

Peregrino Tinto 2001 Vino Tierra de León

13 Oct 2003 by JR

It's not often that a bottle I move from my tasting bench to the dinner table is drained; they're a spoilt lot in my household. But not a drop remained of this bargain north-western Spanish red three hours after pulling the cork.

It is delightfully refreshing, with an intriguing scent of both mulberries and something more mineral - pencil shavings perhaps, and no shortage of ripe fruit but no excess of alcohol either. The flavour hangs on in there all the way to the bright tannins on the finish, and the balance is great for drinking with food over the next couple of years. León has no DO - in fact is a bit of a *terra incognita* as far as wine is concerned. The city of León lies roughly halfway between Galicia and Rioja and its wines have to suffer the relative ignominy of being sold as mere Vinos de la Tierra, which keeps the prices nice and low.

This one is made from a blend of 60 per cent of the local Prieto Picudo grape plus some Tempranillo and the Mencía grown in Bierzo to the west (and now sold in its most expensive form by Alvaro Palacios) which was for some time thought erroneously to be Cabernet Franc. I would need a very small piece of paper indeed on which to write down all I know about Prieto Picudo but am grateful for this brush with it in full-blooded red form. (I also tasted a 100 per cent Prieto Picudo Rosado (rosé) from the same *bodega* but found it too sweet to discern much varietal character.)

This red was treated to six months' barrel age but is marked by neither French nor American oak flavours - just nicely smoothed out in texture. It was made in the new (1998) winery of a *bodega* called Gordonzello in Gordoncillo which seems a mite confusing to me, but they can carry on making wines as well-mannered as this for as long as they like as far as I'm concerned.

The British importer [14/10/03](#)