

Vinoexpo Asia 2008

Tasting Notes Provided by [CataVino](#)'s Asian Correspondant, Edward Ragg, of [Dragon Phoenix Fine Wine Consulting in Beijing](#).

My first tasting stop was at Rioja producer [Bodegas Roda](#) with Sara Fernandez Bengoa. Roda is unusual in eschewing American oak, an attempt, in part, to get back to the essence of Tempranillo:

2004 Roda Rioja Reserva

Appearance: bright purple-red colour, clear rim.

Nose: dark blackberry fruits with hints of red fruit, but not really the red fruits of less extracted, oxidized Rioja. Quite a big nose with marked French oak.

Palate: strong fruit, nice oak, tight-knit gripping highish tannins and impressive medium-high acidity. Decent length and alcohol up there at 14% abv, but balanced.

Conclusion: this is a baby at present. The fruit is sourced from relatively old vineyards with vines ranging 30-100 years old. Sara Fernandez Bengoa explained how the 2004 vintage was saved by an Indian summer after considerable September rains. Roda has at its disposal some 28 plots of which 17 are single vineyard sites. All wines are vinified separately and then blended. This is clearly good stuff. Drink 2010-2014 (perhaps longer).

Rating: 17.5/20

2004 Roda I Rioja Reserva

Appearance: dark purple-red, clear rim.

Nose: even darker fruits here than on the Roda Reserva (blackcurrant, blackberry, black cherry). Subtle French oak. Heady, but refined.

Palate: intense fruit, well-balanced oak, lovely spiky medium-high tannins, very good acidity. Length is impressive and you don't notice at first the 14.5% alcohol. A good sign.

Conclusion: This wine will age for even longer than the above Roda Rioja Reserva. The Roda I is, in fact, intended to be a bigger wine showing generally

darker fruit. Drink 2010-2019. See also second note in the Spanish wine seminar devoted to reds.

Rating: 18.5/20

2006 Cirson

Appearance: dark purple-red, clear rim.

Nose: very concentrated black fruit with some dried-fruit aromas (prune, damson). Oak is less overt here and very well-integrated.

Palate: extremely concentrated, yet also refined fruit. A complex relatively high tannic structure with very good acidity. Those tannins seem superbly ripe. Excellent length.

Conclusion: the Cirson was developed with a trial vintage in 1997 when Bodegas Roda discovered that some of its Tempranillo vines were ripening differently from other plots. Sara Fernandez Bengoa explained that the grapes tasted maturer, even silkier on the vine than in other plots, suggesting that tannin polymerisation (usually a phenomenon of vinification) might be the cause. Whatever the case, this is a beautiful wine that will need time to become more approachable. Drink 2012-2021 (perhaps even later).

Rating: 19/20

Before dashing to the first Spanish wine seminar, I also managed to taste the Symington family's new Altano Reserva Douro red in cask sample:

2006 Altano Reserva, Douro

Appearance: dark purple, clear rim.

Nose: very bright nose of complex red and black fruits. More fruit than oak in evidence.

Palate: angular, lovely high tannins, strong fruit, decent acidity and good length. Will need to come together, obviously, but very promising.

Conclusion: mainly Touriga Nacional and actually a blend of fruit from 23 different Symington properties. This will be a lovely wine. Drink 2010-2016. The

2005 Altano Reserva costs 314RMB in mainland China and is available from [Torres China](#).

Rating: 18/20 (possibly higher with time).

Spanish Wine Seminar (Vinexpo Asia 2008)

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Maria Antonia Fernandez-Daza actually presented three seminars, one each on Cava, Spanish whites and Spanish reds. Having unfortunately missed the Cava class, I attended both the white and red seminars. Ms Fernandez-Daza recommended www.winesfromspain.com as a useful source of info.

Here's what we tasted:

SPANISH WHITES

2007 Pazo de Senorans Rias Baixas DO

Appearance: bright, medium light-green.

Nose: very fresh citrus fruit and pear drop notes. Very clean.

Palate: decent lemon and slight pear fruit, vibrant medium-high acidity and well-balanced. Moderate alcohol.

Conclusion: a good example of Albarino. Competently made.

Rating: 17/20

2007 Condesa de Eylo Rueda DO, Bodegas Val de la Vid

Appearance: medium green colour.

Nose: savoury first nose, some green notes reminiscent of Rueda Sauvignon Blanc, but then more red apple and nutty notes.

Palate: more fruit on the palate than nose, quite high acidity and good length.

Conclusion: 100% Verdejo, generous and, like the above Albarino, food-friendly. Good. Drink now.

Rating: 17/20

2005 Vallegarcia Viognier, Pago de Vallegarcia

Appearance: deep yellow to gold.

Nose: complex Viognier fruit, apricot, peach and some savoury notes from some oak treatment.

Palate: robust fruit, good acidity for the grape (Viognier is not naturally generous in acid), nice length.

Conclusion: a really good expression of the grape. I haven't tasted much Spanish Viognier, but this was promising. Drink now.

Rating: 17.5/20

2005 Milmanda Conca Barbera DO, Miguel Torres

Appearance: medium green gold.

Nose: melon, peach and citrus aromas. Fruity first nose, then the oak comes in. Decent oak to fruit balance.

Palate: abundant fruit and oak, but matched with refreshing medium-high acidity. High balanced alcohol.

Conclusion: 100% Chardonnay and a refreshing example for what is a relatively full-bodied white. Drink now.

Rating: 17.5/20

NV Jean Leon Terrasola Muscat Cataluna DO

Appearance: medium yellow-gold.

Nose: classic orange blossom nose with grapey fruit (green grapes, not grapefruit!).

Palate: fresh rather than lush fruit, not too cloying, some residual sugar but not that sweet. Moderate alcohol and enough acidity just to lift the wine a little.

Conclusion: decent off-dry Muscat. Drink now.

Rating: 17/20

NV Mistela Moscatel de Turis Valencia DO, La Baronia de Turis

Appearance: medium gold.

Nose: orange peel first nose, peaches, heady wafting alcohol (this is actually fortified).

Palate: powerful palate which doesn't quite hang together because you can taste the grape-spirit used for fortification rather too much. The alcohol is out of balance with the fruit.

Conclusion: interesting to taste, but not my cup of tea. If chilled further and with the right food, it might work. Drink now.

Rating: 15.5/20

NV Nectar Pedro Ximenez Xerez DO, Gonzalez Byass

Appearance: deep brown to black, yellow rim.

Nose: intense raisin and prune nose with savoury, nutty notes (aromas of even seaweed or brine). Obviously oxidative notes from the solera system.

Palate: really intense fruit, excellent high residual sugar that is very well balanced with great acidity. The fact that a Pedro Ximenez of this body can give the illusion that it is somehow refreshing is a testament to the acidity-sugar balance.

Conclusion: superb stuff. Drink now.

Rating: 18.5/20

SPANISH REDS

2007 Casa Gualda La Mancha DO, Co-op Ntra. Sra. de la Cabeza

Appearance: bright medium red-purple, clear rim.

Nose: bright strawberry fruit, no oak here. Some smells reminiscent of carbonic maceration (bubblegum, confected strawberry). But it may be just be tank-fermented rather than carbonically macerated under pressure.

Palate: pleasant, light red fruits, low-medium tannins, pretty good acid. Not much length.

Conclusion: simple, fruity, lightweight Tempranillo. A red that would benefit from slight chilling to serve on a warm day. Drink now.

Rating: 15.5/20

2005 Trapio Yecla DO, La Purisima

Appearance: dark purple-red, clear rim.

Nose: alcoholic first nose with kirsch-like cherry fruit and kernel aromas (even smelt a bit of brazil nuts!). Later a prune nose comes through. Quite a lot of oak.

Palate: gum-tightening medium-high tannins, nice dark fruit, heady alcohol, mixture of red and black fruits with more prune aromas and some smoky notes too.

Conclusion: 100% Monastrell (a.k.a. Mourvedre, Mataro). Monastrell is not a grape that oxidizes very quickly and is renowned for producing high alcohol and dark fruit aromas. I haven't drunk much 'Spanish Mourvedre' and no doubt it behaves slightly differently in the vineyard than the grape does in Bandol, for example (just as Garnacha although genetically the same as Grenache is different in Priorat as compared with the Southern Rhone). Good. Drink 2008-2012.

Rating: 17/20

2003 Baltasar Gracian Reserva Calatayud DO, Co-op San Alejandro

Appearance: bright medium purple-red, clear rim.

Nose: attractive first nose of red and black cherry fruit with some strawberry notes too. Good level of oak.

Palate: nice acidity, medium chewy tannins, good fruit and pretty well-balanced. The high alcohol (14.5%) is not so noticeable at first.

Conclusion: well-made, pleasant blend of Garnacha and Tempranillo. Drink now until 2009.

Rating: 17/20

2004 Roda I Rioja Reserva DOCa, Bodegas Roda

Appearance: darkish purple red, clear rim.

Nose: beautiful fruit, more of a blend of red and black fruits than was the case with the bottle tasted at the Roda stand. Blackcurrant, blackberry, but also red cherry, clove notes from the French oak.

Palate: rich fruit, powerful alcohol, but the wine wears this well with refined, gum-tightening medium-high tannins, great acidity, still somehow restrained on the finish. Very good length.

Conclusion: lovely stuff. Needs time. Drink 2010-2019. This bottle actually marginally better than the one tasted at the Roda stand.

Rating: 18.5/20

2004 Felix Callejo Ribera del Duero DO

Appearance: dark purple-red, clear rim.

Nose: concentrated dark fruits of blackberry and black cherry with quite toasted oak (French and American).

Palate: nice fruit, medium-high chunky tannins, high alcohol and nice acidity. Well-balanced.

Conclusion: 100% Tempranillo and well put together. Like the 2004 Roda I, this is a wine that needs time. Drink 2010 onwards.

Rating: 18/20

2002 Vina Santa Marina Ribera del Guadiana DO

Appearance: medium red purple, slight orange rim.

Nose: perfumed red fruits showing the strawberry and red cherry side of Tempranillo. Oak is well integrated.

Palate: ripe red fruits on the palate, medium acidity, moderately high alcohol (13.5%) – what used to be called high alcohol on some reds! – but not much length here. Fades away a bit.

Conclusion: quite good quality, but perhaps not the easiest vintage. Although, it was possibly hard to taste this wine after the two preceding ones. Drink now.

Rating: 16.5/20

2002 Senorio de Andion Navarra DO, Senorio de Andion

Appearance: darkish purple-red, orange rim.

Nose: earthy aromas, mellowed blackcurrant, plum and cherry fruit, developed oaky notes (leather, chutney spice smells), meaty.

Palate: medium-high chewy tannins, fading but spicy fruit. Pretty good balance and nice length.

Conclusion: a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Tempranillo and Graciano, this is drinking well now. Good. Drink now to 2009.

Rating: 17.5/20