

Bruno Murciano, La Malkerida 2011 Vino de España

22 Nov 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From €5.74, \$13.99, £9.95

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Here's an absolutely fascinating wine, one that sounds like an oxymoron: a delicate varietal (NB correct use of this *adjective*) Bobal.

Bobal is Spain's second most planted red wine grape after Tempranillo. It's the characteristic grape of denominations such as Utiel-Requena and Manchuela in east-central Spain, famous for making often rustic, deeply coloured wines that have traditionally been blended into bulk wines. But the wines are potentially velvety in texture and have the advantage of being a little fresher and lighter than the Monastrell (Mourvèdre) that is also widely grown in the Levante.

There was a theory that Bobal is the same as one of the two grapes called Bovale on the island of Sardinia but good old DNA profiling has disproved this, as outlined in detail in our new book [Wine Grapes - a complete guide to 1,368 vine varieties including their origins and flavours](#).

But this very special wine is the creation of award-winning sommelier Bruno Murciano and Spanish oenologist David Sampedro. Bruno writes, explaining the background to this wine: 'Through my childhood [in Valencia], when reaching home from school in very cold winter, my mom used to sit me close to the fireplace watching *Sesame Street* and gave me *pan y vino* (countryside bread toasted with red wine and sugar...always Bobal wine indeed)'.

Murciano was voted Spain's best sommelier in 2008 after four years as head sommelier at the Ritz hotel in London. He now works for London wine merchant Bibendum Wines, but his exciting wine is imported into the UK by H2Vin. It's also quite well distributed in the US, and in Spain of course.

The vines for this wine are old bushvines at up to 950 m altitude in Utiel-Requena 100 km inland. But the wine is aged by David Sampedro, the fifth-generation, minimal-intervention winemaker, at his base in Rioja Alavesa, which is why it has to be described merely as a Vino de España rather than anything more geographically specific. To produce a wine with such delicacy, they deliberately prune late, in February, do a green harvest in August to reduce the crop, and follow biodynamic principles.

They decided to call the wine La Malkerida, which means 'the unloved woman', because they feel that Bobal has been (unfairly) unloved. I loved it. It's sweet and smooth with only the merest hint of game and cough drops but is also really delicate. The alcohol is a very moderate 12.5%. It's certainly the most refined Bobal to have come my way and is truly a bit of an eye opener.

The Old Bridge wine shop in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, and Vinoteca in London sell this wine in the UK, but you can also buy it direct from H2Vin.

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