



Espelt – located in the idyllic Empordà



Warm, sunny places where mountains meet the sea are always popular holiday destinations for the sun-starved, northern tourists who flock to the beaches of the Costa Brava for their yearly dose of vitamin-D and fresh seafood. The local DO supplies many of them with plenty of lubrication in the form of abundant, inexpensive and simple wine of a pinkish hue that matches their sun-burned skin. Like many destination DOs, the quality of the wine is in inverse proportion to the number of hotel bookings so there are few truly remarkable estates. Those farming steep hillsides in the back-country and focusing on indigenous varieties are usually the best bet.

One such property is owned by the Espelt family, who for centuries have grown grapes in Empordà. In the early 2000s they built a cellar and began bottling wines under their name. Headed Anna Espelt, the inheritor of generations of grape growers in Empordà, the farming is certified organic by ECOCERT, not only because it makes better wines, but because the vineyards are located on a mix of sandy granite, limestone and slate in and around several nature preserves in the area. Indigenous varieties and styles are promoted at Espelt from their fresh, crisp whites to their mineral and spicy reds before finishing on a pair of delectable fortified wines.



The vineyards at Espelt are planted in four uniquely different sites from the foothills of the Pyrenees to near the coast of the Mediterranean. At the highest elevation is Rabós, nestled in the mountains northwest of the winery. Here, on slate soils, Anna farms mainly old-vine Carinyena with a small amount of Lledoner which producer dense and powerful wines. Near the cellar are two sites called the Mountain and the Plain, or Pla. The Mountain is a young vineyard planted by Anna between 1998 and 2002 as part of her master's thesis in viticulture. Long abandoned this granitic site in the hills behind the cellar was re-terraced and reclaimed by Anna who planted Syrah, Garnatxa, Mourvedre and Carinyena there. A short distance away is Pla which surrounds the cellar. This was the original vineyard on which Espelt was founded, and where they grow Garnatxa Blanca, Garnatxa and Macabeu. Finally there is Mas Marés, which as the name would suggest, is located close to the coast of the Mediterranean. Encircled by the Cap de Creus National Park, Mas Marés was where Anna first experimented with organic farming practices and where the combination of farming, granitic soils and thermal breezes from the Mediterranean make for fresh, lively and elegant wines.

FACTS at a GLANCE

Founded	2000
Proprietor	Familia Espelt
Winemaker	Anna Espelt
Size	200 ha
Elevation	200 – 250 meters above sea level
Soils	Llicorella
Vine Age	30 – 90
Varieties	Garnatxa Negra, Lledoner, Carinyena, Garnatxa Blanca, Macabeu
Farming	Practicing Organic
Harvest	Manual
Cellar	Hand harvested, fermentation in tank, short maceration on the skins for the white wines followed by aging in tank or French oak, red are destemmed and fermented in tank, short maceration and aged in primarily neutral French oak

