



THE WINES OF PETER SISSECK

2012 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

“The 2012 is in the line of 2008. You could call it more classic. What is most important was the fact that in a very dry year (no winter rain) the vineyard of Pingus showed no signs of water-stress. This is without doubt, the result of biodynamic farming helping to develop a deep and very healthy root system. It is most likely to be the vintage of which I am most proud. It is the fruit of years of stubborn insistence to go in a very singular direction, not always understood or liked by many people. For me it is a triumph!”

PETER SISSECK
June 2013

HISTORY

We are extremely proud to be the exclusive UK and Hong Kong agent for Dominio de Pingus and Flor de Pingus, two of the most iconic, highly sought-after wines in the world today, and more recently of Psi, the newest recruit to the Peter Sisseck, Pingus portfolio.

Eighteen years ago, the young Dane, Peter Sisseck, had a dream. In hindsight, his imagination, vision and ambition were extraordinary. What must the Spanish locals have thought of a Dane in their midst, unable to speak their language and versed only in the traditional winemaking of Bordeaux?

When Peter arrived in Ribera del Duero, it was considered 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 had Peter arrived as an outsider in a relatively unknown world, but he had the blatant audacity to revolutionise accepted norms both in the vineyard and in winemaking. This was particularly brave in a region steeped in conservative tradition and one can only imagine the consternation felt by the locals.

However, those prophesying Peter’s inevitable demise would have been somewhat chastened when the first vintage, 1995, absolutely astounded the critics. It took the wine world by storm with its balance of between classicism and a totally authentic sense of place.

TODAY

Peter’s cellar today is in a wonderful spot, on the bank of the river, at Quintanilla de Onesimo in the Ribera del Duero. From the outside, the building is simple and traditional, yet within those outer walls a winery of inspired vision and complexity is framed.

The pristine, whitewashed walls of the upper cellar make for an almost monastic feel. The fresh morning air flows freely through wide open windows, which look onto an inner courtyard, cooling the

cellar naturally before the sun is too high. Below, a surprise is to be had in a very rare, underground, vaulted barrel cellar originally built in 1832, hidden for years and now beautifully restored by Peter. The place is immaculate, housing large open-topped vats, glistening stainless steel as well as egg-shaped vats, increasingly trialled by our biodynamic friends!

Returning to ground level, across the courtyard, are a state of the art laboratory and a wonderfully modern set of offices, one area of which is dedicated to the preparation of biodynamic treatments.

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

We are delighted to present here Peter Sisseck's portfolio from the 2012 vintage – three exceptional, inimitable wines which are so true to their origins.



ALISON BUCHANAN

July 2013

DOMINIO DE PINGUS

Although relatively unknown as a region when Peter arrived, Ribera del Duero had a long viticultural history. Believing history to be an astute predictor of the present time, Peter was totally convinced that the region had the potential to produce Spain's finest wines. His first years in the area were spent managing another project, Hacienda Monasterio, during which period he had the chance to develop some ideas of his own. He had observed wonderful parcels of ancient vines, naturally low-yielding due to their tremendous age. Many were planted on exceptional sites which he instinctively knew could produce something truly exciting, albeit in very small quantities. Remaining as consultant at Monasterio, Peter threw himself into this new endeavour, to which he attached his childhood nickname. And so 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. There are two complementary *terroirs* covering 4.5 hectares. The first, "Barroso" lies on gravel and sand over alluvial limestone. The second, "San Cristobal" is on south-west facing clay slopes. At Monasterio, Peter had plenty of opportunities to observe and assess his highly-acclaimed neighbours, Pesquera and Vega Sicilia, but chose to chart a different course. From the outset he favoured indigenous Tinto del País, determined to push it to dizzying heights and unusually for this grape at that time, elected to use French rather than American oak.

From these squat, gnarled vines (Tinto del País is a cousin of Tempranillo) of sixty years and more, Peter coaxes a ridiculously small production of 20 hl/ha at best to 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 and obsession for quality.

Peter must initially 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 gamble paid off. Pingus soared to worldwide acclaim with that first vintage, 1995, as did Peter's reputation as a truly gifted winemaker.

Pingus is vinified in open-topped wooden vats and aged in French oak. Nothing is systematic in Peter's cellar however; he follows his instincts. In 2012, for example, he experimented with the addition of 46% whole clusters. The wine undergoes malolactic fermentation in one-year-old oak, followed by 20 to 22 months' maturation in French barrels.

The yield in 2012 is just 11 hl/ha, amounting to 6,600 bottles for the world market.

FLOR DE PINGUS

A jewel of a property, achieving ambitious prices, Pingus was nonetheless a precarious stand-alone business, as production would always be subject to the whims of Mother Nature. Other opportunities beckoned with Flor de Pingus waiting in the wings. Peter, however, 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 of purity and freshness. Flor de Pingus is a great wine in its own right, with its own, richly-deserved, faithful followers. It is the product of 16 different vineyard sites, some older and some younger vines, with a very respectable average of 35 years. The more recent plantings are set at between 6,000 and 10,000 vines per hectare to encourage competition. In this way the individual vines' roots need to dig more deeply for nutrients, aiming for added complexity. The parcels are vinified separately in stainless steel with the malolactic and subsequent ageing in French oak, 50% new, 50% one-year-old.

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 focussed as Peter, mirroring Pingus, has fully embraced organic principles with biodynamic viticulture being the goal. Pingus has been fully biodynamic since 2000 and Flor de Pingus from 2005. The yield in 2012 was 19 hl/ha.

PSI

Before long, Peter would witness Flor de Pingus following a similar path to that of Pingus. Despite the greater volume, 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 more grapes, but he was keen not to change the path of Flor. He had established a network of complementary growers and *terroirs* under the name of Bodegas y Viñedos Alnardo and, from that, Psi was born, the first vintage being 2007.

The Psi project (his initials make up the Greek letter PSI Ψ) is very different from either Flor or Pingus. With Psi, Peter seeks to capture and protect the very essence of the Ribera del Duero, revisiting and reinventing tradition, whilst adding a philanthropic touch 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 otherwise have been 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, using labour saving chemicals and pesticides which add to the problem.

Peter is conscious that these are proud people and that as a fair, blue-eyed Dane he would be ill-advised to try and instruct them. He therefore works alongside the farmers in an advisory capacity, encouraging moves to organic viticulture, which he rewards 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 has become so much more than a wine: it is a philanthropic endeavour to preserve the traditions and a way of life built up over decades and is a means to give something back to the region. The fact that the wine happens to be hugely characterful bears witness to Peter's almost obsessive focus on quality and sustainability.

2012 VINTAGE REPORT

Dry conditions largely informed the character of the 2012 vintage. The season started on rather a back foot with low reserves at the end of a dry winter. Rainfall in spring was insufficient to compensate for the deficit, except in the better soils. Temperatures were largely normal in spring, becoming progressively warmer from the start of the summer. With such conditions, that possibly over-used word *terroir* really plays a significant role, with vines responding and adapting to conditions in the better soils. These vines, with adequate foliage, allowed the ripening process to proceed and full maturation was facilitated by light September rain. The dry, warm conditions made for an early harvest.

2012 TASTING NOTES

PSI

The Psi project has grown, with more farmers now involved, adding to a multi-layered complexity. The wine is made from 100% old Tinto del País vines planted across seven different villages. The wine is vinified in large concrete tanks, then matured for 18 months in a mix of second and third French oak barrels, large *foudres* and concrete vats. The 2012 is a deep plum-cherry, bright and lustrous. The nose presents very crisp, pure, crystalline, primary fruit, rose and violet notes, precise and focussed. The palate mirrors the aromatics offered on the nose: vibrant, perfumed and rich in red and black-berried fruit, supported by earthy, firm, well-integrated, ripe tannins – lovely balance, drive and length.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18 - 18.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2014 - 2019+)

£199/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

£105/CASE OF 3 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

£3,995/1 BARREL (25 CASES), IN BOND UK

£179/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

(For orders of 5 cases or more per customer)

£170/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

(For orders of 10 cases or more per customer)

FLOR DE PINGUS

Rich, brilliant plum in colour, almost opaque, with a tight fuchsia rim, this offers a complex range of attractive red-fruit sweetness on the nose, summer berries to the fore, with darker, earthy and mineral notes, all complemented by hints of mocha. We often speak of the influence of cool night temperatures in the region, but the tremendous purity and freshness of fruit here bears testimony to its importance. The palate offers intense concentration of red and nuanced black fruit, upbeat and breezy, light on its feet despite obvious, underlying power. Beautifully extracted, this is exemplary, classical, world-class wine, expertly handled - bravo Peter!

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18 - 19+

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2016 - 2026+)

***£455/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

£235/CASE OF 3 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

***MAXIMUM 3 CASES OR EQUIVALENT PER CUSTOMER**

PINGUS

Once again, the sheer purity and relative restraint of this embryonic Pingus is surprising, tantalising even, given extraordinary underlying power which is revealed on the palate. Peter has edged back again on the new oak so that there is less of the coffeed, mocha richness than in previous years. Over time, Peter has concluded that too much new oak both troubles his conscience and has little effect on the wine in the long term, acting in the short term like heavy make-up. Perhaps with this in mind, unusually, Peter interrupted the silence of our tasting, proclaiming, "2012 is an intelligent answer to what Pingus and Ribera del Duero should be."

Here the nose is subtle, the aromatics enticing but subliminal. The palate is more strident, densely concentrated and packed with black fruit, blueberry and plum, layered with minerals, driven and focused.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18.5 - 19.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018 - 2029+)

£2650/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

£890/CASE OF 1 MAGNUM, IN BOND UK

DUE TO LIMITED QUANTITIES PINGUS WILL BE SOLD ON ALLOCATION. PLEASE ENSURE YOU PLACE YOUR ORDER BY FRIDAY 19TH JULY.

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 (eg. 14-16) that 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.

TO ORDER

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