



ARTADI

2015 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

“A bit of art, a bit of science and a bit of mystery is the formula.”

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, ARTADI, SEPTEMBER 2016

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 December 2015.

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 and the marketing concerns of larger producers.

Artadi's exit from Rioja's *Denominación de Origen*, much publicised in Spain and elsewhere, may just mark a turning point in this region which has until now valued blends over vineyard typicity. Artadi is leading the charge for wines with a sense of place in Rioja. Corney & Barrow started working with Artadi last year; we are proud to now offer our second vintage of these ground-breaking wines.

Guy Seddon
September 2016

* The image above is of the El Pisón vineyard, taken from the entrance gates. From the photographer to the ridge just beyond the hut is the extent of the vineyard.

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 in his sixth year of organic farming.

VALDEGINÉS

Valdeginés and La Poza de Ballesteros (below) are best understood as a pair – yin and yang, sitting directly opposite each other in the San Ginés Valley in Rioja Alavesa.

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.

LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS

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.

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.

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 opens 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.

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.

THE 2015 VINTAGE

“The 2015 wines show the sweetness of an early ripening and the freshness of a slow ripening... They are wines of chromatic transparency.”

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, SEPTEMBER 2016

A cool, protracted end to the growing season was perhaps the single most important factor in the 2015 vintage. It left a stamp of reined-in finesse and perfume on the wines. The grapes ripened fully, but slowly, unhurried and unfazed (I like to think).

A cold, snowy winter built up good water reserves in Artadi’s soils. In June, it rained for six days, complicating flowering. In spring and summer, sporadic rainfall and high temperatures prompted a very fast growing cycle, resulting in abundant vegetation. The average growing season temperature was just 12.8°C (day- and night-time temperatures).

I love Juan Carlos’ term “chromatic transparency”. It seems particularly fitting to Artadi’s wines, which have a brightness, a luminosity about them, chiming beautifully with the crisp, clear skies of Rioja.

TASTING NOTES

VALDEGINÉS 2015

Crushed parma violets and red berries on the nose. Just a touch of creamy density. The palate is an explosion of ripe red fruits, summer berries and vibrancy. Substantial and yet fresh, with playful perfume on the finish. Expressive and open already: buy this for delightful earlier drinking.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2025)

17.5+

£145/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS 2015

Violets, liquorice and white flowers on the nose. Where Valdegines is weighty and substantially proportioned, this – somewhat counterintuitively given its west-facing slope – has a lightness of touch to the palate, although the fruit is darker. Bitter cherry rather than raspberry compote, but that dancing, joyful freshness lifts the aromas beautifully.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 - 2027)

18

£250/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL CARRETIL 2015

An almost shockingly bright, saturated ruby-violet colour. Sweet red fruit notes on the nose, balanced by a ‘bass’ of wet clay and a ‘treble’ of soaring red perfume. Caramel on the palate, with firm grippy tannins asserting themselves from the outset. They are refined tannins however, the finish coming to a harmonious point, even at this early stage. Perhaps the most mineral of the four wines, this is terroir-led winemaking at its best.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2030)

18.5

£475/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL PISÓN 2015

A real slumbering giant of a wine, irritated at being woken so early. Give him time though and an eye opens... Swirling the wine in the glass, the trademark bright perfume ekes out from the very depths of this beguiling wine's core. The palate, by contrast, has a touch of zesty orange peel, lifting and picking out the dense red berry fruit. Firm tannins permeate the mid-palate, exerting a savoury squeeze on the finish at present. Give this the cellaring it deserves and it will reward in spades.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 – 2030+)

19

£715/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

UK ARRIVAL

The wines will arrive in the UK in winter 2017.

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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