



Tim's Wine Market

June 2024

By JP Donnelly-Davis

For this month the two wines are the final selections from my trip to Spain in September, 2023. Both producers are considered elite for their respective regions, although for different reasons. You may have heard us use the old adage “the more things change, the more they stay the same,” when talking about the world of wine, and nowhere does this statement ring truer than in the vineyards of modern Spain. Spain is blessed with the largest concentration of old vines in Europe, which combined with a renewed interest in native varieties and an emphasis on terroir has led to a major renaissance in “old school” Spanish winemaking. There are a few modern twists being used in conjunction, such as temperature controlled fermentation and cleaner barrels, however this month we are proud to present two wines that prove that there is a marked difference between “traditional” and “old.” - **Tim**

2022 Bodega Cachazo “Carrasviñas” Verdejo (\$18)

The Rueda wine region has been famous since the Middle Ages, their wines even mentioned as a favorite of Queen Isabella. In those days the wines were fortified and sweet, a style popular in the day. After phylloxera devastated vineyards in the region, and the Spanish Civil War, many producers replanted but in favor of the high-yielding Palomino Fino grape of Jerez instead of local varieties. Being of poor quality there was little demand outside of Spain for the wines and so they virtually disappeared from the global wine scene.

This all began to change in the 1970s with the arrival of visiting Rioja producers, who were looking to produce fresher white wines in the region. Spurred on by the advice of local winemakers, they began re-planting the native Verdejo grape which was well-suited to this flavor profile. One of these winemakers was Félix Lorenzo Cachazo, whose knowledge of the region’s native varieties and traditional viticulture would prove invaluable. Félix would go on to become one of the eight founding winemakers who created the modern Rueda appellation. Today, Bodegas Cachazo is still owned by Félix and his family. The winery produces a large range of white wines, from the now-ubiquitous Verdejo to traditional, oxidative Palomino blends. With this bottling it is easy to understand why the wines of Rueda are among the country’s most popular.

The “Carrasviñas” line of wine was the family’s original label, sourced predominantly from estate vineyards, ranging from 10 to 140 years of age. However, the Cachazo family also purchases fruit from a number of local families, paying growers a higher than average sum for their grapes. In doing this, the winery incentivizes a number of small family businesses and aims to reduce rural depopulation, a problem Spain has faced since the 1950s. One constant is that all fruit used by the family, whether purchased or estate-grown, comes from the village of Alcazarén, where an elongated growing season and concentration of old vines are ideal for the making of quality Verdejo.

After harvest, mostly by hand, the fruit is pressed and spends 3-4 weeks fermenting at cold temperatures, which helps to block malolactic conversion. After fermentation, a racking process is carried out, leaving the wine on the fine lees for several months to increase aromatic complexity and body. When you open this wine, you will want to serve it chilled, but not ice cold, around 40-45 degrees Fahrenheit. Notes of yellow pear, melon, stone fruits, fennel bulb and lemongrass make this an archetypal Verdejo, to be paired with sausage and white beans, gazpacho with homemade bread, or raw fish dishes such as tuna poke. Drink now through 2026.

2020 Artuke “Pies Negros” Rioja (\$29)

Last April, we featured the entry-level Rioja from Artuke, a winery run by Arturo and Kiki De Miguel, which became a smash hit almost overnight. The family property is located in Rioja Alavesa, the northernmost outpost of Rioja wine, whose borders extend into the Basque province of Alava. This is not only the coolest sub-zone of Rioja but also the most misunderstood, as the zone’s traditional wines have little in common with the Reservas and Gran Reservas of its famous neighbor, Rioja Alta. In the past, Rioja Alavesa was often compared to red Burgundy for its focus on lighter-bodied, terroir-driven wines. With the advent of the Artuke wines on the export market, many critics are eager to draw this

comparison again, including Tim Atkin MW who consistently lists Artuke as one of his favorite wineries in Rioja. This month, we are eager to present one of the brothers' "village wines," still vinified in the traditional manner and free from additives, pesticides, over-extraction or heavy handed oak.

This wine is predominantly Tempranillo, which thrives in the moderate climates of Rioja Alavesa, though up to 10% of Graciano is blended in for color and complexity. Fruit selection takes place across multiple plots in the village of Abalos, planted by their grandfather and farmed according to biodynamic guidelines. At these altitudes, mechanized harvest is all but impossible, so all fruit is harvested by hand and brought to the winery for de-stemming. The name "Pies Negros," meaning "Black Feet," refers to the traditional method of stomping grapes to extract color and tannin, although this wine is vinified in stainless steel and oak vats today. Once fermentation is complete, the wine sees 12 months in French oak barrels of varying sizes, with a small amount matured in concrete vats, before final blending and bottling.

When you open this wine, you will want to decant for at least half an hour. In addition, I would recommend serving this wine closer to cellar temperature, around 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Once this wine has some time to open up it delivers notes of tart black cherry, blackcurrant, blackcurrant leaf, green peppercorn, and graphite. Drink now through 2030 with grilled chorizo and scrambled eggs, stewed beef dishes such as ropa vieja, or charcuterie such as sheep's milk cheeses and thin sliced cured jamón.

Shrimp & Sausage Stew

This year many of the recipes I have chose reflect traditional regional dishes of where the wines originate. Since I have selected more than few Spanish wines it seems redundant to give you another recipe from their cuisine. I also think that it is unnecessary to strictly match a dish to the wine, as often the best pairings are utterly unrelated. A good case in point is this excellent low country stew that is adapted from versions prepared by the Gullah people from the coastal plains of the Carolinas. It is an excellent combination of flavors that work nicely with both the white and red wine selections this month. - **Tim**

4 quarts water

1 - 1¼ pounds smoked ham hocks

1 onion, quartered

1 bay leaf

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

12 ounces andouille sausage, sliced ¼ inch thick

1 pound frozen or fresh okra (stemmed and cut crosswise ½ inch thick for fresh)

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes

1½ cups frozen baby lima (aka butter) beans

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons table salt

1 teaspoon pepper

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1 teaspoon onion powder

½ teaspoon paprika

1 pound large shrimp (26 to 30 per pound), peeled, deveined, and tails removed, cut into thirds

Cooked white rice

Combine water, ham hocks, onion, and bay leaf in large Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover, with lid slightly ajar; and simmer until ham hocks are fork-tender, 2½ to 3 hours.

Remove pot from heat and transfer ham hocks to cutting board. Let ham hocks rest until cool enough to handle; discard onion and bay leaf from broth. Transfer broth to large bowl; measure out 8 cups broth (add enough water to equal 8 cups if necessary; reserve any excess for another use). Remove ham from bones, discard bones, and cut ham into bite-size pieces. (Broth and chopped ham can be refrigerated separately for up to 2 days.)

Heat oil in now-empty pot over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add sausage and cook until lightly browned on both sides, about 5 minutes. Add okra, tomatoes and their juice, beans, minced garlic, salt, pepper, granulated garlic, onion powder, paprika, 8 cups broth, and ham to pot. Bring to boil over high heat.

Reduce heat to medium and cook at strong simmer, uncovered, until reduced by about half and thickened to stew-like consistency, 55 minutes to 1 hour 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low; stir in shrimp; and cook until shrimp are just cooked through, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve over rice.