PRIORAT: BACK ON TRACK WITH 2012 AND 2013


When you see the Mas d’En Caçador vineyard in Porrera you KNOW it HAS to produce great wine!

– LUIS GUTIÉRREZ

This dark, almost black-colored wine has an equally black nose of shoe polish, peat, graphite, licorice and tree bark. The palate is XXXL with massive concentration, lots of tannins, alcohol and power.

2011 CELLER DE L’ENCASTELL ROQUERS DE Porrera

...has aromas of tree bark and a mixture of red and black fruit with a spicy twist. It also has the earthy and balsamic character of the zone. The palate is medium to full-bodied with some flavors of cherries in liqueur and very balsamic flavors framed by dusty, slightly rustic tannins.

2012 CELLER DE L’ENCASTELL ROQUERS DE SAMSÓ

This dark, almost black-colored wine has an equally black nose of shoe polish, peat, graphite, licorice and tree bark. The palate is XXXL with massive concentration, lots of tannins, alcohol and power.
2010 CELLER CAL PLA PLANOTS
... notes of smoke, roasted sesame seeds, nuts, brick dust around a core of red and black fruit. The palate is medium to full-bodied with roasted flavors, barbecued meat and sour cherries, ending quite dry.

2012 CLOS I TERRASSES CLOS ERASMUS
The palate shows power, elegance and a special mineral savoriness akin to licking stones. There is more Garnacha in the blend (there’s only 15% Syrah) which gives a Mediterranean juiciness. A new life for Erasmus, very much recognizable as Priorat, Gratallops and Erasmus, but with a more elegant haircut.

2012 CLOS I TERRASSES LAUREL
This is a very savory vintage of Laurel with pungent, almost saline flavors. The wet slate and black fruit that I link to Gratallops are present but the wine is much fresher than anticipated for a warm and especially dry vintage in a hot village like Gratallops. There is a balsamic twist in the background, but the place comes through stronger than grapes or process.

2014 CONRERIA D’SCALA DEI BLACK SLATE LA MORERA
... with waxy aromas of dry apricots, and started to show some wild herbs, fennel and tarragon and the texture had also changed to be more focused while gaining in volume... Great white from Priorat at amazing price.

2013 CONRERIA D’SCALA DEI BLACK SLATE SCALA DEI
The tannins are silky, and the texture is very elegant. It feels young and elegant like a Pinot Noir from the south. This is an elegant Priorat for those who avoid the dark, concentrated, powerful wines and who appreciate more the elegant side of a Mediterranean red. Great value too.
2012 NIN-ORTIZ NIT DE NIN
The wine is pure, perfumed, intoxicating even, floral and spicy, intense and captivating. The palate is highly refined, with pure flavors, great freshness, completely focused, nothing blurry at all in there, generous but fine at the same time. It ends very tasty, with a saline minerality.

2012 NIN-ORTIZ PLANETES DE NIN
It has a beautiful floral nose of violets and lilies, with showy aromas of blood orange peel, wild berries and oriental spices in a Vosne-Romanée way, very Burgundian overall and truly captivating. The palate is ultra-sleek, silky with very refined tannins and a subtle minerality that adds to the freshness and makes the wine very focused and precise.

2013 NIN-ORTIZ PLANETES DE NIN GARNATXES I CARINYENES AMFORA
This is somehow musky, with notes of plums and cherries, an earthy touch but it has more zip in the palate, is fresher and shows more juiciness, better overall balance and precision.

2012 NIN-ORTIZ SELMA DE NIN
It had a very flinty, soil-driven nose that also showed plenty of yeasty, leesy, slightly reductive notes that were somewhat grilled. The palate is ample and supple, with pungent flavors and a silky texture, with some faint bitterness toward the finish.

2012 MAS ALTA CIRERETS
It’s very floral and aromatic, elegant and subtle. It has aromas of spices, Mediterranean herbs and perfectly integrated oak. The palate is equally elegant and tasty with some orange skin flavors that are fresh, accessible and show good intensity lifted by the alcohol.

2012 MAS ALTA LA BASSETA
The 2012 La Basseta has a high percentage of Garnacha from a high-altitude vineyard in Vilella Alta that lends the wine a fresh nose of red fruit, orange peel and Mediterranean herbs that is quite harmonious and elegant, with imperceptible oak. The fleshy and supple palate is medium to full-bodied, has very fine tannins and good freshness, and nothing heavy about it.

2012 MAS ALTA LA CREU ALTA
This is balsamic with notes hinting on camphor, but mainly rosemary, fennel and thyme with even a floral touch and a mixture of black and red berries and some spiciness thrown in. The palate is full-bodied, but the tannins are very fine, and the rusticity of the Cariñena feels very polished and elegant. Great Priorat.
**2009 MAS DOIX 1902**

This has the character and rusticity of the Priorats from the 1990s and the finesse, elegance of the know-how acquired with years of experience. Wet slate, esparto grass, black cherries, damsons, clove, nutmeg, violets and loads of earthy aromas and flavors define this huge wine that will age forever and please the fans of powerful, concentrated reds.

**2012 MAS DOIX COSTERS DE VINYES VELLES**

...although there are still some oak-related aromas the wine has swallowed down the barrique; such is the power and concentration of the juice here. The palate is XL, intense and powerful but with very good balance, freshness and chewy tannins.

**2012 MAS DOIX SALANQUES**

This rich, powerful, concentrated Priorat is full of the austerity of the schist slopes and the dry landscape of Poboleda where all their vineyards are located. The tannins are fine-grained and abundant, and the wine should develop and get polished in bottle for a long time. This kind of wine needs really powerful food to match the power of the wine.

**2011 MAS DOIX SALANQUES**

The palate is powerful, concentrated and ripe with abundant, dusty tannins and a dry, cocoa-tinged finish. Even this will benefit form some more time in bottle. They didn’t produce Mas Doix in 2011, so some of the grapes usually destined for the Grand Vin made it into this cuvée.

**2012 CELLERS RIPOLL SANS ESCANYA VELLA**

Intensely balsamic, hinting on eucalyptus, with yellow fruit and some oak aromas still to be integrated. The palate is quite clean and dry with some astringency (apparently inherent to the grape variety) and some spicy-oak flavors.

**2011 CELLERS RIPOLL SANS RONÇAVAL**

Quite Cariñena-like nose with Mediterranean touches, aromatic herbs, tree bark, plums and dark cherries that together give an overall dusty character. The palate is medium-bodied with abundant, grainy tannins that need some bottle age to be polished. It turns more balsamic and minty with time in the glass.
2013 TERROIR AL LIMIT TERRA DE CUQUES
Putting my nose in the glass made me think of a serious Sancerre, with a super mineral side and also something herbal and balsamic, with some bay leaf and hints of mistletoe; Dominik tells me some people mention basil leaves too... The palate is really straight and with high minerality, vertical with great acidity.

2012 TERROIR AL LIMIT PEDRA DE GUIX
These wines are more about the soils than the fruit and show very earthy characters reminiscent of wet chalk with some hints of Mediterranean herbs. The lively palate is really mineral and almost salty, umami-like, akin to licking stones. All in all it is an electric, extreme white that leaves you salivating and ends with a slight bitter finish.

2013 TERROIR AL LIMIT TORROJA VI DE VILA
The medium-bodied palate has fine, earthy tannins blending a more serious, elegant character with some rusticity. As I find with all the wines from Terroir al Limit, it’s not about the grapes, it’s about the place. Still, the Garnacha seems to provide the bright red fruit and the Cariñena the earthy rusticity.

2012 TERROIR AL LIMIT DITS DEL TERRA
There is a slight creaminess with some smoky, toasted notes that would normally go unnoticed and are only perceived when compared directly with its siblings. It’s very showy, ripe, juicy and exuberant with tantalizing aromas that are all about blue fruit and violets and dotted with hints of malted cereals.

2013 TERROIR AL LIMIT L’ARBOSSAR
The fruit here is dark and ripe without any excess; think bitter cherries and damsons that also have an acidic side. The palate is medium-bodied, with some ripe and dark flavors expressing the slate, but the freshness of a north-facing vineyard, the minerality is a rugged texture, a tactile sensation more than flavors.

2012 TERROIR AL LIMIT LES MANYES
The palate mixes that chalky minerality with the juiciness of the Garnacha, a mixture of Mediterranean and Atlantic characters. It gets better and better in the glass, opening up and showing more nuances. Compact, round, terse and serious, it doesn’t show any oak or alcohol, and if you look at the figures the alcohol is only 13.5. Awesome balance.

2012 TERROIR AL LIMIT LES TOSSES
The nose takes forever to take off so you have to guide yourself by the prodigious palate where the balance is gobsmacking (literally!) and full of an earthy, rustic and mineral character that has hints of liquid graphite and tree bark. It really shows the essence of Priorat.

2012 is a fantastic vintage, but I have the feeling that 2013 might be even better. Stay tuned... —LUIS GUTIÉRREZ on TERROIR al LIMIT