



## The Wines of Peter Sisseck *2010 Vintage, En Primeur*

### Background

Dominio de Pingus is one of the most iconic, highly sought-after wines in the world today, yet only as recently as 16 years or so ago it was but a dream, envisaged by Peter Sisseck. Turning the clock back, the imagination, vision and ambition of a young Peter, is extraordinary. What must the locals have thought of a Dane in their midst, unable to speak the language and versed only in the traditional winemaking of Bordeaux.

Ribera del Duero itself was then something of an interloper in the Spanish Hall of Fame with Vega Sicilia and Pesquera being the only two wines to have captured the attention of the outside world. Not only was Peter an outsider, but he had the blatant audacity to revolutionise accepted norms in both the vineyard and winemaking. One can only imagine the teeth sucking and heavenward glances as the locals watched on. If not quite silenced, those awaiting Peter's demise would have been somewhat chastened when the first vintage, 1995, absolutely astounded the critics.

Peter's cellar is brilliantly sited on the banks of the river, at Quintanilla de Onesimo in the Ribera del Duero. The building itself is magnificent, with a very rare, vaulted barrel cellar underground, originally built in 1832 and now beautifully restored by Peter. The pristine, whitewashed walls of the upper cellar make for an almost monastic feel. The fresh morning air moves freely through wide open windows, which look onto an inner courtyard, cooling the cellar naturally, before the sun is too high.

The place is immaculate, housing large open-topped vats alongside glistening stainless steel. Across the courtyard are housed a wonderfully modern set of offices and a state of the art laboratory, one area of which is dedicated to the preparation of biodynamic treatments.

This paradoxical juxtaposition of traditional and modern is in fact extremely apt as it reflects the style of Peter Sisseck's wines, all of which have a very modern look and feel, whilst retaining a certain classicism at their core.

We are delighted to present Peter Sisseck's portfolio from the 2010 vintage – three exceptional, inimitable wines which are so true to their origins.

**Alison Buchanan**  
Associate Director, Buying  
August 2011

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## Dominio de Pingus

Although relatively unknown as a region when Peter arrived there, Ribera del Duero had a long viticultural history. Believing that history is an astute informer of the present, Peter was absolutely convinced the region had the potential to produce Spain's finest wines. His first years in the area were spent managing another highly successful project, Hacienda Monasterio, during which time he had the chance to hatch some ideas of 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 truly exciting, albeit in very small quantities. Remaining as consultant at Monasterio, Peter threw himself into this new project, which he called after his childhood nickname. Thus Pingus was born.

Planted at altitudes of more than 800m above sea level, in La Horra, 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, but elected to plough a different course, favouring indigenous Tinto del País (like Pesquera in this) and utilising French, rather than US oak. From squat, gnarled Tinto del País vines (a cousin of Tempranillo) vines 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. Organic from day one, Pingus has been farmed according to biodynamic disciplines since 2000. Pruning and sorting are rigorous and ruthless. For a farmer, consciously and deliberately producing low yields is an anathema but therein lies the secret of quality.

Pingus is vinified in open-topped wooden vats and aged, generally, in new oak, but there is nothing systematic about anything Peter does – he's a gut-feel/ hunch kind of a guy.

Even Peter must have questioned what all of the care, attention, indulgence and apparent waste would deliver in the finished wine. These were uncharted waters.

As it happened, almost miraculously, the educated gambles paid off. Pingus soared to worldwide acclaim with the first vintage, 1995, as did Peter's reputation as a truly gifted winemaker.

## Flor de Pingus

A jewel of a property, achieving ambitious prices, Pingus was nonetheless a precarious stand-alone business as production will always be subject to the whims of Mother Nature. Other opportunities beckoned with Flor de Pingus waiting in the wings.

Peter chose a pragmatic option which would allow him to protect the integrity of Pingus, spread risk and increase production. He sought out different plots of land, well-sited with younger vines. The fruit from these plots would produce Flor de Pingus. Flor exhibits a very individual style, albeit bearing the peerless Sisseck hallmark- purity and freshness. Flor de Pingus is a great wine in its own right, with its own faithful followers – hugely-deserved. Although *younger* in Peter's parlance, the vines here clock in at a very respectable 35 years on average, the more recent vines planted at between 6,000 and 10,000 vines per hectare to encourage competition. In this way the individual vine's roots need to dig more deeply for nutrients, thereby adding complexity.

Flor de Pingus is fermented in stainless steel, sees 75% malolactic fermentation in new oak, it is then aged 50% in new oak. Both Pingus and Flor de Pingus are in great demand. Having set enormously high standards from the outset Flor de Pingus has become even more focused as Peter, mirroring Pingus, fully embraced organic principles with Biodynamic viticulture the goal. Pingus has been fully Biodynamic since 2000 and Flor de Pingus from 2005.

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## PSI

Before long Peter would witness Flor de Pingus' success going the same way as Pingus. Despite the greater volumes, in a very short time demand began to exceed supply which left Peter with a dilemma. He had access to additional vineyards where he could access grapes but he was anxious not to change the trajectory of Flor. Plan B – PSI- allows him to kill two birds with the one stone. The PSI project (his initials make up the Greek letter PSIΨ) is very different from both Flor and Pingus. With PSI, Peter seeks to capture and protect the very essence of the Ribera del Duero, revisiting and reinventing tradition whilst adding a touch of philanthropy for good measure.

For all his relaxed, convivial bonhomie and his passion for wine Peter has a serious side. Over recent years, wine production in the Ribera del Duero has soared, although not always at the quality end of the spectrum. The region's heritage of old vines is under threat as they are seen simply to be an impediment to efficiency and growth. Peter has forged relationships with growers who might be tempted by the promise of an easier life, offering them an alternative way of working. The threat to these old vineyards is very real. Peter has watched desperately as farmers run their vineyards into ruin. Incentivised by payment based on weight, they are effectively encouraged to overproduce, with labour saving chemicals and pesticides adding to the problem. 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, in an advisory capacity, encouraging moves to organic viticulture and rewarding by paying a premium. He pays three or four times the going average rate for his grapes – a powerful incentive.

Peter has a great deal of passion for Ribera del Duero – as well as a profound sense of gratitude. PSI is a means to pay something back to the region.

## 2010 Vintage Notes

*“Definitely, one was spoilt in 2010 to be a winemaker.”*

**Peter Sisseck, June 2011**

Following the truly exceptional 2009 vintage, few people expected another great vintage in the Ribera del Duero, but Mother Nature smiled once again on the region. Winter was cold, as usual, and wet, which restored much needed water reserves. Spring was rather cool, which delayed the start of the growing season, preceding an uneventful, benevolent summer. Conditions allowed for a prolonged maturation, the vines being stress free so that the grapes were able to obtain optimal phenolic ripeness. Harvest began a full two weeks later than in 2009, on the 7<sup>th</sup> October with the old vines of Pingus being allowed an even longer period to reach their peak, being harvested on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of October.

These old vines, helped by a lack of water stress, the protracted growing season, warm days and cool nights have produced, once again, exceptional potential, intense, ripe and concentrated wines, powerful and long.

## PSI

### **Corney & Barrow Score 18+**

This is an inviting, shimmering, plum-purple in colour, with a firm, bright rim. The nose offers an explosion of ripe, aromatic, black fruit, plum and black cherry compote, complemented by mineral notes. The palate is expansive, generous with abundant fruit, richly textured and bursting with personality. Honest and accessible, this is energetic and lithe, driven and focused throughout, with a freshness and purity borne of natural acidity – harmonious and long on the finish – another winning Psi.

**Recommended drinking from 2013–2017+**

**£199/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK**



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## Flor de Pingus

### Corney & Barrow Score 19+

Intense plum-cherry, richly-textured and bright, this, initially rather shy, opens to reveal a supremely aromatic nose, red and black fruit, rich in cherries complemented by hints of fennel, mocha and earthy minerals, all refreshed by exuberant floral notes. The palate is rather decadent, luscious and seductive, silk - textured and perfumed, opulence complemented by super-fine, ripe tannins. A powerful wine, this is nonetheless very feminine and self-controlled and offers a purity and freshness which add focus to a prolonged, flawless, characterful finish – a stunning Flor de Pingus.

**Recommended drinking from 2015–2024+**

**£455/case of 12 bottles, in bond UK**

**£460/case of 6 magnums, in bond UK**



## Pingus

*“Pingus is like a bumblebee. It shouldn’t be able to fly but it can.”*

**Peter Sisseck, June 2011**

### Corney & Barrow Score 19 - 20

Jet-shot plum, Pingus 2010 appeals from the outset, fathomless and bright, clinging persistently to the side of the glass. The nose presents a penetrating array of black fruit, cassis spice and smoky minerals, complemented by bittersweet hints of balsamic. Heady and powerful there is nonetheless a perfumed, floral freshness adding to the intrigue and vague hints of citrus refreshment – hugely complex. The palate echoes the aromatics and intensity proffered by the nose, set within a profoundly rich structure. Luscious, juicy and generous, this combines undeniable power with a lightness of touch, remaining breezy and fresh throughout. Even lighter on its feet than the 2009, this is beautifully balanced, composed and infinitesimally long – a real *tour de force*.

**Recommended drinking from 2017–2028+**

**£2650/case of 6 bottles, in bond UK**

**£2655/case of 3 magnums, in bond UK**

## 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 '+' adds further to that potential.

• A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.



*Peter Sisseck*

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