

Newsletter

October 2007

No. 17

The theme today is Spain with details of a visit to a number of wineries in its northwest corner and an upcoming Iberian wine dinner at Coco Reef.

With my trusty sidekick, renaissance man Michael Bolt, we headed for the provinces of Asturias, Castilla y Leon and Galicia in northwestern Spain. Initial stops in Oviedo and Leon dealt mainly with some of the great cathedrals and monasteries in Spain, many associated with the route of the pilgrims from southern France to Santiago de Compostella. If we had traveled a little further south we could have visited Bodegas Abadia Retuerta but instead we headed west to the pretty town of Villafranco del Bierzo, the capital of the Bierzo wine region. The area is known for its powerful reds made from the Mencia grape variety and for its white Godello. We visited ***Bodegas Prada a Tope*** which is associated with an excellent hotel/restaurant called Palacio de Canedo and after a memorable five-course lunch, paired with their wines of course, were given a tour of the vineyard and winery.

The wines were very interesting as many of the vines are quite old and the area appears likely to have a bright future as the wines become better known.

It was then on to Monforte de Lemos and where the night was spent at the highly recommended Parador, one of a series of top-notch government-run hotels often located in renovated historic buildings. The next day we were met by our guide and driver Sean, owner of Euroadventures (www.euroadventures.net) a small travel company based in Galicia. Sean proved to be an entertaining and informative leader for the next few days and allowed us to both taste and eat without worrying about driving.

The next stop was ***Bodegas Via Romana*** in the DO Ribera Sacra near the village of Chantada. This is a small but beautiful part of Spain with high terraced vineyards above the river. The winery was especially beautiful, aided, it transpired, by a sizeable grant from the European Union. Only one wine was produced namely a 100% Mencia, and the wine was fresh and fruity with relatively low alcohol. A sort of Spanish cabernet franc. It was well made and elegant and the experience was heightened by the magnificent view out of the tasting room window.

After a visit to Ribadavia to see the old Jewish quarter we stopped off at ***Bodegas Casal del Arman*** for lunch and a tasting of wines from the Ribeiro DO. That night was spent in a manor overlooking the Mino river (with Portugal on the other side) and the next day it was off to explore the Rias Bixas region.

This is quite a large region full of interesting sites and superb restaurants. We visited ***Bodegas Fillaboa***, well known for their Albarinos and then ***Bodegas Terras Gauda*** in the nearby Rosal sub-zone to taste some of their local wines as well as an excellent

Bierzo they produce from a neighbouring appellation. Most of the wines were made from the Albarino grape, generally being fermented in stainless steel. Interestingly the area was once considered a 'cool' region with alcohol levels in the 11 - 12% range. For the past four or five years however the alcohol range has moved up to 12 - 13% thanks to warmer summers.

We then indulged in what can only be described as a lunch of extreme gluttony at the seafood restaurant Andurina in A Guarda on the Galatian coast, where mussels were followed by cockles, clams, langoustines and seafood paella before we begged for mercy. To walk off the excesses we visited a nearby 2000-year-old celtic hill fort finally ending up in the village of Baiona where the Carabela Pinta (replica still there) brought back the first news of the discovery of America.

The next morning we set off for *Pazo de Senorans* and were given a tour of the magnificent old manor and its grounds. A tasting followed of the 2006 Albarino which was excellent followed by a special cuvee called Seleccion de Anada from the 2002 vintage being made from grapes from a single vineyard plot above the winery. This was a revelation to me as I had no idea Albarino could be viable after five years. Apparently it is considered one of the top three white wines in Spain.

After lunch at a very fine restaurant in Cambados and a wander around the pretty village square it was off to Santiago de Compostella to wind up our visit, fittingly perhaps as the city is the final destination for the pilgrims seeking to visit and worship at the Cathedral holding, allegedly, the bones of St. James.

It is a pretty part of Spain, spoiled only by some indiscriminate building around the edges of towns and villages. The food is both relatively inexpensive and generally excellent although you should get used to late lunches and even later dinners!

I will be importing the Pazo de Senorans 2006 and with hopefully a few cases of their special cuvee. Their 2005 is currently in stock. More Muga is also arriving soon, together with some more wines from Bodegas Roda and their wonderful olive oil.

The next wine dinner is scheduled for *Friday November 23rd* at Coco Reef with an Iberian theme. Chef John Pritchard has prepared a superb menu using many specially imported Spanish ingredients (see menu below) and dinner will be served out in their restaurant overlooking the South Shore, preceded by a glass of champagne on the patio.

The wines (also shown on the menu) will highlight different regions of Spain and Portugal.

We will gather for champagne from 7:00 to 7:30 p.m. with dinner to follow immediately thereafter.

The numbers will be limited to 80 with Coco Reef being fairly flexible on table sizes. Parties of less than four may, however, be seated with others. The cost of the dinner (including service charge) will be \$125 per person.

Kindly email your reservations to me at nww@bermudawine.com. Payment will be due two weeks before the event.

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MENU

An Iberian Evening
Friday, November 23rd 2007

Reception (7:00 pm)

Champagne Jacquesson Cuvee #730

Dinner (7:30 pm)

Iberico Fish Soup

bacalhau, saffron, tomato, olives, raisins, gremolata
Pazo de Senorans, Albarino 2005 (Rias Baixas)

Jamon Serrano

almonds, avocado mousse, orange supreme, olive oil
Pastrana Amontillado Viejo Sherry (Jerez)

Deconstructed 'Paella Valencia'

confit rabbit, chicken, escargot, fresh beans, saffron
Muga 'Gran Reserva' 1998 (Rioja)

Braised Oxtail & Chorizo

smoked paprika potatoes, tomato condiment
Quinta de Carolina 2003 (Douro)

Iberian Cheeses

nuts and grapes

Spanish Brandy Truffles

Graham's Vintage Port 1980 (Douro)