



PLUMPJACK

WINES

WINE CLUB June 2006

Spain occupies most of the Iberian Peninsula and is the third largest country in Europe, extending from the Pyrenees that form the frontier with France in the north, to the Strait of Gibraltar, just 9 miles from Africa to the south. It is a diverse country with distinct regional and cultural differences, and has the most land under vine in the world. The country's regional diversity is reflected in its wines, which range from light, dry whites in the cool Atlantic region of Galicia, to the heavy, alcoholic reds in the Levante and the

Mediterranean South. This month we take an organoleptic journey, sampling wines from the northwest across to the southeast. The wines are composed of varieties unique to their wine-producing zones and, in the case of the white, we feature a wine made from a grape that was on the verge of extinction. Much has changed in the last decade when it comes to technology and winemaking techniques, and both of these wines are wonderful representations of a new generation of quality. As usual, supply is extremely limited and we can't guarantee that we will have these wines available for very long. In the meantime, pop a cork and prepare your favorite Spanish recipes.

*2002 Bodegas A Tapada
Guitián Barrica
Godello
Valdeorras, Spain*



*2003 Bodegas Agapito Rico
Altico
Monastrell-Syrah
Jumilla, Spain*

Galicia is one of the Spain's 17 autonomous political regions, encompassing the DO (*Denominación de Origen*) wine regions of Rias Baixas, Ribeiro and Valdeorras. Located along the Atlantic northwest part of the country, Galicia is separated by mountains from neighboring Castile-Leon, and has developed in isolation from the rest of Spain. The region shares more similarities, both geographically and culturally, to Northern Portugal. Galicia is one of the wettest parts of Iberia, and vines flourish in its humid conditions, with yields unequalled anywhere else in Spain. Valdeorras DO is a pocket of eastern Galicia shaped by the River Sil, which cuts a long east-west corridor between mountains, sheltering vines planted on the slopes above the towns in the valley. Valdeorras has made huge strides in recovering its native grapes - in particular, Godello, - in the last thirty years, and in making distinctive varietal wines from them. The new generation of white wines now emerging has greatly benefited from the installment of state-of-the-art technology in newly-constructed bodegas. Bodegas A Tapada was founded by the Guitián brothers, Ramon and Senén, and sister, Mary Carmen, in 1989. Located in the "municipio" of Rubia de Valdeorras (Orense), A Tapada owns 25 acres of Godello vines that have been in the family for three generations. The first wine was released in 1991, the same year the current bodega was constructed. In 1994, the Guitiáns released their first barrel-fermented wine. Pepe Hidalgo is the winemaker at Bodegas A Tapada. José 'Pepe' Hidalgo, was technical director at Bodegas Bilbainas in Rioja. Known for his innovative winemaking, his "Treatise on Winemaking" won the prize for the year's best wine publication at the 28th World



PLUMPJACK

WINES

Congress of Vine and Wine. The grapes for the 2002 Guitian Godello come from a 2.5 acre vineyard of 20-year-old Godello vines planted on slate soils at 6000 feet above sea level. The grapes were picked once they got infected with “botrytis cinera.” The juice was barrel fermented in new American oak (Missouri) barrels and then aged for 6 months on the lees with *batonnage* (stirring the lees) until it was bottled with a light filtration. Fifteen hundred cases were produced, of which only 60 were exported to the US. We were able to obtain 30 cases! This barrel-aged Godello could be a ringer for premier cru Pouilly Fuissé with its complex mixture of banana, nut, vanilla and mineral flavors, rounded mouth feel, and at the same time, bright acidity. It is a truly unique wine and considered one of the finest white wines made in Spain by the Spanish press. Basque dishes (thank you Piperade) such as warm sheep’s milk cheese and ham terrine or Bacalao fritters with pimenton aioli would pair deliciously with this wine.

The 2002 Guitian Barrica Godello is \$20.99/bottle, \$226.70/case.



The province of Murcia is located in the southeast of Spain, within the so-called Mediterranean Rim. In spite of its small area, Murcia is known for its variety of landscapes, including a long and beautiful coastline. The climate becomes progressively extreme away from the coast with summer temperatures reaching 113°F and annual rainfall amounting to less than 12 inches. There are two wine-producing zones within Murcia: Jumilla and Yecla. Created as a DO in 1966, Jumilla spreads out across the northern stretches of the province of Murcia and covers an area of almost 126,000 acres. In the past, Jumilla has been known for its production of heavy, full-bodied red wines with 17% alcohol, however in recent years there has been a shift towards producing younger and lighter styles of wines. The grape varieties permitted by the regulatory body of Jumilla for the production of red, white and rose wines are as follows: Monastrell, Garnacha and Tintorera Cencibel for the red and rose wines, Merseguera, Airen, Pedro Ximenez for the white wines. At present there are 50 wineries registered in Jumilla. In 1983, Jumilla-native and wine-trade veteran Agapito Rico began to formulate a progressive wine estate by consolidating existing old family vineyards with new, choice parcels in complementary sub-regions of the area, focusing on Jumilla's primary indigenous variety, Monastrell. Known also as Mataró, and Mourvèdre in France, this variety thrives in this highly-stressed, nearly desert-like environment. Average yields are a mere 1.5 tons per acre. To diversify, Agapito began careful experiments with Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet and Tempranillo after studying weather patterns from the previous 20 years. A modern facility was constructed on the family property in El Carche just prior to the 1990 harvest. Agapito’s first vintage of Altico was the 2003. This wine combines the year's best harvest of Syrah from an organically-farmed vineyard planted in early 1995, with old vine Monastrell. After fermentation was complete, the wine was aged ten months in used French oak. The 2003 Altico is a concentrated, velvety dry red wine. It shows ripe black fruits, subtle earth tones, and peppery spice in a pleasurable combination similar to a good Gigondas or Châteauneuf-du-Pape from the Rhône. A plate of thinly sliced Serrano ham, braised oxtail, or marinated lamb chops with thyme and aged sherry vinegar will accompany this wine beautifully.

The 2003 Bodegas Agapito Rico Altico is \$17.99/bottle, \$194.30/case