



Bixente & Diane Oçafrain



MAS ALTA

In the Priorat you can find local families who have tended their vines for generations as well as newcomers drawn to the possibilities of this terroir – even the founding members of the modern Priorat include representatives of both camps. The creators of Mas Alta, Michel and Christine Vanhoutte, originally from Belgium, became enamored with the early wines they tasted from the Priorat and decided to relocate to the small village of La Vilella Alta with the goal of establishing an estate of their own. In the process they enlisted the help of Michel Tardieu and Philippe Cambie to start up their Bodega. To run the estate they hired Bixente Oçafrain, a native of the Pays Basque in France and his wife Diane who was raised in the Languedoc.

Bixente had studied agriculture and viticulture in Bordeaux before earning his enology degree in Montpellier where he met Diane who was studying enology, biology and environmental studies. While working in Bordeaux, Bixente met Michel Tardieu who mentioned his project in the Priorat. Their combined experience, temperament and training made them the perfect couple to manage Mas Alta and they moved to the Priorat in 2010.

Mas Alta is currently 35 ha in size with additional acreage contracted from local growers. At the core of the estate, as with most properties in the Priorat, are old-vine Garnacha and Carinyena that are up to 100 years old in age. They



have also planted some new vineyards of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnatxa Negra and Carinyena as well as an increasing amount of indigenous white varieties, Garnatxa Blanca, Pedro Ximénez and Macabeu. When Diane and Bixente arrived, they began to transition the vineyard to organic farming and implemented many biodynamic practices. As they have adapted to the terroir in the region they have also begun to implement some changes to the wine-making at the property. Since its inception, Mas Alta has championed a lavish and expressive style of wine, but under Bixente and Diane there has been a slow evolution in the cellar. More whole clusters are used in the fermentations, indigenous yeasts are employed and a preference for aging in concrete, foudre and well-seasoned, and larger barrels is prized over new wood and small barriques.



FACTS at a GLANCE

Founded	1999
Proprietor	Michel & Christine Vanhoutte
Winemaker	Bixente & Diane Oçafrain
Size	35 ha
Elevation	100 – 600 meters above sea level
Soils	Schist, clay limestone
Vine Age	10 – 100
Varieties	Garnatxa Negra, Carinyena, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Garnatxa Blanca, Pedro Ximénez, Macabeu
Farming	Certified organic (CCPAE) with biodynamic practices
Harvest	Manual
Cellar	Natural yeast fermentation in tank, concrete and French oak vats, aging in tank, concrete, foudres and French oak barrels