

Descendientes de J.Palacios, D.O.Bierzo

D.O. Bierzo

D.O. Bierzo sits on the boundary of Castile with the western (Atlantic-influenced) province of Galicia. Its actual regional location is the province of Leon (most often, the mid-north is referred to as Castile y Leon, but Castile and Leon are distinct provinces, with Leon separating the larger zones of Galicia and Castile). The local grape is Mencia. There's some association between Mencia and the Cabernet family – locally, the variety is often referred to colloquially as either Cabernet or 'Medoc'. At any rate, Descendientes de J.Palacios is the first estate to put this variety in the international spotlight – despite Mencia clearly being the best red wine variety (of dozens) native to Galicia, outright rusticity in production and elevation of fruit means that until now little good (let alone, interesting) wine has been made from the variety.

Mencia

Native to the north-west of Spain – both the continental province of Leon and atlantic-influenced Galicia. Known locally as 'Medoc'. In fact, Mencia is clonally linked by DNA to Cabernet Franc (think Petrus, though, not Chinon!). This means very little, though – after all, shiraz and riesling are merely clonal variants of precisely the same original material. Any way you look at it, Mencia is an autochthonous variety. Despite Mencia clearly being the best red wine variety (of dozens) native to Galicia, outright rusticity in production and elevation of fruit means that until now little good (let alone, interesting) wine has been made from the variety. But, that's all changing rapidly ... nothing at all cabernet-like about it when well handled: you're more likely to see something that looks like a cross between Cornas (wild, spicy northern rhone syrah) and funky top-end Burgundy. An absolute feature is a long, fine, extremely silky thread of fruit tannin all the way down the palate.

Descendientes de J.Palacios

This is one of 3 estates from the family of Alvaro Palacios. Alvaro's personally named estate is the leader of the great Priorato region south-east of Barcelona. The family 'home' (viticulturally) is in the one great Rioja Baja estate, Palacios Remondo. The Bierzo project is their latest.

Descendientes de J.Palacios is in its 5th year in Bierzo – which as a region is one of the traditional stops along the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. Corullon is both the brand-name of the wine, and also the name of the principal village around which Alvaro Palacios and Ricardo Perez own and source their vines. The vineyards are sixty very small, specific plots, at varying altitudes. All are based on a pure, minerally slate rock base – some featuring clay and others chalk. Alvaro and Ricardo have 15 hectares, and all are biodynamic in viticulture. The region is green and mountainous, with fruit generally grown at about 600 metres. The resultant wines are fresh, fragrant and deep – juicy, lively and silky. Produced at several levels – the regional Bierzo wine – Petalos, and the village wine – Corullon (name of the main wine town with the best sites) are partnered by four single-vineyard wines exploring the mystery and charm of specific sites around Corullon: San Martin, Moncerbal, Las Lamas and La Faraona.



Petalos is the regional introduction wine to the Mencias of Bierzo. Largely from Corullon fruit (including declassified material from the single vineyard sites), but includes some material from sites managed, rather than owned by Alvaro and Ricardo. Aged 6 months in French oak, it's accessible, slinky-jubey Mencia with a nice touch of funk, spice and very fine tannin. Will age well in short term.



Corullon comes from 50 parcels owned by Descendiente de J.Palacios, plus a few small purchased parcels, all grown on hillsides around the village of Corullon. Soils are slate, with a little quartzite, sandstone and clay, at altitudes between 500-800 metres. Rainfall is around 700mm, with 2200 sunshine hours per annum. Vine age is 50-90 years, unirrigated, yield is 18 hectolitres per hectare (just over 2 kg per vine). Fermentation is in small wooden vats, and the wine is bottled unfiltered after 14 months' maturation in mainly new, all-French oak. 125 barrels total production.

Purple-rimmed fresh blood in appearance, smelling in equal parts of hung game and caramelized raspberry/plum jube, with lashings of racy-fresh minerality. Beautifully integrated fine oak characters, bright acidity and perky-cute tannins. Succulent.



San Martin is from 5 Palacios-owned parcels totalling 0.6ha on the hill of San Martin in the town of Corullon, on very steep slopes around 600 metres altitude, facing south-west. Malo and first maturation in new 1500 litre French, followed by 12 months in new French barriques. Unfiltered; 7 barrels.

Moncerbal is from 0.86 hectares of the Moncerbal hillside facing southwest in the village of Corullon, at around 700m, with vines around 100 years' age. Fermented in small open wooden vats, then aged 14 months in new French barriques. Unfiltered; 8 barrels.

Las Lamas is from 0.54 hectares of south-facing slope on the hill named Las Lamas in Corullon, comprised of one each of 60, 90 and 100 year old patches of vines. Oak etc as for Moncerbal. Unfiltered, total production 5 barrels.

La Faraona is from a single parcel on the highest hill in Corullon, at 855 metres. Very steep, south-east facing, planted to 65 year old vines. Oak and fermentation as per Moncerbal. Unfiltered, with total production of 2 barrels.

