

Traslanzas 2003/05 Cigales

3 Aug 2010 by Jancis Robinson

7 Sep - Les Caves de Pyrène tell me they have just taken delivery of the 2006 which they retail at around £20

Later that same day - Two, soon to be three, UK stockists located

From €16, 149 Swedish krone, \$23.69, 35 Swiss francs, £25.37

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It was a long, sunny Sunday lunch outside at one of our favourite restaurants on the Catalan coast, Els Pescadores in Llançà (originally recommended by Purple pager Victor de la Serna), that reminded me just how good is this particular wine from Cigales, the rocky old Tempranillo redoubt in north-west Spain about which I wrote in detail [here](#) last February.

Traslanzas 2005 Cigales had been one of the most impressive wines among the many I reviewed in this set of [tasting notes](#) taken in the Cigales region on wines current at the end of last year. It had great balance and confidence - an excellent halfway house between some of the more rustic traditional styles and some of those in which winemaking had obliterated the exceptionally strong character of the ancient vine stumps poking out of the stony soil here.

We first came across this producer, which claims to have produced 'the first modern wine from Cigales', when visiting the restaurant capital of the world, San Sebastian in northern Spain, back in February 2005. The wine had been recommended by the sommelier on our first visit to the Michelin-starred restaurant Martin Berasategui (the second visit is described [here](#)) and was presumably one of the early vintages of this pioneering producer. It seemed so much more interesting than the great majority of Tempranillo wines that can all too often taste more of sweet fruit and/or oak than terroir.

At Els Pescadors, we'd enjoyed a glass of attractively dry Cava and Terras Gauda 2009, a Rías Baixas blend of Albariño, Loureiro and Caiño, with a sensational array of seafood while watching clouds advance over the marina. We had grilled St Pierre in prospect (shared) followed by another shared portion of fish stew - all with the most delicious yellow, waxy potatoes - but somehow a red wine beckoned even me, a confirmed lover of white wines. Perhaps I was swayed by the exceptionally good price, 28 euros, of the **Traslanzas 2003 Cigales** on Els Pescador's unusually catholic wine list.

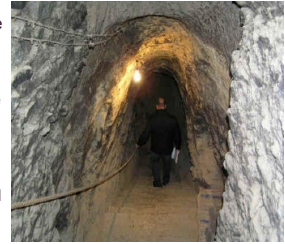
In any event, the friendly sommelier there was reluctant to let us order it. He was worried that this wine from the notorious heatwave year would be far too potent to enjoy outside in high summer but, needless to say, that served only to make us all the more curious - particularly our guests, who had never come across the wine before. We asked him to serve it pretty cool, which he did - in fact it was a lovely temperature, refreshing but with no sign that the strongly spicy but vital flavour had been diminished. And according to the label, the alcohol level was only 13.5%. It certainly was not obtrusive.



In their vintage notes on the excellent www.traslanzas.com (in Spanish and English), the two women behind this enterprise note that, because of the age of the vines, they withstood this notorious 2003 drought well. The harvest was about two weeks earlier than usual, but still as late as the last week of September. Wines are made by Ana Martín, who makes a wide range of wines in north-west Spain, from a low-yielding vineyard planted in 1945 by Aurelio Pinacho. Maria Pinacho is the other woman behind Traslanzas (which many of us are tempted to spell Traslanzas) and the wine is made, using first- and second-year American and French oak barrels and minimal intervention, in the Pinacho family's underground bodega, typical of this region, as shown in these pictures of the entrance and the steps leading down to it. For some context, to see how typical these underground bodegas are of the region, see the second video in the three shown in [The very different faces of Cigales](#).

I'd say the 2005 is even better and more complex than the 2003, and have no reason to suppose there is anything wrong with the 2004 vintage; it's just that I haven't tasted

it. And I see from wine-searcher.com that the 2006 and 2007 vintages are already on sale in Spain. But I suspect these two younger vintages are still a bit too young to drink.



You can find Traslanzas in the US (imported by Winebow), Spain, Ireland, Holland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and, at a very fair price, in the outlets of the Swedish monopoly, Systembolaget.

UK importer Dreyfus Ashby has given up on Spanish wine (other than Hidalgo sherries) but there is still stock of the 2005, at £27.99 a bottle alas, at Waverley Wines, Banks Road, West Kirby, Wirral Tel 0151 625 8305. Origin Wines of Wigan Tel 01942 821540 and originwines@aol.com also have a few bottles at £25.37 inc VAT but their retail site won't be in operation for another month.

And now David Canadas of Les Caves de Pyrene has just contacted me to say, 'Having just read your great article on Traslanzas, I thought I would let you know that we are about to start bringing the 2006 in directly ourselves. Price will be about £17.99 inc- vat to private customers if bought from Les Caves directly. There will - I hope - be retailers in time and I imagine it would sell for about £19.49. The 2005 has sold out at the winery but the '06 is as good.'

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