



PLUMPJACK
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

January 2009

Happy New Year! Last month I wrote that December was a time of reflection. It was a time to look back and appreciate the myriad of wines we explored over the previous twelve months. January marks not only a new beginning, but also a continuation of the journey we as organoleptic pilgrims have undertaken. This month our trek takes us to Spain. Spain cultivates more acres of vineyards than any other country in Europe, and its wine regions encompass a wide range of climates and soil types. Its wineries produce bold, age-worthy reds, fresh dry whites, distinctive sparkling wines, and a vast array of styles and flavors of Sherry, Spain's unique fortified wine. This is fertile ground for wine exploration, and to borrow from my hero James T. Kirk from the Starship Enterprise - *Wine, the enological frontier. These are the voyages of the PlumpJack Wine Club. Its ongoing mission is to seek out new grapes and new appellations. To boldly go where our palates have never been before.* Our two wines this month originate from very different regions within Spain, and are unique, in part due to the indigenous varietals they are made from. Pop the corks and hold on. Their flavors will jettison your taste buds into the stratosphere.

***2007 Adegas Ladairo
Godello, Monterrei D.O.
Ourense, Spain***



***2005 Bodegas del Muni
"Corpus del Muni Roble"
Vino de la Tierra de Castilla
Toledo, Spain***



Occupying the northwest corner of Spain, the province of Galicia is nestled snugly between various mountain ranges to the east, the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west, and Portugal to the south. The area, first colonized by the ancient Celts in the sixth century B.C., was later controlled by the Roman Empire for hundreds of years. By the 13th century, the pilgrimage known as the *Camino de Santiago*, which leads almost 350 miles across the north of Spain to the tomb of Saint James in Galicia's Santiago de Compostela, was at its zenith, with up to 500,000 pilgrims a year. This pilgrimage had a profound effect on the proliferation of wine throughout this region of Spain, as monks from other parts of Europe made the journey, setting up monasteries and churches along the length of the route, bringing their vines and winemaking traditions. Considered the wettest region in Spain, Galicia contains five D.O. (Denominación de Origen) wine regions: Rias Baixas, Ribeiro, Valdeorras, Monterrei and Ribeira Sacra. Although the climate of Galicia is warm and wet along the coast, as you go inland it becomes drier as the landscape changes. This varied landscape and climate help explain the wide variety of wines that can be found in the region. Adegas Ladairo is located within the Monterrei DO, which takes its name from Monterrey, meaning the king's mountain in Castilian. This is the hottest and driest part of Galicia. The vineyards of Monterrei spread over the slopes of the open valleys around the River Tamega in Galicia's southeastern province of Orense (Ourense in Galician). The area's main town is Verín, on the Madrid road, 6 miles north of the Portuguese border. Altitudes vary between 4,300 and 4,800 feet. There are two subzones, Val do Monterrei, to the south of Verín, and Ladeira de Monterrei to the north of Verín, which includes the area surrounding Castrelo do Val. The vineyards are planted over some 7,000 acres in valleys of various tributaries of the River Tamega, a tributary of the Douro, which flows south into Portugal. The soil is mainly alluvial clay. Jose Luiz Vaz Vilela, the owner of Adegas Ladairo, has been making wine from his vineyards since 1984. The 2007 Godello is made from estate grown grapes and is 100% Godello. The average age of the vines is 24 years old and the grapes were hand-harvested at the end of September. The wine was

fermented in stainless-steel tanks and stayed in contact with the lees for 60 days. No oak was used. Godello is a white grape native to parts of Spain and Portugal (where it is called Gouveio.) Pronounced “go DAY yo,” Godello is most important in Galicia, where the warm, sunny climate and well-drained soils make an ideal home for this grape. Galicians have grown the grape for generations, but “modern” Godello mostly dates from the 1990s and post-Phylloxera plantings and rehabilitated Godello vineyards. Adegas Ladairo’s Godello is a silky wine with pear, apple, floral, and light citrus aromas and flavors, with an intense mineral character and bright acidity. The traditional food match is seafood, especially the local Galician shellfish specialties like scallops, mussels, clams, lobster, crab and oysters. In fact, the scallop shell is the longtime symbol of Galicia and the ancient *Camino de Santiago* pilgrimage. Pilgrims walking the journey would bring back Galician scallop shells as proof that they completed the journey to the “end of the world” which at that time was the western coast of Spain.

The 2007 Adegas Ladairo Godello is \$18.99/bottle, \$205.10/case.



In Spain, the concept of the *Vinos de la Tierra* denomination is similar to the *Vins de Pays* of France and, according to Spanish law, is seen as sort of transitional term for areas that can, after 5 years, apply for Denominación de Origen status. However, many wineries in *Vinos de la Tierra* areas have relished the greater freedom than exists under the D.O. system, and the result is wines that are more innovative and exciting than those of D.O.s. In recent years the number of regions in Spain using the *Vinos de la Tierra* denomination has grown dramatically. Currently there are some 31 such regions. *Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla*, formed in 1999, is located in La Mancha, the Spain of Don Quixote. La Mancha is an arid, fertile, elevated plateau (2000 ft.) of central Spain, south of Madrid, stretching between the Montes (mountains) de Toledo and the western spurs of the Cerros (hills) de Cuenca, and bounded on the south by the Sierra Morena and on the north by the La Alcarria region. It includes portions of the modern provinces of Cuenca, Toledo, and Albacete, and most of the Ciudad Real province. It constitutes the southern portion of the Castile-La Mancha autonomous community and makes up most of the region. La Mancha, a word derived from *manxa* (Arabic for dry land,) receives a meager 11.8-15.7 inches of rainfall annually. La Mancha as a whole has 1.48 million acres of vineyards, which represents nearly 6% of the world's vineyards, and boasts the planet's largest area under vine. It produces half of Spain’s wine, an average of 500,000,000 gallons per year! Bodegas del Muni, a small family winery located in Villatobas, Toledo, just South of Madrid, makes its wines in the *Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla* denomination, in the heart of the La Mancha province. Here they are able to take advantage of the area’s combination of relatively high altitude (most of the meseta is over 2,000 feet above sea level), dry, sunny climate, and chalk-laced soils. Bodegas del Muni was established in 2001, and is run by Jerónimo Perea and his sister Paloma. The name of the winery comes from the participation of an ancestor in a battle by the river Muni in Equatorial Guinea. The family owns approximately 257 acres consisting of old vine parcels averaging 70+ years. The 2005 Corpus del Muni Roble is a blend of 75% Tempranillo, 20% Syrah, and 5% Garnacha. The grapes are all estate-grown, and after fermentation was complete, the wine was aged in French and American oak. Robert Parker writes, “A superb value, this dark ruby-colored wine has smoky/toasty aromatics, spice, and an abundance of blue and black fruits in its broad personality. The fruit is ripe and sweet, the tannins silky, and the finish long and pure.” As you would expect, the 2005 Corpus del Muni Roble pairs well with the typical dishes of the region, which are primarily heavy stews and soups. Another regional dish, *El Salpicon* – minced veal with onion, tomato, garlic, parsley and pepper matches perfectly. Don’t miss trying this wine with regional cheeses such as Manchego. This is probably the most famous Spanish cheese and has its own Denomination of Origin. The Denomination of Origin is located in the center of the Peninsula, in the Castilla-La Mancha region. It is piquant, buttery and has a nutty flavor as well. It is soft and crumbly in texture and is the definitive Spanish cheese.

The 2005 Bodegas del Muni “Corpus del Muni Roble” is \$18.99/bottle, \$205.10/case.