



# ARTADI

## 2017 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

*“Beautiful, powerful, fruit-focused wines”*

**JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE, ARTADI, SEPTEMBER 2018**

Based in Laguardia, in Rioja Alavesa, Artadi has in recent years cemented its role in the region as a pioneer, leading the push for recognition of a concept of *terroir*. It is now nearly three years since Artadi chose to leave the Rioja appellation, at the end of December 2015. The single vineyard wines it has since released have made the case eloquently for the nuances which make up this highly intricate region.

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.

**Guy Seddon**  
October 2018

## THE VINEYARDS

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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 eighth year of organic farming. In addition, we have a very small allocation of two new single vineyard sites, Quintanilla and San Lázaro. These new wines are introduced in the tasting notes themselves, below.

### 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

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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 2017 VINTAGE

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*“Adversity is a chance for virtue”*

**JUAN CARLOS LÓPEZ DE LACALLE (QUOTING SENECA), MAY 2018**

A warm winter accelerated the 2017 growing season, with vegetative growth getting underway early. The year experienced the same pivot point as in much of France: freezing temperatures on the night of 28<sup>th</sup> April. Overall, the Artadi vineyards saw losses of 20-25% as a result of this frost. Coming early in the season however, potential quality was not impacted. The remainder of the growing season was highly clement, with both temperatures and rainfall levels slightly above average.

## TASTING NOTES

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### VALDEGINÉS

Juan Carlos describes Valdeginés as having an ‘Atlantic’ personality and this is particularly evident this year, in a cool, assured focus to this wine. Bright red berries on the nose, leading into a palate of admirably concentrated, crunchy raspberry fruit. The tannins are fine yet gently grippy, complemented by a taut, crisp finish. There is really nothing ‘junior’ about this Valdeginés: outstanding value for money.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021 - 2029)

**17 - 17.5**

**£150/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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### QUINTANILLA

This is only the second time this wine has been made. It comes from a plot which previously would have been destined for either Pagos Viejos or Viñas de Gain. Herbal and ingratiatingly generous of fruit on the nose, this reveals a more tannically assertive palate, with some serious backbone to the mid-palate, before pretty perfume and fleshier red cherry fruit emerge towards the finish.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2023 - 2030)

**17+**

**£215/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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### SAN LÁZARO

This is the oldest plot in the Artadi line-up, having an average vine age of 80 years. Only four barrels were made of San Lázaro in 2017! A brilliant purple colour in the glass, this has intense forest fruits on the nose. The palate has more cushioning than Quintanilla, with more rounded, polished tannins. Juan Carlos’ comment when we tasted (in the order presented here) was that “here, we start to get into a different level”, and he is quite right. Beautiful precision of crunchy, luminously bright red berries.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022 - 2030)

**17.5 - 18**

**£315/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## LA POZA DE BALLESTEROS

Inky-dark in the glass, this is described by Juan Carlos as having a 'Mediterranean' personality. It lies directly opposite Valdeginés but benefits from the afternoon sun, making for a more forthright, muscular style. The nose has a certain meatiness and a herbal accent – thyme, and liquorice. The palate is mouth-filling and impressively potent, with powerful, yet marvellously fruit-coated tannins. As always, this needs bottle age, but will repay it handsomely.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2024 - 2032)

**18**

**£365/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## EL CARRETEL

El Carretil lies on the road out of Laguardia, on chalkier soil. This is described by Juan Carlos as the 'bone structure' of Artadi, in reference to its intensely mineral-led character. A shade paler and more luminous in colour than La Poza, it has bitter cherries on the nose and the customary Artadi bright red berry fruit, with sweet spices. The palate has a more savoury, finely chiselled entry, with sea shell and ferrous mineral notes from the mid-palate to the finish. Tensile, long and driven, this reverberates with energy. An electric wine, sustained by its high acidity and very fine tannins. I loved this.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022 - 2032)

**18+**

**£595/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## EL PISÓN

El Pisón is the soul of Artadi, 2.4 hectares of old vines, originally planted in 1945 by Juan Carlos' father. Deeply coloured, with a glass-staining ruby-purple rim, this is dark and sweetly spiced on the nose. The palate is swaggeringly forceful on the entry, with very grippy tannins asserting themselves upfront and only begrudgingly allowing the beautifully ripe, bright raspberry and blueberry fruit to peek around the edges from the mid-palate onwards. This is a wine in its infancy, but whose chassis is impeccably constructed and which is drivingly forceful and long. One for the long haul, extremely impressive and one of the great wines of Spain.

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

**18.5**

**£950/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## UK ARRIVAL

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The wines will arrive in the UK in winter 2019.

## TASTING GUIDE

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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.

## TO ORDER

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