

ROBERSON WINE PRESENTS:

THE WINES OF
VEGA SICILIA

WITH OWNER PABLO ALVAREZ & WINEMAKER XAVIER AUSAS

WEDNESDAY APRIL 1ST 2009

VEGA SICILIA THE ESTATE

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS VEGA SICILIA

There are not many wineries that can genuinely lay claim to legendary status, but Spain's Vega Sicilia rightly takes its place in the pantheon of the world's greatest wine estates. Located to the east of Valladolid on the best terroir that Ribera del Duero has to offer, these are wines of phenomenal breeding that demonstrate traditional Spanish wine of the very highest order.

Vega Sicilia is often hailed as being the wine of Spanish Kings and although the vineyard was originally planted back in 1864, it wasn't until the 1920s that Vega's reputation was established as the King of Spanish wines.

The story begins in the late 1850s when Eloy Lecanda Chaves was given the estate that includes today's Vega Sicilia. He paid a visit to Bordeaux in 1864 and returned with 18,000 vines that were planted on his land, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot, Carmenere and even Pinot Noir. The Pinot and Carmenere have since been replaced, although the other varieties are still planted today and form an important element of the wines. Despite the forward thinking approach of Senor Lecanda in planting the vines, the resulting wines were not as exciting as the Brandy that he distilled (and was apparently more interested in).

The next fifty years saw plenty of changes (the name went from Bodegas de Lecanda to Hijos de Antonio Herrero and finally to Vega Sicilia) including a spell when it was leased to the Palacios family of Rioja after their vineyards were devastated by phylloxera. During much of that period the wine was sold as Rioja but the major development was the employment of the legendary estate manager Domingo Guarramiola (known as Txomin). Once the wine had ceased to be bottled as Rioja (in 1915) Txomin got on with the business of making Ribera del Duero, and before long a string of legendary wines had been met with critical acclaim. International prizes followed and a legend was born.

After Txomin's death in 1933 his good work was continued by Don Jesus Anadon throughout the 40s, 50s and 60s, despite the distraction of having General Franco's regime in the political background. The estate changed hands twice more during this period before being purchased in 1982 by the current owners, the Alvarez family. Renovation and innovation began immediately and continue to this day at both Vega Sicilia and the additional estates purchased by the Alvarez family - Alion (down the road in Ribera) and Pintia (in Toro).

VEGA SICILIA THE ESTATE

The Vega Sicilia estate totals approx 250 hectares of clayey-limestone soil with some vines in excess of 100 years old (although most are replanted at 60). Unlike the early days, the most widely planted varietal at the estate today is, of course, Tinto Fino (the local clone of Tempranillo). This makes up the majority of the blend in the Vega Sicilia wines where it is supplemented by lesser amounts of the Bordeaux varietals. Alion and Pintia are always made from 100% Tinto Fino, or Tinto de Toro in the case of Pintia.

Today's team is headed by owner Pablo Alvarez and winemaker Xavier Ausas, with both men focused on maintaining (and indeed improving) the quality of Vega's wines while doing so with the respect for tradition that makes them so individual. They are joined by a highly skilled team in the winery and vineyards and even their own cooperage since 1987. Jesus Rodriguez is head barrel maker, crafting oak barrels from imported planks of American Oak (the French oak barrels are imported).

The wines continue to be sought after (and fought over) by collectors, enthusiasts and sommeliers all over the world and it is the absolute pleasure of Roberson Wine to welcome the Vega Sicilia team to taste these wonderful wines with us tonight.

"A legend for the quality of its wines. The flavour is astonishing and the perfume is intoxicating."

Hugh Johnson

"The Lafite of Spain."

Michael Broadbent

"Inspired winemaking and inspired quality. Spain's greatest wine."

Robert Parker

"Spain's undisputed equivalent of a first growth."

Jancis Robinson

VEGA SICILIA THE WINES

PINTIA (TORO)

This estate (originally called Alquíriz) in Toro was acquired by the Alravez family in 1997, although the first release was from the 2001 vintage. The property now stretches across 80 hectares of old vine (30 - 50 years) Tinto de Toro, the local clone of Tempranillo and is always made 100% from this variety.

Pintia is barrel fermented and aged in 100% new oak (70% French / 30% American) for 13 months in the case of this 2006 release.

| | Available | Retail price | Tasting special bottle price | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Single Bottle | In a mixed case |
| 1: 2006 Pintia <i>Available In Bond @ £330 (12X75cl)</i> | Good quantities | £41.95 | £37.76 | £35.66 |

ALION (RIBERA DEL DUERO)

Established in 1991, Alíon is located slightly further down the Duero from Vega Sicilia and is vinified with a more modern approach that imbues the wine with a different personality to its more famous sibling. Alíon is not in any way a second wine - the majority of the fruit comes from the 130 hectares of vineyard with the remainder being purchased from quality focused growers with old vines in the surrounding area.

After fermentation in stainless steel Alíon is aged for just over a year in 100% new French oak.

| | Available | Retail price | Tasting special bottle price | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Single Bottle | In a mixed case |
| 2: 2005 Alíon <i>Available In Bond @ £410 (12X75cl)</i> | Good quantities | £54.95 | £49.46 | £46.71 |
| 3: 2004 Alíon | 10 | £49.95 | £44.96 | £42.46 |

VEGA SICILIA THE WINES

VALBUENA (RIBERA DEL DUERO)

Valbuena is made using fruit from the younger vines on the property and goes through a different élevage process to Unico. Despite coming from younger vines, Valbuena is not a 'second wine' in the sense that it is made using sub-standard fruit. Valbuena is justifiably hailed as one of Spain's very best wines, so anything that doesn't match up to Vega's exacting standards is sold off in bulk for distillation.

The '5' in the title refers to the number of years that Valbuena is aged for in barrel and bottle prior to its release. There used to be a Valbuena '3', but this was discontinued in 1988.

In the case of the 2004 vintage, Valbuena spent 4 months in large wooden vats after fermentation before being aged for 16 months in 100% new oak (a mix of American and French). After a further 7 months in used barrels the wine was finished in large wooden vats until bottling in mid-2007.

Despite being labelled as a Reserva, Valbuena is undisputedly of Gran Reserva quality and could in fact be labelled as such if the team at Vega wanted to do so.

| | Available | Retail price | Tasting special bottle price | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Single Bottle | In a mixed case |
| 4: 2004 Valbuena <i>Available In Bond @ £910 (12X75cl)</i> | Limited quantities | £115 | £103.50 | £97.75 |
| 5: 2002 Valbuena | 10 | £75.95 | £68.36 | £64.56 |
| 6: 1997 Valbuena | 2 | £95 | £85.50 | £80.75 |
| 7: 1983 Valbuena | 1 | £75.95 | £68.36 | £64.56 |

VEGA SICILIA THE WINES

UNICO (RIBERA DEL DUERO)

Vega Sicilia's flagship wine is their Gran Reserva 'Unico'. The exact recipe changes according to the vintage, including the final assemblage and the ageing regime. What never changes is the quality, as Unico is only made in vintages that yield fruit considered to be worthy of making this legendary wine. In these circumstances Unico is blended into Valbuena, although in years like 1963, 1971 and 1993, neither Unico or Valbuena were made!

Of the Bordeaux varietals that support the Tinto Fino it is usually Cabernet Sauvignon that figures most heavily in the final Unico blend (Merlot often takes this role in Valbuena) and this further enhances the structure of a wine that is built to age for decades.

The 1999 vintage was fermented in barrel before spending 21 months in large wooden vats. The next phase was 20 months spent in 100% new oak barrels, 17 months in used barrels and then another 24 months in the large vats. After all that the wine was bottled and, as is usually the case, released a decade after the vintage. A famous exception to this 10 year rule was the 1970 vintage, which spent an astonishing 16 years ageing in oak!

| | Available | Retail price | Tasting special bottle price | |
|---|--------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Single Bottle | In a mixed case |
| 8: 1999 Unico <i>Available In Bond @ £2080 (12X75cl)</i> | Limited quantities | £265 | £238.50 | £225.25 |
| 9: 1980 Unico | 3 | £350 | £315 | £297.50 |
| 10: 1974 Unico | 4 | £320 | £288 | £272 |
| 11: 1969 Unico | 1 | £510 | £459 | £433.50 |

VEGA SICILIA THE WINES

UNICO RESERVA ESPECIAL (RIBERA DEL DUERO)

Most Spanish wineries would traditionally sell their wines in cask, to be bottled by merchants at a later date, as was the case in Bordeaux, Burgundy and many other wine-making regions. Those that bottled at the estate would often release a wine from the most recent vintage, and a cuvee that used cross-vintage blending to create a house style - in much the same way that Champagne houses do to this day. This 'Reserva Especial' is still made at Vega Sicilia, and is usually a blend of three vintages.

| | Available | Retail price | Tasting special bottle price | |
|--|-----------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Single Bottle | In a mixed case |
| 12: NV Unico Reserva Especial (Lot 019/99) | 2 | £285 | £256.50 | £242.25 |