with a greater value, and consumers are taking refuge in known labels, so that at home they can enjoy the experiences they previously enjoyed in restaurants.

“A clear example are wine deliveries or online sales. For the moment, wine labels that are a kind of quality guarantee have seen how their clients also search from them online, and that consumers have not just gone for white labels or purely price-based purchases”. He also observes that the sector has to adapt to the new trends while still supporting its traditional distributors. He asks producers to understand consumers, and define their offer taking into account the new drinking trends that are emerging. He is also convinced that “digital experiences must be improved because they are here to stay”.

NEW DISTRIBUTION

In terms of distribution, there are doubts over how the crisis will change the model. Kubach thinks that it will depend on how the

pandemic affects drinking patterns in Spain, and “that it’ll speed us towards a more dynamic and up-to-date model. Generally speaking, wine distribution in Spain is some way behind other countries. I think that many out-of-date players will disappear and new ones will come on the scene, adapted to a new, different and more professional gastronomy sector”.

He foresees the sector becoming more concentrated and polarised, with larger distributors, plenty of logistics and adjusted margins, and specialist operators with a close rapport with consumers, who, he argues, will be defined “less by the wineries they represent and more by their own *know how*”. He acknowledges the arrival of new technological platforms for serving consumers and sees “some very interesting years ahead with plenty of opportunities that will could lead to better distribution and a more diverse and attractive wine offer, which in turn will contribute to a genuine wine culture”.

Rodolfo Bastida agrees with Kubach: “Distributors are essential, but we think that sales teams should be increasingly better trained so that they can understand the increasingly sophisticated wines they offer, which is what the market wants. Essentially, they are the advocates and influencers at the point of sale, bridging the gap between wine and its consumers”.

Ramón Coalla also believes the traditional distribution model will change and that exclusive agreements will disappear. “The market is more and more global and exclusivity will have to give way to service and promoting professionalism within the sector.

Gone are the days of saying 'if you want that wine you have to buy it from me either way because I'm the representative for this area'. Distributor sales teams, particularly, need to be highly qualified and know their product inside out".

HOME DRINKING

With such a discouraging backdrop for the hospitality industry, OIVE sees home drinking becoming the norm, along with online sales. It is asking for the sector to reinvent itself, because it must adapt its messages and innovate ways and times for drinking wine, new sales channels and ways to relate to consumers. It predicts that some of the previous wine drinking habit in bars and restaurants will possibly move to private homes, particularly on weekends, but that is not going to compensate the loss in hospitality sales, which are particularly noticeable in the medium to top ranges.

Ferran Centelles is hopeful that people will continue with the up-and-coming trend of drinking less but better, because "in Spain, we are seeing wine more and more as a cultural product, and this adds to its value". He trusts that quality wine will become more of a feature in private homes, but he is not so confident about the hospitality industry recovery.

"The challenge the sector is facing involves breaking consumption down into smaller differentiated units, and encourag-

"The sector's challenge is encouraging more and more people to drink wine".



ALBERTO SALDÓN

ing more and more people to drink wine", says Saldón, who also believes that it is increasingly likely people will drink at home, and that wineries will have to offer consumers resources so that they can enjoy and appreciate what they have before them.

Atkin is not confident that normality will be restored in this aspect, or at least, not immediately. The MW admits that consumers are afraid of eating and drinking in bars and restaurants, although, he confesses that he hopes "this has also made them a little more daring", since he feels that "in the end, wine is a way of travelling without having to catch a plane or train. Perhaps we just have to be happy with that for the time being".

Ramón Coalla predicts an upward trend in wine drinking figures, particularly for quality wines, and a recovery in home drinking because "remote working makes it easier for people to eat at

home, and this will have a negative effect on company meals. That little glass of wine at lunch time will become a daily habit once more. Meals with family and friends will still be important events. He also predicts an upward trend in online sales, but not to the extent provoked by the pandemic, because "physical shops still have a role to play, as people like to see things and be advised".

WINE CULTURE

Ferran Centelles thinks that, without access to the general media, it is difficult to promote a wine culture: "There's no *Master Chef* TV show equivalent for wine, and neither is there complete freedom when it comes to advertising". In addition he remarks that "if it's difficult to reach the massive media, I don't



"The classic wineries have shaped and gained prestige for many denominations of origin, regions, villages... and it's not fair that many of them are now put in the category of industrial wineries".

JULIÁN PALACIOS

see how we can increase the general wine culture". He sees a future in *pétnat* wines (spritzzy sparklers made using the *méthode* ancestral), and in those with less wood and a softer texture. As far as he is concerned, the change will be evident in wines without such a texture impact, and which are sweeter with greater drinkability.

Julián Palacios adds that wines can be identifiable by area or by the people who make them, without detracting from the classics, which "are the ones that have shaped and gained prestige for many denominations of origin, regions, villages... and it's not fair that many of them are now put in the category of *bodegas industriales* (industrial wineries)". Saldón feels the same way, and sees a mixture of preferences for classic and contemporary wines, which reveals the diversity of landscapes, production methods and wine making curiosity.

The oracles

Professionals from different disciplines and backgrounds, all related to the world of wine, have spoken freely about what they think is in store for the future.

The views of various critics have been compiled, including the British MW, **Tim Atkin**, a great connoisseur of Spanish wine, and **Ferran Centelles**, head of the Sapiens del Vino project at the ElBulliFoundation and contributor for Spain on the publication by the British MW, Jancis Robinson, one of the world's most influential names in wine. We also have the opinion of producers and oenologists, such as the general director of Ramón Bilbao, **Rodolfo Bastida**, the director of the Lalomba project run by this same wine group, **Alberto Saldón**, and his technical director, **Rosana Lisa**; the oenologist, **Tao Platón**, an MW student and director of the vine and wine section of Península Vinicultores, and MW **Andreas Kubach**, co-founder and director general of this same group. On the research side, we have the vine expert, **Julián Palacios**, who describes himself as "a vineyard carer", and who is also the driving force behind the wine seminars, "*Cómo hacer que las viñas vuelvan a vivir 100 años*" (How to get vineyards to live another 100 years). The commercial area is represented by the distributor, **Ramón Coalla**, who owns the Coalla grocery in Gijón which recently opened a branch in Madrid. The institutions are represented by **Interprofesional del Vino de España** (OIVE). They all answered an extensive questionnaire on climate, vine growing, economy and companies, and wine drinking and culture, to check the state of the sector's most vulnerable aspects, and its main advantages for competing in the market and positioning Spain as a country of quality wines.

Atkin points out that consumers are getting bored with alcoholic wines that have a lot of wood, and he also thinks the future lies in fresher, more balanced wines. "The wine world took a wrong turn in the 90s, when Parker had so much influence".

Ramón Coalla believes that in ten years, fresh, simple, easy-to-drink wines will be successful, particularly for home drinking, and will have a reasonable price. The hospitality industry will be able to risk much more, and sommeliers will become decisive figures".

THE FUTURE OF CRITICS

Coalla believes that, in terms of wine culture, Spain still has a long way to go in comparison with France and Italy. He thinks that social media are a determining factor, but in his opinion, trade fairs are facing an uncertain future. He has a lot of faith in "word of mouth" recommendations, but in an online sense, while he thinks the written press will have to reinvent itself because "young people don't know what paper is these days".

Atkin remarks that wine critics have diversified thanks to social media and will remain in the future. "I always advise people to find one or two whom they trust and to follow their advice". However, I mistrust those who constantly give wines a high score purely for personal interest. The British MW encourages consumers to try the wines themselves "and decide who is judging them fairly and appropriately". He confirms that information has now become visible thanks to Instagram, but he believes that "there will always be room for in-depth, well-planned articles. Or at least, I hope so ...".

Julián Palacios trusts in the growing importance of a good, "independent professional who is trained and informed", and thinks interest in those that just jump on the band wagon or who have no training or criteria, will decrease. Nevertheless, he disagrees with Coalla, claiming that wine information will still be popular because, according to producer, Juan Carlos Sancha, "wine needs more stories and less films".

Centelles predicts wine recommendations will be more widely availability through apps like Vivino or Delectable, yet thinks that critics will continue to be important. He also hopes that people will access more information on wine so that they can enjoy it more, since "information promotes hedonism". Nevertheless, he believes "in the most synthetic and direct information" that can really connect with the public".

Alberto Saldón is aware of these delicate times for critics, who are facing new challenges, like online communication. He believes that "the main difficulty is generating interest over a broader spectrum. If we want to make sure that the few media still around today actually survive, and the wine journalists who produce them, we must focus on consumers, and not just on the sector's own niche".

He believes that the specialist press has to adapt to new habits and the more participative user role. "The new generation of wine journalists must accept that the road isn't going to be easy, but they do have an important part to play in building the wine culture value chain". ■

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21st CENTURY

XXI

TWO DECADES THAT HAVE CHANGED WINE



TEXT: MARA SÁNCHEZ

IN THE 80s AND 90s OF THE LAST CENTURY, THE FOUNDATIONS WERE LAID FOR A RADICAL CHANGE THAT HAS MATERIALIZED IN THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF THE 21st CENTURY; THE WORKING PHILOSOPHY, NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW COMMERCIAL CRITERIA, STANDARDS, THE BIRTH OF NEW WINERIES. EVERYTHING HAS CONTRIBUTED TO CHANGING THE SCENARIO IN THE WINE SECTOR WHICH IS ALWAYS TRYING TO KEEP AFLOAT BETWEEN ONE RECESSION AND ANOTHER.

IT WAS TIME TO GIVE VALUE TO

the original land, tradition, forgotten regions, vineyards, local grapes, and small and personal projects. The sector started to turn professional in earnest, and this forged a new road ahead, as we have seen over these last twenty years. Image, communication, new technologies, online sales, social media etc., have all had a part to play. However, it does not end here; just as what has taken place is the result of the eventful 90s, these two decades will influence what comes next. You see, there is still a lot to do, both inside and outside the wineries, and inside and outside Spain, i.e. conquering markets, which is one of the main things we still have to learn. Legislation, another thing, when the sector requests again and again that wine be considered a food product and not an alcoholic product. Twenty years ago, various wineries opened their doors for the first time, like Pago de Larraínzar (Navarra), Ysios (Rioja), Pintia (Toro), Pago de Vallegarcía (VT Castilla), Viñas El Regajal (Vinos de Madrid), Dominio de la Vega (Utiel-Requena), Bodegas Borsao (Campo de Borja), Paco García (Rioja), El Nido (Jumilla) or Finca La Estacada (Úcles) and many others. Over the last twenty years, they have gained positions in the wine sector and market, and their trajectories coincide with an important chapter in our wine's history, because the course of events marks a before and after for Spanish wine. Previously, at the end of the last century, events had changed the national scenario, including the 2007 recession that swept away a few

projects. It is worth remembering that many ventures were created during the construction boom, with insubstantial investments and big overheads; wine had its own expansion boom.

IMPROVING MARGINS

Putting numbers to one side, the value of land rocketed thanks to its differentiating features. Once again people became interested in local and national grapes over foreign varieties that had been particularly popular in many Spanish vineyards. Others started to recover ancestral vineyards (a trend that is very much in today) that had virtually disappeared. This practice was supported in standards adopted by the DO regulating councils who took on the role of improving the image of their wines by giving importance to everything that defined their area of influence: the lie of the land, climate conditions and also the history, culture and customs.



MIGUEL GIL

Also, at the end of the century, Spanish wine, in general, started to gain prestige. An international wine boom (with greater export figures and access to new markets) benefitted the overseas presence of some of the most popular wineries and denominations, and this growing interest in wine spread to areas and wineries that were less known abroad, but were gaining more and more recognition here at home. This gave the sector a great impetus, accompanied by investments from leading labels and new projects that helped to give value to our wine heritage.

It was also a time when wine culture started to attract thousands of visitors to our production regions. Without a doubt, the development of wine tourism together with the increasing and varied offer, is one of the main features to highlight in the 21st century, thanks to its significant contribution to the sector. These are some of the main changes that started to appear at the end of the last century and which are shaping Spanish wine today, together with new events. With this very happening scenario, many new wineries opened their doors with different initiatives for the 21st century. Now, twenty years later, the directors take stock of how things have gone.

Miguel Gil runs Gil family States, alongside his brother Ángel, and he talks about these last twenty years as "the most turbulent and dizziest period in my professional life. In my case, and that of the whole Gil family, it has been a time of rapid undertakings. The start of the century sowed the seed of what was to appear later, at the end of 2001,



that is, Bodegas El Nido. With hindsight, I think of it as a dream come true because, throughout, we have managed to withstand the major changes, by adapting production to technology and staying focused on what we think Jumilla wines should be like - emphasising the personality and quality of our local grape, Monastrell, and in response to customer perceptions". From Bodegas Paco García in Rioja, Juan Bautista García who runs the family firm, considers that, unlike 2001, now "we're at a point of introspection. When we started off, we used to look more at the market and consumer demand. Then, about five years ago, we realised that our wine type and image were more important, while today we are starting to look at the vineyard and the particular features of each vineyard to precisely select what is best for the wines we want to produce. I think this will be the way people continue to work in the next few years, giving value to our own particular features".

For her part, Irene Canalejo, a member of the family that owns Pago de Larrainzar, remembers that they started with one single red wine for blending, but developed their range over the years to include five more references, including their first rosé wine, which is "a very limited production made with the help of the great Fernando Chivite". As for the market, she says that from the outset they chose to export, and today foreign sales represent 70 percent of their business. She agrees with Juan Bautista



García about the importance vineyards and their uniqueness have gained, and thinks "that's why many DOs have opened up to admit different subareas or classifications. Today, more than ever, there is a very varied range of high quality wines, showcasing the diversity found in Spain, where there is room for different varieties, styles and philosophies. During these years, we can obviously see a greater commitment to the environment and health, and so we see more and more organic wines, vegan wines, etc.". Pablo Álvarez, managing director at Tempos Vega Sicilia, talks about Toro wines "which in many cases drank you instead of the other way around because they were so robust, but they have helped other regions improve and have supplemented shortages. We're not going to try and make Burgundies in Toro, as it's impossible for obvious

reasons. Neither is it the region of the future (as Robert Parker declared several years ago), or Spain's answer to Burgundy. We just look for a balance between what the area is capable of producing and what we can do. The wines are now more elegant and have a greater ageing capacity, which has been a pleasant surprise for us all. It's still a small DO, but it has a very promising future for those who know about wine and how to work the vineyard".

SOIL AND TERRITORY

Several changes have taken place, for example, in the working philosophy and production methods, there is a new generation of producers with in-depth, specialised training to start them off in their careers, an appreciation of previous practices and techniques while applying the most sophisticated winery technologies, a greater focus on communication, the possibility of a more direct rapport with end consumers through websites and online shops, bigger export volumes especially in the last ten years ...

One change that is worth highlighting is how quality has become associated with the most artisan productions possible, i.e. fully respecting the land and defending minimum vineyard and winery intervention at any cost. This link between quality and the land also includes supporting local varieties. Generally speaking, the equation appears simple, the less productive the better the quality, providing these vineyards are well located and tended.

SEVERAL CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE, IN THE WORKING PHILOSOPHY AND PRODUCTION METHODS, THERE IS A NEW GENERATION OF PRODUCERS WITH IN-DEPTH, SPECIALISED TRAINING TO START THEM OFF IN THEIR CAREERS.



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Never before has so much importance been attributed to the land and the soil, or to the fact that the vineyard is an essential part of the resulting wine, yet today these trends have led us to really appreciate terms like “*vinos de pueblo*”, “*de pago*”, “*de finca*”, “*de parcela*”, “*de municipio*”. Now, there are several surnames that can be added to wines so that their labels reflect their origin and stand out as superior productions (first in terms of quality and then in price), in comparison with wines that do not use any of these indications.

This philosophy has led to the creation of “*vinos de pago*”, with the first *Vino de Pago* denomination being granted in 2002 in *Dominio de Valdepusa* (belonging to *Marqués de Griñón*, in Toledo). This recognition has a positive and negative side and that is why, at the moment, the “*pago*” concept is a synonym of many things (county, region, place, district, territory, municipality...) all a different size. Limiting the size of a *pago*, and introducing a few more defining parameters would no doubt help the wines with this label gain more prestige and value.

THE PATH OF CHANGE

“The way my principles have changed from the 80s to now is incredible. I was lucky enough to start working with an innovative producer with a very open mind (Carlos Falcó), but not everyone in my circle was so lucky”. These are the words of Ignacio de Miguel, the experienced oenologist and winery consultant who has been in the

business for 30 years. In his opinion, these two decades have consolidated the far-reaching changes that started at the end of the 20th century.

“At the end of the 80s, a new generation of well-trained oenologists entered the sector and they were the ones to implement the great changes since it was their time on duty. They had to give value to all our wine territories and show that



PABLO ÁLVAREZ

great wines were not only made in Rioja. Álvaro Palacios in Priorato and then again in Bierzo, Miguel Ángel de Gregorio in Rioja, Pedro Aibar in Somontano, Telmo Rodríguez everywhere, Peter Sisseck in Ribera de Duero, Agustí Torello with Cava ...and, in my case, alongside other less mediatic names who have been equally important in our forgotten lands”.

He adds that consolidating these changes meant taking technology to

forgotten places and then giving value to abandoned territories. “Before trying a wine, consumers already ‘knew’ that Jumilla wines were oxidised, Cariñena wines had a high alcohol content, and that you could eat the wines from Toro with a knife and fork. However, it looks like this is no longer the case, as they just needed a little technology and investment to rediscover their true potential. Succeeding in having good wines in all our wine territories is a major achievement”.

And he continues. “Today the national sector is up-to-date with everything related to production (in terms of the vineyard, the winery and the techniques used), as the wineries and their technical teams are very much on the ball. Mind you, I also think that the sector has advanced far quicker than the Spanish market or consumers. Many still think like their grandparents, and many restaurants still do not think that wine is an important part of their business, and so still offer boring wine lists and serve warm wines, poor glassware ...”.

ORGANIC AND BIODYNAMIC WINES

Naturally, at the beginning of this century, the numerous I+D studies promoted by some firms, both in vine culture and production methods, became very important. Similarly, organic wine making and everything it involves, also started to gain ground, both in terms of new organic wineries opening and a significant increase in the number of organically run vineyards. This new

AN APPRECIATION OF PREVIOUS PRACTICES AND TECHNIQUES WHILE APPLYING THE MOST SOPHISTICATED WINERY TECHNOLOGIES.

approach has meant moving away from the practices used for many, many years, like using sulphur (a traditional preservative) and the various chemical products for treating the vineyard. One aspect that people began to talk about was radical biodynamics, which is organics taken to the extreme, sustainable agriculture, and full respect for nature because it does not allow any human or chemical interference; only mineral and plant preparations. The land is in control, whatever it produces, and only natural treatments are permitted, no fertilizers, pesticides or fungicides. Inside the winery, particularly during the second decade of this century, people have started to look back at the tools used before in an attempt to make more modern wines, for new consumers. They look for wines made with less contact with wood, i.e., finer wines with greater fruit content, acidity and balanced acidity and freshness, which flow pleasantly over the palate, and have less alcohol content.

Therefore, Robert Parker, who was a popular American critic, very much in favor of wood and long ageing periods, soon feel out of favour, and even the many people who used to acknowledge and applaud him have turned their back on him. With the 21st century, large volume containers have also become popular as they make it easier to deal with the presence of wood, and emphasis is put on the positive features of concrete, a material that is once again being used more and more for wine.

Others are also turning to using earthenware amphorae.

During the same period, selected yeasts have given way to local ones, obtained from the land and the grapes. What is more, the idea of working with lees during ageing in tanks and in wood, has spread all over Spain. Leading white wine regions have even taken to using this technique because of the complexity and smoothness it gives their productions.

THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

Evidence of the climate change represents a before and after for wine



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and, in fact, the first alarm bells started ringing before the end of the first decade this century. The Torres family is without a doubt the most convinced, aware and involved winery. In 2008, they started their environmental program Torres & Earth to adapt to the change and reduce their carbon footprint. Energy consumption and virtually unsustainable production methods are at the root of global warming, a direct cause of the climate change. For his part, Miguel Gil, admits that this is the most important challenge facing the Gil family, as “an undeniable reality that has made us rethink our vine growing and wine making techniques. At the same time, we’re also facing another challenge, which is technological development, and trying to adapt our processes without losing our traditions. It’s something we have to consider when designing the style and characteristics of our wines”. Environmental awareness also has to take into consideration social responsibility vis-à-vis workers, suppliers and society in general. The environment reality is unquestionable, although it is still difficult to admit and really only a handful of wineries are genuinely preparing for it. However, some have started to look for and plant vineyards at a height or in colder areas (traditionally unusual places), and introduce other grape varieties that adapt better to this situation. There is one piece of information that supports these decisions: a study published seven years ago by the

Laboratorio Internacional en Cambio Global (LINCGlobal), founded by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas de España (CSIC) and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC), forecast a 25 percent reduction in the areas suitable for vine growing by 2050, “reaching up to 73 percent in the leading production areas, in the Mediterranean”. This study confirms that these areas will become too hot for growing vines, and this means we have to look for varieties that can withstand the heat.

NEW OENOLOGISTS

This scenario is slowly changing the ways of thinking and working in some wineries, and it is the new generation of oenologists, born at the end of the 20th century and developing their careers now, who are facing this



IGNACIO DE MIGUEL

challenge in very practical terms. As technicians, they are well trained, well-travelled and curious, and having worked on harvests both inside and outside Spain, their tastings are free of complexes or conditioning factors, and they are very much committed to the environment and biodiversity. For them, the bottom line is that wine is made in the field, in the vineyard, their main working area where they make decisive decisions. These professionals spend the year preparing the land and what will later be received into the winery, and therefore, for them, the climate, the soil, the territory, landscape or microorganisms are key concepts. It is clearly this new batch of wine makers who have made us look back to the past, at more artisan practices, while introducing new technologies for precise controls throughout the production process. Also, we can thank many of them for giving value to the territory, and the desire that the wines reflect their origin. “No doubt, one of the most important reasons for the changes that have taken place in the sector, is that these young technicians are very well trained”, Ignacio de Miguel adds. One of these professionals is Rafael Somonte (38 years old), and since 2014 he has been the technical director at Dominio de Tares in Bierzo, and he thinks that the main catalyst behind the “huge changes” that have taken place over the last twenty years, is the activity from 25 years before. “I mean the social-economic context we grew up in. It gave us the opportunity to be

educated, learn languages, receive training, access communications, technology, equipment... and so today, any small producer can turn up at a fair in New York to buy, sell or negotiate whatever is needed”.

In addition, he talks about two very positive decades, even though he believes we have to continue improving. “We’ve been lucky to have plenty of investment in wineries, sometimes from completely unrelated sectors (which has had both positive and negative effects), and this has allowed us to buy the most sophisticated equipment and hire the most professional teams; mind you, sometimes we have forgotten that this isn’t enough to make a good wine, because you also need to know how to sell it properly. We have managed to rank the quality of our wines alongside the world’s best, but over the next two decades we still need to learn how to give value to this quality. The famous price-quality ratio is a mixed blessing, as it shows that we are better at producing than promoting”.

CHANGING THE LANGUAGE

Over the last two decades these new technologies and their sophisticated equipment have burst into the production sector. They are very useful tools that have become essential for promotion and have opened up a direct communication channel with consumers, as well as becoming a very interesting way to sell wines. In this respect, Irene Canalejo, at Pago de Larraínzar, raises an interesting point: “direct sales are

A GREATER FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION, THE POSSIBILITY OF A MORE DIRECT RAPPORT WITH END CONSUMERS THROUGH WEBSITES AND ONLINE SHOPS, BIGGER EXPORT VOLUMES ...



RAFAEL SOMONTE

still on the increase, and in 2020 they have been key to weathering the Covid 19 crisis in the catering trade”. At Bodegas El Nido, Miguel Gil also refers to these virtues, and insists on the need to send honest, sincere messages, “which is another very important aspect that has developed in recent years, thanks to the immediate way information can be obtained and the universal access to it on internet and the social media. Today it’s not just about selling a good product, instead you have to sell the complete project, which has to be sustainable and responsible and with added value. More and more, all business projects aim to contribute to environmental, social and economic wealth. The wineries that are unable to adapt and respond to these demands, while maintaining their level of quality, will not survive this new,

competitive era that is so uncertain and changing constantly, without any signs of settling down.”

New codes adapted to new consumer profiles; some are informed (a wine enthusiast by definition) and others are curious, particularly the younger ones who have less prejudices and preconceived ideas. This means it is difficult to make them loyal to one product, but nevertheless, they are open to trying new, varied productions. At any event, the target public is asking for simpler, more straightforward language because they are prepared to listen and learn and, most of all, enjoy. And De Miguel supports this idea: “I only believe in rich wines that you can enjoy and, if they have a unique personality, then all the better. I’m not interested in anything that needs to be explained or justified because it isn’t clear”.

In tune with these changes in consumer behaviour, there are a few things to note about marginalised, and sometimes underestimated, territories and profiles. For example, the popularity of rosé wines has increased in the second decade. There are more references and their quality and drinking figures have improved. The same can be said for sparkling wines, which are no longer just fresh wines, because of their bubbles. They have proved that they are also able to benefit from long ageing periods. Also, with respect to leading regions like Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Rueda and Rías Baixas, the open-mindedness of these new consumers has opened the door for new-style productions. Today, there is



room for small, personal, minority and even extravagant projects, even though these efforts are only appreciated by a small percentage of the public. You see, since this type of consumer exists, then this type of products can exist too. However, we must not forget that they are buying what is inside the bottle and behind it, and so the wine image has become a fundamental decision for wineries.

NEW HORIZONS

At the other end of the scale from these small and very personal initiatives, we saw some bigger ventures appear at the start of the new century; well-established firms expanding into different areas, with the same commercial philosophy: based on successful DOs and under the umbrella of the mother label and the better-known wines. The Rs still dominate the market, and wineries from Rioja have set up in Ribera, and vice versa. They look for their own white wine in Rueda or an Albariño in Rías Baixas, and there are wineries that have started to produce in emergent areas endorsed by good write-ups. It was the middle of the 20th century when the DOs started to appear, and by the end of the century they had become established as important technical-administrative bodies focused on defending the quality and image of Spanish wine, and consequently, its market presence. Having said that, it is also true that the time came when a winery had to belong to a DO to have

any hope of a future, and so every territory needed to have its own denomination or denominations. Some of them have become so vast (e.g. Catalonia, Valencia or Cava) that they have lost their *raison d'être*, the common features of their wineries that identify them as one entity, different from others. In other words, the arguments for defending common



DAVID PALACIOS

interests were weakened, and there is so much tension in some that conflicts have arisen, with fallouts and walkouts, like the ones in Rioja and Cava in recent years. The main reasons: not feeling identified or represented.

REINVENTING THE DO

As they evolve, the wine denominations need to be restructured internally if they want to maintain their role. We talked

about this to the chairman of DO Navarra, David Palacios, also chairman of the *Conferencia Española de Consejos Reguladores Vitivinícolas* (CECRV). "The way the sector has evolved in recent years has focused on four areas; continuously improving the quality of the wines; promoting professionalism in vine growing and wine making, and modernising the processes; enriching our vine and wine heritage with new denominations of origin alongside the traditional ones, and consolidating DO wines as a reference for export". As for the idea that in these new times we are experiencing a different type of denominations is needed, Palacios reminds us that the way the DOs develop depends on the vine growers and wine producers sitting on their decision-making boards, "however, even though it is not always evident, the DOs are adapting to producer needs and market and consumer demands. The important thing is to keep the balance between the origin, the cultural practices in each territory and market trends. We have to move away from passing trends and still continue to evolve, and the regulating councils have enough tools to move forward in the right direction". As for the much-publicised fallouts in some DOs, Palacios explains once again that it is the vine growers and producers who decide to join forces to give value to their land "and so it is essential to safeguard the overall good of those registered in the DO, and not the individual needs which, sometimes, end up as more of a burden than a blessing". ■

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MAGICAL ALLIANCES

»» Films without a soundtrack: incomplete. Videogames without music: incomprehensible. Dentist surgeries without piped music: unlikely. Parties without music: impossible. Without realising it, we associate familiar sounds with emotions, regardless of how subtle they may be. Our emotional response to a particular sound, is our reaction to the context from where that sound originates. If we can sense somebody's mood because they have a lower, deeper voice than usual, or their happiness because of their higher, sharper notes, imagine everything we must be able to capture with music? And if talking about music, what about the combination of music and wine? The alliance between music and wine is nothing new. There are an endless number of unforgettable musical tastings and concerts sponsored by wineries, which try to combine these two emotions for added value. There have been hundreds of good examples of this in recent years. Some argue that a wine's harmonies and nuances go hand in hand with musical cords and, therefore, it is possible to associate a wine with a specific melody. Have you ever sat down, glass in

hand, to listen to a song you like which reminds you of something or someone? This intimate and personal pleasure is based on the cognitive theory that claims (and has proven scientifically) that music stimulates specific parts of the brain. As humans we love associating people and things, and one example is associating melodies with

there is more to this fairly serious subject than mere intuition. It has "almost" been proved that music directly influences our appreciation of wine. A few years ago, the Chilean producer, Aurelio Montes, managed to promote research with scientific criteria that went further into the relationship between wine and music, since he was

Montes' ideas stirred the curiosity of Dr. Adrian C. North, Sociology professor at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, who developed research that ended in a report published in 2011 (The Effect of Background Music on the Taste of Wine). The report concluded that "background music influences the flavour of wine. A wine's specific flavour is influenced consistently by a person's frame of mind provoked by music. If the background music was strong and rhythmical, the wine was considered more powerful and intense than when there was no background music. If the background music was subtle and elegant, people considered the wine to be more subtle and elegant... The magnitude of these effects was not insubstantial, and they were stronger for red wine than for white".

This last piece of information was explained later by the fact that the 250 participants in the study (adults on the Heriot Watt campus, occasional drinkers) were more familiar with white European wines and felt safer with this type of wine when giving their opinions. Nevertheless, the most obvious conclusion obtained is that there is clearly one type of music for every wine,



situations; wine is an element that combines the various perceptions of a broader experience, including other senses. During these lockdown times, when we are house-bound, there have been a huge number of musical tastings on YouTube and, intuitively, they establish emotional alliances with specific wines. However,

convinced that a genuine interaction existed between them. His wines in the Viña Montes winery were aged with Gregorian music while in the barrels, and he says he notices the effect. If music reduces stress, our heart beat and our blood pressure, alleviates pain and anxiety, isn't it also possible that it influences wine and our perception of it?

both in terms of enjoying it and acquiring it. As for wine purchases, a study from 1997 conducted by A.C. North himself together with D. Hargreaves and J. McKendrick (The Influence of In-Store Music on Wine Selections) revealed the influence of music on purchasing decisions. The experiment was held in a supermarket with French and German background music. Depending on which music was playing, purchases were made according to the same origin of wine, in a ratio of almost one to one for French wines, and three to one for German wines. Now we're onto this subject, let's look at another earlier study from 1993, by Areni & Kim (The Influence of Background Music on

Shopping Behavior: Classical Versus Top-Forty Music in a Wine Store). This showed that music predisposes us to react to certain preconceived ideas that we all have, whether we are aware of them or not. One example was the stereotype of classical music as "more elegant", and associated with more sophisticated and elegant situations. Consequently, with classical music in the background, people tended to purchase more expensive wines than when they listened to popular, top hits. Going back to the study by A.C. North and his idea of checking whether apart from influencing our purchasing decisions, as shown by the previous study, wine can also have an impact on taste, this

is obviously true, even though the sample used to develop the idea was too small to confirm this outright. Along the same lines, the English wine writer and musician, living in New Zealand, Jo Burzinska, who describes herself as a multi-sensory artist, asked volunteers last year to take part in research to study the possible effects sounds have on our perception of a wine's characteristics. The results have been delayed because of the pandemic, but it will be interesting to see them. One evident conclusion is that the idea of associating wine and music is on the table, waiting for more experiments to provide scientific arguments and proof. Combining music and

wine adds to the enjoyment of both, but be careful where volume is concerned. Clark Smith (Vinovation) the wine consultant and manager, also discovered that if music is too loud, the wine's sweet sensation is reduced and its savouriness or umami increases, whereas the greater the umami, the more bitter and coarse the wine appears. Well, we can't have everything ... While the studies and research continue, try sitting back and listening to *Una de dos*, by Luis Eduardo Aute, with a glass of barrel-fermented Chardonnay, or *Red Red Wine* by UB40 with a very fresh rosé, or *Purple Haze* by Jimi Hendrix with a Toro red. Wine and music, or music and wine, work. Proved. ■

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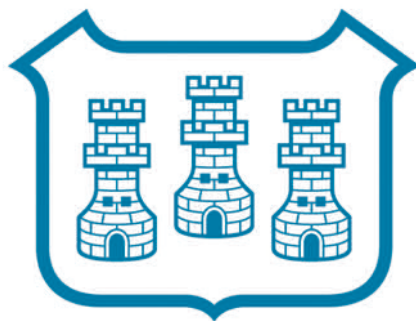
Marta Rivera de la Cruz



VINOS DE SAN MARTÍN
D.O. VINOS DE MADRID



MIGUEL TORRES MACSSAZEK IN 2045.
SIMULATION MADE WITH FACEAPP.

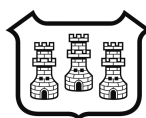


TORRES FAMILY 2045

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

IT IS THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TORRES FAMILY IN WINE PRODUCTION. THE FAMILY'S FIFTH GENERATION AT THE HELM, LOOKS INTO THE FUTURE, WITH THE FIRM'S PAST STILL VERY MUCH IN MIND. THIS IS THE FIRM'S HALLMARK. FEW COMPANIES CAN ESTIMATE SO CLEARLY SOMETHING LIKE THE FUTURE, WHICH, BY DEFINITION, IS SO DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND..

TEXT: MIGUEL ÁNGEL RINCÓN



"What time is it?" Sarah asks looking up from the bed.

"It's still very early".

Today, Tuesday 31 October 2045, at seven o'clock, Miguel Torres Macssazek, at just over seventy years old, is getting ready to go out for a bike ride. It is his long-practiced habit, although the distances he covers now are not the same as twenty years ago. He will go up to the Sant Pau chapel, crossing the Riera del Llitrà.

When he goes down to the kitchen, Macabeu, his personal robotic assistant, has already laid his breakfast out on the table: freshly baked bread, quince jelly, tomatoes, scrambled egg. Everything comes from his wife's vegetable garden, which he and Sarah have been tending for decades in the garden in the family farmhouse; a small universe where they raise rabbits, hens and even a couple of sheep, and they grow vegetables and some fruit trees.

Today, Miguel has an informal meeting with the Board of Administrators at Torres, the family. The harvest finished in the last of the estates in Tremp, a few weeks ago. The first wines have already fermented and it looks like there will not be any unwanted surprises this year. They will talk about that, the anniversary and the business in England.

Perhaps the children are right, Miguel thinks. Perhaps it is time to once again open up new horizons and accept the purchasing offer of that vineyard in Norwich. They decide. They carry the baton now. It is the sixth generation. He has to let them make their own decisions, and face their own challenges. Who would have said that we could end up making wines a couple of hours outside London.

The front wheel of his bike is a little flat so, before setting off, Miguel goes to the garage to collect a hand pump to inflate it. The pump is an obsolete article, since Macabeu himself, who follows at a discrete distance, is equipped to do the job. Miguel knows this, but he likes to continue pumping the wheels by hand. When he finishes, he puts on his helmet and starts pedalling.

DIFFERENT VINEYARDS

There is a clear, blue sky. The summers are much longer than before and the cold weather does not arrive until the beginning of November. The path runs alongside the vineyards he passes. They are so different now to how they were before. The increased temperatures forced them to make fairly drastic changes, but even so, they have managed to maintain a continuity that is noticeable in their wines. The Garnacha and Monastrell varieties cover several plots on his horizon, something that was unthinkable in Penedés fifty years ago. Both vari-

eties came from the south following the increase in the average annual temperatures.

It is the same story with the goblet plantations, which have now replaced most of the trellis systems that covered the ground in the past. When the climate made it clear that there was no turning back, it was obvious that the Penedés had to recover the planting systems vine growers had been using for centuries in the south of Spain. Each vine planted in the goblet system conceals a microclimate that protects the bunches from insolation.

This was one of the keys to preserving the best vineyards in the lower areas, before the overall temperature increase. Selecting the most resistant plants was also a significant move, as was installing the sensor and satellite system that monitors the state of each vine on each estate, individually, every hour of every day of the year.

However, the really definitive decision was surrounding them with a vibrant ecosystem of local wildlife, birds, insects, grasses and flowers. The great vine revolution in the first half of the 21st century was recovering the soil. It was a way of fighting against the effects of the climate change, and it provided an identity statement for each of the terroirs of each of the wines.

THE 21ST CENTURY REVOLUTION

As Miguel Torres cycles around the boundaries of his vineyards on a sunny morning in 2045, his greatest pride is that little woodland that has grown up around his fields, which are all certified as organic, and reducing the carbon footprint in all the wineries to zero, which are the two main things he achieved with his sister Mireia, when they ran the family business.

It was not easy. They had to change everything. They had to learn to make their own clean energy using all the means available: photovoltaic, solar, geothermal, and biomass... And they had to make sure this energy was used extremely efficiently.

It was also necessary to manage the water supply, encourage all their suppliers to eliminate their own carbon footprint, create solutions for the packaging, redesign the commercial channels and on top of all that, plant a woodland. An endless expanse of woodland to compensate what could not be eliminated. In the land not suitable for vineyards, the trees would absorb the CO2 from the atmosphere as they grew. A woodland like Coyhaique, in the Patagonia in Chile.

When Miguel thinks about Chile, the latest harvest of the Empedrado wine springs to mind. That Pinot Noir planted on slate in the south of Curicó has now become one of the jewels in the ...

He has not seen the stone on the path.



The front tyre practically explodes. It looks like he pumped it up too much. He nearly falls to the ground, but manages to keep his balance. He gets off the bike, his legs wobbling and his heart beating faster than is good for him. He is getting on in years now. A melodic bell rings inside his helmet and a voice says:

"Mr. Torres, we have received notification of an incident on your ride. Are you ok?"

"Yes, it's nothing, thank you".

"Do you want us to send a recovery vehicle?"

Now recovered from the small shock, Miguel looks closely at the burst tyre. It is beyond repair.

"Yes, please".

DAMNED 2020

His ride is over. What a setback! He has to wait. What was he thinking about? He moves to the side of the path to let a silent tractor pass as it crushes the gravel on its way to Mas la Plana. The operator driving that huge electric beast waves at him from the driving seat. Miguel waves back, and remembers that his name is Francesc. He must be twenty years old at the most. His father and grandfather worked in the winery too.

Miguel starts to think about his own father, and his grandfather, and the four generations before him. And the fact that Mireia and he have already given way to the sixth generation. Not all the members of the sixth

generation have followed in their footsteps, only the ones that felt what he and his sister felt in their time: the call of the vineyard.

The history of the Torres family is a reflection of the history of Spain. The first generation saw how the colonies fell when they were exporting eighty percent of their production to them. In his grandfather's time, a German Stuka bombed the winery instead of releasing its bombs over the train station in Vilafranca, which was its real target. That incident made his grandfather go to the States to sell a wine that he did not actually have, so that he could rebuild the winery. In the face of major difficulties, you need great solutions.

Even he himself, Miguel, experienced first-hand the pandemic that shook Spain and the world in 2020.

That is probably the most difficult year he can remember. There was also a time for catharsis. Sales in the hospitality industry in Spain, which represented half of their business in Spain, had collapsed with the closing of bars and restaurants, and although exports kept them afloat, they had to grit their teeth. That year face to face contact with clients and tastings, gave way to on screen communication, and that was a turning point in his life. Not since his university days, had he spent so much time with Sarah and the children. And after that, he never went back to spending so many months of his life travelling and being away from them.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGES

It was also at that time that he confirmed his ideas about everything he had been working on in previous years. His grandfather and father had set up a more or less clear line of work beforehand, i.e. abandoning the use of herbicides and synthetic components, working with the estates. He, however, had decided to go much further. He knew that the way to do this was to go back to Nature.

Having the necessary time to work in each of the estates, without trying to grow beyond its own capacity or that imposed by being a family company. This is what he had always felt the need to cling to, the possibility of working at their own rhythm, thinking about the vineyards and not the profit and loss account. And thinking more and more about the land, the world we live in and just how small we really are.

That was one of the indelible marks left in his soul by the pandemic year. Being aware of how vulnerable we are within the natural world around us and which we have attacked. Therefore, he concluded that it was not just a question of making vine growing organic. He had to go further than that. It had to be regenerative. He had to forget the idea of the vineyard as a single crop, and integrate the vineyard into its natural surroundings, in a forever complex ecosystem that agriculture in the past had taken to the brink of disappearing.

A glider has arrived silently, and landed barely one metre from where he stands. Again, he hears the melodic bell and the voice inside his helmet.

"A vehicle will recover the bike in a few minutes, Mr. Torres. You can return home in the transport we have sent you".

Miguel climbs into the glider and sits down. There is a gentle buzzing sound, and the remote-controlled machine rises one and a half metres from the ground and starts to return home. The wonderful feeling of flying over the vineyards in silence is difficult to describe, passing unnoticed above the heads of the cattle grazing peacefully on the woodland vegetation growing between the vineyards.

The bike is parked to one side of the path. This will be a good anecdote to share in the meeting later. It will be better to talk about this than repeat himself about the famous gala dinner cancelled on the 150th Anniversary. Well, it was not actually cancelled, just postponed, ...

As he listens to the buzzing sound of the flying device that is transporting him, he reaches the conclusion that, in short, that year 2020 somehow changed everything.

ESTATE WINES

Mind you, this is not true with respect to the wines. Their most emblematic wines have just aged and improved since then; Mas la Plana, Grans Muralles, Mas





de la Rosa... The best Torres estates have adapted well to the changes thanks to the massal selection of individual plants that were most resistant to the climate change, help from new technologies and control tools, and the transformations in the growing systems.

What is more, some of the wines that were not very promising at that time, now shine in their own light:

For example, the Fransola variety. They had recovered it and planted it in the limestone terraces in Es Costes, in Llacuna, seven hundred metres above sea level in Penedés, in the land he himself discovered on one of his bike rides, and now it has produced one of the wines with the most personality in the Torres collection.

The Els Tossals vineyard, in Priorat, which they made such an effort to plant on the highest lying slate soil in the county, on a crown that is buffeted by the wind and virtually inaccessible, has started to reveal the great wines that it can produce, twenty-five years later, when the Cariñena, Garnacha and Picapoll planted at that time, have started to shine.

The Pirene variety planted at a height in Tremp, in the Pre-Pyrenees, has recovered the full uniqueness of a lost ancestral variety. The vehicle arrives at his house. The garden door opens to let him in and the machine lands silently next to the paved path leading up to the house.

Sarah must be having breakfast, he thinks. He will give her a kiss, and tell her about the bicycle, and then

he will go upstairs for a quiet shower. He has more time than he planned before the meeting starts which, as always, will be in the old Vilafranca winery. He no longer runs the company and he is aware of that. Mind you, he also knows that the others tend to follow his advice. The children seem decided to buy in England. Well, let them do it. They have the time and the energy to do it.

When the door to his house opens, his wife gives him a big smile. She has just finished a holographic conversation and looks radiant. Before approaching him, she sips the orange juice in her hand and then leaves the glass on the table so quickly, that it falls over. Parelada, Sarah's personal robotic assistant, catches it in mid-air, preventing it from smashing into pieces on the tiled floor. Sarah hugs her husband.

"What's going on?" Miguel asks, surprised, as he takes off his helmet.

"I'm going with you to the meeting".

"You're coming to the meeting?"

He repeats it to give himself time to guess what his wife is thinking about.

"Yes," she says, all smiles.

"Has something happened?"

"Yes, something wonderful".

Miguel gives her a confused look.

"We're going to be grandparents!". ■

THE NEW CORK STOPPERS

A CLEANER CLOSURE

THE CORKY SMELL HAS BECOME A PLAGUE, IN FACT IT IS MORE HARMFUL THAN THAT AS IT COULD AFFECT ANY WINE, AND SPENDING MORE ON STOPPERS DOES NOT GUARANTEE A SOLUTION. ALARM BELLS STARTED RINGING IN THE WINERIES, ALTERNATIVE STOPPERS STARTED APPLYING MORE PRESSURE, PARTICULARLY IN CERTAIN NON-CORK PRODUCING COUNTRIES, AND SO CORK FACTORIES SET TO WORK TO ELIMINATE THE RISK JEOPARDISING THEIR POSITION.

» Not very long ago, cork stoppers went through a very difficult time, because a series of olfactory molecules were identified as causing the corky smell and taste in wines. Since then, the whole vine and wine sector has taken the matter seriously, whereas before it was something like a lottery and rather enigmatic.

To overcome this serious drawback, some producers opted for other closure systems using different, alternative materials, like plastic stoppers, metallic threaded caps, glass, etc., which certainly provide a way around this problem, but can nevertheless, also generate other, different problems, but that is another story. Meanwhile, the cork sector set to work developing different technologies, to try and eliminate from the cork the compounds causing this defect, up to today where their presence has been minimised and even cancelled out.

Until recently, a batch of wine bottles was considered to have a problem if there was more than two percent of stoppers causing this smell. At the moment, this percentage tends to be lower, and some manufacturers guarantee that the smell has been completely removed. However, to reach this point, it is worth looking back at the cause of the problem, and the way it has been overcome.

FALSE CORKY SMELL

First of all, we have to differentiate between the real stopper taste and the false stopper taste. They originate from different sources, although they are both a serious wine defect. Secondly, the origin of this flavour has nothing to do with the corks, even though they are made up of microorganisms, fungi and moulds. We find substances like 2-methylisoborneol and geosmin, developed by ropy soil bacteria called Actinomycetes, and also fungi from the Penicillium and Botrytis families, which develop on the grape leaves, revealing dirty, mouldy and earthy aromas

The compound called 2-methoxy-3,5-dimethylpyrazine (MDMP), is a very strong-smelling volatile substance, with a dusty, corky and plant (potato, green hazelnut) sensation in the mouth. It is the result of a reaction between a proteobacteria (*Rhizobium excellensis*) and some amino acids.

It is not only the cork that can become contaminated with this substance, as oak wood can too. However, in this case, there is no danger, because it is very volatile at high temperatures, and therefore it is eliminated in the barrel manufacturing process. Another one, Guayacol, results from the action of the fungi, *Armillaria mellea*, from the breakdown of lignin and vanillin, and it

produces a smoked, phenolic, almost medicinal smell. Due to its appearance, it is known as *mancha amarilla* (yellow stain) and it frequently infects the lower parts of cork trees.

THE REAL CORK FLAVOUR

The compounds responsible for the true cork taste are chlorinated (chloroanisoles), and the main ones are 2,4,6-trichloroanisole (TCA) that smells of mould and wet cardboard, 2,3,4,6-tetrachloroanisole (TeCA), which also smells of damp, and pentachloroanisole (PCA), which is less intense than the others.

These substances come from the transformation of the fungi of chlorinated compounds, generally chlorophenols, which are used as insecticides or disinfectants for various materials, for treating cork trees or cork planks, and also as a disinfectant for wood. Therefore, these unpleasant smells can come from the cork used as the raw material for the stoppers, and also from other different materials found in wineries, particularly wood treated with chlorinated compounds.

The main microorganisms triggering this transformation are the ropy fungi. Particularly, the ones in the *Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, *Cladosporium* and *Trichoderma* families, and also others



like the *Rhodotorula* or *Candida* yeasts, which, in the presence of humidity, can transform non-aromatic chlorophenol compounds into the chloroanisoles that produce these smells.

These living elements use this breakdown mechanism as a defence system to remove the former chlorinated compounds that are aggressive for them. On other occasions, in order to develop this mechanism, you just need the wine polyphenols, or some other winery compound containing them, to be chlorinated with cleaning bleach or chlorine-treated water.

INNOCENT CORK

Therefore, it is not necessarily the cork that is directly responsible for wines being contaminated by chloroanisoles. These particles can also come from treating wood, or similar materials, with chlorophenol type fungicides, which in damp environments can form chloroanisoles that can spread in the winery atmosphere and contaminate the wines stored there. Therefore, the following compounds may appear:

PCP: 2,3,4,5,6-pentaclorofenol

TeCP: 2,3,4,6-tetraclorofenol

TCP: 2,4,6-triclorofenol

PCA: 2,3,4,5,6-pentacloroanisol

TeCA: 2,3,4,6-tetracloroanisol

TCA: 2,4,6-tricloroanisol

The perception threshold for these substances is so low that any wine can be contaminated by chloroanisoles and,



what is more, they can be absorbed by various materials, even if, in principle, the components do not contain them; for example, filtration soils, filtration plates, clean cork stoppers, non-contaminated wood, etc., all of which can end up contaminating the wine if they come into contact with chloroanisoles.

It was recently discovered that other halogen compounds, like bromoanisoles, particularly 2,4,6 tribromoanisole (TBA) (from the corresponding bromophenols, produced by the action of certain fungi and microorganisms), can pass

characteristics on to the wine; an intense mouldy smell, and some phenol and iodine hints, which are particularly evident in the nose during the tasting stage, and are very persistent.

DEFENCE MECHANISMS

Today various methods are being developed for directly fighting against this cork issue. It is worth highlighting some of these methods, including the following techniques:

- During the cork plank maturing stage in the field, the mould, *Chrysomya sitophila* is developed,



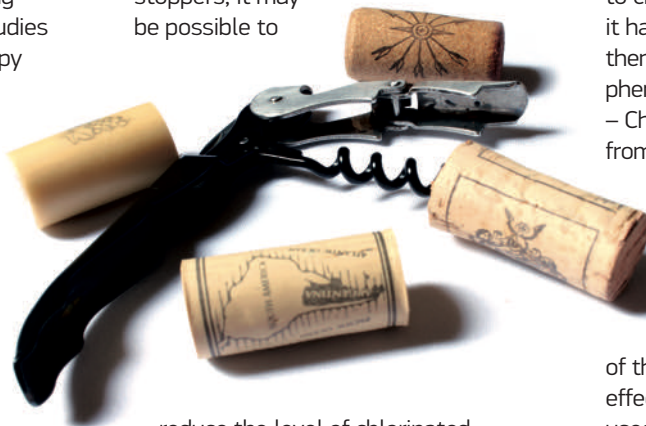
as it can break down more than 80 percent of the chlorophenols, the chloroanisole forerunners. As this mould spreads, it inhibits the development of other moulds with a high chloroanisoles forming capacity. Also, in this respect, studies have been conducted with the rosy fungi called *Trichoderma longibrachiatum*.

- Treating the cork planks during the maturing stage after boiling, by sterilising them in an autoclave or similar device.

- Sterilising the cork stoppers limits this problem, as the process eliminates the microorganisms that transform chlorophenols into chloroanisoles. A very effective sterilisation method is an ionisation treatment using accelerated electrons; the cork stoppers are

treated in their containers, and the microorganisms are destroyed without affecting the cork's physical-chemical properties.

- In possibly contaminated cork stoppers, it may be possible to



reduce the level of chlorinated compounds they contain, through treatments based on their high volatility, such as exposure to strong air currents over a series of weeks, or

a shorter heating treatment or controlled steam distillation.

- Cork lenticels contain a significant number of phenolic compounds (substances that can be forerunners to chloroanisoles), and therefore, it has been suggested eliminating them from cork stoppers, using a phenol-oxidase enzyme.

- Chloroanisoles can be removed from cork using carbon dioxide (CO₂) in a supercritical state (in other words, in an intermediate state between gas and liquid), to combine the liquid's extraction power with the penetration power

of the gas. This system is very effective in treating ground cork used for agglomerates or the cork dust used to make technical cork agglomerate stoppers. It is not very recommendable for natural stoppers because the cold and

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high-pressure conditions may deform them.

- Another technique called *innocork*, consists in sealing the cork stoppers in a stainless steel chamber and treating them with a jet of water vapour and pure ethyl alcohol, which attracts the chloroanisole molecules and removes them from the cork. Then, the stoppers are washed in pure water vapour to remove any alcohol remains.

- The Procock technology places a selective membrane on the heads or mirrors of the cork stoppers, made up of five polymeric layers with the following functions: absorbing chloroanisoles, controlling micro-oxygenation and controlling humidity. This not only prevents the problem of the corky taste, but also other defects that appear in cork stopper manufacturing or diversity.



- Sealed stoppers nearly always have a very reduced number of chloroanisoles, because in the manufacturing process and immediately before sealing, the stoppers are treated on the outside with hexane or benzene, and when these very soluble substances evaporate, they entrain virtually all the chloroanisoles contained in the stoppers.

- Some cork stopper manufacturers have developed a chloroanisoles analysis system for all manufactured stoppers, called one by one.

The system identifies the contaminated corks and guarantees completely eliminating the problem. It even offers to reimburse any bottles that may be affected. When contracting a batch of stoppers processed this way, the manufacturer increases his price by a percentage to cover the cost of the process and also the rejected stoppers.

BREATHABLE STOPPERS

Moving on, the cork stopper is a semi-hermetic closure system and its main purpose is to prevent the wine contained inside the bottle from spilling

out. However, it also has another interesting property: allowing a limited gaseous exchange between the wine and its outside environment, which will affect the quality or evolution of the bottled wine over time.

Initially, the bottling conditions determine how oxygen enters the wine, and this oxygen can come from operations prior to bottling, such as filtration, pumping, etc., and also from the actual bottle filling process. Here the extent that the wine is oxygenated is very significant, and the wine can be saturated at the rate of about five to

seven milligrams per litre, which is why an inert gas atmosphere is used to overcome this drawback.

Once the bottle is closed, the only ways oxygen can enter is either through the space between the glass and the stopper, which causes very limited oxidation, or, particularly, by air constantly entering through the stopper, and which can be a considerable amount over time.

The oxygen permeability of the various closure systems can be measured using what is known as an OTR index (oxygen transfer rate), which will depend on the type of stopper used and the materials used to make it. This parameter is used to measure the amount of oxygen that can penetrate as far as the wine. The result is expressed in milligrams of oxygen per unit of time, which is normally one year, although it can refer to other periods of time.

For a cylindrical cork stopper, the amount of air that enters is very high, in principle, due to the porous structure of this material, which gradually expels the air it contains inside. This effect is called desorption and also OIR (oxygen initial release).

This stage lasts about six months, during which time the stopper can expel and pass on to the wine, between ten and twenty milligrams of oxygen when natural corks are used. The values range from 0.5 to 1.8 milligrams of oxygen for the so-called technical corks (micro-agglomerates). Logically, when non-cork stoppers are used, such as the synthetic ones, metallic ones, glass ones, etc., this stage does not take place because these materials are not porous, and therefore, they cannot transfer oxygen to the wine.

PROLONGED OXYGENATION

After the desorption stage, oxygen enters the wine constantly over time, and it depends on the OTR value (oxygen transfer rate) of each type of stopper. For natural cork stoppers, their values are usually high and also very

variable, even within each batch of stoppers, which makes it difficult to regulate a uniform oxygen rate in one and the same batch of bottled wine. However, for technical cork stoppers (micro-agglomerates), values are usually lower and even very uniform in each batch. This means it is possible to accurately regulate the oxygen that enters the bottle, and consequently, control the speed at which the bottled wines evolve, depending on their style. Some cork firms are already offering a range of micro-agglomerate stoppers that guarantee different levels of oxidation in bottled wines, with OTR values fluctuating between 0.2 and 0.8 milligrams of oxygen per year.

OXYGEN MANAGEMENT

Wines with a greater oxidation capacity, develop small amounts of hydrogen sulphide and mercaptans, which

indicates that they are less likely to reduce, even if they are closed with a stopper that allows a minimum amount of oxygen to enter. In the same way, due to their smaller antioxidant capacity, these wines are more exposed to the risk of prematurely losing their fruit aromas. In this case, you can choose a stopper with a low OTR value to prolong the bottle life.

Otherwise, wines with a smaller oxidation capacity, on the one hand, preserve their fruit aromas better, but on the other hand, increase the risk of reductive characteristics. So, in this case, it is better to choose a stopper with a higher OTR value.

Wines with sensory characteristics and prevalent thiols, such as for example, Sauvignon Blanc or other similar ones, are very sensitive to oxygen entering the bottle. However, it is important not to fall into the trap of encouraging the appearance of unpleasant reductive

smells, like hydrogen sulphide and mercaptans. Therefore, stoppers with a lower OTR value will be used. Wines with a greater terpene composition develop better using stoppers with higher OTR values, where the varietal fruit can be expressed better. Generally, metallic screw caps offer low OTR values, depending on the material used in the airtight seal. So, Saran Tin is virtually oxygen impermeable, with very low OTR values (0.03 milligrams per year), while Saranex offers much higher values (0.7 milligrams per year). As for synthetic stoppers, their oxygen permeability depends on their manufacturing technology. The injection moulded version only allows a limited range of OTR adjustments, while the coextruded version provides a wide range of OTR values, which are also very interesting for regulating, under your own terms, the rate at which oxygen enters bottled wines. ■

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ZAMORA



» Slowly, but deservedly, the city has gained merit and recognition in the media for things other than its undeniably attractive monuments. It is a reference for the Romanesque period, in terms of its architectural treasures, both inside and outside the capital, and it is one of the main cities in Castile for

its Holy Week celebrations and, what is more, it can boast an appetising selection of tapas venues. Another advantage is that, as it is a small city, you can go from one place to another in a couple of minutes, and so the most appetising and successful venues are within easy reach. Zamora is one of the capitals where you can really enjoy tapas because it is a great choice for good food and drink; there is a good selection, it is not expensive and the produce is excellent, mostly locally sourced.

The calm, peaceful character most of us attribute to Zamora is a very attractive feature, and very noticeable as you walk around, in contrast to the places in the old quarter at the aperitif-*tapas* time, at midday or in the evening. Here there are plenty of people, a good ambience and general hustle and bustle, with everyone constantly walking in and out of full, lively bars. In any of these bars, or most of them,

you will find a good range of local and regional wines, particularly from Toro. Midday and evening are the two times of the day when people go for a drink and then carry on, either at home or in the street. It is at these times of the day that the hustle and bustle begins in the tapas areas in Zamora. Taking



Wine Bistro by Abel.



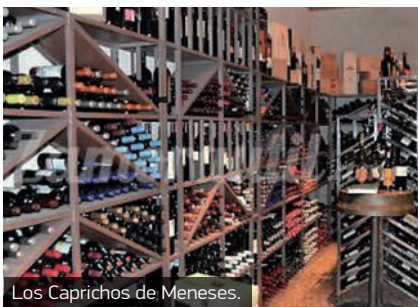
Lasal.



the Plaza Mayor as our reference, one street with plenty of venues is Los Herreros. Two places are particularly interesting because of their focus on wine and everything associated with it. **Wine Bistro by Abel** (Herreros, 24) has a list of nearly 200 references, either in the bottle or by the glass. It is run by Abel de las Heras, a self-trained chef who has earned himself a good reputation. Local produce based on traditional recipes that he reinvents and combines, and a cellar that houses local productions and plenty of other Spanish and international references. They also do wine tastings, maridajes, presentations, etc.

Just a few steps away, we find another must, **Lasal** (Herreros, 29), run by Rubén Becker, a well-known sommelier from Zamora who runs another local venue to enjoy a good selection of wines, again with more than 200 references on the list. It opens after eight o'clock in the evening and also organises regular tasting events. The cooking focuses on good produce, and in the bar, there are about a dozen by-the-glass selections that change every week.

Still in this same street, we find two more interesting names, **Taberna**



Los Caprichos de Meneses.

Urbana La Rosa (Herreros, 21) where they serve cheese, cured sausage, tapas and local wines. **Los Abuelos** (Herreros, 4) is a much more traditional, family-run venue in terms of what you see and what you eat; their tapas and grilled raciones are their main thing, and the key to their success. A great place with quality and variety that serves several wines from DO Toro. Once in the Plaza Mayor, **Los Caprichos**



Patanegra.

de Meneses (plaza San Miguel, 3) is one of the most popular venues, opposite St. John's church, and it is precisely a place to enjoy the treats served by the founder, Alfonso Meneses. If you love good wine and good food, you must try it. Its cuisine focuses on good produce, particularly



Bar Lobo.

cod, and they organise gastronomy workshops on this and other delicacies, like caviar and foie. Its cellar has references for all tastes, but you have to book (maximum twelve diners). Another place where they hold many presentations on wines from very different areas. Next door, we find the restaurant, **Ágape** (Plaza San Miguel, 3), which boasts a bar, dining room and

well-sized terrace, and where they serve a variety of freshly made tapas and a good list of wines from DOs in Castile, (mainly Toro), and other areas. They organise tasting events here also, and their homemade pizzas cooked in their wood oven are well worth trying. Moving away from the Plaza Mayor, around Plaza del Maestro, there is one of the capital's traditional references, **Bar Lobo** (El Horno de San Torcuato, 1), which is famous for its *pinchos morunos* (kebabs) cooked over coal, served with some of the leading local wines. Another must, which describes itself as "the kebab king"... so there you go!

Not far away, we have **Patanegra** (Pelayo, 4), with a similar philosophy: reasonably priced *tapas* and *raciones*, and a selection of local wines.



París Zamora.

Here, they hold occasional wine tastings too.

A couple of minutes away, there is **París Zamora** (avenida Portugal, 14), which has a fantastic range of wines and gourmet dishes, some of the best in the city. It is a modern, cosy place where they pay particular attention to their wines, both in terms of service and variety (local and beyond), and



La Oronja.



they also serve local food, and hold a variety of tasting events. On the city's main shopping street there is Casino de Zamora, which includes **La Oronja** (Santa Clara, 2) on the first floor. It is a lovely building with an attractive façade (one of the city's modernist treasures), and elegant interior. It combines a light, spacious restaurant that serves market cuisine based on quality produce, and a gastro bar where you can eat well and enjoy plenty of local wine labels. It is run by Ricardo Campos, in the kitchen, and his wife, Conchi Rodríguez, in the bar and dining room. Every week, they offer a new selection of tapas with corresponding wines.

Ajo y Perejil (plaza Santiago, 3) is just two minutes away, next to the church of Santiago del Burgo, and it is another must on the Romanesque tour of the city. A very modern premises serving traditional, homemade tapas for enjoying with local wines, particularly from Toro. Weather permitting, its terrace is a good alternative. Either inside or out, this must be part of your tapas tour in Zamora, particularly as the staff and wine service are excellent. With a 10 minute walk, we can continue the tour in another area



around Calle Cervantes, which has become popular for tapas because of its bars and traditional and creative venues ... and because it is off the tourist route.

There are three main names to remember if you want to have a good, correctly served wine. **La Vinacoteca** (Cervantes, 5), is famous for its cured sausages and cheese (which you can also buy to take away), and its local



and national wines. Right next door, we find **Portillo de la Traición** (Cervantes, 5), which first opened its doors eight years ago in Calle Herreros, and moved to these larger premises three years ago. They serve local produce and dishes, reinvented and blended with foreign ingredients, and Asian cuisine.

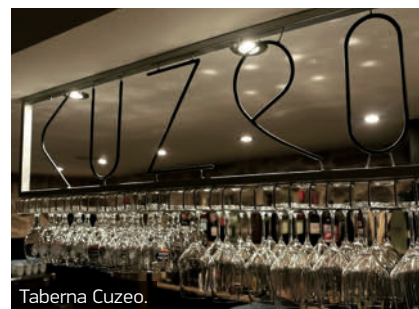


It is a different option, which makes it interesting, and their wine references include local and national labels from leading wineries.

Further down the street, we have **La Flaca Taberna Gastronómica** (Cervantes, 7). Bar, dining room, terrace and some of the city's most original tapas, both hot and cold, traditional and not so traditional, depending on the season and the available produce.

Every day they highlight one particular “*tapa* of the day”. The cellar works in a similar way, with some less-known labels and references.

Moving on to the square next to Parador de Zamora, we find two venues very close to one another. Two minutes from the Parador we have **El Motín de la Trucha** (Carnicerías, 2), right next door to the church of Santa María la Nueva, and where the village revolted against the nobles in the 11th century, in an event known as *Motín de la Trucha*. Anyone new to the city, must visit this place, not just because of its wares, but also because of its location: a 12th century winery, with doors made from barrels. Inside, the wine list has about 50 references, particularly local labels. Its seasonal, rich produce and tapas are based on tradition,



and there is something for everyone. Three minutes away on foot, we find the next venue called **Taberna Cuzeo** (Los Francos, 6), which is very popular with young people since it opened last December. A gastro tavern, with tapas and dishes made with local produce, inspired in traditional recipes with a modern touch. The wines are mainly local labels, and are all correctly served.

Another leading name is the restaurant, **Libertén** (Puerta Nueva, 2), which lies just outside the area mentioned above, but only 10 minutes away. Modern, functional and cosy, and well-known for its fish, seafood and meat dishes, and its popular tapas bar. Its range of wines is a little limited, but the service is very good, and that is what counts. ■



LA MALAJE.

PLAZA DE LA PAJA, 10. MADRID. TEL.: 913 642 587.
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): € 30.

» La Malaje has been located in the authentic Plaza de la Paja since July, but it actually first opened its doors at a different central location in the capital, i.e., Tirso de Molina. On these new premises it has gained both inside and out, as it has added a terrace which was impossible before. However, that and the address is all they have altered, since they have maintained the Andalusian-focus on their food and wine, and in the décor and produce. They still showcase the *generosos* wines, available either by the glass or the bottle. Obviously, as one can imagine, the wines are served very correctly (temperature, glassware, vintages), both the *generosos* and the other references lying in the cellar. Here there is a definite slant for Andalusian labels, as well as names from all the provinces and DOs in the region. They complete their range with a few examples of Canary Island wines, which they say “look further southwards”; namely, three references from Lanzarote and a fourth from Tacoronte-Acentejo.

This is a good reference for getting to know and trying the numerous, varied and even intriguing productions from the Andalusian vineyards, including reds, rosés, whites and sparkling wine, as well as Fino, Manzanilla, Palo Cortado, Amontillado and Oloroso, which, of course, are the ones that attract people's attention from the start.

Manu Urbano from Cordoba (former chef at restaurante Sacha) and the actor Aaron Guerrero, created this restaurant around the designer Andalusian cuisine prepared by Manu. Their formula has been working well for them since they opened their doors, as they combine a rich array of appetising gourmet dishes, for those wanting something a little more formal, with tasty *tapas* and *raciones*. The tavern proposal includes a selection of *escabeches* and a wide range of tapas with seasonal produce inspired by the Andalusian tradition that Manuel recreates, including *fritos*. They apply the same approach to their gourmet, state-of-the-art dishes that originate from traditional recipes. Top level cuisine supported by high quality produce. Overall, a venue that impresses everyone with its style, wine and food. A well-recommended Andalusian reference in Madrid. ■ Mara Sánchez



AMBIVIVUM. PAGO DE CARRAOVEJAS.

CAMINO DE CARRAOVEJAS, S/N. PEÑAFIEL (VALLADOLID). TEL. 983 881 938.
PRICE (ACC. TO MENU AND WINES): FROM € 95 TO € 245.

» The chosen name calls to mind the Roman term *convivium*, meaning a *symposium*, a banquet where wine was particularly important. However, it is in interpreting the Greek version of *symposium*, where wine was shared in a common vessel called crater or krater. The Head of the Alma Carraovejas group, Pedro Ruiz Aragonese, has unexpectedly moved away from what we could call a typical countryside restaurant. He has taken the more or less standard grill restaurant that was very much along the lines of the family business that started everything, and turned the Asador José María in Segovia, into a sophisticated restaurant that aspires to becoming one of the leading names in Spanish gastronomy. Here they use several craters, not just one, and have created two different closed menus. They recommend choosing *maridajes* (as they've always been called, but here they use the horrendous synonym, *harmonies*) with wines served by the glass. They offer two options, the Alma Carraovejas wines (Pago de Carraovejas, Ossian, Viña Mein and Emilio Rojo), or labels from their cellar that houses over 4000 references from all over the world.

Their menus are very long, including a whole range of state-of-the-art cuisine judging by the glassware and crockery designed for the restaurant, and numerous, attentive staff, including a star player: David Robledo, from Santceloni (Madrid). The creative cuisine is all down to Cristóbal Muñoz, who came here two years ago after working with top line chefs. The menus contain over twenty dishes, at a basic price of €95, without wine, or up to €175 or €195 if including wines from Alma Carraovejas, and up to €245 if you go for the *maridaje* (or, dare I say it, harmony ¡brrrrr!) with national and international wines in the most expensive menu of the two.

Everything is impeccable, with careful attention to detail, in a spacious, bright dining room, where tables are generously separated, very little noise, attentive and professional staff, the kitchen on view... And to top it all, a true festival of wines, illustrating the growing appreciation among catering professionals for old wines (which are not always a pleasant surprise). Achieving the correct wine temperature is the one thing that they claim is difficult to guarantee because of the by-the-glass service. ■ AP



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TEL.: 956 357 017.

» Only recently opened, these premises have largely contributed to completing the extensive wine tourism offer provided by González Byass, the largest in Andalusia, and perhaps in Spain itself. Honestly, it was an extraordinary decision that has led to a charming sherry hotel, the first and only one in the world.

The project involved renovating four 19th century houses belonging to the winery, which for years had been inhabited by the families of the foreman and another three loyal employees. The four homes have been joined together, fully respecting the outside appearance, and the hotel makes up one of the two corners of the large façade that looks directly on to the monumental cathedral opposite. It stands directly next door to the functional winery, the first premises Manuel María González Ángel purchased in Jerez, in the 1930s, to house the few *botas* with which he started his business. A significant symbol.

Coincidentally, today where we find one of the magnificent hotel suites, was where the winery oenologist, Antonio Flores, was born. He is the son of the foreman who lived there. (A little birdy told us that he and his wife were invited to spend the night precisely in the suite now occupying the room where he was born).

It is a 4-star hotel with 27 rooms in 6 different categories, three types of suites and three types of bedrooms (classic, premium and luxury, with different prices) and several, secluded patios and terraces that blend in well with the varied architecture of the joined houses. On the roof, there are splendid views of the cathedral and the fortress, and there is also a small swimming pool and the La Atalaya bar. On the ground floor next to reception, there is another one called Solera 1847, which has tables in the delightful garden, Pedro Nolasco, which has recently been recovered, opposite the cathedral. For many years, there have been several kitchens and restaurants located on the González Byass premises, and two of them, Villa Ricardo and Gran Bodega, cater for the hotel clients. They also provide tastings and brunches in one of the firm's vineyards, La Canariera, where clients can discover the wines and brandies in the magical winery grounds and tropical gardens. Legendary dreams in a unique hotel. ■ Paz Ivison



BODEGAS LANGA

THE EVOLUTION OF A CLASSIC

BODEGAS LANGA.
PL. SAN PEDRO, 5. JACA (HUESCA). TEL.: 974 360 494.
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL.): €20-25.

» Back in the 1930s, this used to be an old warehouse selling bulk wines. It was started by Sebastian Langa's grandfather and uncle who moved to Jaca to set up a branch of the family's 19th winery in Calatayud. His grandfather remained in Jaca and separated from the family firm, eventually setting up this company which has evolved thanks to client demand. Here you can buy wines, liqueurs and artisan products like oils from Somontano and Bajo Aragón, cured game sausages, ham from Teruel and cheese from the Pyrenees in the Sierra de Albarracín, passing by Moncayo. Today, its success is thanks to its reputation as a *tapas* and *raciones* venue, particularly since 2013 when Sebastián started their simple food range. The concise menu is based on local produce, such as pink tomato with ham and Radiquero cheese, longaniza cured pork sausage from Graus stuffed with wild mushrooms, and the hit dish: slow-cooked lamb glazed with the rancid wine made by Sebastián's grandfather.

Mind you, the real stars of the show are the wines and their excellent service. Obviously, priority goes to the wines from Aragón: Somontano, Campo de Borja, Cariñena and Calatayud are permanent labels, but they also serve wines from Navarra, Rías Baixas, Txacolí, Cavas and Champagnes, many traditional names from Rioja and Ribera del Duero, including leading names, which are also available by the glass.

The by-the-glass range particularly promotes Garnacha reds from Aragón and, quite honestly, there is a difference between the €2 a glass and €2.50 a glass options. You can also choose any bottle from the shop, and the corking fee is €5.

There is a bar and fully equipped terrace. And to top it all, it has a privileged location, in the middle of the old quarter.

Glass in hand, if I had to highlight just one thing, it would be the anchovies, called "*salmueras*" here. They are from Cantabria originally, ok, but they have made this *vinoteca* a must visit. In winter, it is difficult to find a table, unless you book. Good cuisine, professional, friendly service and reasonable prices have maintained its popularity and contributed to the evolution of this traditional wine outlet in Jaca. ■ Mar Romero

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BIODYNAMIC WINE TASTING



FRUIT DAY

The wine enhances the harmony of all ingredients: the most obvious being the fruit notes, naturally, but also its the balance achieved in ripening the grape.



FLOWERS DAY

After the fruit days, the flower days are better for wine tasting. This is the moment when the wines are particularly fragrant and delicate.



LEAVES DAY

Now the plant aromas are enhanced. Although it is not a good wine tasting day, it can be a good time for fortified wines or young whites, with noticeable herbal notes.



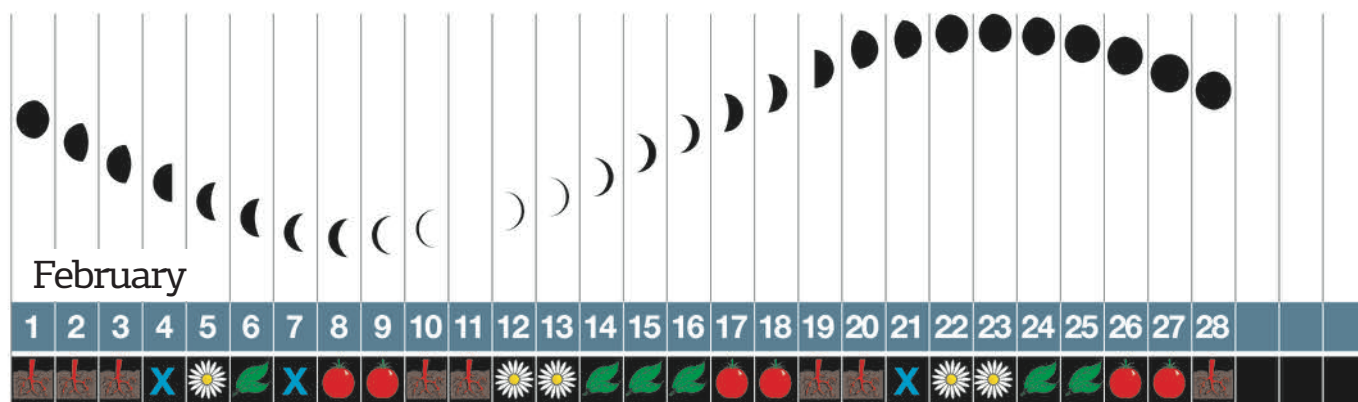
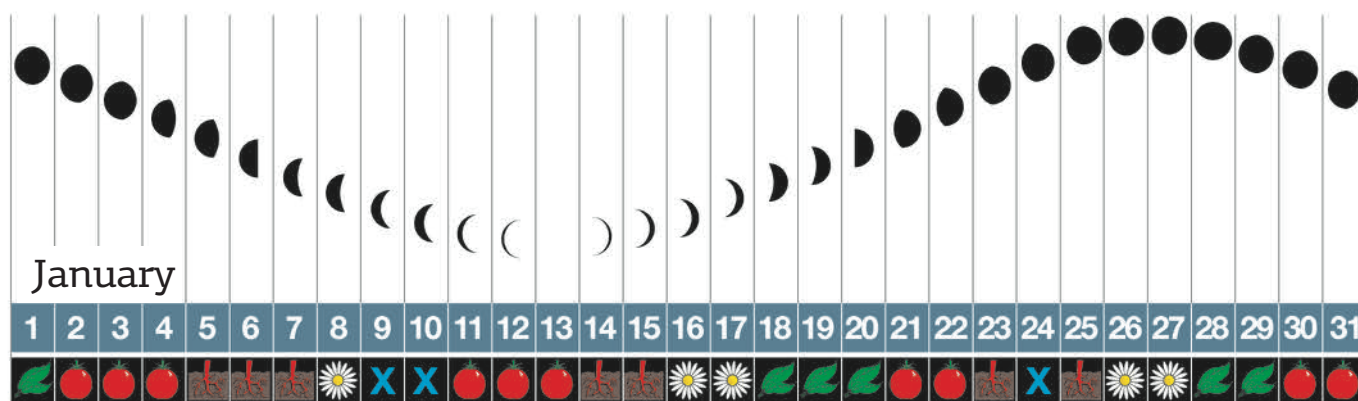
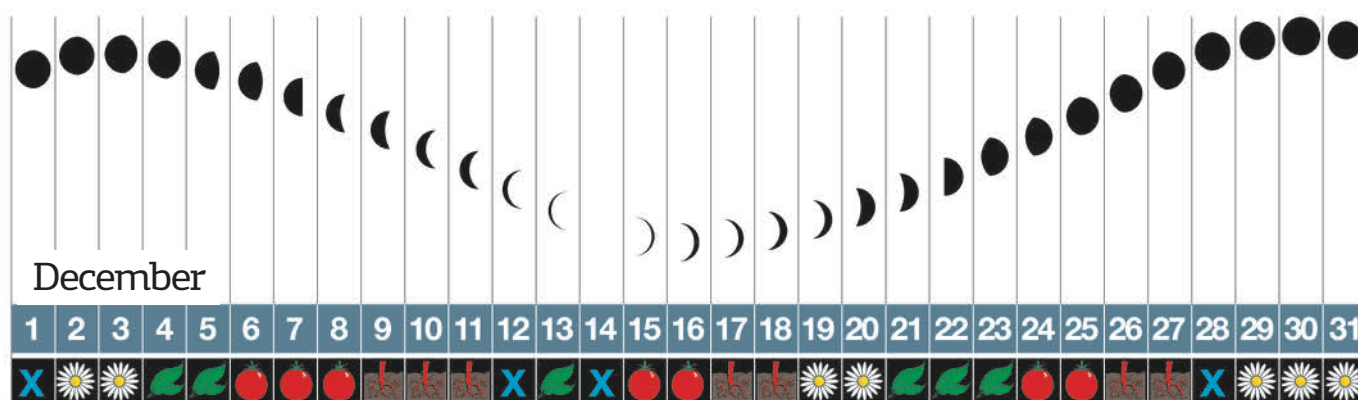
ROOT DAY

These increase the tannin notes, as the fruit hides away. It is the ideal time to perceive the link between a vine and a specific soil, or a specific, singular location.



LUNAR NODE

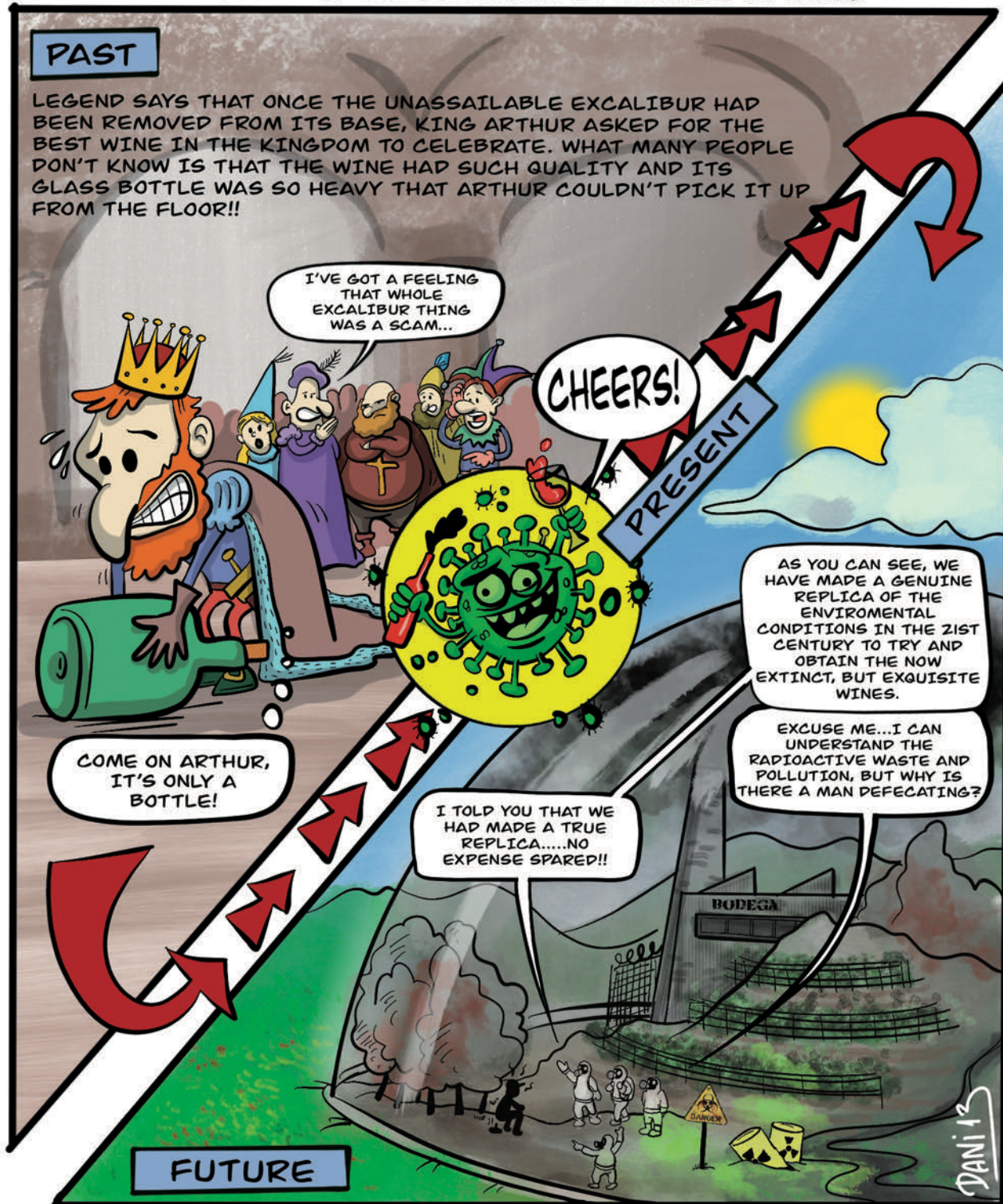
A negative day, when no agricultural or tasting activity is advisable. On lunar node days, you should not even contemplate opening a bottle of good wine.





PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE

A journey through the evolution of wine





A REAL BURDEN!

» Now that Spanish wineries presume to be *eco friendly*, boasting about their environmental responsibility and flapping organic or biodynamic certificates in our faces, it is surprising that most of them still showcase their premium wines in thick, glass bottles, which are particularly heavy. They are trying to convey a convincing message about quality and prestige through the disproportionate weight of these bottle that are usually twice the size of a normal bottle.

I can still remember the first time I came across this curious argument in favour of quality. It was in Napa Valley (California) around the middle of the 80s, and the wine in question was *Opus One*. Robert Mondavi offered it to me when I visited his winery. He tried to be Napa's answer to Médoc, and this high-flying project was endorsed by Baron Philippe de Rothschild (Château Mouton Rothschild). The strange thing is that I do not remember my reaction to the wine, just the unusual weight of the bottle.

Since then, the trend of associating quality and weight has spread around the world, and particularly in Spain, where it is one of the most popular options for showcasing the quality of a wine. Giving priority to an accessory over the substance has allowed marketing professionals to create an appearance of quality, far beyond the wine's real virtues. It is true that there are good wines, even excellent ones, sold in bottles weighing over 1 kg. However, is it necessary to waste glass like this, particularly as it increases costs and makes the wine unnecessarily more expensive?

Let's take a look at the world's best wines, like Chateau Petrus or Romanée-Conti, to name but two, they continue to use their traditional Bordeaux and Burgundy style bottles, which have become a universal style reference today. The truth is that, apart from a few exceptions, in the world of wine excellence, bottle weight is usually inversely related to maximum quality.

The issue would not be particularly important if we were not facing an alarming climate change situation, where reducing the wine industry's environmental impact and carbon footprint is essential to its survival. And, honestly, I find no 'weighty' or substantial reason for continuing to insist on wasting glass (i.e. bottles over 500 grams), with the resulting energy cost and environmental impact.

Fortunately, people are taking more and more notice of this fact. For example, the Canadian firm *Liquor Control Board of Ontario* (LCBO) adds surcharges to wineries that do not comply with the requirement of a maximum standard weight of 420 gram. They are fined \$0.50 per bottle between 420 and 500 grams, and \$1.00 per bottle over that weight. Policies like these have managed to reduce the weight of wine bottles to 340 grams.

In Spain, the companies belonging to the non-profit organisation *Ecovidrio* pay what is called *Cotización del Punto Verde* (Green Point Price), which finances waste management. Along these same lines, we have the *ReWine* project, where studies show that after eight uses (seven washes), you can save between 1.7 and 3.7 kg of CO₂. They are even trying to reduce the weight of the bottles used for natural sparkling wines, even though the glass needs to be thicker here because of the pressure from the carbonic gas. Also, the CICV (*Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne*), recommends reducing the bottle weight from 900 to 835 grams.

All this leads to a reduction in greenhouse gases, as by reducing glass thickness by just 20 grams we can reduce a wine producer's carbon footprint by five percent. Therefore, I find it hard to accept this fashion for heavy bottles. I do not understand the reason for paying more for the discomfort of a handling a heavy bottle. Mind you, while there are consumers who think that a lightweight bottle can only contain a lightweight wine, it will be difficult to change things.

If we really believe the *Green New Deal*, let's do away with the illogical use of disproportionate, imposing bottles, and focus on offering the best wine possible in a lightweight container which, nevertheless, must be convincing in terms of the message it conveys. You see, although wine is an emotional liquid, buying wine must be guided by reason. And in today's world, reason demands sparing no measures that can contribute to the fight against the climate change.

It is possible that, with age, I am becoming fussier and more wrinkled, but I cannot stand having to hold a bottle that weighs a kilo or more, which only really serves to attract our attention, and determine the image of a wine with an inferiority complex. There is no wine making reason to justify using this type of bottle. Nevertheless, we consumers are the ones who must support the wineries that adopt an eco-friendly policy, starting with making more lightweight bottles.

I really cannot see the attraction of handling a heavy, thick bottle that is very expensive to produce, expensive to transport and difficult to serve,...except for the sake of appearances. We have to realise that, at the end of the day, what really counts is the wine that which is served in the glass. That is where we find the enchanting harmony of aromas and flavours that flow over our ever-grateful palate. Just as the poet said, *cuando el vino es bueno la viña canta tu alegría* (when the wine is good, the whole vineyard sings). That is what is really important. ■

SÓLO EN PAPEL



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