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Verdejo and other stories!

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And I quote:

“Piedra Luenga Verdejo is an organic white wine made with the

Verdejo grape that grows in our Casilla del Morcillote vineyard overrun by a layer of lavender, poppies, clover and wildflowers, buzzing with bees and other insects.”

Close your eyes and picture the vineyard – beautiful, isn’t it? (www.bodegasrobles.es)

I was kindly sent three wines from their portfolio, by current incumbent, Francisco Robles, third generation of a family that has toiled relentlessly to make the best wines possible from the soils of this less well known area of production adjacent to Jerez, with its centuries of history and tradition.

Firstly, some clarification – ‘less well known’, is accurate, but, whilst ‘burgeoning’ may be slightly overstepping the mark, there are increasing signs that DO Montilla-Moriles is tired of the shadow, and wants to come out to play! They have two particular champions, in terms of promoting the area, my Twitter friends @LauraWBurgess & @TheWineKiwi, and it’s largely down to them that my interest has grown, along with that of many other commentators and consumers.

I was down there several years ago visiting a large concern, making very good wine, (I wish I'd known of Bodegas Robles then, too!) and was fascinated to learn a little about the area, whilst tasting, admittedly a limited number of wines, due to time restraints. I was impressed, and continue to be so.

Piedra Luenga Verdejo, has a charming label, indicative, I think, of the philosophy of the winery, and indeed, the vineyards used for its production. Regular readers will know, from, perhaps 15 years ago(?), when I first started writing about the variety, that I'm a fan of Verdejo. I won't bore you again with the details of how this practically unheard of variety suddenly hit the Spanish Wine World headlines, and of its subsequent rise from rags to riches. Suffice to say that it is now considered one of the most famous white wine varieties in Spain and is seen in restaurants and shops throughout the country.

In some ways, and I'm sure my Twitter friend, @VictordelaSerna, will agree here, Verdejo has become something of a victim of its own success. It's been too heavily planted in its original home, DO Rueda, often by those interested in making a quick buck, rather than those whose concern is quality first. But let's not denigrate the variety – those who do care about its quality are making really good wines from this variety, Spanish, but sharing some of the characteristics of France's, Sauvignon Blanc.

Francisco Robles is obviously in the latter group, and a distance away from Rueda! I really enjoyed the wine – there's a little Honeysuckle blending with wisps of fennel on the nose, plus a faint gooseberry nod, nicely fused with some red apple notes too. Fermentation is provoked using wild yeasts found in the vineyard and transported to the winery on the backs of the grape skins, grapes which are certified as organic (Best Organic Production in Spain in 2014 and the Agriculture and Fisheries Awards 2017!).

Stirring of the lees is also employed and I think it's this that contributed significantly to the creamy mouth-feel, adding presence to the wine. It paired perfectly with my step daughter's Feta Cheese and Spinach Filo Pastry Slice, with the creaminess blending so well with the salty cheese, and a lemon acidity to keep it all so fresh!

Bodegas Robles also makes a dessert wine, this time coupled with a carrot cake (same chef, you don't buy a dog and bark yourself, do you?). [Don't worry, she'll laugh at that – eventually!]. It's an interesting wine as well as being really enjoyable.

Caprichoso Dulce, also organic, of course, is made with dried PX grapes, which have gained greater sweetness because of their loss of water content, but blended with zesty, young Verdejo wine, balancing the sweetness to avoid a cloying wine, with, unusually, a little Carbon Dioxide added to add bubbles, freshness, and hey – some fun too! Floral, honeyed with a citrus lick, and, like the previous sentence, it's a mouthful, with an intense, yet light finish, courtesy of the slight fizz!

I'm sure it'd not just me who's noted a rise in Vermouth production and promotion here in Spain. VRMT Robles is one that really pleased my wife, who particularly loves the style! Oloroso wine is aged for 8 years in oak barrels, a little Pedro Ximénez wine is added. The Vermouth is also macerated with ten different herbs/plants grown on their land, adding a sense of place to the honeyed, though dry, finished product.

You'll find vanilla, cinnamon, a touch of cloves, a little nutmeg along with a certain Christmas aroma too! @clairemariesoprano advises – drink it as an aperitif or/and as a digestif at the end of dinner!

Once again, I am reminded how lucky we are to live in such a dynamic wine orientated country with a huge variety from which to choose, and at such good prices: both wines are a touch over 7€ and the Vermut, just 13€!

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