



ARTADI

2016 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

*“Wines full of life and energy, transparency and cleanliness.
Wines which thrill with their natural honesty.”*

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, ARTADI, AUGUST 2017

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. Corney & Barrow started working with Artadi in the 2014 vintage. This, our third vintage, is without doubt the most impressive we have seen. These 2016s are stunning wines: a vindication (as if it were needed...) of single-vineyard winemaking in Rioja.

Guy Seddon
November 2017

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 seventh 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 2016 VINTAGE

“A harvest to be remembered with great joy.”

JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, AUGUST 2017

The curtains opened on a mild, dry winter. A rainy spring provided the vineyards with important water reserves that aided a vigorous bud-burst and rapid vegetative growth. The summer saw higher-than-average temperatures and drought, which lasted until September. These conditions, whilst placing the vines under hydric stress, led to a total absence of disease in the vineyards.

By the second week of September, the vines were parched and close to shutting down, closing their stomata and retaining what little energy they could, rather than photosynthesising. Fortunately (or miraculously?), the second week of September saw nearly 24 litres of rainfall, buoying the growing cycle through to a harvest which finished on the 3rd November.

Juan-Carlos proudly described the crop as “abundant and of optimum health: a harvest to be remembered with great joy.”

TASTING NOTES

VALDEGINÉS 2016

Vivid, blood-red in colour, glass-staining and vibrant. Roses, raspberries and blueberries greet you on the nose, with a promise of nervy mineral tension beneath. Could you be forgiven for thinking this effusive young claret on the nose...? The palate is silky-smooth on the entry, tannins building in the mouth. There is an impressive amount of extract and grip here, but the sensation is medium-bodied, no more, with an overriding succulence and sweetness of fruit. That trademark Artadi freshness carries the palate through to a sustained finish. A pretty good intro to the 2016s!

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 - 2028)

17.5

£150 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS 2016

The step-up in intensity from Valdeginés is immediately apparent from the muscular, forceful nose of La Poza. There are fewer pretty top-notes here – a tenor to Valdeginés’ contralto – but the substantial red-fruited aromas more than compensate, hinting at fleshy delights. The palate is more streamlined than expected, taking you by surprise with its firm, serious tannic chassis. There is an abundance of juicy raspberry fruit but it is channelled by a compellingly rigorous framework. This will need more patience than Valdeginés, its neighbour across the valley, but my goodness it's going to be worth the wait.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2023 - 2031)

18

£365 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL CARRETIL 2016

A nutty, leafy nose of blackberries and dark rocky minerality, which opens slowly to reveal a seam of fine red berry perfume. Sterner than the previous two wines but spicy and intriguingly complex. More cerebral... The palate grabs you upfront in a fine tannic embrace, blueberries and violets providing a wonderfully sucrose-laden counterpoint to the earthy mineral structure which is the essence of this wine. The Artadi acidity is in full flight, buoying the flavours along on its soaring wings. Disarmingly complete, a masterclass in winemaking with a sense of place.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021 - 2031)

18+

£615 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

EL PISÓN 2016

Plummy and sweetly-fruited on the nose, reflecting Rioja's warm, dry 2016 summer. With a little time in the glass, the most glorious aromas of crushed rose petals break free, backed up by tea leaf and exotic spices. The palate is racier on the attack than expected, nimble on its feet, with tannic presence building on the mid-palate. By the finish, it has metamorphosed into a heavyweight. Still dancing like a butterfly, mind you... What a journey! We are in rarefied air here. El Pison 2016 is a baby, but suffice to say the raw materials both abound and fit – the surest indications of quality at this heady level.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2023 – 2035+)

18-19

£995 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

UK ARRIVAL

The wines will arrive in the UK in winter 2018.

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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