Bodegas Marañones

Interview

This interview with Fernando Garcìa took place at *L'Herbe Rouge* in January, 2012.

Tell us about *Bodegas Marañones*.

We are located 70 km West of Madrid, in the Gredos Mountains. It's great because it gives us altitude and fresh nights in the summer. We work 24 hectares. mainly with Albillo in whites, which is a local grape and with Garnacha for red (also quite typical for our region). Our soils are mainly granite, and varies greatly depending on the depth of the mountain soils. The altitudes vary between 650 and 850 meters, and all the vines are spread out over small plots. We have 26 plots, and most are less than an hectare each. The vines are about 50 years old on average.

How did you get involved in wine?

I started studying agronomy in university, and then I got a job working at a wine shop. It was there I discovered organic and biodynamic wines, which at the time were coming mostly from France. I eventually got a job making wine for someone, and we started *Marañones* in 2008. There is an owner, who has had the vines for over 25 years. It's a joint venture, and I am the head vigneron and winemaker.

What's the work in the vines like?

We work in organic viticulture. In Peña Caballera, we started working biodynamically in 2009. For biodynamics, the conversion will happen little by little. I don't think we'll ever ask for either certification, because it's just a piece of paper that means more administrative things I don't want to deal with! It's very complicated in Spain More work in the vineyard, less paper!

What was the state of the vines before you took over?

Some were in excellent shape, while others were horrible. They were on the brink of dying. Some were abandoned, others were never plowed and a few were even over plowed for how poor the soils were! Everything is changing so we can best express our terroir.

What about in the cellar?

In the cellar we try not to do wrong with what we harvested. We have very good old vineyards, so we don't see why we would be interventionists. It's just grapes and our hands: no machines. There is a manual press and big barrels, and that's it.

How do you feel about the Madrid appellation, and with the D.O.C the system as a whole?

My wines don't fit the norm of the appellation, but they are happy because people speak well of us! It's usually a more concentrated, oaky style here, just like the rest of Spain. Unfortunately, the mistake many people make here is to value technology over wine. They go to university and are taught that there is only one way to make it. Extremely oaky wines were very popular up until very

recently (new oak, American oak, Cabernet, Merlot), which became more important than expressing terroir and local varieties.

Do you feel that there is a current shift in Spain?

In the last decade, I'm seen a rise of viticulturists. More independently run vineyards and wineries. A lot of people who used to sell their grapes to the cooperative are bottling independently now. They know their land, and the sensibilities can be felt.

Do you think the current debate on "natural wine" is of any consequence?

For me, I think it's better to be honest and to feel good with what you do. A lot of people want to categorize themselves and the others who work differently. All I care about is making a quality product, because you can sense, taste and feel quality. I prefer eating or drinking something organic because it's going to be healthier for me, but also because it tastes better. I don't care if it's fashionable or not. I don't do this for marketing, I do it because I believe in it.

You mentioned French wines were a big inspiration

Yeah. I've always appreciated Burgundy, and how they value the difference between each plot, but also how the wine itself is so floral and expressive. I'm also big fan of the Loire, and Rhône.