

RED WINE IS YELLOW ✕ VIÑEDOS DE ÁLAVA ✕ PAZO DE BARRANTES ✕ BODEGAS DIOS BACO

planetVino

THE MAGAZINE OF WINE, DRINKS AND QUALITY PRODUCTS

WINES FROM
RÍO NEGRO

SULPHUR
AND VINE GROWING

GERMANS
IN MALLORCA



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Cuando comienzas a mirar el viñedo con otros ojos, descubres que cada suelo es único y que respetándolo y entendiéndolo es posible conectarlo con su entorno y crear vinos con identidad propia, que representan con singularidad su origen. Es entonces cuando tu mente elimina las barreras entre pasado y presente, permitiéndote redescubrir lo que ya conocías.



MIRANDO EL VIÑEDO CON OTROS OJOS

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EL VIAJE COMIENZA AQUÍ



RAMÓN BILBAO



ARMAGEDDON

RECENTLY, WE ARE JUMPING FROM ONE APOCALYPSE TO ANOTHER. THE CRISES THAT ARE OCCURRING IN BIG FIGURE CIRCLES, AND WHICH ARE REFLECTED IN SMALL ECONOMIES, ARE THE OBJECT OF ENDLESS HYPERBOLE, TO THE POINT THAT TERRIBLE TERMS, SUCH AS APOCALYPSE, ARE OVERUSED AND LOSING SOME OF THEIR INTENSITY. THE MALIGNANT COVID 19 HAS ARRIVED AS SOMETHING LIKE THE MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES, THE BEGINNING OF ARMAGEDDON, AND IN VIEW OF THE COLLECTIVE HYSTERIA AROUND THE WORLD, I'M NOT SURE THERE'S GOING TO BE A TOMORROW.

»» The infamous coronavirus, or Covid 19, are words that have been branded into biographies the world over, and there have been some unimaginable consequences, particularly if we take into consideration its real size, compared with the deaths caused each year by flu, smoking, cancer, drinking or the sum of rare and minority diseases which hardly deserve the attention of science or the powerful pharmaceutical industry. That same powerful industry which, in spite of how sweet the future looks for those who discover the remedy or vaccine, seems to have had the good sense to comply with the terms indicated by scientists.

Surely, when these lines see the light of day, and we do not know when that will be, whatever is written here, will have been surpassed by an unknown reality. For the moment, the isolation measures have given us a series of familiar images, but familiar in fiction, disaster movies or zombie series. For the moment, the public is generally behaving well, although there are some worrying aspects, such as the spread of armed agents controlling the streets; because we all know, if you give a simple man a uniform and the slightest opportunity to exercise control, the next moment he thinks he is an admiral on the open sea.

Nevertheless, it must be said that this Armageddon has brought some positive things too, such as well-behaving citizens or the recognition, endorsed by the government, of groups who are usually worthy of praise, like the healthcare workers or security and emergency forces, and also others who are not normally in the limelight, like food shop assistants, newsagents (a soon-to-be-extinguished species) and even hairdressers. The virus, however, has also confirmed the miserable side of human nature, as seen in the attitude of some politicians, over the speculation in hard-to-come-by elements, such as masks, or the initiative of some restaurants who have immediately fired all their staff, or certain xenophobia aimed at owners of second homes in holiday areas, who are annoying except when they pay their taxes and spend their money in the local businesses.

This Armageddon is arriving in parts. First, it was an exotic piece of news in a far-away province in China. Then, it was seen with a certain amount of concern, and then as an alarming reality, cancelling all agendas. Like a tsunami, the appointments that normally fill the calendar pages of professionals in March,

have all disappeared. In the wine sector, everything has been disrupted. Barcelona Wine Week got away by the skin of its teeth, taking place close to Bacchus, the annual wine tasting course run by the Spanish Tasters Union, a world event with some tasters dropping out at the last minute. Not many can say the same.

The German event, Prowein, is one of the world's big wine events, perhaps the most important, together with the French Vinexpo or the British, London Wine. Prowein should have opened from 15 to 17 March, but it was cancelled a few days before; the new date will be 21 to 23 March 2021.

This was a drastic decision, followed to a certain extent in Italy, where the Vinitaly fair, planned for April, has been postponed until June (from 14 to 17). The Spanish Alimentaria fair is set back further, to the end of the summer; its new dates are from 14 to 17 September.

Some have been more optimistic. The Club de Gourmets Salon, which should be held from 30 March until 2 April, will be moved to June, which seems a little soon; specifically, from 15 to 18, according to the notification issued by Grupo Gourmets less than a month before the envisaged dates. Vinoble, the exhibition in Jerez for the *vinos generosos*, maintains its dates of 24 to 26 May, but they are planning to meet at the end of March to study the situation further. The same applies to Organic Food Iberia, in Madrid, which plans to bring together 600 organic food companies, and is maintaining its dates of 3 and 4 June.

The more modest events, like presentations, group exhibitions and even the Mass Vino Awards, have been brushed aside by the Covid 19 tsunami, just like the catering trade as a whole and so many other aspects. This crisis seems to be provisional, but we have yet to see how long its effects will last. The country is facing a crucial test, as is the future of the European Union. First impressions show that the public has risen to the challenge, at least during the heat of the moment and before actually suffering the consequences. We have yet to see public representatives, both public and private institutions, responding in the same measure or, perhaps, as happened in the last crisis, they are going to use this situation to take us down into the depths of disequilibrium. We just have to keep our fingers crossed! ■



Editor's note

Normality

At VadeVino Editorial, we think that trying to maintain normality, insofar as it is possible, is the best way to recover our pace once this new crisis is over. It has fallen on us just as we were starting to come out of a previous, very long, crisis lasting more than ten years, during which time we completed business, paid taxes on time (which have been increasing: it seems that half of the more than 30,000 kilometres we do on the road each year are just for strolling around), and we have maintained normality as much as possible. This includes not taking the very liberal alternative of putting out our hand to ask for help, grants, reductions and such like from the Government, who give nothing and do not even include us among the media where they publish their adverts.

This is the path we have been treading since 2008: we are the same people, the publications have the same style, size and quality, we are paid duly and on time (except for some tight moments, when we have had to pay VAT that we have not yet collected ourselves) and we have not cut

down (but neither have we been able to increase) fees to our collaborators. We have done away with certain luxuries, like having a headquarters, and changed to working online, with everyone in their own home. Therefore, the compulsory isolation due to the coronavirus Covid 19 pandemic is the norm for our small team. And that is how we are going to carry on, external forces permitting. It is very likely that circumstances impose delays on the dates our publications appear, but this will be due to situations beyond our control.

We are going to maintain our writing, production and printing dates, not just with this edition (which we do not know when it will reach our readers), but also for the next editions and the other publications, such as, the case study on 100 Creators of Spanish wine, which should come out in June, and the Proensa Guide, as always in November. We are grateful for the unparalleled contribution from all our team and suppliers, who are all essential to eventually recovering normality.

planetAVino

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SUMMARY



RÍO NEGRO, THE SOUTHER CROSS

The area of Río Negro, in the middle of Patagonia in Argentina, is one of the most southern lying wine regions in the world, and a rising star on the Argentinian wine map. **PAGE 30**



GERMANS IN MALLORCA

A millionaire whim. Powerful Germans have landed in Mallorca, and are now looking to making wine. There are several wine products, with German backing, intended for at export and also for selling on the island and Spanish mainland. **PAGE 22**



Learning More SULPHUR IN VINE GROWING

The controversy over sulphur, which is rejected by some of the new organic trends, in one of its historic scenarios and roles – protecting the vineyard from different bacteria and fungi. **PAGE 40**

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Viñedos de Álava

...just a storm in a teacup

IT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS GOING TO BE A HURRICANE, BUT CHANGED TO A SQUALL, THEN A DOWNPOUR AND NOW APPEARS TO BE A STORM IN A TEACUP. THE FIRST STAGE OF THE DO ARABAKO MAHASTIAK/VIÑEDOS DE ÁLAVA PROCEDURE TRIGGERED REACTIONS, CRISES AND SILENCE.

»» The Official Spanish Gazette of 28 January published a resolution by the *Dirección de Calidad e Industrias Alimentarias* [Food Quality and Industry Management] in the Basque Government, “making public the request to protect and record the *Denominación de Origen Protegida “Arabako Mahastiak/Viñedos de Álava”* as requested by the *Asociación de Bodegas de Rioja Alavesa*”. A further step in the age-old desire for a well-defined sector to separate Rioja Alavesa from DOC Rioja.

This left people with the feeling of *déjà vu*, a recurring issue that seems to have lost some of its impetus over time, and which someone has tried to rekindle surreptitiously.

PlanetAVino wanted to explain all this in a longer article, but, except for the DOC Rioja Regulating Council, everyone else has refused to make any statement or has just ignored our request. The is what happened with the organisation behind the ABRA project, as the managing director, Inés Baigorri, has not answered our calls.

With those who did at least reply, their general reaction was that they did not want to give any statement. Obviously, the main figure in this issue is Juan Carlos López de Lacalle, head of Artadi (the winery that left DOC Rioja), and he replied to us, but declined to give any opinion: “I don’t want to know anything about it; I made my decision and I’m happy as I am. I don’t want to be involved in any of this, and I haven’t been in the meetings and neither have I been consulted.

I understand their positions, but, if possible, I prefer that my name doesn’t even appear”.

ABRA is breaking up

Another important opinion is that of Fernando Remírez de Ganuza: “I don’t want to say anything because I’ll just end up saying something ridiculous”. His winery and Viñedos y Bodegas de La Marquesa have been the main names mentioned in connection with the group of wineries that have left ABRA, following disagreements over initiatives. In this case, the decision to change the organisation’s name to *Asociación de Bodegas de Euskadi* is relevant. It has not been accepted by the Chacoli denominations of origin who have given a firm argument: “We sell annual wines at more than six euro a bottle, whereas they sell at two euro; we don’t have the same business model”.

Francisco Hurtado de Amézaga, from Vinos de los Herederos del Marqués de Riscal, is also keeping quiet: “with Fernando Salamero as chairman of the Regulating Council, we prefer not to give any opinion”.

The reference winery for Rioja Alavesa, thanks to its history, distribution and distinction, only uses fruit from vineyards in Álava, particularly Elciego, Laguardia and Navaridas. The already famous vineyard map that the oenologist shows, is made up of a myriad of shaded areas with own vineyards (almost 500 hectares), leased ones (another one hundred) or long-term suppliers (owners of more than 800 hectares). Despite these figures, which

on their own total more than some denominations of origin, they are not in favour of Viñedos de Álava.

Rioja appeals

There is no major outcry over this, but there are some grunted feelings. The whole thing is full of blunders, including the actual Basque Government who sign the initiative, but then cower, and limit themselves to saying that it is “to process the sector’s request”. This argument is as believable as you can imagine in an election year.

The exception is the DOC Rioja Regulating Council, whose secretary general, José Luis Lapuente, always attended our calls, even just to refer us to the plenary decisions, by both the Regulating Council and the *Interprofesional del Vino de Rioja*, who are basically the same.

Both organisations decided by immense majority and unanimity in the latter, to appeal against the publication by the Basque Government. There were some absences and abstentions but these were not counted.

The plenary took the decision on Friday 13 March, and that same day the opposition brief was filed at the Government Delegation in La Rioja. It was not expected that it would be necessary to fulfil the regulatory 2-month isolation period, or that the administration channels would be decreed to shut down because of the Covid 19 pandemia.

Several points need clarifying

To date, upon closure of this magazine, we have not been able

to access the arguments put forward in the opposition, and which Lapuente considers relevant, structured and well-founded. However, the article published in the Official Spanish Gazette raises certain questions. Particularly intriguing is the paragraph that opens up the possibility of being in the two denominations of origin, as it says: “The Regulating Council will be able to authorise the production wineries upon receipt of grapes, or the production and storage of wines from the production area called “Arabako Mahastiak/ Viñedos de Álava”, even when the products are not covered by the DOP Arabako Mahastiak/ Viñedos de Álava. At any event, the operations mentioned will be carried out separately from those corresponding to the products that choose to be covered by the DOP, and always guaranteeing their traceability using reliable procedures”.

Certain issues remain in the air: Is Arabako Txakolina/Chacolí de Álava going to appeal against the use of the words Álava and Araba? Taking into account the size of the wineries remaining in ABRA, who will pay to promote the label that is going to compete with none other than Rioja? Who will compensate the vine growers for lost assets if they have to remove their vineyards from DOC Rioja, which currently has a higher value than the new denomination of origin? And, finally, how many wineries that actually sell their wines with the Rioja stamp, will change to Arabako Mahastiak/Viñedos de Álava? ■



THE THIRD OF VÍA ATLÁNTICA

Vía Atlántica Adegas y Viñedos has bought the winery in El Rosal, where Bodegas La Val started its career. It was founded in 1982 by José Limeres who bought it previously from the children of some emigrants, and for a time, before launching La Val, he worked with his neighbour, Santiago Ruiz, by providing the fruit from the three hectare-vineyard on his estate. This is the eleventh winery set up in El Rosal, a subarea of DO Rías Baixas, and the third belonging to the group run by Juan Luis Méndez Rojo. He also owns Terriña (DO Valdeorras) and Vía Romana (DO Ribeira Sacra).

HARVESTERS IN PRIORATO

In February, DOC Priorato released its new seals of guarantee, specifically for vine grower-producers, to distinguish the wines made by the vineyard owners. This is what other areas call *vinos de cosechero* (harvester wines) or according to the most recent term, *viñador*. At the same time, the Priorato regulating body has changed its seals and added a new security hologram which, for some time, will be seen alongside the old ones.

CORPINNAT AND CLÁSSIC Penedés SIT DOWN TO TALK

They have started negotiations, but there is still no commitment. Corpinnat, the wineries that split from DO Cava, and Clásic Penedés, the sparkling wines from DO Penedés, have closed the first stage of negotiations without any agreement. They are discussing the possibility of creating a new denomination of origin for sparkling wines within Penedés. They claim to coincide over certain points, but there are still some significant discrepancies, and new talks have been arranged.

PÉREZ OVEJAS WITH JUVÉ & CAMPS

After months of uncertainty and silence following his sudden departure from the family winery, Bodegas Hermanos Pérez Pascuas, José Manuel Pérez Ovejas has returned to the wine arena. Recently, in March, he joined J&C Prime Brands, as their wine consultant. This is the parent company that owns Juvé & Camps and its subsidiaries, including Pagos de Anguix; a winery from DO Ribera del Duero that the Catalan group acquired in 2017, even though their first wines in the new phase were presented that same year.



CVNE EXTENDED

CVNE, one of the legendary firms in the Barrio de la Estación de Haro district (La Rioja) has started extended its foundational premises. The project conducted by the architects Ábaton, has taken ten years to come to light. It provides the winery with three new bays plus offices and recovers one of the historical buildings. The project spans two stages and adds 16,000 square metres of constructed surface. The end of the extension coincides with the commemoration of the 140th anniversary of the winery's foundation.

OWN NAMES

Ferran Centelles, sommelier at elBulli for more than ten years and Jancis Robinson's Spanish delegate, has been awarded the Outstanding Alumni Award from the international Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET), for his long professional career and his work promoting wine culture and gastronomy. The team from Barcelona, made up Rubén Pol, sommelier at the restaurant, Disfrutar, and the lawyer Lucía Viz, have won the thirtieth edition of the Vila Viniteca Couples Tasting Award, held on 1 March in Barcelona. The prize is worth 30,000 euro.

LA VIRTUD DE LO EXTREMO



Wines & Spirits Education Trust
WINE SPECTATOR

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PUNTOS
GUÍA PEÑÍN

95,5

PUNTOS
GRAN CIVAS DE ORO

92

PUNTOS
WINE SPECTATOR

HAY QUIEN SE CRECE ANTE UN ENTORNO HOSTIL. EN ESTAS TIERRAS DURAS, ALTAS, PEDREGOSAS, ARISCAS, HACE SIGLOS QUE GRANDES CIVILIZACIONES ENCONTRARON UN SITIO DONDE ASENTARSE, CRECER Y CULTIVAR SUS MEJORES VIÑEDOS. ELLOS SABÍAN DE LA VIRTUD DE LO EXTREMO.

Rising associations

Strong together

THIS TENDANCY HAS BEEN MISSING IN AN ENVIRONMENT PRONE TO EVERYONE DOING THEIR OWN THING IN ALL RESPECTS. WHETHER IT IS A TREND OR ANECDOTE, WINERY GROUPINGS ARE ON THE RISE.

»» In all fairs, you can see that the *España* label is old-fashioned. You see, in every pavilion, the first thing to do is to indicate where each particular territory is, and then explain that wine is made in that geographical entity and that it has several denominations of origin, often scattered all over the fair, and made up, in turn, of several wineries, many of which prefer to go it alone ... and so on, and so on, indefinitely, or until you collapse with dizziness.

The “stronger together” slogan which was chanted decades ago, seems to have become outdated. Nevertheless, circumstances are pushing people to look beyond individual careers, and turn to the comfort of belonging to a team. Or at least, a company. Synergies are needed to reinforce identity, which may seem like a paradox. This is how we have to interpret the appearance and growth of a series of initiatives. Some are very specific, like the *Fundación para la Investigación del Vino y la Nutrición* (Fivin), while others have more generic purposes, like the recent example of Corpinnat, and other older ones, like Grupo Rioja or the actual employers’ association, *Federación Española del Vino* (Fevin). Others have been around for some time, like *Fundación para la Cultura del Vino*. *Grandes Pagos de España* or *Bodegas Familiares* or *Asociación de Bodegas por la Calidad* (ABC) in Rioja, previously *Agrupación de Bodegas Centenarias y Tradicionales de Rioja*, have adopted a name change that suggests overcoming geographical barriers. These barriers are, precisely, the basis of two new associations in

leading areas. In Rioja, eight wineries have started up *Asociación de Bodegas de Logroño* which aims to join forces and “promote La Rioja around the world, as a wine tourism destination”. In January, Bodegas Franco Españolas, Bodegas Olarra, Bodegas Ontañón el Templo del Vino, Bodegas Arizcuren, Bodegas y Viñedos del Marqués de Vargas, Marqués de Murrieta, Pernod Ricard Bodegas and Viña Ijalba set their project in motion.

Small gardens

From the Ebro to the Duero, a group of wineries has decided to prove that Soria also exists. Until only recently, there was only the San Esteban de Gormaz co-operative (now DO5 Hispanobodegas) and Bodegas Dominio de Atauta, to prove the existence of vineyards and wines to the east of Ribera. Now there are fifteen wineries who have formed the *Bodegas Viñas Viejas de Soria* association. This movement aims to “promote the historical legacy of the Soria vineyard”, which represents only five percent of the total land under vine in DO Ribera del Duero.

They are small wineries that mainly produce between 2000 and 10,000 bottles, and their vineyards that occupy “between 0.05 and 0.25 hectares, outline a wine landscape that looks more like a series of small gardens, rather than wide expanses of agricultural land”. The fifteen wineries are: Antídoto, Bodega Aranda-DeVries de Inés, Bodegas Castillejo de Robledo, Bodegas Dominio de Atauta, Bodegas Valdeviñas, Bodegas Vildé,

Bodegas y Viñedos Aceña, Bodegas y Viñedos Señorío de Aldea, DO5 Hispanobodegas, Dominio de ES, La Quinta Vendimia, Lunas de Castromoro, Señorío de Villálvaro, Taruguín and Tierras El Guijarral.

The classical names include Bodegas Familiares de Rioja, which was founded in 1991 by twenty small wineries. It stands out because of its renegade stance against the sector’s dominant employer associations, and against the ruling underpinning the *Organización Interprofesional del Vino de España*. Judging by the gradual number of enrolments it is registering it appears they have been successful. In February, four new wineries joined: Bodegas Quiroga de Pablo, Cor de Mei, Heredad Martínez Castillo and Pago de Larrea. Following these additions, their membership numbers now total 55. Slightly more exclusive is the *Fundación para la Cultura del Vino*, which has six wineries (now seven), all of which lead winery groups. They have been associated for more than twenty years to “promote the close relationship between wine and culture in Spain, and to advocate quality”. The Foundation has registered some cancellations, while on the other hand, applying some restrictions to new memberships.

The latest, in February, was Pago de Carraovejas, which joined Bodegas de los Herederos del Marqués de Riscal, Bodegas Muga, Bodegas Vega Sicilia, La Rioja Alta and Terras Gauda. Their most significant initiative is their *Encuentro Técnico* (technical meeting), already in its

fifth edition. Circumstances permitting, it will be held in Madrid on 28 April, under the title of *Adaptación enológica al cambio climático* (Adapting wine to the climatic change). At the time of closing these lines, the enrolment is open (€225, €135 for the members of its Club of Friends, and €50 for students). Nevertheless, the event is hanging in the air and dates have yet to be confirmed.

Fighting against the climate change

Even more exotic still, by requirement, is the International Wineries for Climate Action (IWCA), founded in 2019 by *Familia Torres* and Jackson Family Wines in California. It is like “a co-operative work group committed to implementing innovative solutions to alleviate the impact of the climate change by removing carbon from the world’s vine and wine industry”. The aim of the IWCA is that all the members have a long-term strategy to reduce their carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2045, including a short-term objective of a 50% reduction by 2030. To be a member of the IWCA, wineries must fulfil four demanding requirements related to renewable energy, reduced CO2 and greenhouse gas emissions and a commitment to comply with the group’s foundational goals. Four new members will be joining the group: Symington Family Estates, in Portugal, Spottswoode Estate, in Napa Valley (California), VSPT Wine Group, in Chile and Yealands Wine Group, from New Zealand. ■



José Luis Cuerda Wine producer, and that's a pretty big deal

What is a man from the Albacete film world doing in the heart of Ribeiro? "How do I know! I like wine, although I know nothing about it. I earned money with the film, *Los Otros* (The Others) and I just got involved in it...". That is more or less how the conversation went, but José Luis Cuerda never does anything in vain and he ended up making one of the best, modern wines from Ribeiro. Sanclodio was a serious, personal project; no signs here of being just an



aficionado. This gifted film producer started the venture in 2002, with a name right out of the entertainment world: *Producciones A Modíño*. The things that happened to Cuerda were often like something taken out of one of his scripts, such as the episode when he bought the 15th century house where he set up the winery. The property was divided between several heirs, and one of them refused to sell at any price, using quite a logical argument: "because it's mine". The man who made us laugh with *Amanece*, which is quite a claim, and *El bosque animado*, and then brought tears to our eyes with *La lengua de las mariposas*, now provided us with pleasure in the form of Sanclodio. It is made with the unique fruit from the 6.5 hectares planted under vine, which he managed to assemble in Gomariz; thus proving that he was also a genius in the wine world. He died in Madrid on 4 February.

Luis Delgado Wine through marriage

Los Astrales is one of the most interesting projects among the recent generations of wineries in DO Ribera del Duero. It stands on a firm basis: the vineyard belonging to the Romera de la Cruz family (several generations of vine growers from Aguix), and its clear focus on quality as seen by its choice of oenologists: Eduardo García in the first stage, and José Hidalgo Togores in recent years. The winery was started in 2000, following the initiative of Luis Delgado Sanz, from Villalpando in Zamora. He was a lawyer working in Palencia while day-dreaming of making wine from his wife's vineyards, Marisol Romera de la Cruz. They started off with the '00 harvest by making the red wine,



Astrales, and five years later this was joined by Christina Astrales and then in 2019, the third one appeared, Astrales Luma. Luis Delgado, the main driving force behind the project, died suddenly on 16th January. In August he would have been 65 years old.



Carlos Falcó, marqués de Griñón A grand name in wine

Better known to the public for his more frivolous ventures, his public life and his four marriages and five children, Carlos Falcó y Fernández de Córdoba (Sevilla, 1937), Marqués de Griñón y de Castel-Moncayo, a great Spanish emblem and descendent of the Great Capitan, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, stood out as a producer and businessman in wine and olive oil. He was an Agricultural Engineer from the Universidad de Lovaina and held a Master degree from Davis (California), which is the qualification that particularly marked his career in the wine world. At the end of the 70s, he planted Cabernet Sauvignon on his Valdepusa estate, which has been in his family since the 13th century, and which Carlos Falcó had inherited from his grandfather, together with Casa de Vacas, an 18th century building, and the title of Marqués de Griñón. He pioneered adopting the Cabernet Sauvignon grape variety in Castilla-La Mancha at a time when it was prohibited to import foreign varieties. Later he was also an ambassador for the Syrah grape, and later repeated the role with Petit Verdot, and recently the Graciano grape from Rioja was one of its favourites. In 1994 he started a project, with ideas and changes, together with the Arco group, who were set on collecting noble names (Príncipe Hohenlohe, Marqués de Monistrol) for their commercial portfolio. In 2000 he started his second winery, planting 9 hectares in El Rincón, in DO Vinos de Madrid. He was the driving force behind the plot denomination of origin in Castilla-La Mancha, and succeeded in entering this category himself in 2002; it was the first in Spain. He never spared any efforts with his wines (or with his oil; the winery also houses an oil press) and at different times, he worked alongside important names such as Émile Peynaud, Michel Roland and Richard Smart. He founded the Grandes Pagos de España association, and had been the honorary chairman since 2017. He also actively spread the good news of wine among his friends and started up wineries in Castilla-La Mancha, like Dehesa del Carrizal, Capilla del Fraile and Vallegarcía. Carlos Falcó died in Madrid on 20 March, victim of the coronavirus, Covid 19.



LIVING OFF THE VINES

»» Having seen and heard the recent demonstrations and protests by Spanish crop and cattle farmers, you could quite honestly say that country living in Spain is tantamount to financial ruin. With the prices farmers receive, it is impossible to maintain their businesses and, as a direct result, people are abandoning rural life, and the only way to stop this, of course, is by going back to fair pricing.

Selling at a loss, below production costs, is hard to understand and not just because it is illegal. Due to the little business sense in the agrarian sector, it is ranked at the bottom of the value chain, in an extremely weak position. This is the exact opposite effect intended by the Ministry of Agriculture when they implemented the fixed price system. Building prices from the bottom upwards, with a reasonable margin at each level seems, and to a certain extent is, the most natural approach in a free market, without any intervention and where the free circulation of goods and services endorses its correct implementation. However, reality is as stubborn as always, and has shown us that setting prices follows a path that returns water to its natural course: the real negotiating power of each party involved.

Due to large-scale concentration in distribution, reducing the primary sector to smaller segments and the lack of any real power for agrarian organisations and collective companies, such as co-operatives, for the last few years the primary sector has been losing value, its future has turned bleak and the generational takeover is a pipe dream in any business that did not start out as a business activity.

And, if I may say so, this is the main problem facing the Spanish agricultural sector; and, to be more precise, the vine growers which, at the end of the day, is what I know a little about, though not much. Respect for tradition and the sense of belonging to the original land of their ancestors is all very well, bucolic, perfect and even desirable... but the growers have to earn their living from it and maintain a certain business sense in order to analyse costs and give priority to making the activity profitable. Otherwise, it is impossible to view it as a business activity. And, without this background concept, reaching fair, dignified prices is a utopian idea and a pure contradiction.

First and foremost, vine growers have to be professionals in the field, and they must produce the best grapes possible and sell them at the best price to wine producers who make appropriate use of them according to their market expectations. Not all growers can produce grapes that sell at six euros a kilogram,

as is the case of Champagne, or at 0.22 which was the price in the last campaign in Castilla-La Mancha. And I mention this community because it is where most of the Spanish vineyard is concentrated, but we could easily refer to any other Spanish regions, as each one reveals the reality of the sector, through notable differences.

Some vine growers, tired of the lack of profits from their vineyards, have had to go to the cities to look for a way to support their families, therefore leaving care of their vineyards to times of leisure at weekends or during holidays or days off, and so production is not conditioned any more for making a profit, as the main cost, i.e. labour is not included in the balance, but seen as a leisure activity.

The possibility of supplying a suitable product at low price, has led to an increasingly limited number of this type of growers, therefore forcing other growers, who do earn their living from their vines, to look for profitability through increased production. This approach has been endorsed and encouraged by the European Union who, in their attempt to adapt production more to market needs, assigned more than two hundred million euro, between 2009 and 2013, to reconverting and restructuring the Spanish vineyard; that is equivalent to three thousand eight hundred euro per hectare. In doing so, they made the parable about feeding the five thousand with the fish and bread look feasible because figures went from 1.4 million hectares and a production volume of 30 million hectolitres, to 0.9 million hectares and 50 million hectolitres.


With a lot less quality? I hear you asking. Well, no, actually. Applying more modern growing techniques and turning vine growing into a professional trade has meant that Spain is still considered a wine producing country, with a great number of good quality wines. Mind you, only a very few wineries and labels are considered international references of good quality and high prices.

And this brings us to the last point (I do not want to bore you any further): that Spanish wines do not have any image; they are considered excellent quality/price ratio products, but with little or no ability to attract consumers. This supports the historical situation of foreign operators arriving, attracted by the enormous quality potential of our vines, and willingly investing in production so that they can sell the wines in other countries with labels and registers that have nothing to do with the place where they have been produced. ■



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Marqués de Cáceres



MARKETING

»» In some religions, and also in science, wine is a symbol. It attracts the most capable people. There have been many cases, like Columella in agriculture, Pasteur in microbiology and Kierkegaard in philosophy, people who excel in other fields of activity and who choose wine as their vocation. This has given wine a leading role in issues of knowledge and belief, until recently. In the 20th century, a new science was developed, namely marketing, which quickly became the basic science of society. Yet, possibly due to its inexperience, science has belittled wine. Instead of getting to know it and then developing its theories, it claimed its own principles as the universal truth and expected wine to adapt to them, at the risk of disappearing.

Since I started studying about wine, I have often assumed some inferiority complexes induced by marketing masters who told us how backward and incapable us wine enthusiasts were, compared with the practical and brilliant minds of those who drank beer or anything else, but particularly beer.

While us wine lovers, like Neanderthals on the verge of extinction, set about building up our sector with huge business dispersion, thousands of brands and short production volumes, the beer crowd was an example of business concentration and this gave them strength against the quasi-oligopoly over distribution. Also, those companies capitalised so much that they dominated other areas, like bars, with their product monopolising drinking figures.

Like the Amazonian tribes that the marketing world consider to be losers, we also lost our strength and passion to defend the undefendable, i.e. collective brands (the term for denominations of origin in *marketingese*), when everyone knows that what really makes a market work is strong competition. Look at the wealth building up for those who have jumped at the opportunity in the beer sector. That is life, son.

As if that were not enough, we were a bunch of fools incapable of transmitting a simple message to consumers, which is what they really want. We told stories about traditions, soils, grafts, climates and God knows what else, which are neither fun or simple. The spiel about low yields, old vineyards, hidden

sites, has more Emily Brontë storytelling ability than economic sense.

We also gave ridiculous importance to trying to describe the flavour of wine using quasi-technological and often inconsistent language. Look how well a glass of beer sells in all its simplicity; the most that is said about its flavour is “yummmm!”

Considering all this, are we really surprised that the wine sector was about to disappear? Proof of this is the continual drop in wine drinking figures, overtaken by ever-triumphant beer. Young people flee from wine because it is arrogant and complicated, so the opinion leaders tell us; they want a simple message. Just like polar bears, we have been moving around on meringue-like floats, that the great marketing climate change will soon disintegrate.



The overwhelming confirmation of all this is seen through some leading wine personalities. Witty commentators, like Gary Vaynerchuk, showed us how we had to talk about wine. Old-fashioned people like me, who talked about territory, stories, ways of thinking and acting that were reflected in a liquid, were boring preachers. As you might expect, the great wine strategies spent their huge resources on attracting youngsters and communicating messages of unparalleled simplicity.

They avoided communicating any intellectual emotions in wine. It was forbidden to say that in

order to love wine you have to dedicate both time and effort, or that wine is not for any old person ... However, those campaigns were not very successful. Even drinking generic wines, wines without a face or a name, continued falling (and you cannot imagine how pleased yours truly feels about that!).

And nevertheless, there is movement afoot, he said... Despite all the predictions from that science that claims to dominate the truth, never has the wine sector earned so much money as today. Never have there been so many people investing in vineyards and wineries, or so many wine drinkers asking for wines with an origin and a history, using strange words and making strange gestures as they drink. Fine wine drinking figures for fine wine (a word that should never commandeer a type of wine which, as those who read my articles know, I adore, and should be used to define



wines with attributes of pedigree and quality) are higher than ever. Out of my essential respect for science, until recently I did not understand this contradiction, and then something interesting happened: my son became a beer enthusiast. Not like his father, an enthusiastic, thoughtless beer drinker, but actually taking it seriously: making beer, studying beers and giving beer tastings. Out of love for my family, I followed him closely and discovered a whole new world for me, which I am so happy about as it made me doubt the science of marketing.

When I go to a bar serving craft beers, I don't understand half of what is written on the labels, essentially because they use acronyms that nobody explains, unless you dare to go through the humiliation of brightening the waiter's day, confessing your ignorance and asking him. Apparently, the labels are important, but they take second place to the origin (which is actually quite surprising for a grain-based drink). The most sought-after beers are difficult to find, because production is minimal and irregular.

The vocabulary used to talk about the beer flavours is on the same level as the words used for wine, including some rather esoteric descriptions. Now, beer also smells of strange fruit and has tightened textures and mineral aftertaste Language for beginners, as you can see.

So apparently those who drink these beers are the young, and they can spend hours talking about malts, hops and far away people and places. Also, they think it is fantastic to pay much

MARKETING IS THE SCIENCE FOR BASIC PRODUCTS, WHICH INCLUDES IMPULSIVE CONSUMERS WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE EMOTION OF SHARED EXPLORATION.

more for a beer with a unique flavour. And thousands of small-scale producers have appeared, who are very inefficient, and they connect with distributors who are equally inefficient. And the big beer names have crept into the world of craft beers, because that is where the money is to be found.

I draw the conclusion that marketing is the science for basic products, which includes impulsive consumers who do not understand the emotion of shared exploration. Science gets lost among the masses without understanding individuals or small groups; it still does not know that we are all the general masses when it comes to some things, but individual for others.

Marketing does not know that there are *vinos de pasto* for those who drink while thinking of something else, and fine wines for people who think about what they are drinking; that wine and good beer are not for everyone, and that doesn't matter; that great wine is as difficult to understand as love, and that makes it infinitely resilient to markets and trends; that life is far more beautiful when it is inefficient, complex and infinite in its ability to surprise. Just like wine. ■

ALBARIÑO RÍAS BAIXAS
**GUSTA ALLÍ
 GUSTA AQUÍ**

Rías Baixas
 DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN

マグロの刺身、トロ、サーモン、ハマチ、いくらと雲丹の軍艦巻き、マグロ、サーモンの握り、生山葵

DEBUT WITH A PREVIEW



LA CAPILLA VENDIMIA SELECCIONADA '16

RED. BODEGAS FINCA LA CAPILLA.
AREA: DO RIBERA DEL DUERO.
VARIETIES: 95% TINTA DEL PAÍS, 5% MERLOT.
AGEING: MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION AND 16 MONTHS
IN NEW, 500 L. FRENCH OAK.
EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2023-2024. PRICE: € 40.

93 Various factors have coincided to make this launch less of a show than it should be, and which a winery such as Marqués de Cáceres really deserves, to showcase the beginning of its operations in Ribera del Duero. This Cenicero winery is in the middle of its 50th anniversary celebrations, and has recently bought and renovated its Ribera winery and launched its first Ribera wines with notable discretion; it has even avoided the reference to Marqués de Cáceres on the labels. The first launch was a limited batch of wines from the '15 harvest, seen as a general dress rehearsal, which has also made the actual launch a smaller affair. Even the two '16 red wines seem somewhat provisional among the definitive wine profiles. Nevertheless, both these wines give very good vibes, consistent with Marqués de Cáceres' current profile where the wines reveal a particular blend of consistency, strength, freshness and elegance. This is the aim of Vendimia Seleccionada; an example of the great, modern Ribera character with well-defined traces of seasonal fruit, blue flowers and well-measured barrel ageing. Fairly pleasant mouthfeel, with body and a consistent core, highlighting well-rounded, ripe fruit tannins and a good balance. Generous, attractive aromas in the mouth and an elegant aftertaste. Good debut with preview.



ALFONSO 2/6

OLOROSO. GONZÁLEZ BYASS.
AREA: DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY.
VARIETIES: PALOMINO. AGEING: 40 YEARS IN 'BOTAS'.
EVOLUTION: LONG-TERM. PRICE: € 90.

98 González Byass uses the term "vinos finitos" (finite wines, that have an ending) to describe some of the jewels that, for various reasons, have been left in a corner of their extensive cellars. Left-overs of limited soleras which have short-lived market presence, like the two they have introduced recently, Viña Dulce Nombre (made like a Pedro Ximenez, with Palomino) and Alfonso 2/6 (2nd *bota* out of a total of 6). The Oloroso is a good example "oloroso fino", as they call it in the winery, and perhaps it could have its place in the Fuera de Serie collection. It is like a perfume thanks to numerous subtle overtones that unfold from its bouquet rather than from its strength, which is also good. Excellent balance in the velvety mouthfeel and medium body. Very dry, with elegance, expression and a good flavour.



EL JARDÍN DE LA EMPERATRIZ '17

RED CRIANZA. VIÑEDOS HERMANOS HERNÁIZ.
AREA: DOC RIOJA.
VARIETIES: 90% TEMPRANILLO, 5% GARNACHA,
2% GRACIANO, 2% VIURA, 1% MATURANA TINTA.
AGEING: 12 MONTHS IN AMERICAN (70%) AND FRENCH OAK.
EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2023-2024.
PRICE: € 10.

93 Eduardo Hernáiz, who runs this winery, did not get dizzy giving a 360° overhaul to the family winery. He has changed the name and the wine range, doubling his trust in his inspiration from Bordeaux: two Finca La Emperatriz Gran Vino, white and red, and two younger siblings, El Jardín de La Emperatriz, which was launched recently. The white is good, but the red Crianza is even better; a modern wine that emphasises its fruit (red fruit, berries, blue flowers), its terrain (flint, phosphorus) and its fresh, agile mouthfeel. A medium body with a consistent core and lively acidity. Its powerful flavours blend well with its fine fruit aromas.



TORELLÓ COLLECTION '15

QUALITY SPARKLING WINE, BRUT NATURE
TORELLÓ. AREA: WITHOUT IGP.
VARIETIES: 40% MACABEO, 40% XAREL-LO, 20% PARELLADA.
AGEING: 10 YEARS IN STACK.
EVOLUTION: UNTIL 2022-2023. PRICE: € 90.

88 Torelló was one of the main names in the emergence of Cava, half a century ago, when it broke down all the geographical and commercial barriers and inundated places like Madrid or Bilbao. It is also one of the leading names in Corpinnat. This new production is a tribute to Francesc Torelló Casanova, who started making sparkling wine in 1951. It stands a little apart from the usual Torelló profile that is usually lighter and sharper, and instead this is a more modern Brut Nature with long ageing. It is complex in the nose with developed hints of ageing that respect the original fruit; pleasant mouthfeel, somewhat lighter, well-balanced and fresh, with plenty of soft, fine bubbles. Dry with a good flavour.

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ÁS DE MIRABRÁS '19

WHITE. BODEGAS BARBADILLO.
AREA: VT DE CÁDIZ.
VARIETIES: PALOMINO.
EVOLUTION: SHORT-TERM. PRICE: € 11.

85 This is the second generation of another wine, and it is continuing the tradition. Mirabrás was created in 2014 from a selected plot, and it was made in oak *botas*, according to the old method, and used as a base wine (must is the term they use locally) for fine wine. Ás de Mirabrás also comes from selected, old vineyard plots, but it is an evolution of the collection of Barbadillo white wines, introducing a few modern touches with the character of the Palomino grape and its distinguished plots. It showcases anything but the simplicity of the grape, and instead reveals honest, fine aromas with hints of ripe fruit and lime and a touch of chamomile. A good, fluid mouthfeel with pleasant, soft fruit aromas. Simple and easy to drink.



CHIVITE LAS FINCAS '18

ROSÉ. J CHIVITE FAMILY ESTATE.
AREA: DO NAVARRA. VARIETIES: GARNACHA.
AGEING: FERMENTATION AND 10 MONTHS IN OAK (FRENCH).
EVOLUTION: 2023-2024. PRICE: € 25.

92 The new rosé trends are experimenting interesting terrain: wines with longevity, planned for rosés from the beginning, and in this case, from the selected vineyards that belong to the winery. This is the third production from the Chivite-Arzak collaboration, which started in 2014 with a rosé and went on to also produce the white wine, Dos Garnachas. This one is very far from the common rosé profile; it is already expressive, although it is still young and has time to develop and assimilate all the good white wood that does not override the hints of well-ripened fruit, flowers and minerals expressed in its bouquet. Excellent balance in the mouth, with certain body and nerve suggesting good structure and consistency. A dry, serious wine full of flavour and aromas.



FINO CB EN RAMA

FINO. ALVEAR.
AREA: DO MONTILLA-MORILES.
VARIETIES: PEDRO XIMÉNEZ. CRIANZA: 5 AÑOS EN RIMA.
EVOLUTION: 2021-2022. PRICE: € 10.

95 A new legendary label joins the trend of *finos en rama*. It openly challenges another less recommendable trend for very pale *Finos* that compromise on aromas and roundness to get their golden colouring. However, this one showcases two positive aspects: the character of the ageing with all its elegance (almonds, fine hydrocarbons, chalk) and the strength of the *Finos* that can withstand colour treatments and maintain all their character. Alvear, also insists on the heritage of its area: *Finos* without any added alcohol, which naturally reach the necessary 15 degrees, that lead into a mouthfeel full of strength and balance and a soft, fluid texture, with very dry and bitter saline hints. Generous and long.

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PAZO BARRANTES NEW RHYTHM CHANGE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAZO BARRANTES IN RECENT YEARS BRINGS TO MIND THE IMAGE OF THOSE GREAT ATHLETES WHO, AT THEIR PHYSICAL PEAK, CAN INCREASE THE DEMAND ON THEMSELVES AND CHANGE THEIR RHYTHM, USUALLY WITH DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR RIVALS. IN THIS CASE, WE ARE WITNESSING A NEW TURN IN THE WAY THESE WINES ARE AGED, IN THEIR LAUNCH DATE AND ALSO IN THE PRESENTATION OF THEIR FLAGSHIP WINE.



»» Thanks to its history and distinction, Pazo de Barrantes could be the emblematic winery in Valle del Salnés, in competition with legendary names and other more recent ones, who, luckily for the area, are in plentiful numbers. The winery has not aspired to this, or so it seems, as it has followed a fairly discreet career in the wake of another historical winery, namely Marqués de Murrieta in Rioja. Here, it is important to point out that, although it has less weight in all respects (production, history, commercial presence, distinction), the Galician winery is not a subsidiary of

the winery in Rioja. In fact, it could actually be the other way around: Vicente Cebrián, who owns the Pazo Barrantes estate, bought Marqués de Murrieta in 1983; although he advanced the launch of the first Pazo Barrantes bearing his label, by six years, they have been growing vines and making wines here in Galicia for centuries, for their own drinking.

The Counts de Creixel have owned the estate since 1511, when building started. The property easily has everything one would expect it to have, according to the popular saying: “*con capilla, palomar y ciprés, pazo es*” (with a

chapel, a barn and cypress trees just like every estate should). They also have a huge granary and some old Eucalyptus trees (possibly the oldest in Galicia), which pave the access road to the property.

A twelve-hectare estate planted under vine surrounds the property, and there are a further four adjacent hectares that belong to the Arch Bishop of Santiago; however, they are tied to the winery through a long-term leasing contract. Yet there is one thing that Vicente Cebrián would love to have: a part of the historic estate, planted with Albariño, that a close

relative, his aunt, sold, and which he can see no way of recovering.

Barrantes itself also adds some historical value, thanks to the so-called *Pacto de Barrantes (The Barrantes Agreement)* which was signed in 1930 by a group of intellectuals, and is considered to be one of the starting points of the Galician nationalist movement.

There is also the Barrantes family history throughout the county, particularly highlighted by the great-grandmother of the current owners, Julia Becerra Malvar, the good countess. She married the Count of Creixel



and was very socially aware, standing for elections to the Congress of Deputies in 1936. She also donated terrain from her property to build the schools in Ribadumia.

THANKS TO ITS HISTORY AND DISTINCTION, PAZO DE BARRANTES COULD BE THE EMBLEMATIC WINERY IN VALLE DEL SALNÉS.

EMBLEMATIC WINERY

Her grandson, Vicente Cebrián entered the wine world in 1983 by buying Marqués de Murrieta in an auction alongside powerful wine

making groups (including Rumasa). He became responsible for launching the Pazo de Barrantes wines and in 1989 and 1990, they made their first bottles, while the winery was being built next to the estate; it is also built in stone, to blend in with the 16th century building presiding the property. Since that '89 vintage, seen as the beginning of Pazo Barrantes modern wines, the winery has adhered to the orthodoxy of the Albariño grape and the Salnés, albeit with a few personal touches. They have always maintained the profile of a wine made to last, with longevity. Either deliberately or thanks



to the strength of the Albariño grape, it is true that their wines have always responded well to spending time in the bottle. Also, they never have got caught up in the commercial trends that have swept through the area, like the exotic perfumes, sweet overtones or excessive production volumes. The successive changes they have introduced have only made the winery adhere further to their philosophy of classic parameters, with

completely changed the historical Rioja winery, both in terms of its wines and its facilities, and also, on a more discrete yet equal level, the site in Galicia.

THE ESSENTIAL FOR ADVANCING

The wine making team has to interpret and embody the projects devised by the fertile creativity of Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga. He is a real “pain”, in the nicest possible way, as he is always imagining alternatives and ways to



some precise vine growing approaches and state-of-the-art production techniques. These are the factors that the new generation, Vicente and Cristina Cebrián-Sagarriga, have gone into depth over in recent years. The wine making is in the hands of María Vargas, the oenologist who runs things from Ygay with frequent visits to Barrantes, and Elena Cores, who holds the fort in the vineyard and winery. They make a very well-tuned team and after twenty-five years' work, they have

advance. The paradox is that what he finds, he blends with the historical essence of the Albariño in Salnés. The first twist came when he entrusted María Vargas with managing the Galicia winery while successfully introducing changes to the historical Marqués de Murrieta. The oak cones, the modifications made to production and delaying the bottling and launch helped to deepen the character of the Pazo Barrantes white wine, and its presentation was also radically altered.



At the same time, in 2004 they started to restructure the vineyard, again along the same lines applied to recovering ancestral values: the trellis was replaced gradually with the traditional bower. An old formula for state-of-the-art criteria: a well-fed plant cover of leaves that pick up the sun's energy and protect the bunches that hang freely and well-ventilated from their roof covering. And a soil study to define twelve differentiated plots.

The basic wine, and therefore the only wine, gained in terms of its ageing capacity, but the winery management wanted more. In 2009, after ten years of tests and starting with just one of the plots, i.e. Pago Cacheiro, they made La Comtesse; also, an Albariño varietal and a tribute to the owners' mother, defined as a "vino exclusivo".

Like before, they used wood, but with numerous overtones like working with the lees and bottling late, to produce a white wine designed to look straight into the eyes of the best in the area, and in the world.



A NEW TURN

"At Pazo de Barrantes we understand that Albariño is a symbol of top quality among white grape varieties, both nationally and internationally: its aromatic complexity, its particular structure and, naturally, its capacity to age either in wood, concrete or stainless steel, or even in the bottle, means the potential of the Albariño grape is never-ending. In 1989, we started producing Albariño wines in Pazo de Barrantes, and we have always given priority to seeking its quality by preserving the grape's authentic character". The words of Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga to open the

gateway to a new turn in the winery's development, this time, with Pazo Barrantes as the lead. Those responsible for this radical change that will not see the light of day until 2021, are perfectly happy to call it simply a "new project; it applies what they have learned from the grape and the estate over the last three decades. "We have fought tirelessly", María Vargas points out, "to preserve the great potential of the Albariño grape, as it is very versatile and needs tranquillity to reach its maximum expression. We have added the ingredients that we consider necessary to make the wine we have in mind".

TIME FACTOR

And one of these ingredients is the time factor. This is confirmed by Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga: "The foundations are laid in the vineyard, an in-depth control that guarantees healthy fruit, and detailed selection is vital for producing wines with these characteristics. To this basis we have added the time that the wine has needed". And the oenologist adds that,

"this wine needs tranquillity, patience and observation, since the grape has plenty of personality and does not like being subject to advanced timings or planning, which cause imbalance and imperfect expression. Also, we have added a new ingredient, i.e. the barrel; a short time in acacia barrels gives it subtlety and moderates its impulsive nature".

Finally, with a nod to the longevity of the great Albariño wines, its ageing in the bottle has been extended "to let all its talents harmonise and reach their full potential. If there is anything that we have learned over

SINCE THAT '89 VINTAGE, SEEN AS THE BEGINNING OF PAZO BARRANTES MODERN WINES, THE WINERY HAS ADHERED TO THE ORTHODOXY OF THE ALBARIÑO GRAPE AND THE SALNÉS.

these years", María Vargas adds, "it's that this wine evolves incredibly over time, producing a unique personality combining its delicacy and elegance with vigour and complexity". And Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga sums up by saying that "this new Pazo Barrantes '19 will have more authorised ageing, later bottling and gentler in-bottle maturing. We want to highlight the potential of the Albariño grape, its definition, its honesty and elegance, showcased in this wine that is the fruit of everything that the variety has shown us over the years". ■ AP



BODEGAS DIOS BACO RECOVERED HISTORY

PALOMINO & VERGARA WAS ONE OF THE LEADING WINERIES IN JEREZ AT THE START OF THE 20TH CENTURY. THE ORIGIN OF THE PALOMINO GRAPE IS LINKED TO ITS HISTORY. THE WINERY CURRENTLY BELONGS TO THE BUSINESSMAN, JOSÉ PÁEZ MORILLA.

»» My childhood memories are of streets and streets marked by high, whitewashed walls. Buildings with slanted roofs, Arabic tiles and windows at the top, which were relatively small considering the height of the walls. Those completely round, or sometimes oval windows, had railings but never any glass, and that is why walking along those streets was like joining a wine tasting during the olfactory stage (I was not allowed to move on to the tasting stage: I was still a little girl).



Gregorio Ábalos, 2015.

Those unique buildings, where I would dare to say that the winery architecture in Jerez was even as rich as the wines housed inside, made up a large part of the urban framework in Jerez. However, gradually most of these ‘cathedrals’ have disappeared and have been turned into housing blocks, completely void of any kind of charm. Almost all of them, at least the mainstream ones, had façades crowned with round vases *floreros* and stone jugs, *jarrones*; typical ornaments in cathedral buildings in 19th century Jerez.

façade, standing on a central street and very close to the railway station. It was the Palomino & Vergara winery. In the 60s and 70s, it was the firm that made and exported very popular Jerez wines and brandies. One of the most important.

It was, and is (thankfully it has survived), crowned by a large statue of the god Bacchus sitting on a throne, with his mantle and glass of wine in hand, and obviously he is smiling, although I could not see so high up. That same winery had another

Out of all the wineries I walked past in my childhood and teenage years, there was one that really caught my eye. A monumental, majestic winery with a stone

distinctive characteristic; three huge and beautiful windows with railings nearly reaching down to the street. This was not common in the typical cathedral-type wineries, where the windows were higher up and naturally not as impressive as the ones Palomino & Vergara had.

JEREZ AND THE GOD BACCHUS

With time, when I started to work in wine, they told me intriguing stories about that smiling god Bacchus. However, it is best to start at the beginning. The origins of the Palomino & Vergara winery date back to 1765, but it did not occupy its current site until 1848. That year, the important winery complex was built, of which only three buildings survive today.



These buildings covered many square metres and housed twelve ageing bays, on various blocks, with in-set gardens and streets between them, as was usual. It was a very powerful firm, the third in turnover and sales in Jerez, and they employed about 700 people. They had vineyards and branches in various capitals around the world, and the surnames of the founders joined by such an English symbol as the ampersand (&), were well known in the sherry markets. Palomino & Vergara are actually very Spanish surnames, as there were also important Spanish businessmen who founded, created and supported Jerez at the end of the 18th century. It was not only the British. However, let's get back to Bacchus, the namesake of the current winery. Dios Baco was acquired in 1992 by the Jerez businessman, José Páez Morilla. Here we cannot overlook two very intriguing anecdotes. Around the 1920s, in the lush, exuberant gardens in Bodegas Domecq, there was a statue dedicated to the god, Bacchus. The wife of Pedro Domecq Loustau, who was then the chairman of this important firm, was a very devout, practising Catholic, and she really did not like the idea of the statue of the Pagan god standing in the winery gardens. She ordered that it be removed and it was replaced with a statue of the Sacred Heart.

Some say that, that same statue, is the one that presiding over the entrance to the Dios Baco winery, but I was not able to verify this. However, the press at the time did document another anecdote associated with the famous Bacchus statue at the Palomino & Vergara winery. In the 1930s, Cardinal Segura, the Archbishop of Seville, made a pastoral visit to Jerez. As he left the railway station and went past the façade crowned with the god Bacchus, with his glass in hand and mantle, the cardinal mistook it for a virgin, custody in hand (to be honest, it is a high-standing statue and it is not easy to see the details) and strongly expressed his disapproval.

PALOMINO, FAMILY AND GRAPE

The Palomino & Vergara firm was built up at the beginning of the 20th century, by two partners, Juan Palomino and Juan Vergara. The first was a descendant of Fernán Yáñez Palomino, one of the knights from Castile who lent his troops and money to help King Alfonso X the Wise, to take Jerez square from the Arabs in the 13th century. He was recompensed, like all the knights that fought in the Christian wars, and granted large expansions of land.

Apparently, as there is not much documented evidence, vineyards were



cultivated on most of his lands, which had a very good reputation for producing quality fruit. And the grapes from Mr. Palomino's vineyards started to have signs of identity and to be called by this name. Centuries later, this grape became the queen variety in the Jerez Framework and many other areas. In turn, the Vergara family, like the Palomino family, have a long-standing family tradition in the area. Since the end of the 18th century, they are



documented as both producers and exporters of wines and brandies. The company, Palomino & Vergara, was successful and their Tio Mateo Fino sherry was a reference in Jerez, alongside Tio Pepe and La Ina, until bad times came. At the end of the 60s, the firm was sold to Ruiz Mateos, in the way that Ruiz Mateos used to buy things. More or less twenty years later, in 1983, it was expropriated by the State. Palomino & Vergara, along with Terry, another famous firm in the Jerez framework, were adjudicated and sold, given away really ... to John Harvey & Sons Ltd. Today, many years after all these Rumasa ventures, this multinational firm belongs to the famous Philippine magnet, Andrew Tan, whom we have already talked about in PlanetAVino (The Last



Stand from the Philippines. PlanetAVino, edition 77).

WINE AND VINEGAR BOTH

The ventures that the famous Jerez firms experienced during those years are partly well-kept secrets. Returning to Palomino & Vergara, in 1992, a leading Jerez businessman, son of a great vinegar, white wine and still red wine visionary in the area (Tierra Blanca, Viña Lucía...), José Páez Morilla, acquired the winery; the three buildings and the *criaderas* and *soleras* contained in the *botas* found there.

Some labels like the famous Tio Mateo Fino, had already been bought previously by another local producer, José Estévez, but the bulk of the firm was acquired together with the three *cascos* that were still used for making wine. According to direct family members of the old owners, the firm was sold off in parts, labels on one hand, bays on the other ... For example, the twelve "*catedrales*" at Palomino & Vergara, had disappeared. They were turned into blocks of flats of dubious design and standing. Today part of the in-set gardens is a square in the town, but at least they have been saved from being dug up. The office building that was in the centre, a really palatial affair,



José Páez and his daughter Alejandra.

is still standing but it is locked up ... This was the panorama that José Páez Morilla found when he acquired the winery in 1992. He christened his project, Bodegas Dios Baco, and since then, and with help from his daughters and sons-in-law, they have built up a part of the new wine scene in Jerez. Small wineries, small families (for the moment, because as Mao Tse Tung would say, every march starts with one first step).

For me, it is a pleasure to be able to remember the figure of Antonio Páez

Lobato, the father of Pepe Páez. Virtually a self-made man, very intelligent and a true visionary. In the middle of the last century, and aware of the quality of the Jerez vinegars which at that time were a kind of "winery embarrassment", a failure that should be concealed, it occurred to him to buy the *botas* that had turned to vinegar naturally, real gems, and to sell them packaged in small bottles. It was a complete success and the characteristic 375 cc bottle of *Vinagre de Jerez Reserva 25 Muy Viejo*, stood on the tables in all the world's top restaurants. Don Antonio Páez opened up a new, prosperous market. He was the king of Jerez vinegar.

The current portfolio of Bodegas Dios Baco, S.L. is extensive. A range called Dios Baco (Manzanilla, Fino, Olorosos, Amontillado, Cream, Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel). Another superior range, called Baco de Elite, under the Elite label (Oloroso and Amontillado), and the Premium range, Baco Imperial, made up of an Oloroso VORS and an Amontillado, Palo Cortado and Pedro Ximénez VOS. They also sell three Jerez brandies (Luis Felipe Solera Gran Reserva, Dios Baco Solera Gran Reserva and Solera Imperial) and, naturally, their own label vinegar. ■ Paz Ivison



GERMANS IN MALLORCA

■ A PROFITABLE ■ WHIM ■



THEY ARE RICH AND HAVE MADE MALLORCA THEIR SECOND HOME, USUALLY A MANSION, WHERE THEY SPEND THEIR HOLIDAYS OR VISIT NEARLY EVERY WEEKEND FLYING IN FROM THE MAIN GERMAN CITIES. THEY ARE BUSINESS PEOPLE, AND MANY HAVE HAD THE GREAT IDEA OF SETTING UP A WINERY AND MAKING WINES ON THE ISLAND.

TEXT: ENRIQUE CALDUCH
PHOTOS: LENT BY WINERIES



Generally, they do not know much about the wine world, and so they leave the winery management and technical expertise in Spanish hands. It may be just some charming whim, but at the moment there are 14 wineries set up on German capital on the island and, in fact, many more are expected, in view of the auction of 700 hectares that the Balearic Island Government has reserved for extending the land planted under vine on the island. The fact is, these Germans are joining the locals and making the most of the surprising development in Mallorcan wine in recent years.

At the beginning of the 80s, there were not even ten wineries on the island bottling their wines. Today there are 70, and 63 of these come together under the protection of *Indicación Geográfica Protegida Vinos de la Tierra de Mallorca*. The wine revolution in Spain, which had already started in the 80s, also reached the island, where a small group of *históricos* had been making quality wine with their traditional grapes like Callet and Manto Negro for reds, and Prensal for their whites. These grapes were essentially local to the island and only a few specialists on the Spanish mainland actually knew about them. After the 90s, a new wave of Mallorcan wine makers appeared who revolutionised the local wine scene, and were also well-known in Spain. Now there is another wave, inspired mainly by tourism. This phenomenon that has transformed the Balearic Islands in recent decades, initially put the brakes on the development of local wineries, but now it is the exact opposite.

Tourism and a particular type of tourism. It was around 1983 when the Spanish journalists who had attended a conference on tourism in Thessalonica in Greece, looked at one another in surprise when it was officially stated that all the tourism that flocked to Greece, including Athens, Peloponnese, the wonderful islands ..., was more or less the same number that flocked, not to the Balearic Islands on the whole, or to the island of Mallorca, but simply to Arenal beach in Palma.



Can Vidalet.

FUELLED BY TOURISM

Now things have changed, a little, but back then the young farmers who could have promoted planting vineyards and building wineries, first went for work in the construction sector and then found jobs associated with this tourism, the island's economic motor.

Then, however, quality tourism arrived, and not only concentrated in Sóller and the Sierra de la Tramontana, but all over the island. The tourists come from all over the world, but are mainly Germans, according to Inturea, a tourist marketing agency, who specify that 36 percent of the visitors to the island are Germans. It became fashionable among the German middle and upper classes, to regularly visit Mallorca or buy a home there to spend several months of the year, and this trend has changed the type of tourism. According to the same source, back in the 90s, a total of 80 percent of the foreign property investors on the island were Germans. It was even called Germany's 17 *bundesland* or federal state, and everyone's favourite.

Anyway, they come to enjoy the climate and the sea, and are also eager to



enjoy the local produce, mainly quality products. And wine is one of them. That powerful, large audience, who are not all German, is already estimated at twelve million tourists a year who visit the island to consume, and this has inspired a new wave of wine producers, most of them locals, whom have been joined by German investors, in a very unusual phenomenon.

However, all the wine made in Mallorca only represents 13 percent of what is drunk on the island, as this powerful market is dominated by mainland producers who have well-established operations here.



IGP VINOS DE LA TIERRA

The beginning of this new phase was somewhat chaotic, as wineries and vineyards were set up here and there, and so the Balearic Island Government decided to organise things and control the new wineries that were emerging. Therefore, they created the IGP Vinos de la Tierra de Mallorca denomination of origin, which now covers 63 of these wineries. To do this they created the Pla i Llevant denomination of origin (with head-quarters in Felanitx), to manage this new IGP; this way, the president of the former, Toni Bennassar and his team, also presided over the latter. In fact, on the Balearic Islands there have been quite an assortment of acronyms and initials, and today they have the *IGP de Vinos de la Tierra de Mallorca*, and the equivalent in Menorca, Ibiza, Formentera and the Balearic Islands in general, which firmly associate all the islands, including Mallorca. Then, there are *Vinos de la Tierra de Tramontana-Costa Nord*, also in Mallorca; and two denominations of origin on the island, namely Binissalem-Mallorca and Pla i Llevant de Mallorca.

MILLIONAIRE GERMANS

However, Vinos de la Tierra de Mallorca groups together most of the wineries on

the island, and all the Germans. The pioneering German wine enthusiast was Johan Matzen, a powerful businessman from Hamburg who founded Can Vidalet almost 20 years ago. It has about 14 hectares around the mansion where they live, and they make wines essentially with foreign varieties and some local Malvasía.

Perhaps the most powerful was Klaus Grag, who made his money in the steel derivatives industry, and was president of Teka, who sponsored Real Madrid and built Puerto Portals in a head-on collision as a fully-blown rival to Puerto Banús in Marbella. Mr. Grag, who was one of the sponsors who made a gift of the Fortuna yacht to Juan Carlos I, also entered the world of wine.

He rebuilt the small village of Biniagual, in the area of Binissalem, turning it into an idyllic venue, and he joined up with Miquel Angel Cerdá from Anima

Negra, one of the leading wine firms in Mallorca, to produce the wine, Veral. Klaus died at the age of 84 years old, and has been succeeded by his daughter Corinna, who still has the winery; Cerdá left the venture due to disagreements with the family over management issues.

Another emblematic investor is Hans-Peter Schwarzkop, a businessman from the world of cosmetics, whose brand and products can be found easily in shops and supermarkets. At the end of the 90s, he was looking for somewhere to build a home in Mallorca and he found it near Pollença, Can Axartel; a 200-hectare estate with an old mansion, virtually in ruins, that had belonged to Balearic nobility, and an old oil press. Schwarzkop bought it, rebuilt the mansion and tidied up the estate, and as he had so much space, he decided to make the most of it and make wine.

He excavated the mountain where there used to be an old quarry, and built



Biniagual.

a surprising winery on the rocks, with a 20-metre steel and glass façade. Inside they make wines with grapes from the 32 hectares planted under vine on the estate, and a further 22 that he has bought from inland vineyards, the first of which were planted in 1999.

The whole operation is organic and he uses local grapes plus some Cabernet, Merlot and Syrah. He works in collaboration with the university on the Balearic Islands, and they have one hectare of experimental vineyard planted with local varieties. The manager is Pep Cifré, who trained at the university, and the oenolo-

gist is Pedro Balda, who comes from a family of vine growers in Rioja. The rest of the team in the fields, winery and sales are all Spanish, except for one German salesman who resides in Hamburg.

THYME AND WINE

And just as we see here, in virtually all the German wineries the managers, technicians and oenologists are Spanish. Most of them are new arrivals, as the fast development of the island's wine sector has meant that technicians had to be imported from the Spanish mainland. First of all, from nearby Valencia from *Escuela de Requena*, and then from all over Spain. Also, the local government is taking action and is offering second degree professional training in vine growing and wine making, in an attempt to train local people in this new business field.



Michael Popp was also looking for an estate and a grand home. He owns Binorica, a pharmaceutical firm specialising in medicinal herbs with over 1600 employees in Nuremberg. He has thyme plantations in Mallorca, and it was also the perfect place for his second home.

He found Castell Miquel, an estate that made wine before the phylloxera and which later turned to growing olive and almond trees. Michael bought the property and renovated the old castle tower and magnificent mansion that stand in the middle of the estate, in Alaró. He works with French varieties and, although he initially worked with a German oenologist, for some time now the technical management has been in the hands of Núria Turduri.

These are some of the big German names, but there are also smaller ventures, run by equally powerful people. One example is Son Juliana, in Santa Eugenia. It is a small, secluded winery that is very beautiful and modern, surrounded by a magnificent garden. It only has seven hectares planted recently, the oldest five years ago and the youngest three, and they make 40,000 bottles a year. The management and technical side



Castell Miquel.



are both run by Rafael Montero; and the property belongs to Günter Zimmer; he is the businessman who invented and patented the brake pad so that drawers and toilet seats close gradually instead of snapping shut.

A FRENCH TREND

Virtually none of the owners live day-to-day in Mallorca, and they only come occasionally. They tend to favour Bordeaux, and French wines in general, and so although many of these German producers work with local grapes, they prefer using Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot... because they think that they will sell better than if they use Callet, and, naturally they prefer Chardonnay to Prensal. The boxes they use for packaging their wines have the word Mallorca emblazoned as large as possible on them, to catch people's attention. Another characteristic of the most recent wave, and



Can Axartell.





also true in Son Juliana, is that they have to start their vineyards from scratch and then wait, or not, to make their wines.

Curiously, the Mallorcan sources we consulted about them prefer to remain anonymous. They hold them up to close scrutiny and can be quite cruel. “This is like the brick and mortar boom on the mainland”, one of them says. “Rich people who like to say they’ve got a winery and their own wine to show their friends. It looks very glamorous arriving to dinner and bringing your own wine from Mallorca. They’re not from the wine world and aren’t actually interested in it, and that’s why whenever there’s any problem or generational change they wash their hands, because in many cases, it may be the parents’ whim, but their children kids aren’t interested”.

These sources also admit that the German producers have redeveloped many magnificent old buildings and mansions that were in ruins, and they are very environmentally friendly; and then when the winery is up and running, they work out their figures. Friends they can sell to, clients, Christmas presents or other gifts, and so the first vintage works out quite well, but with the second or third things start to flounder. Their main objective is to sell in Germany, and it is calculated that they export about 15 percent. This is not enough, and so when things start to get tricky, and as they do not understand the wine world, they start selling their wines in Mallorca. However, they do not

PRODUCERS IN MALLORCA FULL STEAM AHEAD

The reason for writing an article about wineries and wines belonging to Germans makes sense, because it is difficult to find this situation in other wine regions around the world. It is also logical because the marvellous climate, people and different kinds of infrastructure in Mallorca, have made it a tourism paradise.

Nevertheless, the German contingent represents a third of the wineries started up by local Mallorcans, who are knowledgeable about their grapes and have been fighting for a long time to put their wines on the map, not just on their own island, but also throughout Spain.

Mallorca has been a wine region since it was colonised by the Romans, but its heyday was at the end of the 19th century when the phylloxera plague shook France and French merchants turned their eyes towards Spain, including Mallorca. In 1862 the plague set in, and in 1891 when the first case was detected on the island, there were 30,000 hectares of vineyard (today there are only 2000), producing about 50 million litres of wine. Shipping firms emerged that chartered ships carrying wine from Palma to Marseille.

When the phylloxera took hold in Mallorca, all that activity quickly disappeared, and vines were replaced with olive and almond trees. Even so, the local wine industry continued and in Felanitx, they started an oenological station and the island’s biggest co-operative, which finally closed in the 80s.

Yet a few wineries, virtually operating alone, continued to carry the flag for Mallorcan wines. The oldest of them all, Hereu de Ribas, also one of the oldest in Spain too, is 300 years old, and is now simply called Bodegues Ribas, in the town of Consell. From those glorious years at the end of the 19th century, José Luis Ferrer Franja Roja still survives. In the 1980s, there was Antonio Nadal and his Nadal winery, currently run by his daughter, Magdalena. Also, from this time, we have the brothers, Miquel and Toni Gelabert, each with their own winery. Miquel Oliver and Jaume Mesquida, the latter now run by this daughter Bárbara, who is one of the representatives of modern wines from Mallorca.

In 1989, the first denomination of origin was created in Mallorca, Binissalem-Mallorca, and ten years later, the Pla i Llevant de Mallorca DO. However, it was not really until the 90s when Miquel Àngel Cerdá, Francesc Grimalt and Pere Obrador started up Ànima Negra, that there was another turn in the screw and Mallorcan wines enjoyed worthy prestige on the mainland, leaving wine enthusiasts from the rest of the country both surprised and wanting more.

Other creations appeared at this time too, such as the modern Macia Batle followed later by Binigrau led by Matías Batle, all of these in the front line of invention and promoting Mallorcan wines. When Francesc Grimalt separated from Anima Negra, he created 4 Kilos Vinícola which, in turn, became another reference for the island’s vibrant, new wines.

Alongside these, we also have the new generation of wine producers who have emerged in the 20th century, in the wake of profitable quality tourism. These several dozen people really understand their land, play with local and foreign grapes, support wine tourism and they are advancing full steam ahead towards, what looks like, a promising future.





Son Juliana.

reduce their prices but luckily for them, the tourist market accepts their wines because they are made in Mallorca. Even so, they are businessmen and they do not like losing money, and either the business works well or they can sell up at any moment; for the moment, the business is proving profitable.

ES FANGAR

You see, many people are put off by what happened with Es Fangar, perhaps the most ambitious of all the firms that we have mentioned so far. It was the most powerful and is now up for sale. Peter Einsenmann is the multi-millionaire owner of a firm that specialises in plants for the car industry, basically production and assembly lines for painting cars. One can imagine that the leading German car manufacturers used his services.

The parent company in Germany has gone into receivership, and although the businessman told Mallorca Zeitung that this would not affect his properties on the island, in the end, they have gone on the market. The most contentious ask that he returns the grants he received from the autonomous community, and Diario de Mallorca reports that they are asking for more than 100 million euro for the property.

But, let's go back to the beginning. In 2002 Einsenmann bought one of the largest estates in Mallorca, 1064 hectares in Manacor, for 13.8 million euro. Here he set up a paradise of gardens, luxury holiday mansions to rent, and brought across his huge Hannover horse farm where he holds annual dressage and horse-riding competitions, and he also makes organic jams, oils and, of course, wine.

The estate has a total of 64 hectares planted under vine, and he produces



Es Fangar.

labels like Elementos Fangar, Lo Cortinello, N'amarat. The winery is on the Felanitx industrial estate because the Manacor Town Hall did not let him build it on the wine estate. This town hall and some neighbours have always been on the defensive with this businessman because as soon as he bought the property, he fenced it off completely, closing usual, local roads that people used. They were on the verge of going to court, but in the end, they reached an agreement, after years of conflict. The huge winery and the vineyards are now for sale, like everything else, and it is rumoured that it will probably be bought by another German.

This is the biggest case, but the people in Mallorca are also complaining about something else. And it is that the Germans sell most of their wine through wine tourism, hardly entering a competitive market that would increase the level of the island's wines.

The would-be wine German wine producers have formed alliances with German tourism agencies operating in Mallorca or in Germany itself, and they take tourists to see their wineries, where they explain things in their own language, give them paid tastings and sell them their wines. During non-summer periods, and summer periods when there is no beach weather, the new wineries, both German and Mallorcan, are full with visits.

Unusually, the island still does not have any auxiliary wine infrastructure, and so bottles, corks, stoppers ...all come from the Spanish mainland. This does not matter, because most of the wine drunk on the island also comes from the mainland. However, wine from Mallorca, which is more expensive in equivalent segments than Spanish wine, has a significant market niche which means it sells easily.

For the moment, the business is profitable, and although most of the investors are whimsical millionaires, they are also promoting wine on the island and starting up good productions with a promising future. Just like the more than 50 Mallorcan wineries that are developing and receiving this quality tourism and business with open arms. ■



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THE RISING STAR IN PATAGONIA

RÍO NEGRO

THE SOUTHERN CROSS



Nahuel Huapi Lake, Río Negro.
PHOTO: USA EMBASSY IN ARGENTINA.

IN THE SO-CALLED ALTO VALLE DE RÍO NEGRO, AT THE SOURCE OF THE FASTEST FLOWING RIVER IN THE PATAGONIA, A CENTURIES OLD PRODUCTION TRADITION COMBINES WITH EXCEPTIONAL NATURAL CONDITIONS TO CREATE TOP RANGE WINES. MAINQUÉ, VALLE AZUL, CHINCHINALES, VILLA REGINA, INGENIERO HUERGO, FERNÁNDEZ ORO AND CERVANTES ARE THE VILLAGES WHERE GRAPES ARE PROCESSED TO MAKE GREAT WINES IN SOUTHERN ARGENTINA.

TEXT: MAR ROMERO

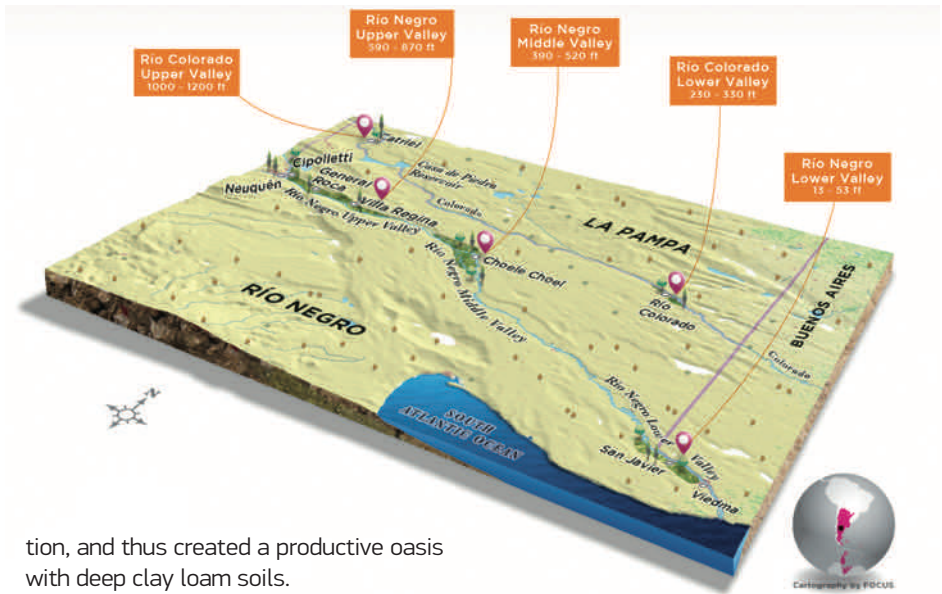
PHOTOS: LENT BY WINERIES

The arrival of investments, modern technology and the knowledge of distinguished foreign professionals enabled Argentinian wine to make a significant, qualitative turnaround at the beginning of the 1990s, and take up position in world rankings. This was how the Malbec grape became popular in the US, and the name of Mendoza was heard again and again in Europe and neighbouring countries, like Brazil.

Now, Argentina is entering a new phase, adding production areas, grape varieties and wine styles. Now it would be wrong to talk about “vino mendocino” or wine from Mendoza, or to group multiple regions like Alto Valle del Río Negro, the Atlantic coast or the budding, adventurous vineyards in Chubut under the general name of “Patagonia”. You see, Patagonia is a vast area which already has four wine making provinces in full swing, and each terrain has developed completely independently.

A DESERT OASIS

In the middle of desert lands, Río Negro traverses the largest valley in the Argentinian Patagonia. The colonisers channelled water from the Andes for irriga-



tion, and thus created a productive oasis with deep clay loam soils.

The climate is ideal for growing vines; cold winters and dry summers, with a significant temperature range. Warm, bright days and very fresh nights allow the grapes to ripen slowly and gradually, ensuring the balance between acidity and sugar, and a good proportion of aromatic substances and excellent colouring. The intense, frequent winds, together with a low annual rainfall and little humidity are very favourable conditions for sustain-

able vine growing, without the need for agrochemicals.

One important differentiating factor of the vineyards lying along the valley, is the protection that the forest curtain provides from the Patagonian winds. The vineyards only stand at 250 metres above sea-level and the greatest risk they face are the late spring frosts.





Lying in the north of Patagonia, Río Negro is Argentina’s fourth most significant wine province, with a total surface area under vine of 1,674 hectares and

producing about 45,000 hectolitres per year, less than one percent of the country’s total.

In the department of General Roca, in what is called the Alto Valle de Río Negro, we find the oldest vineyards that led to the province’s vine growing and wine making tradition. A little further east, along the river that runs into the Atlantic Ocean, Valle Medio appears, and the centre of this valley is Choele Choele island, where we also find old vineyards. The natural terrain offers an ideal habitat for red varieties like Merlot, Pinot Noir and Malbec, while Semillón and Sauvignon Blanc stand out among the whites. The wines from Río Negro are typical cold region wines, with well-defined aromas and interesting characteristics.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

In the 1920s, alongside the production of alfalfa which was started by the mainly Spanish and Italians settlers, with the arrival of fruit trees, vine growing became one of the new agricultural additions, and the farmers provided their grapes to make wines for home drinking.

At the end of the decade, they started to make their first wines, following the

example of the pioneer, Humberto Canale. However, vineyard plantation stopped in 1934, when the wine regulating board passed a national law resulting from excess wine production in Alto Valle. The law levied a tax applicable to each new vineyard hectare, and this led people to plant fruit trees, and thus the boom in apples and pears in this area.

In the 1950s, a series of new wineries were opened which helped to boost the industry. During these years, the *Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA)* opened a head office to promote the area’s technical, economic and social development. In 1958, French technicians from the firm, Chandon, conducted studies on the intention to acquire 400 hectares in the area, to make sparkling wines from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The project did not take off due to red tape, but the Río Negro area was already earmarked as ideal for producing top range wines.

Despite the subsequent crises in the 70s, due to little or negative profitability in the vineyard, for various reasons, it is worth highlighting that there has always been quality vine growing and wine making here, albeit on a small scale and sup-



ported by a handful of wineries. They are the ones who have been aware of the area's vine and wine vocation, and they have started to demand measures to protect their quality product; knocking on the doors of the various entities and asking them to promote the wines, penetrate markets and use technology to plant vineyards for making fine wines and sparkling wines, called *champañas* here. Today, we can say that Alto Valle is one of the largest wine regions in Argentina, and it has well-differentiated and identified subareas.

HISTORIC WINERIES

If we want to go into the vine and wine history of Alto Valle de Río Negro, we have to visit the Humberto Canale winery, in General Roca. The family has been making wines in this area for five generations. Today, the soul of the oldest and most important winery in Patagonia is Guillermo Barzi Canale. He embodies the dream of his great-grandfather, Humberto Canale, the founder of this centenary company that is associated with the growth of Argentina and the development of the area following the arrival of the railway in 1900.

It was the country's first winery to bottle a varietal Semillón wine, in 1976. Now it is paying tribute to its old vineyards with a new label, Humberto Canale Old Vineyard Semillón, made with grapes from a vineyard planted in 1942. The inspiration behind each variety are the different personalities of the family's grandchildren: Pinot Noir and Riesling are associated with the women in the family and Malbec is inspired by the men. Their winery is an example of success, as they have managed to combine their historic legacy with the most sophisticated technology in their export wines.

The history of the Herzig family, from Bodega Museo La Falda (Cipolletti), also illustrates the vine and wine development in Alto Valle, which began at the end of the 19th century at the hand of European immigrants. The family's third generation have transformed this winery, opened in 1910, into a museum which opens its doors to curious tourists. The winery managed to build up 150 hectares under vine and to produce a million litres of wine a year, directly employing over 120 people. It is now an artisan winery and offers a combination of wine tasting, museum visit and meal. An example of the past and

present Río Negro economy, a few steps from the centre of the city of Cipolletti.

VALLE AZUL

It is also essential that you visit the 1932 and 1955 vineyards belonging to the winery, Noemia, and learn about its wine making tradition. Countess Noemí Marone Cinzano was a top quality wine producer on her property Argiano in Tuscany and, together with her colleague and life-long partner, the oenologist and wine maker Hans Vinding Diers (of Danish origin and born in Stellenbosch, the birthplace of the best wines in South Africa, and trained in Graves, Bordeaux, where his family owned Chateau Rahoul and Chateau de Landiras), they recognised the potential of this arid steppe land in Valle Azul, as soon as they saw it, and decided to set up their winery there. They also built their home here and looked for the orientation of their vineyards which they tend to following biodynamic methods. Hans also created the distinguished *Chacra de Patagonia* wines, belonging to Piero Incisa della Rochetta, considered to the world's best Pinot Noir producer. Two of their wines are among the best in Argentina, according to the *guru*, Robert Parker.



At Noemia, they have shown their respect for the land and the environment, by transmitting the identity of their Malbec wines, which are unique. By combining harvests in the two hemispheres, they have become luxury ambassadors for Río Negro and Argentina.

Another well-known name is Bodega Favretto (Villa Regina), the town's historical producer who sold wines in demi-johns. In recent years, Gustavo Favretto, grandson of the founder, has thrown himself into turning the winery around and producing top range wines. He is creating a line of varietal wines made with their own grapes, in a rich region close to Valle Azul, about 30 kilometres from Villa Regina.

To achieve their goal, they reconverted vineyards and invested in technology so that they could abandon common, table wines and make limited editions instead. Sometimes, these editions are not carried through because the winery only bottles the wine that exceeds its levels of quality. The *premium* wine lines have a distinctive feature: some barrels, others with *chips*. The idea is to play with the elements available and look for increasingly more complex aromas. Along these lines, they also produce the Oir line, ("río"

backwards, i.e. Río Negro). The red wine, Ferrucio Favretto, is named after the grandfather and founder, and it is the top wine in their range; a Malbec *coupage* made up of three different vintages.

FRENCH INSPIRATION

About 3 kilometres to the west of General Roca, on Ruta Nacional 22 near J.J.Gómez, we find Bodega Fabre (General Roca). After investing in Mendoza, in the Fabre & Montmayou winery, Hervé Joyaux Fabre decided to buy a winery and some vineyards in Río Negro, which he called Infinitus.

In Joyaux's own words, "the Infinitus wines express the citric aromas of the Semillón grape, the elegance of Chardon-

nay, the charm of the Patagonia Malbec, the strength of the Cabernet Sauvignon and the roundness of the Merlot".

In this harsh land, they use the same tradition and *savoir faire* from Bordeaux, as they applied in Mendoza. The vineyards are cultivated using sustainable methods so as to respect the *terroir* and obtain the maximum expression. In November, part of the harvest is sometimes sacrificed to ensure they obtain the wine's best concentration and maturity. They age all their wines in tanks and French oak for twelve months.

SPANISH PRESENCE

There are also small wine projects like Bodega del Río Elorza (Fernández Oro), a state-of-the-art *boutique*-type winery that makes top range wines with their own vines. It was acquired in 2001 and has forty hectares in Colonia Lucinda, where there had been a vineyard before, in the first few decades of the 20th century. In 2004 they started the task of recovering the almost centenary vines in the old vineyards, which until then had been abandoned. They planted twenty hectares with specially selected clones of Malbec, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet

THE CLIMATE IS IDEAL FOR GROWING VINES; COLD WINTERS AND DRY SUMMERS, WITH A SIGNIFICANT TEMPERATURE RANGE. WARM, BRIGHT DAYS AND VERY FRESH NIGHTS ALLOW THE GRAPES TO RIPEN SLOWLY AND GRADUALLY.



Franc and Chardonnay, all adapted to the Patagonia land.

To fulfil their expectations, they also added the skill of the well-known Hans Vinding-Diers, and a group of excellent professionals who share their passion for making great wines, including the agricultural engineer, Marcelo Casazza and the oenologist, Agustín Ezequiel Lombroni.

It was easy for the family from Río Elorza and the López Montero family who own the Verum winery in Tomelloso (Cuidad Real) in Spain, to reach an agreement over the Verum by Verum project. This also involved Hans Vinding-Diers for some years, although he will not be taking part in the 2020 harvest.

In 2016, the oenologist Elías López Montero found a plot, surprisingly with the same name as his mother, and he fell in love with it. Perhaps he thought it was a good omen, particularly after learning about the conditions in this glamorous region for growing vines. Today, he has already produced four vintages of María Victoria Malbec, which is different from the Malbec in Mendoza, because it has a lower alcohol content and greater acidity.

To complete their range, they are preparing a Chardonnay fermented in 500

l barrels and will launch about 1500 bottles in a few months, and a Pinot Noir made with wood and steel that will be released later. Therefore, Bodegas y Viñedos Verum has become the first Spanish winery to produce wines in southern Argentina.

SMALL PRODUCTIONS

The Agrestis vineyards and winery (General Roca), belong to a traditional family in Valle, and the premises lie about three kilometres from the city of General Roca. All the grapes used to make the Agrestis wines come from their own vineyard, where they have vines imported from France. They specialise in producing nat-

ural sparkling wines, using the traditional method of fermenting in the bottle, and they also make still varietal wines.

Their varieties include Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, for the sparkling wines, and Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot noir and Merlot for fine varietal wines. They also have a small Gewürztraminer vineyard, which is not producing yet. At present, their annual production volume is 20,000 bottles of Vino Espumante Nature, 5000 bottles of Rosé Nature, 3000 bottles of Pinot Noir, 5000 bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon and 2000 bottles of Chardonnay.

Bodegas Gennari (General Fernández Oro), is also a historical winery in Río Negro. Although the family's main production since 1957 has been dried fruit, they have not abandoned their wine production. The founder, Emilio Gennari, started selling demijohns of their Malbec red locally when, at the time, people were only selling rosé wine. He had inherited 17 hectares planted with this variety and managed to make himself a niche in the market. The winery is run today by the second generation, his children, Osvaldo and Ana. They have three lines of wines, Familia Gennari, Garrón de Piedra and Parada 81, from the 80-year

LYING IN THE NORTH OF PATAGONIA, RÍO NEGRO IS ARGENTINA'S FOURTH MOST SIGNIFICANT WINE PROVINCE, WITH A TOTAL SURFACE AREA UNDER VINE OF 1,674 HECTARES AND PRODUCING ABOUT 45,000 HECTOLITRES PER YEAR, LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL.



old vineyards in the area of Barda. They produce between seventy and ninety thousand litres.

Marcelo Miras is one of the best oenologists in the Patagonia, and a fundamental part of the history of Río Negro wines. Apart from his own family project in the Miras winery (General Fernández Oro), he is also the director of vine growing and wine making in the province. His job as chief oenologist in a huge Patagonian winery, such as Bodega del Fin del Mundo, alongside Michel Rolland, introduced him to most grape producers, whom he worked with for many years to include them in his personal project.

Marcelo has created his own style that has managed to rescue forgotten vines and promote varieties that few people defended until only recently in Río Negro, such as Merlot. He also defends the Malbec grape for obtaining quality wines, both young and aged, as it expresses the typical mineral nature of the Patagonia. He has also been one of the great pioneers of Cabernet Franc, a variety famous for its ability to adapt to the *terroir* and to produce different wine styles.

He had always bought grapes for his winery from the vineyards lying in the

best areas of Alto Valle. However, the 2014 vintage was the first time he used grapes from a 20-year old vineyard in the Cervantes micro-region, belonging to his son, Pablo. The first time his own vineyards were used for a vintage, that is consolidated by its combination of appropriate fruit and wood, resulting in honest, expressive wines without any excesses. Their future lies in continuing this growth, and taking every effort to maintain the quality. The Miras wines are exported to US, Canada, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and China.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Another family winery is Finca Aniello (Mainque), which has one of the most spectacular vineyards in the Patagonia. It was started in 2010 when the family bought an estate called 006, planted in the Mainque district back in 1998. The diverse nature of its soils means they can harvest the same variety (Malbec and Merlot) at three different times, resulting in different, complementary wines. In the second stage they bought an old winery in the area, which was built in 1927 and had one hectare under vine, planted in

1932, and four other hectares planted in 1947. They use a mass selection of pre-phylloxera Malbec, which is currently being recycled and recovered.

The Italian family who run the project introduced sustainable agriculture and integrated vineyard handling, as well as reducing their carbon footprint; they respect nature and want to leave a legacy for their future generations.

And there you have an overall view of the current diversity that has given the area its *raison d'être*. All the knowledge acquired in this relatively recent history, is now being enriched by an inward reflection to embody places that have more than just soil and altitude. There is also the role played by man's interpretation of this environment, and the way each producer reads the land will determine the style of modern Río Negro wines. ■

We would like to extend our gratitude to Marcelo Miras for his help as Director of vine growing and wine making in the Río Negro province, and to Laureano Gallegos, Director of communication for Río Negro wines. And the various wineries for their photographs.





RED WINE IS YELLOW

»» Is it incongruence? An outburst? Colour blindness? By describing something, we represent a reality through words, but isn't it truer to say that this reality depends on the glass you are looking through. Perhaps the most complicated thing to describe is a sensation. In the end, the language becomes confusing, not very clear, and ends up being cryptic and difficult to associate or comprehend. The first thing to do is observe, select the data that can be relevant, order it and use it. What is easy to put down on paper, is more complicated to say because a description is also a translation of our own experiences. Here the multiple linguistic resources generally dotted with adjectives come to our aid, as well as the comparisons and metaphors that help to connect with the person receiving our description. But, as the personal experiences are different, what we transmit in the description is also very different from one person to another. In the literary world, things are clearer because we are all accustomed to the rhetorical figures and do not even look for any logical

explanation. The phrase, "your name tastes of grass" by Joan Manel Serrat sounds very normal to us, or the "violet peacefulness of the path" by Juan Ramón Jiménez. Nobody raises an eyelid when Luis Cernuda writes that "the rain water collected in the ball of your hand tasted like that aroma". These phrases can be a nightmare for a translator or Spanish language student, but for the rest of Spanish speakers they are not particularly difficult because we get the general ideal of what they want to transmit, and the literal interpretation is not important. We know very well that a name or an aroma does not taste of anything, and that peacefulness does not have a colour, nevertheless we enjoy the sound and beauty of the language. However, what if that were not the case? What if a name and an aroma did have a flavour, or a state of calmness did have a colour? Generally, we associate shapes and colours with our sense of sight; touch, takes us to our appreciation of textures and our sense of taste is responsible for flavours, but there is a small group of people, about four



percent of the population according to the latest estimates, who assimilate various sensations together in one and the same perception. They are called synesthetes. They hear colours, they touch an object and have the sensation of taste or see sounds. They are surprised that in their environment people do not know that number four is yellow, for example, or that tobacco has a very sharp sound. They have double the information that the rest of us are lacking. This is not the result of a psychotropic journey or any mental disorder, it is a simple *curiosity*, where the senses create a rather unique mental blend and interpret sensations in a different way than the rest of us mere mortals are used to. Just like how, a few days ago, a synesthete assured us that red wine is yellow, because they see the oak as yellow. The rest of the group identified the ageing aromas but nothing more. There are different degrees of synesthesia, and there is a theory that assures us that everyone is born as a synesthete, but as we develop and grow, the sensory information process separates into different compartments. The neuroscientist, David Eagleman believes that, to a certain degree, we are probably all synesthetes, even though we are not aware of it. The senses have very

personal descriptions, which means that what may seem obvious for some, because we know it, we experience it and we see it, is not so obvious for others because they do not share the same experience. If also we have this “certain degree” of synesthesia that, apparently, we are all adding to our bag of personal experiences, we see that a description is the most subjective thing in the world. The difficulty that one and the same sensation is perceived in the same way by two different people does exist, but we have language to close the distances. It is much nicer to say that a wine is cardinal red, as my friend Carlos Delgado says, than explaining that it is between vermilion and dark carmine (which only a few people really know what they are) or to be even more exact, that it is Pantone 227c. The Chinese do not care much for nuances when it comes to *hòng* (red) because it is always a synonym of beauty and luck, although in Chinese culture the favourite tone is what the fashion experts call Valentine red, which is like saying Pantone OXWO-C. Confusing? Let’s let our imagination fly and avoid impossible, corny and snobbish descriptions, and instead let’s put into words, with or without synaesthesia, the emotion of describing a wine in a very personal, non-mechanical way. ■

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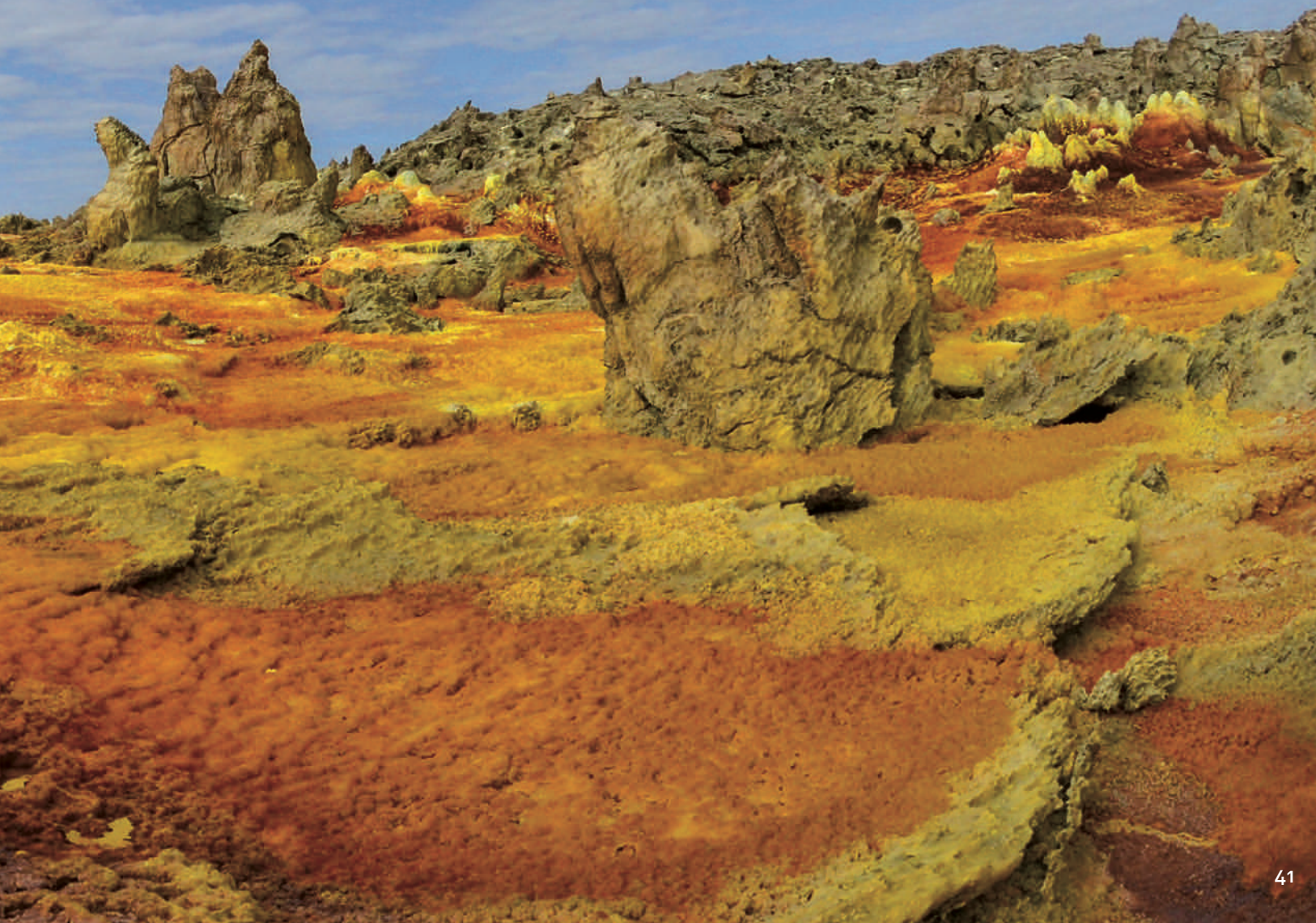
PEPE HIDALGO



Sulphur formations in the Danakil desert, Ethiopia.

SULPHUR AND VINE GROWING PREVENTION AND CURE

DISPUTED BUT ESSENTIAL, USING SULPHUR IN THE WINERY HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MANY DISCUSSIONS, INCLUDING SOME IN THIS SECTION. IT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART, OR MORE, IN THE VINEYARD, WHERE NOTHING RIVALS ITS DEFENCE OF THE PLANTS AGAINST VARIOUS CONDITIONS, SUCH AS OIDIUM, THE FIRST OF THE FUNGUS-INDUCED AMERICAN PLAGUES.



LEARNING MORE

»» Contrary to what many may think, using sulphur in vine growing, does not date back to the Greeks or Romans, but to the oidium crisis that befell us during the second half of the 19th century. In ancient times, sulphur was used as an insecticide, as described by the politician, soldier and writer Marco Porcio Catón, *El Viejo*, in his work on agriculture, *De Re Rustica*. Oidium (or powdery mildew as it is also known), came from America and is triggered by the fungus called *Uncinula necátor*. It was unknown in Europe until just over one hundred years ago.

However, the fungicide properties of sulphur were known within the context of fruit trees in England at the beginning of the 19th century, and also in the US shortly afterwards. The first evidence of this disorder appeared in a table grape greenhouse near London in 1845. It came from the American continent and was observed the by the gardener, Mr. Tucker, whose surname was used in the first name given to this fungus, *Oidium tuckerii*.

The disease spread quickly to the European continent, appearing around Paris in 1848. From there, in 1851, it spread first to the wine regions in Bordeaux and Roussillon (France), Porto (Portugal), Rheinfalz (Germany) and Levante in Spain, and later to the rest of the continent and islands, including the Canary Islands, leading to a serious crisis in grape and wine production in 1854. It is

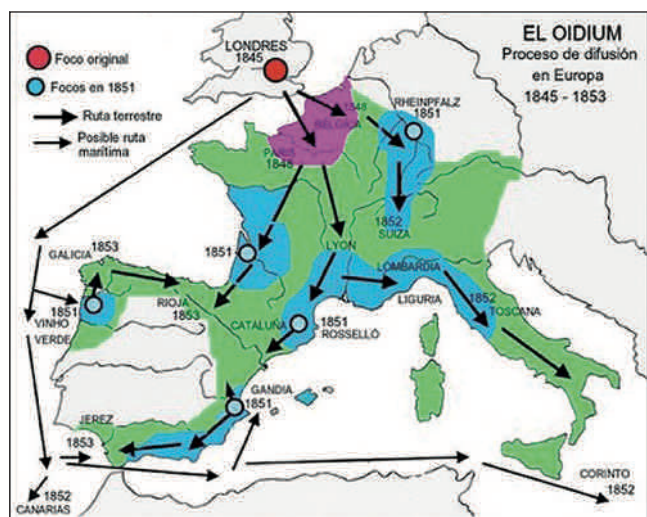


Grapes infected with powdery mildew.

worth mentioning that this catastrophe appeared in Europe some years before the other crises involving the phylloxera (1863) and downey mildew, both also imported from the North American continent.

In Paris in 1850, the first tests against this plague were conducted by Ducharte and Gontier using sulphur, but they were not very successful. More effective

results were obtained in 1853 by Charmeux, who was the first to apply pure sulphur in powder form. The definitive results against the disease came from Henri Marés (Montpellier), in 1855. He finished defining the strategy for fighting against powdery mildew, and confirmed the use of sulphur in powder form as a preventative treatment, particularly when using effective sprinkling



Left: the spread of powdery mildew in Europe (Juan Piqueras).
Right: the effects of powdery mildew on branches, buds and leaves.
An old vineyard sprinkling apparatus (F. de la Vergne. Bordeaux. 1853).



machines to distribute the product more efficiently over the vineyard vegetation.

Despite this significant development found against the spread of powdery mildew, it was not until 1862 that this disease was effectively controlled, leaving behind a period of nearly ten years of desolation in vine growing, and particularly, in wine production. This was a time when some producers who were not affected, made genuine fortunes.

REMEDY WITH A REWARD

Such was the importance given to this disease that in Spain, in the beginning of

sprinkling sulphur powder as a preventive remedy, but in other cases they discovered ridiculous things like the proposal by Pedro Culleres (Gracia-Barcelona), “to make a big hole in the trunk of the vine and insert a piece of oak wood the same size, cover it with earth, water the trunk with sea water and put a nail through it, trying to split the wood and water both the trunk and the roots with human urine”.

Out of all the responses received, barely half a dozen were in favour of using

THE FUNGICIDE PROPERTIES OF SULPHUR WERE KNOWN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FRUIT TREES IN ENGLAND IN 19TH CENTURY.

PRODUCING SULPHUR

In nature, sulphur can be found in its basic form in volcanic soil and also in mines, in its crystal form, although today it is obtained almost exclusively as a by-product of refining petrol. Using raw sulphur as a basis, three formulas can be found for agricultural use, depending on the particle size: *sublimed*, between 5 and 15 microns; *triturado* (*ground*), between 15 and 80 microns, and *miconizado* (*miconized*), less than 10 microns in diameter. The first two forms are applied directly by sprinkling the sulphur powder, while the third one is used as “wetttable” sulphur in aqueous suspensions intended for spraying.

This last form is used to control powdery mildew and other cryptogamic diseases like excoresis (*Diaporthe viticola*), and also to control dust mite and spider plagues, particularly during the first stages of vegetation development and until flowering. While sulphur, as a powder, is used in the following stages of the vineyard life cycle until the grapes ripen.

Due to the action of temperature and light, the sulphur applied to the crop sublimates, passing directly from a solid to a gaseous state. The vapours are absorbed by the tissues of the invading fungus, causing its death and therefore protecting the plant from its harmful effects.

Sulphur in powder form is effective, providing that the powdery mildew or oidium attacks are not too significant; it is a low-cost product that also favours the buds flowering and setting in the vineyard. Temperatures above 18°C are needed for it to act, but when temperatures rise above 30°C, the plant tissues can get burned. The persistence or protective effect of sulphur on the crops is from 10 to

12 days, providing it does not rain, which is when any sulphur applied can be washed off.



Applying sulphur in the vineyard.

1845, the Government's Ministry of Public Works and Development opened a tender worth 25,000 *duros* (about 125,000 pesetas), a real fortune at that time, to find the “safest and most efficient method to cure the vine disease, known as *Oidium tuckeri* or *cenicilla* or *polvillo de la vid*”.

Several people took part, with a total of 119 bids, out of which 47 came from abroad. These included bids from well-known scientists, like Marqués de Lavergne (Bordeaux) and even Henri Marés himself (Montpellier). In some cases, they found good solutions, like

sulphur, including the above-mentioned Lavergne and Marés from France, Baron Forester, an Englishman residing in Porto, Joan Cros, a chemical manufacturer from Barcelona, José Elvira from Logroño, and Jacinto Montells from Malaga. We do not know the result of the tender, but we can imagine that this small group of participants and possibly some others, with some other original solution, were probably the fortunate winners.

AN ABUSIVE USE OF SULPHUR IN VINE GROWING CAN, ON THE ONE HAND, CAUSE A BURNING EFFECT ON THE LEAF SURFACE.

A COPPER ALLY

One alternative to sulphur is using different synthesised phytosanitary products, which are more effective against fungus attack and therefore these treatments particularly have been developed during recent years. Nevertheless, they are not very relevant to organic vine growing and its derivations (biodynamic, natural, etc.), where sulphur is still virtually the only authorised product, together with copper, for fighting against the other significant cryptogamic vine diseases, like downy mildew.

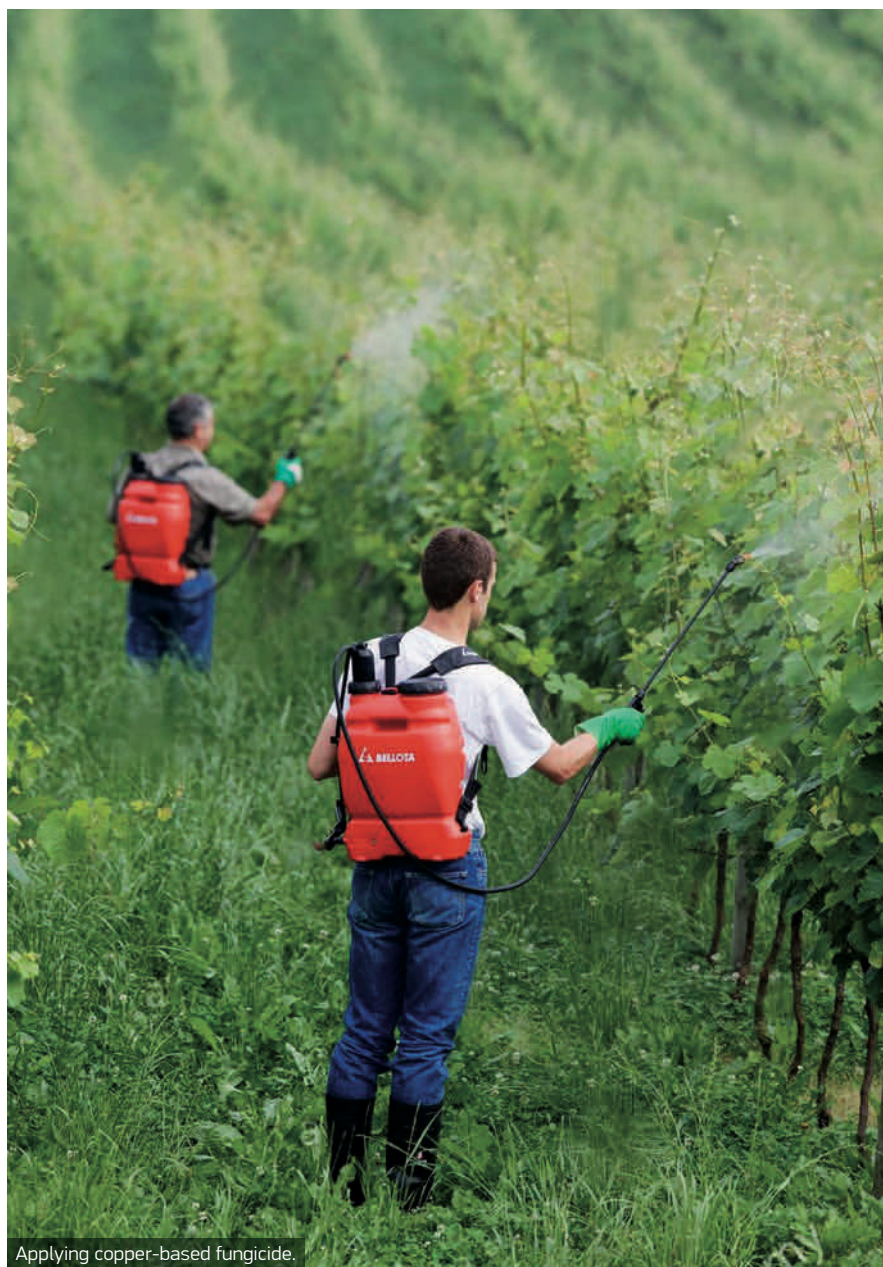
Delaying treatments using copper-based products reduce the polluting load of the mildew spores on the vine for the next campaign. Also, removing the stalk pruning remains from the vineyard and eliminating them, is an interesting and effective practice to prevent the disease from developing; this can be enhanced with a winter treatment applied to the pruned vineyard, using a product based on sulphur oxidation.

The treatments that apply calcium polysulphide to the vineyard during the budding period are also fairly effective in containing this disease. One modern, organic treatment against the oidium, or as a preventive complement to other active matter is 6% orange oil, which is also effective against mildew and against dust mites and insects.

The use of copper is currently limited to 28 kilograms per hectare for a period of seven years and with compensation, in other words, with the possibility of exceeding the limit of four kilograms per hectare and year, when necessary, if there are adverse climatic conditions, and reducing this limit in the years when there is less pressure from fungi.

The reason for this limitation is the build-up of copper on the plants, which can end up altering the microbial life and even become toxic for the plants themselves.

However, there is no legal restriction for using sulphur and so spraying or sprinkling vine and wine soils with sulphur-based phytosanitary treatments stirs a lot of interest, as it also increases acidity as the sulphur slowly converts



Applying copper-based fungicide.

into the corresponding acids. Sulphur also contributes to the fertility of the soil.

However, similar to the previous movement focused on copper, mentioned above, there is a trend that wants to limit the use of sulphur, but this is motivated by a very different cause; the vapours given off during sulphur sublimation could contribute to the formation of so-called “acid rain”. This poses a real problem in some parts of the planet, particularly in heavily industrialised areas, where gas

emissions contain high levels of these sulphurous gases.

An abusive use of sulphur in vine growing can, on the one hand, cause a burning effect on the leaf surface, as mentioned above, and it can also have a negative effect on the quality of the wine, since the sulphur remaining on the grape bunches, ends up unavoidably in the wines, in the form of off-putting sulphurous odours: rotten eggs, stagnant water, rubber, cauliflower and others. ■



GREAT VINE GROWING AND WINE MAKING TREATIES

TREATY ON VINE GROWING AND WINE MAKING

LECTURES GIVEN IN THE ATHENAEUM OF THIS COURT
IN THE ACADEMIC YEARS OF 1860 TO 1861 AND 1861 TO 1862

ANTONIO BLANCO FERNÁNDEZ.
MADRID, ESTABLECIMIENTO TIPOGRÁFICO DE T. FONTANET, 1863



»» We are continuing our series dedicated to major vine growing and wine making treaties, and in this case, it is the turn of the botanist and agricultural engineer, Antonio Blanco Fernández, from Valencia, according to Miguel Colmeiro, or born in Segura de la Sierra (Jaén) according to Antón Ramírez. He was a doctor in medicine and surgery, an agricultural teacher, a professor in special cultivation at the *Escuela Superior de Ingenieros Agrónomos* and director of *Jardín Botánico de Valencia*, where he was appointed plant physics teacher. He was also a member of the *Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales y Bellas Artes de Barcelona*, the *Real Sociedad Económica Matritense de Amigos del País*, the *Sociedad de Ciencias Médicas y Naturales de Bruselas*, and the *Sociedad de Horticultura de Lieja*.

His bibliography includes *Tratado elemental de botánica teórico práctico* [Elemental treatise on theoretical and practical botany] (Valencia, 1834), *Introducción al estudio de las plantas* [An introduction to the study of plants] (Madrid, 1845), *Curso completo de botánica* [Complete botany course] (Barcelona, 1851), *Elementos de Agricultura* [Elements of Agriculture] (Madrid, 1857), *Arboricultura, o sea, cultivo de árboles y arbustos* [Arboriculture, i.e. growing trees and bushes] (Madrid, 1864) and his *Tratado sobre el cultivo de la vid y elaboración de vinos* [Treaty on growing vines and making wines] (Madrid, 1863), which we are going to talk about here.

This is a complete treaty published in two, generously illustrated, tomes. In the *Advertencia* section, that is a kind of prologue, the author says: "Everything

related to growing vines and making wines is very interesting to most of our farmers.

Therefore, there is a need for a book that provides an easy to understand, organised description of the very useful concepts regarding each process, and also the significant developments to date ...". He quotes authors whom he refers to throughout his work, such as Simón de Rojas Clemente, Herrera, Lagasca, Guyot, Ladrey, and Maumené, among others.

The first book, which has the most pages, is dedicated to vine growing, and it includes a generous treaty on ampelography and a section on the insects that harm vines which, given its length, is not usual in books on vines and wines. The second book is dedicated exclusively to wine making.



VINE GROWING

The work begins by describing the usefulness of this plant and goes on to provide a historical outline, and then a description of the vine plant. The author talks about the meteorological conditions, climate, terrain, location, height, sun exposure, soil slope, preparing the land and fencing.

He then goes into detail about the vine species and varieties, which he divides into two sections, classified and numbered by types and their varieties. The first section focuses on vines with faded leaves, and it details all the varieties: Listanes, Palominos, Pensiles, Mantúos, Jaenes, Mollares, Albillos and isolated varieties.

The second section concerns furry-leaved vines, or completely hairless ones. The types are: Jimenecias, Perrunos, Vigiriegos, Agraceras, Ferrares, Tetas de

vaca, Cabrieles, Datileras, Moscateles and isolated varieties. As in the first section, here the author describes all the varieties of this type and their characteristics.

He then goes on to say that knowing these varieties, and carefully choosing them according to the climate, terrain and producer's purpose, is the most important fundament for vine growing and wine making, while also taking other considerations into account, which he then goes on to describe. The subjects he covers are the number of varieties, vine multiplication, general vineyard planting and table grape varieties, particularly for eating.

SUCCESSIVE CARE

Other areas he discusses include propping vines, replacing dead or destroyed

plants, vineyard tasks and fertilisers, improving soil intended for vines, training vines, leaf cleaning and pruning, and ways to support or adapt the rods. This long chapter also focuses on the circumstances affecting the quality and quantity of the vine fruit, and the author introduces headings like Collecting the fruit of the vine, Preserving the grapes, Restoring the vines and renewing a vineyard.

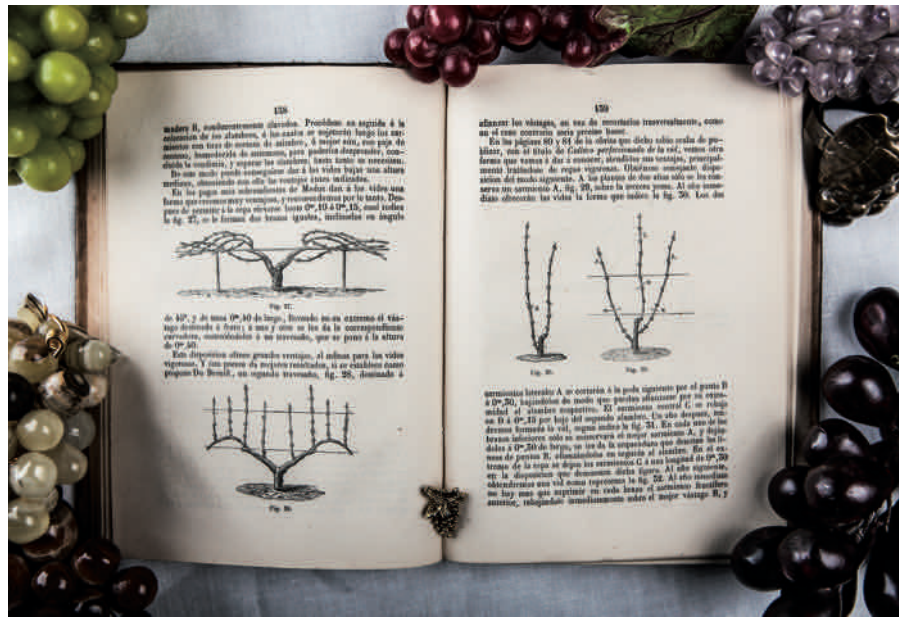
He then discusses accidents that occur with the vines and the vineyard enemies. There is a long section on climatic influences: heat, cold, hail, rainy wind, fog and wounds. Then he discusses vine diseases and highlights the treaty on oidium, or powdery mildew, with a historical overview, including how to destroy it; among other methods, he quotes using carbon. Later on, he talks about the importance of sulphur and how to use it.

He continues talking about the damage animals can cause vines, like birds, molluscs (snails and slugs) and insects, and he divides them into beetles, orthoptera (locusts, grasshoppers), hemiptera (general bugs, leafhoppers, planthoppers) and lepidopterans (butterflies, moths), considering the species that are most harmful to vines.

WINE MAKING

He begins this section talking about preliminary operations regarding the grapes, where he includes procedures such as transport, how to clean and separate the bunches, placing them in the sun and amassing them; he says that in some districts in France, the grapes are amassed for five or six days before they are crushed, so that the moderate temperature and dry atmosphere finish off ripening the bunches. Others prefer to put the grapes in large casks.

In the preliminary operations regarding the most suitable site and utensils for making wine, he talks about the wine press and winery, detailing how they should be built, the optimum conditions for keeping the grapes in vats and how they should be used. He continues by describing the containers for making and holding wine. To complement this section on wine making, the author includes



headings where he describes destalking and crushing the grapes in the press, and he finishes with other important considerations like cleaning the press before starting the wine making process per se, and this leads into the must analysis, i.e. the density or specific weight of the must and the sugar they contain, improving the must, consequences and practical applications when the must is very sugary and when it is very acidic. Then he also talks about alcoholic fermentation and tumul-

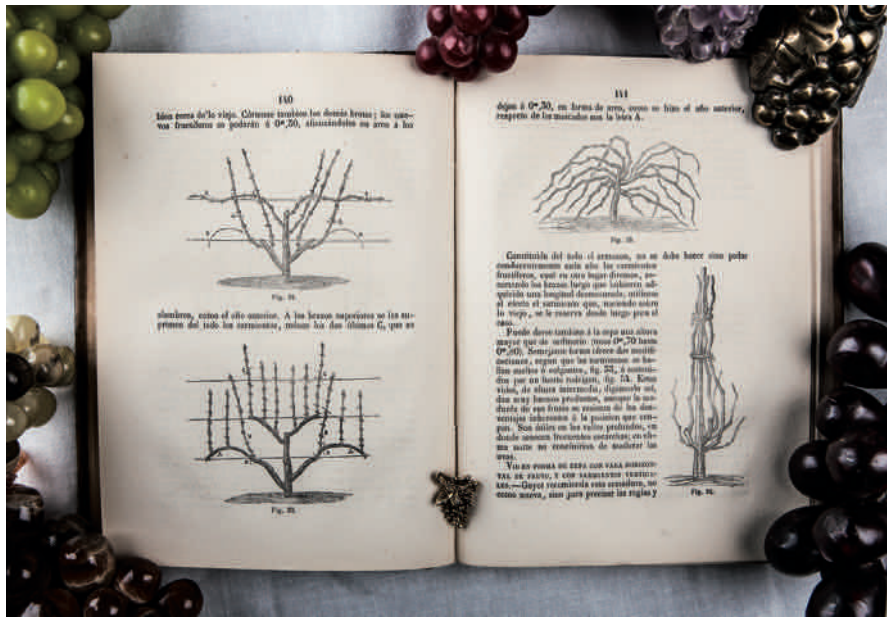
ous fermentation (also called prolonged fermentation), and he details the phenomena subsequent to fermentation, how to conduct fermentation and the important precepts.

TYPES OF WINE

He continues with a description of how to make different types of wine, including, good white wines, under the heading “Term of tumultuous fermentation in white wines, important precepts”. He also refers to “*vinos intermedios*”, deducing that they are rosé wines, *generosos* and *vino de lágrima* or free run wines, from the first press.

Other issues in this section include Arranging the vats, Interrupting fermentation, Hermetically-sealed vat systems, Wooden vats, Masonry vats, Decanting must into casks, Vats from other fermentations, Wine enhancing products and Lees analysis.

The next stage focuses on the Successive care wines require, where he describes decanting, sulphating and clarifying wines, before going into Notable influences where he discusses wines and their duration. He also details different aspects that influence wines, like the heat, the cold, light, electricity, ozone, the air in the atmosphere, the amount of liquid held in the containers, movement,



acids, metals, the action of the oxides and salts, and how time can affect the wine.

As for the reference to Wine improvements, the author says: “The principle ones can be divided into three groups: one is the sugar, sugared substance, and acids already dissolved in the must, which we can call fundamental acids, while others (derived acids), like alcohol and carbonic acid, are formed during fermentation, at the expense of the former. A third series (the mixed ones) dissolve thanks to the influence of the elements that develop again on the residue of the transformed must”.

He assures his readers that any imbalance between these various wine elements is the principle on which any wine improvement is based, and he then goes on to list the ways to improve the wines: appropriate choice and blend of various grapes, adding sugar and other substances, using mixtures, adding alcohol or carbonic acid, transporting, freezing, keeping the casks constantly full and adding aromatic substances. He also provides an abbreviated method for obtaining good wines.

PROPERTIES OF WINE

The author also says that wines are distinguished by the smell, colour, taste, alcohol content or spirit level they contain, and their age, origin and blends, and he describes all these aspects. When it comes to flavour, he divides wines into slightly sour ones, acidy ones, slightly acidy ones, coarse ones, sweet wines, *generosos* or sour ones.

He indicates that imitated wines date back to ancient times, and he explains different general procedures, describing the imitated wines made with leaves and vine stalks or with fruit residue. He also refers to imitated wines made with fruit from other trees and bushes, and with other plants, like currants, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, beetroot. He also mentions wine imitated through different mixtures (factitious wines), and other wine types, some of which are famous, like Tokai, tear, Bordeaux, Lunel, Moscatel, Jerez, Frontignan, Burgundy and second class Malvasia.

In the Appendix, he describes wine making methods in other countries, like Greece and Turkey, and how Malvasia de Madera [Madeira], Tokai and Hegy-Allia, Menesch, and Moscatel de Rivesaltes are made.

ALTERED AND FALSIFIED WINES

He includes a section on Wine alterations and describes the most frequent types and the way to rectify them, like incipient acidity, colour modification, lost transparency or cloudiness, greasiness, isolation or mucilaginous state, cream or mould efflorescence, styptic or astringent

listed in alphabetic order, which is more typical of modern-day books than those from the 19th century. Also, the definitions are completely understandable today.

This treaty is a great work by the author, contributing to both agricultural and botanical knowledge, mainly thanks to the extensive descriptions he gives, not only of the soil, but also the vine diseases, particularly in that pre-*phylloxera* period.

The work is based on classical authors, mainly from Spain, like Simón Rojas Clemente in his work *Ensayo sobre las variedades de la vid común que vegetan*



gent flavours and bitterness, abnormal or extemporaneous fermentation, woody flavour and insipid wines.

The author defines wine falsification as follows: “Any liquid that is sold as wine and made with substances extracted from the fruit of the vine, that contains other substances that are more or less harmful, must be considered falsified wine”. He quotes Pliny, whom it is said used to complain that the leading gentlemen could not find pure wines to grace their tables”.

The author finishes his treaty with an interesting dictionary of technical terms

en Andalucía [Assay on the common vine varieties growing in Andalusia], (the first edition, edited in Madrid in 1807), and also other authors from France, who contribute to the latest developments.

It is worth highlighting the clear way the treaty subjects are set out, particularly the steps to follow in wine making, and which can be considered fully up-to-date in the author’s time. Equally important, are the numerous complementary illustrations. Therefore, we can consider this to be one of the most complete books ever published in Spain on vine growing and wine making. ■



MADRID

BARRIO DE LAS LETRAS



Plaza de Santa Ana.
PHOTO: VIVIENDO MADRID.

»» Historical, literary and full of plaques in remembrance of its famous neighbours, the Las Letras district in Madrid is one of the most popular with tourists.

No doubt, the fact that it lies in the centre of the capital is also a big advantage. It is a privileged location, with pros and cons (just like this article), pedestrian streets and a night-time atmosphere for cocktails and particularly, beer which has some very traditional references like the Cervecería Alemana or Naturbier, in Plaza de

Santa Ana, or La Dolores and La Fábrica, on the corners of Duque de Medinaceli with Lope de Vega, as well as other nearby premises. However, they all have a reasonable chapter on wines that is a little more decent than the average found in some bars.

HISTORICAL, LITERARY AND FULL OF PLAQUES IN REMEMBRANCE OF ITS FAMOUS NEIGHBOURS.

In Lope de Vega, just a few steps away from the alleged tomb of Velázquez, we find the HQ of *Unión Española de Catadores*, which is like an embassy for the wine world in a traditional cocktail area, and, next to this, there is Casa Mariano often frequented by wine personalities visiting the UEC to give

talks, and who then relax with a glass of wine or *caña* to wash down the famous *torreznos* and fried almonds.

The first thing to do is define an area: between Plaza Jacinto Benavente, Atocha street, the Prado

and San Jerónimo street where you join up with the Congress. This area includes several well-known names such as Huertas, Prado, Echegaray and Plaza de Santa Ana, and it is a splendid place for anyone visiting the city because it is so easy to get to; however, it is

complicated if you are looking for well-cared for and respectable, quality restaurants. Due to the crowds that meet here, from all over Spain and the world, the eating and drinking options have adopted other styles... apart from some very dignified exceptions, which are always recommendable meeting places for locals, neighbours and the usual clientele, like the main parish. And obviously, there are always plenty of visitors, but the real tourist masses do not come this way.

Nevertheless, there are already several groups set on changing things and opening establishments that have nothing to do with the businesses that have triumphed in this district. And the truth is that some premises are undergoing some interesting renovations which have gradually brought back clients who have not been here for years. For example, **Viva Madrid** (Manuel Fernández y González, 7) was a



much talked-about re-opening; a historic tavern in las Letras that re-opened its doors under the guidance of Ricardo García and the well-known Diego Cabrera, a name which no doubt increased the expectancy and delight of many before its opening; what is more, it has attracted people to this local district who have never been here before. It has plenty more glamour than before, but still maintains its tavern airs, and although its speciality is aperitifs and cocktails, it serves other proposals introduced later just as well. You see, this part of the capital has been going through an interesting and necessary renovation for years. The hotels that have opened in the area are a sign of this, and so it was just a question of time before the *different* restaurants arrived (with a well-presented offer) and good venues for wines. So, although it is true that the district has a slant for beer, for the last two or three years, in just a few square metres, Las Letras has combined four wine venues worthy of attention and a visit, as they are meant to be enjoyed.

Alimentación Quiroga (Huertas, 19), **Casa Varona** (plaza Matute, 13), **Amano** (plaza Matute, 4) and **La Ferretería** (Atocha, 57) have become essential now for anyone who wants to enjoy a good

wine and, given their proximity, they often support each other. Seeing how well these wine bars have been received, it seems quite likely that others will follow. They are popular because they provide a good offer, good attention and good products, and these are the keys to their success, and also the fact that they are run by good connoisseurs.

Juan Carlos Henche, who was associated for many years with the Osborne group, runs the new **Alimentación Quiroga**. It was first opened in 1958, as a grocer's shop, and has now been turned into a tasting outlet. It carries top level products (preserves, delicatessen sausages, cheese, dairy produce...), which you can buy or enjoy on the premises, together with a very wide offer of wines by the glass and the bottle. These are showcased in view of the customers, who can select whichever label they want. They also serve a few dishes such as salads, toasts and a warm seasonal stew.

The second wine bar opened less than a year ago, and has opened on the site of one of the district's historical venues. What used to be Mantequería Cabello, another grocer's, is now **Casa Varona**. We could say that it is a sibling venue, and an alternative when Quiroga fills up, which happens quite regularly, particularly on weekends, when trying to get a table is a matter of patience and good luck. So, Varona is like a continuation with the same philosophy, and the premises divided into different areas. As for the rest, the products are on view, the cuisine is simple with no frills, and there are wines for everyone including very well-known labels, not so well-known labels and some that are not known at all. Added value always. Just to clarify things, in these two venues and the others, the service is impeccable, at last for Letras!... including the appropriate glassware. And what is more, another common feature are the aesthetical additions, arranged with taste and careful attention to detail.



Alimentación Quiroga.



Casa Varona.



Amano.





Ferretería by Ego.



Casa González.



Vinoteca Moratín.

The most recent wine bar opening came just after the summer, just in front of Varona. It is called **Amano**, and it is the latest name to join Plaza Matute. The project is run by a well-known sommelier, Fran Ramírez (until this place opened, he shared the head waiter position in the Alabaster restaurant), and his friend Javier Goya. One more premise endorsed by its professionals, and essential in this area for wine enthusiasts. It carries references from a variety of origins, both national and foreign, by the bottle and by the glass, both in the bar and in the dining room. Their cuisine is based on market produce and original flavours, without any artificialness.

In Atocha street, **Ferretería by Ego** is the most spectacular in terms of its staging. It opened on the site of a centenary iron monger's, hence its name (it was first opened in 1888, and so it is part of Madrid's historical and cultural heritage) and the décor at the entrance. The renovated premises hide surprises inside where you can find antiques and works of art. It is a must to visit, and you can choose between the street level, a tribute to the recent past of stopping for a quick bite (although you have the option of choosing something a little more nourishing) and enjoying some of the wines they serve. The rest of the establishment is divided into different heights and rooms, and there is a table where you can watch the activity in the kitchen.

It is important to mention the Iberian ham which is one of the essential elements on these premises, since

the co-owner, Emilio García-Ortigosa, is skilled at cutting the ham and usually makes a show of it, breaking the fine fibres and separating the muscles. Mind you, before asking for the ham, just check the prices to avoid any surprises ... It is a good idea to go in and have a glass of wine to check the place out, and no doubt, you will stay for a second glass too.

Four impressive neighbours who have arrived in the district in recent years, and all of them are essential for those who love enjoying and discovering good wines, thanks to their selection and service.

Nevertheless, there are two other venues in Las Letras that complete our circuit. They opened several years ago, but also have wine running through their veins; **Casa González** (León, 12) dates back to 1931, and it was opened by someone who served in La Mallorquina, a legendary cake shop in Puerta del Sol. Vicente González Ambit opened this firm on premises shared with the family home, in the back shop. Again, it was a grocer's selling delicatessen sausages, cheese, preserves... which with time became the purveyor to Madrid society. And it is still there. Now the shop has a few tables (always taken) for sitting down to open and enjoy one of the more than 200 national wines lying in its cellar.

Vinoteca Moratín (Moratín, 36) is much more recent, but also a good recommendation for its cosy environment and rich wine offer. It is a kind of secluded bistro, with very few tables (and so it is better to book before by telephone), and a manageable culinary menu. It is the other one, the wine list, that is surprising because of its endless number of references. It is very well organised, with a mixture of labels from very different national origins, and a rich representation of foreign wines. Amazing; interesting. The next stop, perhaps Lavapiés, another popular district in Madrid which is having a facelift and opening attractive wine venues. ■



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PLAZA DEL POETA IGLESIAS, 10. SALAMANCA. TEL.: 923 217 222.
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €55.

»» This is a must on anyone’s list when visiting Salamanca, because of both its food and its wines. The attractive venue boasts a comfortable environment, and its wine selection stands out as one of the few in the city including unusual labels (remember, we’re in Ribera and Rioja territory, here), and where the glassware and service are more than appropriate.

This is one of the historical businesses in Salamanca. It was founded by Manuel Sendín in 1947, who was followed by his son, Gonzalo Sendín, and it is maintained today by his son, also called Gonzalo, who represents the third generation of the family. He is responsible for the change in décor in the Mesón, which is now more modern, but has not lost any of its true essence. It is still a good reference for good meat, fish and wines, and has updated some of its dishes to include a good mix of traditional and modern styles. This is how he has managed to maintain his local clientele from the time of his father and during his own career. There’s always a good atmosphere here and they serve the ideal wine for every moment of the day. The actual bar has a life of its own after more than 70 years of business, and it was completely renovated in June 2017, when the whole establishment was remodelled and renovated; the start of the new Gonzalo, elegant, comfortable and cool.



The restaurant and bar are in the same building, but are now separate areas with independent doors. At the bar, locals have a direct view into the kitchen and can watch how their tapas and raciones are prepared. Here we find the firm’s usual dishes (ham croquettes, bravas fried potatoes, pig’s trotters ...), and they have also included dishes with oriental influences. Both upstairs, where the bar stands, and downstairs, where the restaurant is housed, the cellar is a pleasure for all self-respecting wine enthusiasts because there is plenty to choose from: a good display of national labels, new and traditional names and some foreign productions ... and it even includes some by-the-glass options. ■ MS



RIOJA WINE ACADEMY.
DOC RIOJA REGULATING COUNCIL.
www.riojawineacademy.com

»» There’s no doubt that educating consumers, giving them a certain amount of in-depth training, helps to provide the necessary arguments and critique to guarantee the future of quality wine. Some wineries and a few entities also understand it as a powerful diffusion tool that also contributes to consumer loyalty. It’s a simple process: you create an expert and at the same time you train a spokesman or spokeswoman who will publicise the virtues of the label. There are some very-well established, leading courses, run both by labels (Aula Marqués de Riscal, Master Sherry de González Byass) and wine regions (trainers in Cava, in Jerez...). Rioja joined this trend in 2016 when it created the Official Rioja Educators course, aimed at professionals who have spread wine culture through tasting courses and presentations.

After four years of what the DOC Rioja Regulating Council qualifies as “a huge demand” in this initial cycle, attended by more than one hundred students from over 20 countries, the Rioja governing body is now extending the offer by starting up an initiative called the Rioja Wine Academy. This entity has designed four courses that will be given free-of-charge over their website, created for this purpose. Four courses with four well-defined targets from the outset: Diploma in Rioja wines will be the most basic course, lasting 15 hours. It is accompanied by other more specialised courses: Diploma for Trade and Distribution, totalling 18 hours; Diploma for Wine Tourism, lasting 20 hours, and Official Trainer in Rioja Wines, envisaged in three stages, and totalling 30 hours.

The organisers are particularly emphasising this last one, aimed at the most specialised public: “trainers, speakers, writers and journalists from the wine world who want to obtain certificates in Rioja wine”. This is the only group that will be subject to prior selection and their course will combine online material and presentational classes in Rioja, in the Regulating Council HQ, and with visits to vineyards and wineries.

The academy’s web provides all the necessary information for passing the final exam, where candidates will be required to obtain a 75 percent pass in the areas studied. ■ MNÑ





EL MARGINAL

FOR ALL BUDGETS

EL MARGINAL.

IBIZA, 35. MADRID. TEL. 910 607 280.
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €30-35.

» Located in the Retiro district, we find a fairly different wine bar than usual. Its comfortable bar area and high tables, which you cannot reserve, are designed for those who are anxious to discover new labels with every visit. El Marginal sits in a pleasant semi-basement, previously known as Buen Provecho at the end of the 80s. Like its predecessor, it also specialises in wine and local cuisine, but it's common here to see the wines taking the limelight and not the food, because the names behind the venture are César Ruiz, Flequi Berruti and Nacho Jiménez, who run the Alma Vinos wine distribution business and the La Tinorería wine outlet.

Their dynamic wine list features around 101 shooting star labels, ordered according to price, and including a good selection of by-the-glass options. They also have a list of confidential wines belonging to their private collection, with a selection of "disappeared", non-released wines, or ones from very exclusive producers. They began the collection over 20 years ago, just biding their time before they could offer it to the public. The impressive wine cellar where visitors are received deserves a special mention. There is no overriding rule regarding the production areas, as the wines come from all corners of Spain and from all over the world.

They also serve a selection of Iberian produce by Carrasco Guijuelo, butifarra pork sausage from Cal Rovira, Premium preserves from Güeyu Mar, such as the grilled sardines, Caviar Paris 1925 and a variety of cheese, as well as traditional raciones, such as Curro fried eggs from the Cobardes y Gallinas solidarity project, fried and served with Iberian shoulder of ham. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at midday, they serve sit down meals prepared by various chefs. If you want to take your time to enjoy these delicacies, they have a high table that sits 8 people available for reservations. They want to promote wine culture by displaying the relationship with the producers, their production method and the resulting tribute to wine. As if that were not enough, they use the ideal glassware for each wine ordered, depending on the origin, type and category. Who could give you more? ■ MR



SANTERRA NEOTABERNA

A NEW OPENING IN CHAMBERÍ

SANTERRA NEOTABERNA.

PONZANO, 62. MADRID. TEL. 919 070 415.
APPROXIMATE PRICE PER PERSON (EXCL. WINE): €30.

» One of the new kids on the block in the popular area around Ponzano Street; the new area in Madrid where many reference wine haunts have been opening up in recent years. This one belongs to the owners of Santerra (General Pardiñas, 56), and Santerra Neotaberna opened its doors in December, in Chamberí, as a more roguish, informal version and where the bar area is the focal point, although they also have a dining room too.

In fact, we could actually call it a gastro bar, since it is full of select raw materials showcased in imaginative preparations, based on well-blended products, flavours, techniques and influences. The man behind it all is Miguel Carretero and, among his creations, is the eye-catching fried pork belly with green tomato sauce; beef gizzards, chimichurri sauce, field peas and tuna; *los rejos chili peppers*, his version of the squid sandwich; fried estuary sea bass in Canarian moho sauce... And he also has *callos a la madrileña* (Madrid offal), steak tartar and jamón ibérico cut freshly with a knife. You just have to choose what you want.



As for the wines, there are only a few (reds, whites and a couple of sparkling labels), but they are very distinct and, above all, not very well-known, with a couple of exceptions. It is worth assessing and appreciating this business decision because it gives all its references the same showcase opportunity, thus helping to introduce less popular and less-well known productions. In addition, as the doors are open all day until the early hours of the morning, cocktails are another star feature, together with the live music. They also serve vermouth on Sundays, loyally supporting this Madrid tradition. The venue has a lively atmosphere from the beginning of the afternoon, or from midday on weekends, and is another watering hole for enjoying the wine and gastronomy trend that has been creeping into Ponzano Street over the last few years. ■ MS



Barcelona Wine Week New beginnings

THE SUCCESS OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE BARCELONA WINE WEEK, HELD IN FEBRUARY, HAS LED THE ORGANISERS TO CONSIDER MAKING IT AN ANNUAL EVENT, ASPIRING TO BECOME THE GREAT SHOWCASE FOR SPANISH WINES. THE FAIR ACTUALLY REPLACES THE FORMER INTERVIN, AND HAS SEPARATED FROM THE ALIMENTARIA FAIR, REVEALING ITSELF AS AN EXCITING NEW PROPOSAL.

»» Nearly 15,600 visitors, 13 percent from 54 countries, about 3,200 business meetings, more than 130,000 Riedel glasses, fifty programmed activities, about 350 international buyers, 550 exhibitors and 40 denominations of origin; these are the impressive figures drawn from the first edition of the Barcelona Wine Week (BWW).

After overcoming the bad omens due to organisation problems as they did not start hiring people until August last year, the event's undeniable success has led to studying the possibility of it becoming an annual fair. The organisers have assessed the possibility of holding it in February 2021 in the facilities in Montjuïc. Nevertheless, the first BWW only filled



one of the two pavilions originally set aside, after separating this year from the Alimentaria fair. The previous event, Intervi was biannual and it was redesigned following its declining performance in the last two years due to the growing number of activities held around the fair that took away some of the limelight. The new event is organised by Alimentaria Exhibitions, and it has been supported by various institutions such as Federación Española del Vino (FEV) and ICEX España Exportación e Inversiones. One thing that has been decided is that the new format will be maintained, "highlighting the territories", according to the chairman of the Associació Vinícola Catalana, Valentí Roqueta.

The BWW chairman, Javier Pagés, has called the event “a showcase for the excellence of Spanish wines”, and he aims to make it “Spain’s great international reference”. Pagés has carried out an initial evaluation, which he claims is “very satisfactory”, since it started out as “a new, almost ground-breaking concept, involving certain risks”.

For his part, J. Antonio Valls, Director General of Alimentaria Exhibitions, focuses on the professionals’ positive opinion of the new format that “embraced both big groups and small wineries, essentially showcasing the wine itself”.

Keeping up with trends

The organisation has committed itself to recycling most of its furnishings in the event’s next edition. Also, the team has worked with Ecovidrio, who collected more than 10,000 bottles during the event, to promote bottle recycling, and it has reduced the use of disposable plastics.

BWW has also highlighted the wine made and marketed by women and the natural, organic and biodynamic productions. The presentation of a study by the Canadian sommelier, François Chartier, was a major crowd-puller, as he proved scientifically that “Cava is a prestigious wine that is ideal with most of the world’s flavours, creating perfect harmonies”. Together with DO Cava, they created a map showing the best coincidence between the world’s food and different Cavas.

Event activities

Pablo Franco, the technical director on the DOC Rioja Regulating Council, led a tasting that covered the regulation developments implemented in recent years, in terms of the zonification, which started in 1998 and finished in 2017, including the new *zone* and *municipio wines*, and the approval of the *viñedo singular* (the new mention for vines specifically linked to a particular plot or spot). The tasting was opened by the chairman of DOC Rioja, Fernando Salamero.

For their part, Mireia and Miquel Torres, members of the fifth generation of



Familia Torres, gave their own tasting focusing on their wines made with ancestral grape varieties, recovered on their lands, to showcase their wine making potential and capacity to face the climate change.

Some of the other interesting proposals included the presentation by Antonio Flores, the oenologist at González Byass, on state-of-the-art organic ageing; a talk by the executive editor of *The Wine Spectator*, Tom Matthews; a tasting led by the technical director and oenologist at Legaris, Jorge Bombín, to introduce the new vintages and developments in his *Vinos de Pueblo* collection; an introduction of Vallformosa’s revamped image, and an act involving the sommeliers from the former *El Bulli* restaurant, Ferran Centelles and David Seijas.

BWW was also supported by *Foro Cava. Dieta Mediterránea y Salud (Cava Forum. Mediterranean Diet and Health)*, where they concluded that Cava, like sparkling wine, is considered a food product and when drunk in moderation, contributes 25% to the benefits of the Mediterranean diet. This first forum was run by DO Cava and the *Fundación Dieta Mediterránea*. The DO Cava chairman, Javier Pagés, highlighted the importance of the value of the Mediterranean and Cava brands, which include “health, sustainability, culture and the territory-based product quality”.

Outside the program

There were also off-programme activities coinciding with the fair. In particular, there was the fourth edition of *The Women of Wine* in Barcelona, which attracted 289 people. It was held in the Moritz brewery, and a total of 27 wineries took part. Also, over 20 wineries filled one of the halls in the Sir Víctor Hotel in Barcelona, in the fifth edition of *G-Night*, organised by the *Associació Terra de Garnatxes*. And the first edition of *Barcelona Rosé International Bubbles Awards*, organised by *Vadevi* as part of the *Barcelona Wine Week* like the city initiative, with the *Gran Medalla de Oro* going to the *Rosé Cava Montesquius 1918 '09, Gran Reserva Brut Nature*. ■

Ramon Francàs

DO Somontano Fourteen years travelling by bus

With more than 745,000 travellers since it began, the Vino del Somontano Bus is showcased as one of the most successful wine tourism initiatives in Aragón. The journey lasts one whole day, on Saturdays and Sundays, and leaves from Zaragoza. It follows different routes within DO Somontano and includes visits to wineries, various monuments and tasting events for local wines.



The Vino del Somontano bus project was started in 2007 when it took more than 40,000 visitors to Huesca. Except for 2012, its numbers have risen each year to the total of 93,000 in 2019. The organisers hope to exceed this figure with the series of bus journeys programmed for this year, which was presented recently and includes new routes. The service runs from 22 March until 28 November. The price of the ticket is €32 per person.

Cangas del Narcea Atlantic wines

From 13 to 16 June, Cangas del Narcea (Asturias) is going to hold the first edition of *Atlantic, Concurso de Vinos de Influencia Atlántica* (A competition for wines influenced by the Atlantic). The event is organised by the Town Hall of Cangas, DOP Cangas and the communication company Gustatio. The competition rules set out the “fundamental aims which are to value wines with an Atlantic style, and promote their distinction from other wines on the market. The competition intends promoting them, particularly the winning labels and, in short, hopes to improve awareness and help sell more wines from Atlantic regions. It also intends encouraging producers and healthy competitiveness, to stimulate a greater demand for quality wines.”

The competition is open to wines belonging to denomination of origin or a protected geographical area and made in “A Coruña, Álava, Asturias, Cádiz, Cantabria, Guipúzcoa, Huelva, Las Palmas, León, Lugo, Ourense, Pontevedra, Tenerife

and Vizcaya; in the French Pyrenees (Jurançon, Madiran...), Aquitaine (including the left bank of the Garona in Bordeaux), Poitou-Charentes and the Loire (from Nantes to Anjou-Saumur); in the south of the United Kingdom and along the whole of Portugal and its islands.”

The rules establish eleven categories of wines and a maximum of three awards per category. The enrolment (€50 euros for the first wine, and €25 for each additional wine) closes on 30 April or when they reach 200 enrolments, the competition’s maximum number of participants.

OIVE campaign on your mobile Laughing with wine

Wine, humour and bars, three powerful arguments for promoting human relations, come together in the general promotion campaign called #Chateemos, which the *Organización Interprofesional del Vino de España* (OIVE) is launching in April for mobile phones, social media and the web www.mejorconvino.com. There are a total of nine chapters appearing individually each month that develop fun situations based on having a *chato de vino* in a bar. At the same time, in April, OIVE launches the new publicity campaign *Expertos en saborear cada momento con vino* (Experts in savouring every moment with wine), which it hopes will convince people that you do not need to be an expert to enjoy wine. Situations like a BBQ, or a picnic on the beach are some of the drinking proposals for enjoying a glass of wine that will be shown in April and May on TV, social media and mobiles.



Protecting heritage Premio Fondillón

The Prado Museum has been given the Premio Fondillón Award, by the DO Alicante Regulating Council for “reinforcing some of the area’s most important values in terms of history, wine quality, and, in particular, for defending and recovering the value of any type of heritage”. This first edition wanted to acknowledge the efforts by Madrid’s famous museum in

line with its 200th anniversary, “and for using modern approaches to successfully transmit its significant artistic heritage, the history of its collection, and the new challenges it faces in the future, including, new forms of communication.”

The *Premio Fondillón* award is a new addition to the recognition that DO Alicante grants each year to professionals in catering and trade in Alicante. In this year’s edition, the Premios Alicante DOP 2020 awards went to the restaurant, El Hogar del Pescador, in Vilajoiosa, and Quiero Delicatessen, in Villena. The awards were given during the *V Salón Profesional* held in March, which was attended by more than 300 Alicante professionals.

The work of Charo Carrera Enredada wins Beca Enate 2020

“The beauty of the composition, the perfect way it is put together and the evident use of technology to create a seductive image”. This is the way the jury for *Beca Enate 2020* (Enate 2020 Grant) described the merits of *Enredada*, the work by Charo Carrera, who has won the first prize in the event’s ninth edition. On this occasion, four hundred works of art took part from all over the world; this is a record number of enrolments for a grant worth 6000 euro and 6 bottles of wine with labels illustrated with the winning image.

The jury, made up of five experts and artists, decided unanimously to award the prize to this piece, created using electrography on velvet, and which “seems to change colour when the spectator moves around it, while at the same time creating the unique effect of inviting you to touch the work and keeping your distance, so that metaphorically, “with your eyes you are caressing “the surface on which this reticular element is centred, revealing a somewhat enigmatic effect”. The 32 finalist works were shown in the Salas Bajas winery during the month of March. *Enredada* has now become part of Enate’s significant collection of contemporary art. ■

Bacchus 2020

Come hell or high water

»» Bacchus 2020 closed its doors on Monday 9 March, just in time to avoid, by the skin of its teeth, being hit by the storm unleashed by the coronavirus. Mind you, it did not come away completely unaffected by the pandemia. Throughout that same week, from 5 to 9 March, some of the international tasters dropped off the list and a few last-minute changes had to be made to the number of tasters, eighty in all, and the juries who were in charge of assessing the quality of 1,578 wines from 16 countries. These were the totals enrolled in this international wine competition that is organised every year by the Spanish Wine Tasters



Union (UEC), following the criteria set down by the International Wine Organisation, in support of this type of event.

Fernando Gurucharri, chairman of the UEC, was very satisfied with how the competition developed, and highlighted the growing participation of international wines, one of the objectives of Bacchus, and this year, foreign labels represented 22 percent of the total of wines showcased. Also, a new category was created specifically for vermouth. During Bacchus 2020, a tribute was paid to one of the competition veterans, John Salvi MW, who has sat on the jury in every edition of the event.

The competition granted no less than 25 maximum awards, i.e. Gran Bacchus de Oro, revealing the growing level of quality wines exhibited in the competition. However, one of the main aspects of the latest editions of Bacchus are the activities the UEC organises around the tasting.

On this occasion, as Spain was the guest country, the programme opened on day 5 with an exhibition called *Spain, a garden of varieties*, offering 25 wines provided by a like number of wineries, each one made with a different grape variety. The most well-known varieties and many other minority ones were showcased in the tasting that the participating wineries enhanced with other wines from their catalogues.

The programme included specific tastings, master classes, given by other specialists, with appealing titles: *Osborne, treasures from Jerez*, where the El Puerto de Santa María winery offered part of its old wines collection, both the VORS and their Rare Sherry range.

On day 7, Sarah Jane Evans, master of wine, led DO Valencia: *Mediterranean vine growers*. The following day it was the turn of

DO Jumilla, with a presentation by Heidi Mäkinen, also a MW. She presented Podium 2019, with the wines awarded in the twenty-fifth edition of their annual *Certamen de Calidad de Vinos DO Jumilla*, held last spring.

On 9 March, with the claws of the virus scratching at the door, it was time to announce the winners. A total of 25 wines, listed in the table next to these lines, exceeded 92 points out of one hundred, the minimum demanded to access the competition's top prize. Spanish wines picked up 21 of the awards, with the other four going to Mexico, Slovakia, Italy and Australia. ■

Gran Bacchus de Oro 2020

Whites

- BORDÓN VIÑA SOLE '11 RESERVA B FRANCO-ESPAÑOLAS. DOC RIOJA
- LAS VIRTUDES FORTALEZA '18 B NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LAS VIRTUDES. DO ALICANTE
- MAXIMO BOTRYTIS CINREA MARCHE IGT '16 AZIENDA VINICOLA UMANI RONCHI. ITALIA
- GRANBAZÁN ETIQUETA ÁMBAR '19 GRANBAZÁN. DO RÍAS BAIXAS.

Reds

- ANAYÓN PARCELA 15 '17 GRANDES VINOS Y VIÑEDOS. DO CARIÑENA
- BARCO LAS CULEBRAS '13 RESERVA VIÑAYARA. DO RIBERA DEL DUERO
- FAUSTINO SERIE MAGNA '17 CRIANZA B FAUSTINO. DOC RIOJA
- KILÓMETRO 400 '07 B Y V BERGIDENSES. DO BIERZO
- MONTE XANIC GRAN RICARDO '17 MONTE XANIC. MÉXICO
- SOLTERROIR 12 '12 COMPAÑIA VINICOLA SOLTERRA. DO RIBERA DEL DUERO
- WARBOYS VINEYARD MCLAREN VALE SHIRAZ '18 ANGOVE FAMILY WINEMAKERS. MCLAREN VALE (AUSTRALIA)

Generous

- AMONTILLADO TRADICIÓN B TRADICIÓN. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- BROTONS GRAN FONDILLÓN RESERVA '64 BROTONS V & A. DO ALICANTE
- BROTONS GRAN FONDILLÓN RESERVA '70 BROTONS V & A. DO ALICANTE
- COQUINERO OSBORNE. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- DE ALBERTO DORADO VERDEJO B DE ALBERTO. DO RUEDA
- DE LA CRUZ DE 1767 B ARFE. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- FONDILLÓN MG WINES GROUP. DO ALICANTE
- FRANKOVKA MODRÁ HROZIENKOVÝ VÝBER PALUGY '15 VILLA VINO RACA. ESLOVAQUIA
- NOÉ GONZÁLEZ BYASS. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- OLOROSO TRADICIÓN B TRADICIÓN. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- PALO CORTADO TRADICIÓN B TRADICIÓN. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- SIERRA VIENTO ICE '17 BODEGAS SAN VALERO. DO CARIÑENA
- SOLERA INDIA OSBORNE. DO JEREZ-XÉRÈS-SHERRY
- VERMOUTH PADRÓ & CO ROJO AMARGO PADRÓ I FAMILIA. ESPAÑA

A top-down view of a wooden crate filled with fresh produce. At the top, a clear plastic container holds several small red cherry tomatoes. Below it, a large green zucchini and a smaller cucumber are visible. The middle section is dominated by a black tray filled with fresh green beans. The bottom half of the crate is packed with various types of red tomatoes, including some larger, ribbed varieties and smaller ones. The crate is set against a light-colored, textured background.

THE
Sixth
FLAVOUR

PEPE IGLESIAS

MARIDAJES WITH
REGIONAL
CUISINE

MURCIA

»» When I was young, the name “Murcia” conjured up images of an endless vegetable garden, with a thousand aromas and colours. Unfortunately, today the name “Murcia” brings to mind one of Spain’s worst property speculation scenarios, starting with the terrible and more or less declining Manga del Mar Menor, and continuing inland to Archena, where there have set up a golf course. A deserted wasteland where the macro estates and the golf course drink up the local water resources. Anyway, let’s move on to what we’re really interested in, which is the table contents. Obviously, we’re going to start with a delicious dish of *mojama y hueva de mújol* [filleted and salt-cured tuna with grey mullet roe], served with freshly toasted almonds and drizzled with extra virgin olive oil. Correctly speaking, you should drink a glass of *generoso*, like Amontillado, Palo Cortado, etc. with it, but as they do not produce anything like that here, we can choose one of the rosés from Monastrell de Yecla, for example from bodegas Castaño, or the iced beers that they serve so well in some *tapas* bars.

If we now take a look at the local cuisine, we must include *zarangollo*, a kind of *pisto* with courgette and onion and usually served with scrambled egg.

A very healthy and tasty starter. In the summer, before the *zarangollo* we can enjoy a Murcia salad, sometimes called *moje* or *mojete*, which consists of finely chopped home-grown tomatoes, onion, hard-boiled egg and tuna in oil. In winter, we can change that for *michirones*, a kind of dried bean which is used to make a stew with ham bones, chorizo sausage and bay leaves. A real

heavyweight; I once tried it in summer and it took me a while to recover! Of course, the star dish is Calasparra rice, for example with rabbit and snails, which is my favourite version, although perhaps the most famous is the *caldero*; a rice broth with fish, usually grey mullet or gilt-head bream, made from a previously prepared *fumet* or fish stock, using small rough fish usually thrown away.

All these dishes work well with the rosé aperitif, or with one of the good white wines they have in this area. They also have good fish, although the best that came from the Mar Menor, have already been exhausted, but in some bars in Cartagena, I have tried really impressive fried fish, particularly the small red mullet, or *salmonetes*. As an anecdote I would just like to say that the old port of Escombreras was not called this because it was previously a rubbish dump. It is actually named after a fish, *scombrus* (mackerel), which is the fish the Romans used to make *garum* sauce, and their main production facilities were in this port.

One particularly delicious and intriguing dish is the *pastel murciano de carne* [Murcia meat loaf],

which actually originates from China, (RouJiaMo). It consists of a shortcrust pastry base topped with minced meat (beef, ham, chorizo sausage and bacon), and covered with flaky pastry in spirals. It is wonderful, but it would be even better without the chorizo, but don’t tell the people from Murcia that ... Here, one of the new reds made in Jumilla would be a good wine choice.

When it comes to desserts, we have the famous *paparajotes*. It always makes the locals laugh when they see people from Madrid actually chewing the lemon leaves. It is really about the dough mixture that the lemon leaves are dipped in and then fried immediately; you are only supposed to eat the mixture as the leaf is only for providing a nice aroma.

There are other sweet dishes too, and all of them are very sweet, like the *almojábanas*, small doughnuts obviously of Arabic origin, pumpkin with syrup, *picardías de Murcia*, a hazelnut sweet, and *tocino de cielo* made with caramelised egg yolks and sugar.

They have a sweet red Chestnut wine for accompanying their sweet dishes. Overall, the star ingredients include the Calasparra rice and the very famous Murcia sweet paprika, which is different from the Vera one because it is made with red peppers dried in the sun over several days, but not smoked, thus its sweet flavour.

If we now turn to the wines, we have three denominations of origin in this area, Bullas, Jumilla and Yecla. As the grapes come from vineyards planted at a height in the blazing sun, they manage to make wines with a high alcohol content and intense flavours, although sometimes lacking in elegance. Some new wineries are working on changing this profile, particularly in Jumilla and Yecla. The young have shown that the local grape, Monastrell, can produce elegant, perfumed wines. In fact, two stand out in Jumilla, Carchelo and Juan Gil, which are both featured with decent scores in the Proensa Guide. In Yecla, bodegas Castaño has stood out for some time with its interesting and varied productions. ■



Michirones.



Zarangollo.

SLOW COOK RED WINE BEEF STEW



INGREDIENTS

For 4 people without idiomatic scruples.

- 1 kg of finely cut beef (flap, rump or shank).
- 1 onion.
- 2 ripe tomatoes.
- 1 packet of *boletus* or *senderuelas*.
- 1 cup of *vino rancio*.
- 3 garlic cloves.
- 1 handful of toasted almonds.
- Extra virgin olive oil, salt, ground black pepper, bay leaf.



»» The people in Catalonia are proud of their slow cook beef stew which, they claim, dates back to Medieval times, even though one of the main ingredients are tomatoes which did not reach the Iberian Peninsula until the end of the 17th century. Nevertheless, it is true that, with or without tomato, it is part of their great culinary tradition.

It's not what you'd call a popular dish, as it was favoured by the bourgeois and even the nobility, as they were the only ones who had access to lean beef. The other essential ingredient are the wild mushrooms. The most typical are the so-called *moixernons* (St. George's mushroom), better known as *perrechicos* or *seta de San Jorge*, but they are

THERE ARE NO SURPRISES HERE. IN FACT, UNLESS POOR QUALITY INGREDIENTS ARE USED, WHICH WOULD MAKE ANY DISH INEDIBLE, YOU CAN MAKE THIS BEEF STEW WITH WHAT YOU CAN FIND IN YOUR CORNER SHOP STORE.

pricey, only grow at certain times and are also fairly difficult to get. So, if you can't get hold of them, you can use *boletus* (penny bun), *senderuelas* (scotch bonnet), *trompetas* (horn of plenty), etc. The variable element in this recipe is the liquid people choose to add. Some use white wine, and others brandy, or even beer, and so I decided to try vino rancio from Priorato, De Muller to be precise, and it notably enriched the dish.



Fricandeu.



Boletus.

In France they make a dish called *fricandeu*, but it is like country paté and so nothing really to do with this dish.

THE INGREDIENTS

There are no surprises here. In fact, unless poor quality ingredients are used, which would make any dish inedible, you can make this beef stew with what you can find in your corner shop store.

Perhaps the most difficult part are the wild mushrooms, because I have only really seen baskets and baskets of these fresh mushrooms in specialist green grocers, like La Boqueria in Barcelona. Mind you, we can always resort to the dried versions, and the easiest to find are the *boletus*, and they have a very definitive flavour. Milder, but equally tasty are the scotch bonnets, and they actually improve when dried. As for the others, well as we always say: if you can get your hands on fresh ones, lucky you, but us mere mortals will just have to make do with what we find in the shop. And, in case you're wondering, yes, the difference is as clear as night and day.

GETTING STARTED

Start by sealing the meat on a low heat. We're not cooking it here, just toasting it slightly to seal the pores and give it a grilled taste, which is much appreciated. Add the roughly chopped onion and the crushed garlic. When these start to brown, add the peeled and roughly

chopped tomatoes together with the spices. Leave to simmer and drizzle with the wine. Leave to boil so the alcohol evaporates, and then add the mushrooms.

Toast the almonds and crush them in a mortar, and then add them to the stew when it is ready and the meat is soft. I love serving *spätzle* or fresh pasta with these meat stews that have plenty of delicious sauce. These side dishes are easy to improvise and are typical in German cuisine (there they serve them with *goulash*). Another good accompaniment for dishes with sauce are potato gnocchi, tossed in butter.

Otherwise, just a simple bit of pasta will suffice, like orzo, but that's difficult to find in Spain, even though the

Torres brothers say they can get it. You can also add *orechiette*, which look nice on the plate, or do what I've done, which is to use basmati rice and raw leek, an easy, yet dignified solution. ■



Orzo.



RECOMMENDED WINES

This is really a dish for red wines, even the Reservas, for example from Ribera del Duero. Mind you, Spain has so many magnificent wines that it's difficult to choose. The Toro wines are great and are ideal with this dish too. There is also an interesting wine from Montsant, called Pinyeres Negre, made from grapes grown in old Garnacha and Cariñena vineyards. It has been aged for twelve months, and I think it's ideal here. Also, it's only €9 a bottle, and that's an affordable price.

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

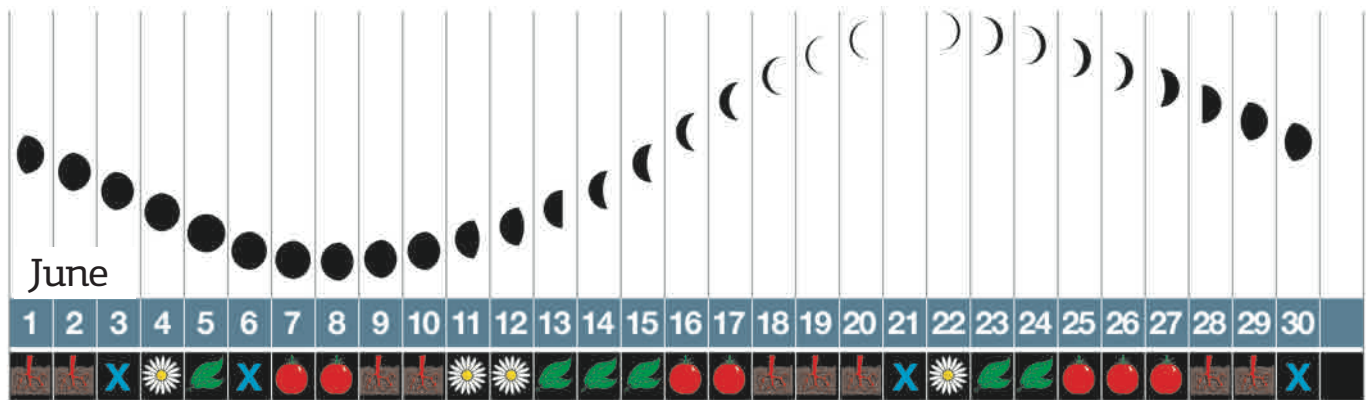
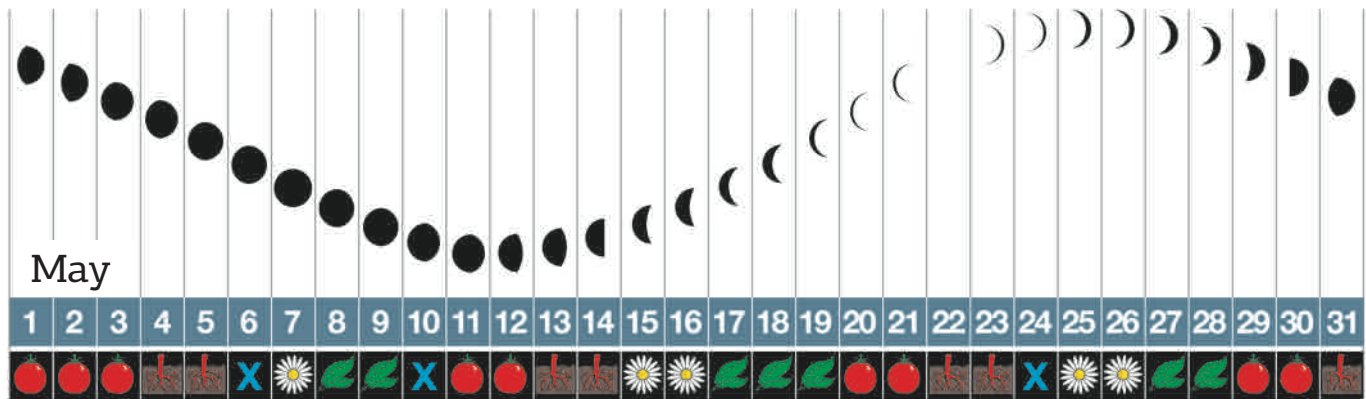
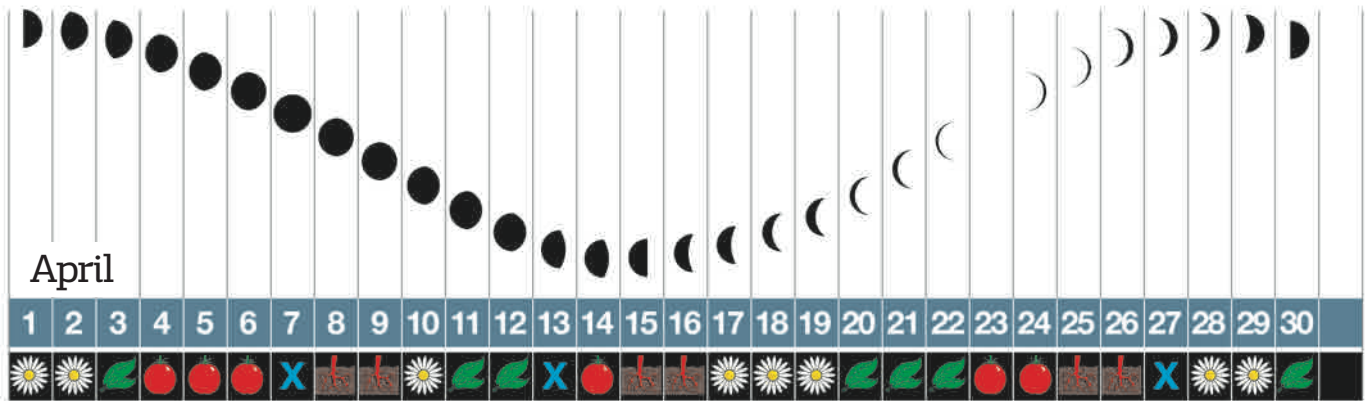
Now the plant aromas are enhanced. Although it is not a good wine tasting day, it can be a good time for fortified wines or young whites, with noticeable herbal notes.

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.

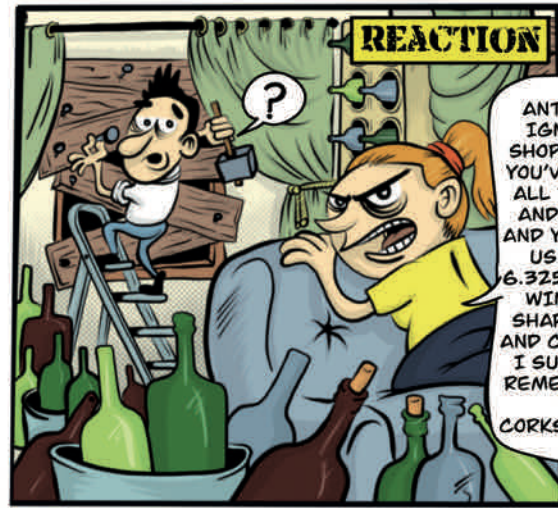
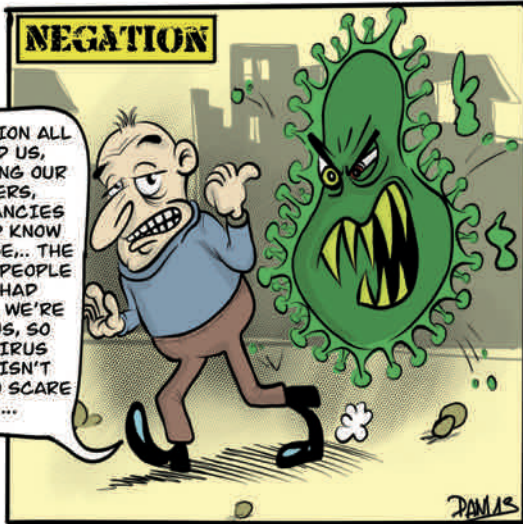
LUNAR NODE

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.





CATASTROPHE ASSIMILATION STAGES





SO, WHAT HAPPENS AFTER COVID-19?

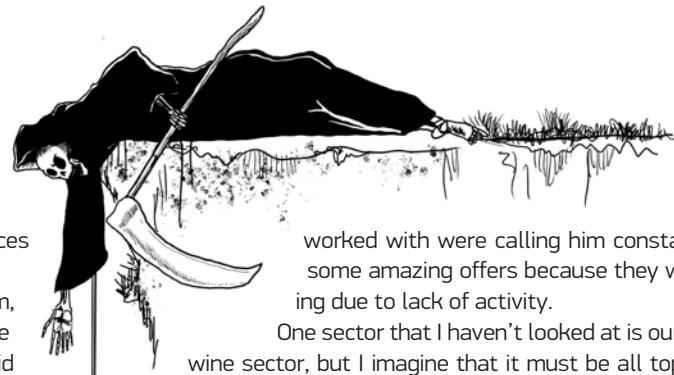
»» I imagine that you are fed up to the back teeth of people talking about coronavirus or Covid-19; it's everywhere; thousands dying, hospitals pushed to the limit, whole areas under quarantine, everyone shut away at home, the pandemia spreading like an oil slick, etc. Mind you, I have yet to see or hear anything about the economic consequences of this mess.

The day that the Government announced the State of Alarm, my wife went to buy bread in a cake shop next to my home (the bread shop opposite was already closed) and the girl said to her "I've prepared a pot of liqueur chocolates for your husband because God knows when we'll be making them again. We're not selling a thing, so we're closing until further notice." And that is a small business in a mining town like Mieres. I daren't imagine what is going on in Madrid. How are business owners supposed to exist for three or four months without invoicing? I mean this Covid guy is going to be around for quite some time. A closed business is like throwing money away, even if it is just on rent and community expenses.

However, there is something bigger behind all this, and that is that the State has committed itself to paying salaries through the Social Security. How many hundreds, thousands or millions of Euros would be needed to pay all the country's salaries for a couple of months? I can't work it out, but it must be an unbelievable sum. So much so, that I foresee the whole Public Treasury crashing. Then, we really will have a pandemia on our hands, and we'll be hungry.

The catering trade and everything associated with tourism, Spain's main economic resource, has stumbled. Hotels, bars, restaurants, fast-food places, etc, have all pulled down their shutters. When I had restaurants, I remember that we used to close in summer because Madrid was empty and even then, it took us three or four months to balance the accounts because closing had cost us a fortune. And that was only one month. Imagine what is going to happen now that we're looking at four or five months. I fear that many, if not most, will not re-open.

A friend of mine who has a furniture shop, closed by government order, told me that he closed when he got the order, but he would have done anyway because otherwise the place would have just filled up with spider webs. The factories he



worked with were calling him constantly with some amazing offers because they were closing due to lack of activity.

One sector that I haven't looked at is our own, the wine sector, but I imagine that it must be all topsy-turvy, because without the catering trade or people drinking wine, they will not be selling a drop. And it is the same story in all sectors, footwear and production industries, jewellers, car mechanics, food shops, printers, bookshops and graphic arts, textile and clothing outlets and industries, and so on, including all the business and labour activity in Spain. The only ones who are possibly benefiting are the frozen food home deliveries, like Bofrost, because this is the easiest way to eat varied meals while respecting the isolation rules.

Mind you, this madness is not only affecting Spain, it's also causing havoc in half the world, the half that affects us, because we're not particularly interested in whether North Korea is standing on its feet or not. In fact, the communist systems may be the ones that can withstand the challenge and chaos yet to come.

Solutions? I wish I could come up with one, even if it weren't that good, but it's like the guy who jumps out of the plane without a parachute... his fall will be tragic, but his landing... I don't think that these isolation means are effective and, in fact, if we weigh up the pros and cons, I think that they have been catastrophic because nobody is thinking about the "Aftermath of Covid19". The economic pandemia can be alleviated, but I fear that the number of "drop outs" will be five times the figure for direct deaths from Covid19.

I think that Western governments should start working on this soon, before it's too late. There are some measures that can be taken to avoid this catastrophe, but they need to be implemented immediately, because afterwards it'll be too late.

Carpe diem. ■



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TORRES

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Durante 150 años, hemos aprendido a escuchar a la naturaleza. Este vínculo personal con los paisajes del vino nos ha inspirado a preservar viñedos históricos y a recuperar variedades ancestrales casi extinguidas cultivadas por nuestros antepasados.

Hoy, más que nunca, creemos que hay que devolver a la naturaleza todo lo que nos ha dado, por ello cuidamos nuestros viñedos ecológicos y luchamos activamente contra el cambio climático.

Gracias por recorrer este camino juntos.

Alfonso Torres

