



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



BY APPOINTMENT TO  
HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES  
WINE MERCHANTS  
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED  
LONDON

# CORNEY & BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

*Established 1780*



THE WINES OF PETER SISSECK  
*2009 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR*

# The Wines of Peter Sisseck

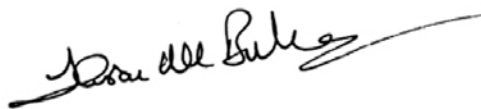
## Background

Spain, June 2010. Our Trade Sales Manager Rachel Donnelly and I were trundling down to the Ribera del Duero to meet MD Adam Brett-Smith and one of our most inspired principals, Peter Sisseck. After a couple of hours' drive we arrived at the village of Quintanilla de Onesimo, home to Peter's cellar. It was cool when we got there, chilly in fact – something which we always write about in relation to the region, but which always comes as a surprise. This is Spain, after all.

Peter's cellars are brilliantly sited on the banks of the river Duero – which appeared to be in spate. I have never seen it so high – so there should be plenty of water reserves for 2010. The cellars themselves are magnificent. On my first visit there the building was a rather crumbling shell with rubble everywhere, and yet Peter was so enthusiastic at acquiring this 18th century bodega with an authentic vaulted cellar below ground – a great rarity. My memories of that visit were further coloured by Peter's picking up an air rifle and shooting a stray pigeon which had drifted in – whither 'Health and Safety'?!

Now his cellar is transformed: whitewashed and immaculate, large open-topped vats in the spot where the pigeon met its demise, alongside glistening stainless steel. Huge glass windows looking out to the inner courtyard lay open, refreshing the cellar until the sun would get stronger later in the day. Fresh and airy, we were treated to birdsong – a lovely environment in which to work. Across the courtyard are housed wonderfully modern offices and an all-mod-cons laboratory – an area of which is dedicated to preparing biodynamic treatments. The paradoxical juxtaposition of traditional and modern is apt as it reflects the style of Peter Sisseck's wines. They all have a very modern look and feel, yet they retain a certain classicism at their core.

We are delighted to present Peter Sisseck's portfolio from the 2009 vintage – three iconic wines made by one of the world's greatest translators of *terroir*.



Alison Buchanan  
Associate Director, Buying

## Dominio de Pingus

Although relatively unknown as a region when Peter arrived there, Ribera del Duero had a long viticultural history and he believed that it had the potential to produce Spain's finest wines. Having successfully established Hacienda Monasterio, Peter yearned to try something on his own. He had observed wonderful parcels of really ancient vines, naturally low-yielding due to their tremendous age. Many were planted on exceptional sites which he knew instinctively could produce something exciting, if only in small quantities. Remaining as consultant at Monasterio, Peter threw himself into this new project, which he called after his nickname. Thus Pingus was born.

Planted at altitudes of more than 800m above sea level, the Pingus vines enjoy warm, sunny days and refreshingly cool nights during the growing period. These swings in temperature ensure increased complexity and vibrant freshness. At Monasterio, Peter had plenty of opportunities to observe and assess the highly-acclaimed neighbours, Pesquera and Vega Sicilia. He elected to plough a different course however, favouring indigenous Tempranillo (like Pesquera in this) and utilising French, rather than US oak. From squat, gnarled Tempranillo vines (Tinta del País locally) of sixty years and more, Peter coaxes a ridiculously small production of 20 hl/ha at best – though at times as little as 9hl/ha.

Pingus is vinified in open-topped wooden vats and aged, generally, in new oak, but there is nothing systematic about it. One can only imagine what the locals must have thought about this eccentric behaviour – flying in the face of all perceived wisdom, especially by consciously and deliberately producing low yields. What would all the care and attention and, at that time, indulgent use of new oak deliver in terms of wine?

Quite simply, no-one had ever seen anything like it before. Pingus soared to worldwide acclaim with the first vintage, 1995, as did Peter's reputation as a truly gifted winemaker.

Given the limited production and potential climatic risks, Pingus would have been a precarious stand-alone business and certainly would have been insufficient to keep the agile mind and energy of Peter fully occupied – but other opportunities beckoned.

## Flor de Pingus

Having created a new archetype, Peter then chose a pragmatic option which would allow him to increase production, spread his risk and yet protect the integrity of Pingus, which would always be subject to the whims of Mother Nature. What became Flor de Pingus comes from different plots of land and younger vines. Flor exhibits a very different style, albeit bearing the Peter Sisseck hallmark – freshness. It is a very great wine in its own right, with its own following.

The vines which produce Flor de Pingus clock in at a very respectable 35 years, with the younger vines planted at between 6,000 and 10,000 vines per hectare. Dense plantation forces the vines to compete with one another and their roots travel deep into the soil for nutrients, adding further complexity. Flor de Pingus is fermented in stainless steel, has 75% malolactic in new oak and is aged 50% in new oak. Both wines are in great demand and have improved as Peter fully embraced organic principles and, increasingly, the disciplines of biodynamic viticulture. Pingus is fully biodynamic and Flor is moving in that direction.



The river Duero and Vineyards at the winery

## PSI

Perhaps Peter had a sense of *déjà vu* when he saw Flor's popularity and recognition spiraling upwards, with attendant supply problems. He could of course have bought in grapes and/or wine to increase production, but Peter was reluctant to pursue that route. He had however identified interesting sites from which he would have been delighted to buy, different terroirs with which he would like to experiment – but not for Flor. A germ of an idea was sown, which would ultimately blossom as PSI (the name is a play on his initials.)

This project is dramatically different from Flor and Pingus with Peter and his team revisiting and reinventing tradition – adding a touch of philanthropy for good measure.

Peter has a great deal of passion for Ribera del Duero – as well as a sense of gratitude – yet he has watched desperately as farmers ran their vineyards into ruin. Being incentivised by payment based on weight, farmers are effectively encouraged to over produce, with labour-saving chemicals and pesticides adding to the problem.

Peter wanted to capture and protect the very essence of the Ribera del Duero. Fully committed to sustainable agriculture through organic and biodynamic disciplines, Peter has established a group of partners which he is able to help, advising on organic and biodynamic issues, providing treatments and, as quality increases, paying them more. Peter realises that these are proud people and that as a fair, blue-eyed Dane he would be ill-advised to try and instruct – so he works alongside the farmers, helping where he can and giving something back to the region.



## 2009 Vintage Notes

The changes in the vineyards will be gradual but the sites are exciting, with varied altitudes, vine age and geologies. They occupy steep, free-draining slopes in narrow valleys (the lowest at 830m, the highest at 920m), on a mix of gravels, clay, lime and calcareous sandstone – providing a very complex palette of ingredients.

The changes in the cellar are obvious, very different to Flor and Pingus. The grapes are fermented in concrete, which allows gentle extraction, avoiding excessive tannins. The thick walls of the tanks serve to retain the natural heat produced during fermentation, leading to a simple, natural balance, reached by a post-fermentation maceration on the skins. These same tanks, along with large and small wooden vats, are used for the wine to settle on the lees and to develop optimum complexity. There is virtually no new oak. Peter will continue to experiment with contrasting and complementary vinification methods, in order to express the characterful texture and fruit of Ribera wines in the best way possible. Corney & Barrow is delighted and honoured to have been involved in this from the first vintage and have enjoyed its runaway success. It is a lovely wine, refreshingly honest and unadorned with oak, accessible and very pure.

*NB. Our drinking dates may be overly conservative. Peter admits that he has not yet tasted a mature PSI, so we have no history to call upon. These wines drink well in youth but have the structure to age well.*

The winter of 2008/2009 was relatively mild and dry – worryingly dry, as this is the opportunity for the vineyards to build some water reserves. This weather continued through February and March and delayed budding. May and June then came up trumps with warm weather, but also rain, making up for the dry spring. Flowering was around the 19th June. July and August were gorgeous, warm and occasionally hot, though without excessive temperatures and the vineyards were bathed in glorious sunshine. *Véraison*, when the grapes change colour, was the earliest Peter had ever witnessed. September and October were also hot but, crucially, with cool nights. Such differences in day and night temperatures add intensity and complexity.

Having had a hotter and drier growing season than average and with the vines still working and continued good weather, the question was when to pick. Harvest too early and the alcohol balance would be fine but the tannins under-ripe. Wait too long and the tannins would be fully ripe but the alcohol would be too high. Peter elected to wait. A little light rain on the 10th October served to refresh the vines, with no dilution. Pingus produced just 11hl/ha – 5600 bottles in total, Flor de Pingus 19hl/ha, 46,000 bottles and PSI 24,000.

*“The 2009s are, in this winery’s brief history, off the charts. The purity of fruit and the length of the palate have never been seen before”*

Peter Sisseck, April 2010

## 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.*
- *A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a ‘spread’ (e.g. 14–16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A ‘plus’ adds further to that potential.*
- *A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.*

# The Wines of Peter Sisseck

## PSI

Corney & Barrow Score 18

*“I have found my direction with this wine”* Peter Sisseck

This is a beautiful, lustrous, plum-cherry in colour, with a bright fuschia rim, enticing from the outset. The nose unusually evokes fresh grape must allied to cherries, plums and fresh blueberry – all complemented by pronounced mineral notes. The palate is supple and accessible, plump and ripe, supported by rounded tannins which, with the minerality, give tremendous focus and direction. This is a wine with energy and personality, a purity of expression and so much charm.

£199/case of 12, in bond UK

*Recommended drinking from 2010–2014 plus*

## Flor de Pingus

Corney & Barrow Score 19 to 19 plus

Intense plum-cherry, clinging to the glass, this has immediate appeal. The nose is simply gorgeous, with black fruit and warm cherry compote laced with spice and wild herbs, all layered with mocha and vanilla cream. There is a lovely minerality which punctuates the seductively-textured palate, the aromatics reflecting those of the nose. This is stylish, opulent and elegant, tremendous depth supported by almost imperceptible, fine-grained tannins. Rachel Donnelly pronounced this as her desert island wine. It was stunning.

£435/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK

£455/case of 6 magnums, in bond UK

*Recommended drinking from 2012–2022 plus*

## Pingus

Corney & Barrow Score 19 to 19 plus plus

Rachel, Adam and I were treated to a fascinating tasting of four separate parcels which are blended to make Pingus, when we visited in June this year. It was a real eye-opener, giving us some idea of just how the finished wine comes to be so complex. They all tasted very different and the blend, briskly assembled by Peter was so much better than the sum of the constituent parts. Jet-shot plum, it is a stunning colour, persistently clinging to the side of the glass. The nose is really intense, rich in cassis and red fruit, tinged with violets and refreshed by an almost citrus character, all punctuated by minerals. Incredibly rich and dense, the palate is a paradox. It is fathomless, concentrated and dense, with layers of pure fruit supported by well-integrated, fine-grained tannins – yet it is breezy and fresh throughout. Hugely powerful, it is nonetheless classically balanced, beautifully rounded, ripe and ultimately, so elegant – bravo Peter.

£2,495/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK

£2,505/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK

*Recommended drinking from 2015–2025 plus*

*(Please note due to the tiny quantities available of this wine, orders will be limited to one case per person.)*

To order, please use the form provided or call 020 7265 2430 (London) or 01875 321 921 (Edinburgh)

||| These wines are released en primeur. Delivery dates to be confirmed. All prices are quoted in bond UK

