



BY APPOINTMENT TO  
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN  
WINE MERCHANTS  
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED  
LONDON



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HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES  
WINE MERCHANTS  
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# CORNEY & BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

*Established 1780*

## BENJAMIN ROMEO, SPAIN

2009/2010 VINTAGE EN PRIMEUR



EXCLUSIVE TO CORNEY & BARROW IN THE UK





Benjamin Romeo vineyards, Rioja.





“BOTH VINTAGES, 2009 AND 2010 ARE THE CLOSEST  
WE HAVE COME TO PERFECTION TO DATE –  
THE BEST EXPRESSION WE HAVE HAD OF THE  
INDIVIDUAL VARIETIES – FINE AND ELEGANT.”

BENJAMIN ROMEO, AUGUST 2011



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## BENJAMIN ROMEO

Benjamin Romeo is an extraordinarily complex character, passionate, sentimental, emotional and fiercely loyal. Latin in temperament, with a typically Spanish disregard for the passage of time, he is nonetheless obsessive about detail and order. Benjamin has many gifts but the most inspiring of these perhaps is his vision, from which nothing and no-one will deflect him. Totally uncompromising, he has translated into reality an ambition which, for most of us, would have remained as a castle in the air or indeed ensconced in cloud cuckoo land. The path to success has been paved by sheer hard graft, perseverance and not a little audacity. Looking back, born of farming stock, with generations of antecedents growing grapes rather than making wine, Benjamin's aspirations were absurdly optimistic but everything he has achieved has been mapped out systematically from the outset. Having cut his teeth at the highly acclaimed company Artadi, in forging his own path, Benjamin's compass is unwaveringly set towards achieving supreme quality.

Benjamin's strategy was threefold; stage one involved acquiring vineyards, stage two researching the market and assessing whether there was an audience which would like the wines and then, and only then, stage three – the construction of an all singing, all dancing winery. A more circuitous route to success would be difficult to imagine. Firstly the vineyard parcels which Benjamin was able to acquire were scattered over dozens of sites, almost all of which are so small that, in isolation, they are unviable. The source of grapes was therefore challenging enough, particularly at harvest time, but then, with a cellar placed way down in Benjamin's list of priorities, his first wines had to be produced in his father's garage in the centre of town before being transferred, barrel after barrel into the cool environment of caves hewn out of the rock which tops San Vicente de la Sonsierra.

The vineyard parcels, now numbering 60, are individual, with considerable points of difference be it aspect, soil, mesoclimate or altitude. There is just one mono-bloc, 3.5ha planted in a loop of the river – La Viña de Andres – named after Benjamin's father who in fact planted part of the vineyard here. The other sites constitute a myriad of small amphitheatres of old bush vines, planted alongside intoxicatingly scented wild herbs. The aromas are staggering and complement the finished wines. This is where it all really happens. The most gifted winemaker in the world cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear and Benjamin recognises that his wines are made in the vineyard. Standing for any length of time amongst his vines, Benjamin distractedly caresses them, plucks any irritant weeds from their vicinity and simply beams. His passion is palpable and infectious.

Having acquired a critical mass of vines and achieved considerable world acclaim, Benjamin finally pressed "go" on stage three. He began work on a bodega which goes so far beyond state of the art. All was revealed in 2008 – a fabulous Bond-esque structure which melds seamlessly into the landscape on which it is built. Constructed on a number of levels, it emulates the natural contours of the rock-face, allowing the wines to be moved by gravity thus eliminating damaging pumps. The building materials, choice of hardwood, and equipment are of the best quality. Roof terraces are planted with the same herbs, some 20,000 plants, which grow wild amongst the vines, their heady aromas tantalising the senses, reminiscent of the vineyards.

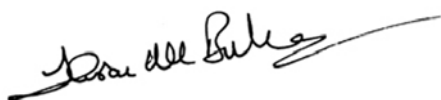
Stylish, modern and hugely efficient, it was designed by a young architect closely supervised by Benjamin. At the heart of this feat of modernity there is an emotive reminder of Benjamin's roots, with a black and white print of his grandmother, a tiny woman with a *panier* of similar stature, full of grapes, strapped to her back. Benjamin has a profoundly rooted sense of tradition and history.

Benjamin's wines are so individual yet they are faithful to their origins, with that all-important sense of place. These are in fact supreme examples of Rioja which, in true Benjamin fashion, do not conform to the more usual labelling conventions.

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## VINTAGE NOTES

We have decided to streamline our offering from Benjamin Romeo to give the key, iconic wines the attention and focus they so clearly deserve. We are therefore delighted to be presenting two reds, the flagship **Contador** and the single vineyard **La Viña de Andres** as well as Benjamin's stunning, aromatic white **Que Bonita Cacareaba**.



Alison Buchanan  
Associate Director, Buying  
September 2011

### A VIEW FROM THE SALES FLOOR:

I was lucky enough to visit Benjamin Romeo's Bodega Contador in March. In complete contrast to the sleepy hilltop village where it is based, the winery is a futuristic structure which somehow manages to blend in with its surroundings – a spaceship landed in ancient Rioja and camouflaged in literally tens of thousands of thyme and rosemary plants. This could even be a metaphor for Benjamin's winemaking: grounded in tradition, harnessing some of the oldest and most venerable vines in Rioja, but subversive and forward-thinking, refusing to conform.

I tasted these vintages from barrel at the bodega and again from bottle last month. If I had to sum each wine up in a few words, I would say QBC (our shorthand for the white) is "white peaches and blossom, viscous but mineral"; La Viña de Andres is "violets, mocha and sweet tannins"; and Contador is "classical, savoury, massively concentrated yet herbal, earthy and fresh". Three wines with very different personalities, but each in their own way showing some of the best of Rioja.

If you'd like to try a vintage of QBC which is drinking now, we have some stock of the 2009 vintage available for immediate delivery, at £43.59 per bottle inc-VAT.

**Guy Seddon**  
Sales Executive, Private Sales

### 2009

2009 saw essentially normal levels of rain, most of which fell in the winter months, restoring the water table before a change to the very dry spring and summer. It was a warm and sunny year, especially in May, June and October and over 70% of the days were recorded as cloudless, dry and clear in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. The combination of long sunny days and limited production provided the ideal environment for photosynthesis, making for perfect ripeness. As always, these old vines, naturally low producers, were further denuded when 30% of their crop was picked close enough to the general harvest so that the vine had no time to compensate. The balance between tannins, acidity and potential alcohol was optimal by the time picking began, producing a vintage noted for its finesse and elegance.

### 2010

2010 started with cold weather, ideal for killing off the less welcome wildlife and diseases and snow and rain helped to replenish the water table – which was fortuitous given the hot summer which followed. Spring was both dry and hot and, over all, over 70% of the season enjoyed cloudless skies. Summer was about 2°C warmer than usual. The older vines fared well as their roots were able to dig deeply for nutrients, avoiding too much stress. By harvest time it was clear that ripening was very even though, as ever, Benjamin picked in stages, waiting until the grapes had attained optimal ripeness, and harvesting between the 29th September and 1st October. Each parcel was cold macerated for 48 hours before fermentation in new French oak.

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## TASTING NOTES

### La Viña de Andres 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 18–19

100% *Tempranillo*

This is an exception in Benjamin Romeo's portfolio. La Viña de Andres is a 3.5 ha contiguous, riverside plot. 2.5 hectares of which were planted by Benjamin's father, after whom it is named. The soil here is clay over limestone subsoil, free-draining due to alluvial deposits of rounded pebbles. The challenge here is tempering the natural productivity of the vines so Benjamin prunes extremely heavily. A final boost to the intensity of the finished wine is a pre-harvest harvest, reducing the production to one bunch per branch – the "prunings" producing a *rosado* which is sold off in bulk.

Jet-shot plum ruby in colour, with a tight, fine scarlet rim, this presents sweet, almost candied fruit on the nose, blueberries and cherries laced with pepper. Benjamin reckons that this is possibly the most balanced he has produced at this early stage. The palate mirrors the richness and aromatics offered on the nose, set within a silky, opulent texture, supported by sweet, ripe tannins. Layered, with a rather hedonistic, decadent flair, this shows obvious complexity and, despite its power, is elegant in its bearing lifted by vivid fruit and high toned minerality – a very impressive translation of the vintage. Just 5000 bottles were produced from 1kg of grapes per vine, aged for 17 months in new French oak.

Recommended drinking from 2015–2025+

£425/case of 6, in bond UK

### Contador 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 19–19+

97% *Tempranillo*, 3% *Garnacha Tinta*

The 2009 blend comes from 12 different parcels, chosen on the basis of the oldest vines, lowest yields and balancing rounded, structured components with lighter fresher styles, complementary slopes and flatland. A shimmering jet-ruby in colour, Contador 2009, as in previous vintages, teases the taster with its innate complexity. Hints of bramble, blueberry and cherry vie for dominance, complemented by citrus notes, minerals and wild herbs. The palate, echoing the aromatics presented on the nose, is multi-layered on attack, black and red fruit give both a savoury edge and floral intrigue, all set within silken opulence. This is a big wine yet power and muscle are borne with grace and poise and there is a prominent sense of focus and energy throughout. Bravo Benjamin! Just 5,000 bottles were made, from 0.5kg of grapes per vine.

Recommended drinking from 2018–2032+

£995/case of 6, in bond UK

### Que Bonita Cacareaba, Rioja Blanco 2010

Corney & Barrow Score 18+

45% *Garnacha Blanca*, 35% *Viura*, 20% *Malvasía Riojana*

Shimmering gold, this is enticing from the outset; bright and alluring and offering an appetising nose, a commanding blend of orchard and stone fruit, refreshed by citrus zest and underpinned by an authoritative minerality. Six months maturation in new French oak has added texture and richness, rather than oak *per se* but there are shades of warm pastry and brioche, adding complexity. Only 4,000 bottles were produced from 12 sites cropped at 1kg of grapes per vine – extremely low production for a white wine – all enhancing intensity. The palate is richly textured, seductive and complex, comprehensively refusing to be pigeon-holed. Just as the taster believes they have captured its essence, further intricacies are revealed. Wafts of wild herbs enhance the nose and palate, contributing to its chameleon-like character. Beautifully balanced, this is a powerful wine yet remains wonderfully poised and elegant and a perfect complement to food.

Recommended drinking from 2012–2018+

£195/case of 6, in bond UK



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TO ORDER, PLEASE USE THE FORM PROVIDED OR CALL 020 7265 2430 (LONDON) OR 01875 321 921 (EDINBURGH)





## CORNEY & BARROW TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system.

We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

14–16 A very good to excellent wine

16–18 An excellent to outstanding wine

18–20 An outstanding to legendary wine

- *Wines are judged within their peer group, eg. Villages, Premier Cru, Grand Cru.*
- *A definitive score of a young wine is almost impossible. We usually offer a spread (e.g. 14–16) which relates to a potential to achieve a higher mark. A ‘+’ adds further to that potential.*
- *A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.*



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