

the bullionaire

BULLION 13D

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Discover the wines from Iberia!



A little known fact to us in the Southern Hemisphere is that Europe is broken into a number of peninsulas or areas. One of these areas is known as the Iberian Peninsula, and is basically made up of Spain and Portugal. These two countries make up the big 4 of wine in Europe, after France and Italy. Dan Sharp of EST has chosen three amazing red wines from these two countries and in an amazing quirk of fate, the winemaker of the Australian white wine he selected also worked a vintage at one of these wineries, Quinta do Noval in Portugal. A very small world indeed! So let's all head over to a lovely part of Europe and learn more about these amazing wines.

Before we start, we just want to say how excited we are to have Dan join our little gang of sommeliers. For those not familiar with EST, it is one of the premier restaurants of Sydney

and Australia, headed by Chef Peter Doyle and owned by the ubiquitous Merivale group, who seem to own most of Sydney's CBD. Dan is a Kiwi, but we won't hold that against him, and it is great to add his palate to our group.

Dan's first selection was a table wine from Portugal. A little unusual at first glance, as the fortified wines of Portugal have more fame on the world stage, but in recent years it's the table wines from this country that are generating all the buzz. As a very general overview, there are only three regions to focus on for table wine in Portugal, the Douro and Dao in the North and the Alentejo in the Southeast corner. Dan selected a wine from the Douro.

In a relatively short period of time the Douro has established itself as Portugal's premium wine region. You cannot overstate the scale and pace

of change that is currently taking place in this spectacular wine region. The steeply terraced hillsides contain some wonderful vineyards, but because of the economic dominance of the Port trade it is only in recent times they have been exploited to produce premium wines. The most important factor in changing this situation is the emergence of a critical mass of like-minded winemakers, passionate about making high quality table wines and pooling their experiences and resources to promote their wines to the world.

Quinta do Noval is one of the great Port houses, famous around the world for producing the legendary 'Nacional'. But their relatively new English wine director has joined this critical mass and forced them into spending more time and resources on their table wines. The results are really starting to pay dividends if this wine is anything to go by. The **2007 "Cedro do Noval"** combines the traditional 'port' varieties (30% Touriga Nacional, 30% Touriga Franca, 10% Tinto Cao) with 30% Syrah. It is the Syrah component that really interested both Dan and I when we tasted the wine, as it adds a very fragrant and silky charm to the fruit profile. The wine is bright and succulent but beautifully structured. Quite a wine and a great introduction to the wines of Portugal.

Next up from Dan, are two red wines from Spain. Both made from Tempranillo, but from two different regions; Rioja and Ribera del Duero. Spain is red hot right now in Australia. Every restaurant and funky wine bar is crammed with the wines from Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Priorat, as punters look for something different. The wines of Spain have slipped onto the wine lists thanks to a number of very passionate importers, a strong Aussie dollar and the renewal of wine making and viticulture in Spain over the past 20 years. These are not the "wine on

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SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES



2007 VINA MARRO RESERVA *Tempranillo, Rioja Spain*

The Domenco de Jarauta family can trace their links in Rioja back to 1888. However it was not until 1995 that the winery really hit their straps. In this year they built a modern winery and the owner's son joined the family business with the primary target to combine tradition, quality and innovation. He had previously studied oenology at the prestigious university in the Penedes.

Their mature, low yielding vineyards are all located in the key wine growing areas of Rioja, planted over clay like soils with many boulders that aid water drainage. Combine this with a significant investment in the best modern equipment and a move towards organic viticulture and the wines of this estate have never been better.

The 2007 Reserva is a modern take on a Rioja, with plenty of up front fresh fruit. Elegance and finesse are the key features of this wine, with oak as a support and the wine is so drinkable it slides down the throat. The fruit is harvested from the Rioja Baja sub-region of Rioja, which is the warmest viticultural area within La Rioja, where wines are characterised by their intensity of colour and density of fruit. This wine displays a mixture of cherries and dried flowers, with a solid backbone of fine tannins and an underlay of richer chocolate flavours.

Many Rioja wine enthusiasts, including myself, swear by the Reserva level because they are a great balance between the super fruity Crianza and the oaky-bottle-aged Gran Reservas. A match made in heaven, particularly as most winemakers will often age their wines longer than the minimum three years and select better quality grapes for these Reserva cuvees.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Modern styles of Reserva Rioja have flavor profiles tending towards chocolate, spices and licorice. These flavours lend themselves to big flavours, with a Mediterranean slant. Think traditional Spanish dishes like shellfish paella and grilled chorizo sausage to name a few. They are also magic with slow cooked garlicky meats like lamb or mushroom risottos. This wine would be great for that tapas restaurant that has just opened up around the corner.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Despite already being 6 years old, this wine has plenty of life left. It will cellar easily for the next 3 -4 years. I would decant the wine for at least 20 minutes before serving.



2009 CONDADO DE HAZA TEMPRANILLO *Ribera del Duero, Spain*

Alejandro Fernández is the poster child for the rise and rise of the 'New Spain'. He is one of the greats of modern Spanish viticulture and a pioneer of Ribera del Duero and the Tempranillo grape. Pesquera was the first estate he established and the one that launched his fame. The critical acclaim was instrumental in the Ribera de Duero receiving official D.O. status in 1982. In 2008, the region joined the esteemed ranks of Rioja and Priorat as one of only three regions with the Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa) classification. He now owns 4 wineries in Spain, yet it is the estates of Pesquera and Condado de Haza that are the leading lights in his portfolio.

In the mid-1980s as Tinto Pesquera was assuming its place among the most intriguing and powerful icons in the world of wine, Alejandro spied a neglected slope along the Duero River which he felt held real potential. After lengthy and complicated negotiations with the many owners, he planted the first 50 hectares in 1989 and today the contiguous estate includes over 250 hectares of prime Tempranillo vines. Located within the historic county of the hilltop village Haza, the estate was christened Condado de Haza.

Condado de Haza reflects the bold and brilliant winemaking style of Alejandro Fernández. Bottled after malolactic fermentation and 15 months in American oak, like Tinto Pesquera, it can be enjoyed early yet will reward patient cellaring.

I loved this wine when I first tasted it, and it represents incredible value considering the winemaking talent and vineyard resources behind the wine. It is very dark in colour with lots of intriguing dark fruits and black cherries on the nose. A serious wine with a serious finish. The palate is very well balanced with fine tannins over-layering a sweet core of red fruits, spice, espresso and vanilla.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This is a big, bold wine packed with big flavours and strong tannins. With these types of wines, you want to match them with lots of protein dripping with juices. Think medium rare steaks, grilled lamb chops and roast pork. Then make sure you have a second bottle handy!

CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine could be cellared for the next 3-5 years with no difficulty. When drinking now, decant for 20 minutes before serving.



2011 IPSO FACTO CHENIN BLANC *Margaret River*

Kate Morgan has been the senior winemaker at Fraser Gallup in the Margaret River for the past 5 years. Prior to this she did a number of vintages in WA and other regions around Australia, as well as vintages in Oregon and Portugal. As we have already pointed out, she did a vintage at Quinta Noval, however we had chosen this wine long before we discovered this little quirk of fate. Kate's employers have kindly allowed her to branch out so to speak fulfilling her dream to make her own wine under her own label. This dream started in 2010 focusing on two wines, a white and red, and it is the white wine that Dan has chosen. A Chenin Blanc is a bit of a rarity in Australia, with most plantings found in WA, where it is used as a component of the larger white wine blends (The Classic Dry Whites that are the bread and butter of the wineries over in the West).

However Kate was never going to make something so mundane. Firstly she chose an ideal site, and a vineyard she has had her eye on ever since coming to Margaret River. It is a vineyard in the Wallcliffe subregion that is now over 30 years old (very mature by the timeline of this relatively new area). The fruit was handpicked and then whole bunch pressed to extract the finest juices without the added phenolics you can get from extended skin and juice contact.

Kate is all about minimal handling with the juice gravity fed into older oak barrels where it was allowed to ferment using wild yeasts. After 10 months in barrel the wine was blended and bottled. This is pretty serious winemaking that despite

being very minimal, requires great focus and judgement- deciding on "what not to do" is often more important than "what to do".

Now to the wine! I can safely say this is one of my favourite white wines of the year. It has a definite acidity running through the palate giving it plenty of structure, which is balanced with sensational fruit flavours and elegance. Lemon curd is prominent on the nose combined with honeysuckle and pear following onto the palate. Try not to drink this wine too cold, and the toasty oak will become an added feature, however the use of older oak means it only supports the flavours and never dominates.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Simply prepared seafood dishes and salads are the obvious choice for this wine. It is also big enough to handle poultry and pork dishes. However I like to drink it by itself on a nice summer evening with a little bit of soft cheese.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine is in the zone right now. However this is a white wine that you could cellar. I believe it could easily handle another 2-3 years, at which time I think the oak would become a little more prominent. I however will be drinking my case over the next 3-4 months. Perfect over summer.



2007 CEDRO DO NOVAL *Douro, Portugal*

30% Touriga Nacional
30% Touriga Franca
10% Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo)
30% Syrah

Portugal is famous around the world for its fortified "Port" wines. In the past 10 years however it is the table wines of the area that are generating most of the buzz. Ports can sometimes seem a little old fashioned, mostly associated with grandfathers and English gentleman in tweed jackets. It is certainly not something you would think about having at the end of a meal in that trendy new wine bar. The table wines however are another breed. They are using the great vineyard resources at their disposal to make some exciting and very distinctive wines.

Quinta do Noval is one of the great Port houses. Not only does Noval produce the most famous Vintage Port of them all, the legendary 'Nacional', it was also the creator of the "Late Bottled" style in 1954 and of single vintage tawnyies (Colheita), in 1954. They were a little bit late to the table wine party at Douro, but they have been using the time well, making lots of experiments since 1996 before they felt they were ready with their first release in 2004.

They offer a small number of table wines in their portfolio and it may be hard to believe but the Cedro do Noval is their second label. True to its long history

of continuous innovation, Noval has also been among the first to experiment with Rhône varieties in the Douro. In the end it was only Syrah that proved worthy, offering a vibrancy and silky charm to the Cedro bottling. The idea of using the Syrah in the final blend is to make the wine rounder and smoother. It really does add an intriguing dimension to the wine. In the 2007 vintage it represents 30% of the blend, with the balance being 30% Touriga Nacional, 30% Touriga Franca and 10% Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo). Matured in high quality French oak this wine is all class with a structure and elegance that is simply a joy to drink.

Very pure on the nose, with elegant red cherry, plum and smoked meat flavours. It shows its pedigree with fine tannins and seamless oak, but with plenty of power.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This is a medium to full bodied wine, so it is pretty versatile in what you can match. Think roasted meats and Italian dishes, be they tomato or creamy based. It would also be great with Pizza, but then so is everything else.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine could be safely cellared for another 3 -4 years. If you are drinking now, please decant for 20 minutes.

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



Dan Sharp *Head Sommelier at EST, Sydney*

Dan is the head Sommelier at EST, one of Sydney's leading restaurants. He is in charge of an international wine list focusing on the classic regions of Australia and France. EST has won numerous awards for both food and wine including 2013 New South Wales 'Wine list of the Year'.

Prior to working at EST, Dan worked vintage at Pegasus Bay winery in NZ, to get his hands dirty so to speak, as well as curating the wine list at one of New Zealand's leading restaurants, Logan Brown.

Dan continues to travel the world honing his craft and if not in EST, can be found in a winery or vineyard somewhere in the world.

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steroids" that some areas are promoting to the world, but winemaking that has kept the tradition and terrior in place, showing what you can do with great fruit and careful use of modern methods.

Despite being quite close in proximity, Rioja and Ribera del Duero have very different styles. Rioja is the old dog, gaining prominence in the 18th Century after Bordeaux trained winemakers introduced small oak barrels to the winemaking process, (which still remain a strong feature of today's wine.) The Ribera del Duero only started to gain prominence in the 1970's but has quickly caught up. The regions are relatively close together in central northern Spain, and both focus on red wines, with Tempranillo the major grape variety.

From the Rioja we have the **2007 Vina Marro Reserva**, a modern take on a Rioja, with plenty of up front juicy berry fruit; however this wine is all about elegance and finesse. Being a Reserva, oak is a feature of the wine, but it is so drinkable it slides down the throat. All wines in Rioja are classified by the time they spend in oak and are broken into 4 categories.

- Rioja – less than 1 year in oak and bottle
- Crianza – less than 2 years in oak / bottle
- Rioja Reserva – three years, with at least 1 year in oak
- Gran Reserva – two years in oak, three years in bottle

The new kid on the block, Ribera del Duero is sure gaining a lot of attention and the wine Dan has chosen is no exception. The **2009 Condado de Haza** comes from one of four wineries owned by Alejandro Fernández, a winemaker whose flagship wine Pesquera (also from Ribera del Duero) is often compared with Vega Sicilia (arguably one of Spain's best, and most expensive, wines). Alejandro Fernández first discovered

the vineyards for the Condado de Haza in the mid-1980s, but did not produce the wine as we know it today until the mid 1990's. He now has 250 hectares of Tempranillo vines which make a lot of wine! Plus, the 2005 vintage was rated a top 100 wine (number 34 to be exact) from the US magazine Wine Spectator; a very impressive feat indeed! The 2009 vintage is pure Tempranillo and sensational. Aged for 15 months in oak, it is elegant and structured, but playful and a delight to drink. The palate is very well balanced with fine tannins over-layering a sweet core of red fruit.

The white wine Dan selected also has an Iberian connection. The wine is the **2011 Ipso Facto Chenin** from Margaret River in WA. This is a side project for Kate Morgan, the winemaker of Fraser Gallop, who started Ipso Facto a few years back focusing on two wines (Cabernet Sauvignon and Chenin Blanc) and a few vineyards she had her eye on for years. When we subsequently found out Kate had done a vintage at Quinto do Noval, we knew we had completed our Iberian pack. When Dan first showed me this wine, it blew me away. It has an elegance and sophistication you expect with a high quality wine, yet it is so fresh and drinkable. Handpicked from 30 year old vines, fermented with wild yeasts and aged for 10 months in oak this is a very serious wine. It has this engaging lemon curd characteristic that is simply amazing.

Chenin Blanc is not widely planted in Australia and has its ancestral home in the Vouvray region of the Loire Valley in France. In Australia, most plantings are found in WA, where it is used in the blends of the big brands, but under the care of Kate and in small quantities this is a completely different beast. This is one of my favourite white wines of the year. Try not to drink it too cold and the toasty oak features will be more prominent- delicious!

So there you go, 4 wines with an Iberian pedigree and all utterly delicious. Enjoy, Matt (*The Bullionaire*)

SERVING TEMPERATURE OF WINES DURING SUMMER



As we move into the warmer months it is important to consider "room temperature" when you are drinking wine. As a rule in Australia we serve our red wines too hot and our white wines too cold. For the reds the ideal temperature is 15-18°C and whites 8-10°C. If you think the red wines are a little warm, do not be afraid to put them in the fridge for 20 minutes before serving. The wine can always warm up if it is too chilled. This will make a huge difference in your wine drinking pleasure.