

Tasting with Rockstar Winemaker Alvaro Palacios



Date : Monday, 17th February 2014
Time : 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Venue : 12/F Hong Kong Wine Vault (Wong Chuk Hang)
No. of Attendees : 60
Wines Tasted : 2009 Finca Dofi, Priorat
2010 L'Ermita, Priorat
2011 La Faraona, Bierzo
2011 Las Lamas, Bierzo
2011 Moncerbal, Bierzo
2009 Placet, Rioja



Name a wine growing region in Spain? Since Vega Sicilia and Pingus are both in Ribera del Duero, many will say Ribera del Duero, or Rioja, yet very few have heard of the region Priorat and Bierzo. You might then wonder what kind of wine does Priorat and Bierzo make? Priorat is in the east side of Spain, near Barcelona where many footballer are, and Bierzo is closer to Portugal than the two famous regions mentioned above, then their wine should perhaps be cheaper, say a few hundred Hong Kong Dollars a bottle maybe? You'll be very WRONG, as Mr. Alvaro Palacios – winemaker and owner explains.

After studying enology in Bordeaux and working at Château Petrus, Palacios decided not to return to his family's vineyard in Rioja, but to go in search of new terroir in Spain. In the 1980s, he fell in love with Priorat, and acquired a plot of old vines in 1990, which became his Finca Dofi vineyard.



In 1993, Palacios found what is now considered to be the best site in Priorat: the L'Ermita vineyard, planted with ancient garnacha on the side of a steep hill.

"I use a lot of Garnacha (Grenache) in Priorat. I am very happy when working with this grape. Some people say 'you're a manic and obsessed with Garnacha' but I am not obsessed with any one variety to be honest. Garnacha is the queen grape for the Mediterranean climate and in our wineries in Alfaro that's the climate we have so we use the grape that's best suited to the climate"

Vines planted on the steep slopes in Priorat.

The Priorat region has since achieved international acclaim, with Palacios leading the charge. His L'Ermita wine, a carinena / garnacha blend, is to die for: mineral-driven, silky, elegant, with blackberry and red cherry fruit and a fine line of acidity.

Alvaro's nephew, Ricardo Perez, traveled through the relatively unknown region of Bierzo after completing his training at Château Margaux and spotted its immense potential. He convinced Palacios to buy land in the area, and the two have been creating highly acclaimed wines from old mencia vines ever since.

Along with its well-known – and more affordable – Petalos wine, Descendientes de J. Palacios makes a selection of high-end, single-vineyard wines. These include their second most-expensive Spanish wine, La Faraona. It is grown on barely more than an acre of land, with the vines yielding just a single barrel of wine each year.

No matter whether you like Garnacha or not, the achievement in building up these wineries in places where others might need hundreds of years to do, with the quality that can compete with the greatest wines around the world, is something very remarkable.

As these wines are becoming more famous while supply remains so limited, prices are bound to rise and it would probably be wise to stock up now than later!



Cult wine? No matter what, they only make 1 barrel a year.



It is a new experience for many guests to taste these exciting wines from Priorat and Bierzo.