Bodega Mara□ones, Picarana 2009 Vinos de Madrid

16 Dec 2010 by Jancis Robinson

From €11.90 and £13.95 (and $21.99 - the 2008)

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I was thrilled when I gave our 19-year-old daughter, freshly returned from the fleshpots of Paris and recently turned on to wine by that experience, a glass of this full-bodied Spanish white. She immediately recognised its quality even though she rarely remarks on individual wines. (She is, I scarcely need say, a fastidious taster.)

This is an extremely serious dry white made entirely from Albillo vines between 40 and 80 years old. In the Oxford Companion we're a bit sniffy about Albillo but this is a great white wine by any standards. Perhaps its complexity is explained by the fact that it is grown in four organically farmed parcels in the valley of San Martin de Valdeiglesias. The real distinction here is a variety of different soils on a granite base that is all of 750 m above sea level. This is that part of Spain whose weather tends to be extremely hot or cold depending on the time of year, but at least presumably summer nights are sufficiently cool to retain natural acidity for this is not a flabby wine.

In fact it reminds me a bit of the better whites of the Agly Valley in Roussillon for its combination of weight, complexity and finesse and of a good white Châteauneuf in terms of build. The nose is exotically full, certainly not crisp but not fat. It gives every suggestion of having the potential to develop even more interesting flavours over the next three years or so and I would imagine it would be very rewarding with food - hearty roast chicken perhaps? There's a certain nuttiness on the finish as well as just a hint of the sort of bitter herb that is appetising rather than a fault. This exciting wine is 14% alcohol.

But perhaps the excitement is also down to the young winemaker, Fernando 'Fer' Garcia, who is a big fan of some of the best biodynamic wine of the Loire and Burgundy and is a good friend of the likes of Dani Jiménez-Landi. They both belong to a group of young Spanish terroir fanatics who style themselves Chicos del Terruar, according to UK importers Indigo Wine. Garcia gives the hand-picked grapes a cold maceration and natural settling before fermenting them in large, 500-litre open-topped oak barrels with ambient yeasts. The wine is left on the lees for seven months and the finished wine is neither filtered nor clarified and is very low in sulphur.

As I write I can find this wine chez Lavinia in Spain and The Sampler in the UK according to wine-searcher.com but Indigo also claim to have sold it to Bacchanalia, Sommelier Wine Co of Guernsey, Harvey Nichols, The Vineking and No 2 Pound Street of Wendover. Adnams are offeringi it at £15.99. I also see that Chambers Street Wines of New York have the 2008 in stock for $21.99. Click on the Find this wine link to find current stockists.

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