



ARTADI, RIOJA

2014 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

“We work with vines and wines, that is to say, we work with living elements. Nature is our ally and fortunately has its own morals.”

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, ARTADI

Based in the hilltop village of Laguardia, in the heart of Rioja Alavesa, Artadi is both a flag bearer and a rebel. A flag bearer due to the undisputed quality of its wines, which rightly sit in the top echelon of Spanish wine. Yet a rebel, whose cause is the pursuit of *terroir*, in the name of which it left the Rioja appellation at the end of last month, December 2015.

This exit from Rioja’s *Consejo Regulador*, the regulator of the *Denominación de Origen*, has been much publicised in Spain and elsewhere. It may just mark a turning point in this region which has until now valued blends over vineyard typicity. By focusing on single vineyard wines Artadi is leading the charge for a sense of place in Rioja. Corney & Barrow is proud to offer, for the first time, these breathtaking wines.

HISTORY

Artadi has come a long way since its establishment in 1985 by a group of 13 local vine growers as a cooperative. In those days, just one wine was produced from one vat, using the method of carbonic maceration, as historically practised in Beaujolais. Those fruity, easy drinking vintages will have borne no relation to Artadi’s style today.

The social element remains however, long after Juan Carlos López de Lacalle bought out the other cooperative members. Artadi stands for respect for the region’s traditions, both human and natural. Its recent rebellion against the local regulator is borne from a desire to showcase the region’s typicity to best effect, unhampered by red tape or the marketing concerns of larger producers.

THE VINEYARDS

Artadi’s Rioja vineyards are planted with old bush vines, although the majority are trellised rather than free-standing. Vineyard practices are best described as sustainable. No synthetic chemicals are used and Juan Carlos is now embarking on his fifth year of organic farming, meaning he could seek organic certification (somehow, I suspect he will not...)

EL PISÓN

The emotional bedrock of Artadi is **El Pisón**, a 2.4 hectare walled vineyard of bush vines planted at the end of the Second World War. Located in Laguardia, on deep clay-limestone soils, El Pisón was acquired by Juan Carlos López de Lacalle’s father. It has been the jewel of Artadi since its first release in 1991.

A pair of rusty steel gates open onto a gently undulating, bowl-like vineyard. This topography shields the vines from the wind, whilst capturing the sun’s rays. The resulting wine is the most complete expression of Artadi’s trademark purity of fruit. It balances elemental power and body with chiselled definition and elegance, and now easily ranks amongst the greatest wines of Spain.

EL CARRETIL

This is the highest of the single vineyard plots and arguably the most distinct from the 'house style'. No limestone here – the soils are a mixture of clay and sandstone, driving the roots deep in search of nutrients. The wine is darker, less voluptuous and more brooding than its siblings, with a rigorous tannic framework, above which soars a Margaux- or Chambolle-like perfume. A beautiful freshness further lifts the flavours, complemented by an overriding sense of stony minerals. Energy, perfume and minerality are the watchwords of this wine.

LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS

La Poza de Ballesteros and Valdeginés (below) are best understood as a pair – yin and yang, sitting directly opposite each other in the San Ginés Valley in Rioja Alavesa. La Poza, named after a pool-like hollow at the centre of the vineyard, is a two hectare, west-facing plot. Its grapes are therefore largely the product of afternoon sunshine. The oldest vines here are 50 years old.

Standing in La Poza on an autumn afternoon, you can feel the sun's residual warmth on your face, whilst Valdeginés on the opposite side is already in shade. This aspect gives a density, tannic structure and ageing potential to its wines, which are also impressively aromatic and sweet-fruited.

VALDEGINÉS

At over twice the size of La Poza, the five hectare Valdeginés faces east and as such is sculpted by the morning sun. The wines are correspondingly crisp, defined by their acidity and cool, linear, precise fruit. 'Luminous', I scribbled in my notes – there is something wonderfully immediate and untrammelled about Valdeginés, a carefree, disarming naivety.

WINEMAKING

Oak barrels are used for gentle oxygenation rather than to add a flavour component to the wine. For this reason, French oak is used in place of Rioja's traditional coconutty American oak. Multiple sorting tables are employed in the winery, to make absolutely sure that only first rate fruit makes the grade. Fermentation takes place in a mixture of open top wooden vats and bespoke inverted conical stainless steel tanks. Stems are used as deemed fit, according to vintage conditions. Grapes are 100% Tempranillo.

2014 VINTAGE NOTES

"We can define the 2014 wines as transparent wines, full of light and limpid aromas. In the mouth they are silky. We could define 2014 as a vintage full of subtlety and length."

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE

Rainfall and temperature were near the regional mean in 2014. 448 millimetres of rain fell throughout the growing season. Less usually, the water table was highly saturated at the beginning of the season, with 271mm of rain having fallen over the winter. During the heat of the summer months, this residual moisture was a great benefit to the vines.

Temperatures during the dormant season were cooler than normal, due to the presence of snow in the nearby Cantabrian mountains, returning to average from spring onwards. The secret behind the freshness of Artadi's wines is Álava's high diurnal temperature variation, or difference between day- and night-time temperatures. During the hottest month of August 2014, the mean minimum temperature was a markedly low 7.5 degrees centigrade.

TASTING NOTES

“With respect for all the vine growers and winemakers of this region, we face this new chapter with optimism and excitement. We feel we must keep alive the historical and cultural legacy inherited from our ancestors. We cherish this responsibility and vow to preserve this legacy. To hand over the baton to future generations of young vine growers, through a kind of viticulture that is able to generate eagerness and passion. This is our investment for the future.”

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, ARTADI, 30 DECEMBER 2015

VALDEGINÉS 2014

Pretty ruby-purple colour. An immediate embrace of pure red berries on the nose, with a beautiful crushed rose petal aroma and a hint of coffee beans. The palate is quite dense and corporeal, with a warming glow of ripeness building from within. Pithy grapefruit lifts the aromas and adds complexity. The finish is wonderfully precise, leaving an impression of measured, controlled opulence and urging you back for more.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018 - 2024)

17.5

£120/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS 2014

Bright ruby in colour, clinging to the sides of the glass. Substantial on the nose, with ripe red berries and summer roses. There is a confidence and assertiveness here, hinting at this vineyard's sunny, privileged aspect. Density and phenolic extract on the palate, which despite its rigorous tannins and powerful sweet red fruit, is wonderfully fresh and precise. The finish comes to a savoury point, puckering the mouth with a sprinkle of rock salt.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2026)

18+

£220/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL CARRETIL 2014

Bright, vivid purple colour. A wave of perfume – rose petals and violets – soars out of the glass. Raspberry fruit beneath, with an edge of bitter chocolate. The palate is framed by rigorous, savoury tannins, between which weaves lithe red berry fruit. An overriding sense of crushed rock minerality permeates the palate, adding complexity and definition. Perhaps the most mineral of the line-up, with fabulous ageing potential.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018 - 2030)

18.5

£435/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL PISÓN 2014

Deep ruby colour, turning purple towards the rim. The nose exudes a quiet rumble of innate power, a heady, exotic perfume slowly building in the glass. A perfectly engineered motor, just idling, waiting for the accelerator to be pushed. Once the liquid hits your tongue, the surface tension breaks. The palate is a veritable unleashing of flavour – and every descriptor has a counterpoint to keep it in check – exuberant yet salty, concentrated yet precise, powerfully tannic yet fresh, with elements of both sweet and savoury. So tempting to drink this now, the lushness of the fruit deceiving you as to its readiness. But no, the tannins demand patience. One for the cellar therefore, but what pleasure to come...

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 – 2030+)

19+

£685/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, 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.

Wines are scored out of 20. Customers seem to like it and it has the benefit of simplicity.

We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine.

A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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