

Pirineos, Mesache Tinto 2004 Somontano

18 Jul 2006 by JR

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This is the time of year when, in the northern hemisphere at least, lively reds that can be served chilled are at a premium. This one is practically given away but is truly an artisan product very obviously bearing the stamp of its origins. I'd love to see more wines offering this amount of character at such a friendly price.

Bodega Pirineos is an admirable outfit in Somontano, one of Spain's coolest wine regions right up towards the Pyrenees north east of Rioja. Long before anyone coined the phrase 'heritage varieties' they were doing their best to recuperate the local red wine vine specialities Moristel and the light-bodied but perfumed Parraleta.

Montesierra is Pirineos's 'serious' range and they also make some special cuvées but Mesache is the name of their new range of wines for drinking young, the word local Aragonés dialect for *muchacho*, or youngster – the idea being that they can be drunk young but offer some complexity too. The **2004** is a blend of the old and new in Somontano: 50 per cent old vine Garnacha Tinta, 20 per cent each of youngish Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon plus 10 per cent Parraleta. The Parraleta vines vary in age, with some more than 100 years old. The four varieties are vinified separately to maximise their inherent individuality and are blended just before short ageing in new American oak. The oak is certainly not a taste-able characteristic but has deepened the flavour and given the wine the stability to hang around for up to two years after the vintage. I'd drink this wine straightaway and revel in the fact that it is fairly widely distributed.

The **2005** is exactly the same blend and Pirineos are very proud of it but I haven't yet tasted it. Retailers are in the process of moving from the 2004 to the 2005, for which there should not be the same hurry to drink.

20 Jul: Just tasted a sample of the 2005 somewhat shaken after being hurtled over the Pyrenees and it is certainly chock full of character and apparently versatile in terms of serving temperature though I would wait a little before drinking it. Should be ready to take over from the 2004 in September or October.

Accordingly to winesearcher.com there are stockists for the 2004 in Spain (of course, from 4.14 euros) but also in the US, from \$10.89, Sweden and Holland. UK merchants who sell Pirineos wines include Alexander Wines in Scotland, Cellar 28 and Penistone Court in Yorkshire and Adnams of Southwold. Oddbins are expected to stock some Pirineos wines soon.

This lively red is far from heavy but is packed full of juicy fruit (perhaps dominated by the Garnacha character) but with layers of cherry and a beginning, middle and an end to its structure. You could enjoy it at a wide range of temperatures but, as I say, drink the 2004 in the next few months. I showed it to a group of professionals in March in London as part of a demonstration of [Cutting edge Spain](#) and it went down very well.

The white, a blend of equal proportions of late-picked, old Maccabeo, Chardonnay and Gewurztraminer (a grape that does notably well in Somontano) is also worth looking out for. Both have so far been stoppered with Neocork, a synthetic stopper that is apparently more flexible than most and therefore better at being put back in the bottleneck. Pirineos's Rosado (without the Mesache name), made from equal portions Merlot and Cabernet, a small proportion of the Cabernet being barrel fermented for texture, has been voted best Spanish Rosado and is widely available in the US at under \$10.

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