DOMINIO DEL ÁGUILA

"Pícaro del Águila Tinto"

ORIGIN
Spain, Ribera del Duero, La Aguilera

WINE TYPE & VARIETIES
Still red, with Tempranillo, Garnacha & Bobal

SOIL
Sandy clay limestone, heavier clay, gravel

AGE OF VINES
60 years plus

VITICULTURE
Certified organic

VINIFICATION
Hand harvested, whole cluster natural yeast co-fermentation in concrete tanks, pigeage. 12-20 months in French oak barrels, no racking

Jorge Monzón and Isabel Rodero, the husband and wife team behind Dominio del Águila, shows us both the forgotten history and bright future of Ribera del Duero and its wines. With more than century old vines, old local varieties, a wide genetic diversity, countless of clones and cautious wine making they are reshaping and redefining the way the wines of Ribera del Duero are seen upon.

For Jorge it sort of started in France. He left his hometown of La Aguilera to study viticulture, oenology and soil at the universities in Bordeaux and Beaune. During his time in Burgundy he somehow made his way into Domaine de la Romanée-Conti where he worked under cellar master Bernard Noblet observing and learning every aspect of their methods. After DRC Jorge returned home, here he worked a few years at Vega Sicilia before taking on the position of technical director at Arzuaga-Navarro. During this time at these different estates and with his accumulated knowledge Jorge began to purchase vineyards in La Aguilera. His time at DRC had given Jorge an understanding of the importance of terroir and tradition, at Vega-Sicilia he'd also understood how essential old vines and old clones were if you want to make really good wine in Ribera del Duero. For this reasons the vineyards Jorge sought were old vineyards, really old. These were often plots in danger of being ripped up due to their content of low-yielding old local varieties and to make place for trendy Bordeaux varieties or high-yielding clones of Tempranillo.

Some of Jorge and Isabel's vineyards were planted before phylloxera, or right after it struck the vines around his home village. These were planted exactly as they had been for centuries – predominantly Tempranillo with a wide genetic diversity along side Albillo, Tempranillo Gris, Cariñena, Garnacha, Bobal, Bruñal and other varieties so obscure that they haven't been identified yet. Ranging in age from 60-150+ years old, it is surprising that these vines survived at all considering the recent trend in Ribera del Duero for everything new, shinny and perfectly predictable.

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Dominio del Águila was founded 2010 and since 2013 Jorge dedicates all his time here. Today the estate tends 35 hectares of vines. 30 of these are older than 50 years and 5 “young” hectares, i.e. below 50 years of age, so not so young really… Jorge and Isabel are true growers, working organically. They really try hard to do everything in an artisanal way, being very respectful with nature and creating a symbiosis between tradition and technical knowledge. From the use of herb-infused juices to treat the vines to the cautious vinification. They do not vinify every bunch of grapes that they grow and still sell much of their fruit to wineries around in the region, including Vega-Sicilia and Arzuaga — tells of the quality of fruit!

When it comes to the winemaking, also this aspect at the estate is historic and traditional. The winery consist of an ancient bodega dating back to the 1600’s which Isabel, being an architect, restored. So also with the six deep subterranean cellars dating back to 1400’s. Harvest is manual, the must is never altered, fermentations occur spontaneous without any additions with the exception of some low sulphuring. They are co-fermented, blue and green varieties mixed, and maceration is done gently through foot-pigeage. After primary fermentation the wines are transferred to oak barrels in the cellars. Their cold, subterranean cellars ensure that the evolution of their wines proceeds slowly, allowing for the development of greater complexity and nuance. Wines are neither filtered nor fined.

At Dominio del Águila the historic wine style Clarete is also being revived. It’s pink, it’s not a rosé, it’s a Clarete. Red and white varieties harvested and fermented together, with long ageing in oak. A fantastic white wine of Albillo is also made. It has gotten great international acclaim and in extension caused the Consejo Regulador to permit white wines under DO Ribera del Duero, previously is has been classified under ‘Castilla y Léon’.

It is safe to safe that Jorge and Isabel with their Domino del Águila are in the forefront of not only Ribera del Duero but also the whole of Spain, the world of wine if you will! These wines are masterpieces of the highest pedigree full of concentration, complexity, freshness and history.

The Tinto counterpart to the Pícaro Clarete is a co-fermented blend of Tempranillo with Albillo, Garnacha, and Bobal – fruit strictly selected from parcels chosen for their quality and response to vintage conditions. In warmer years, cooler sites are favored, and in cooler vintages, warmer sites are utilized. All these sites have soils of gravel and heavier clay, which in a dry climate like Ribera del Duero prevents vine stress and promotes an even and simultaneous ripening of both fruit and stems – vitally important for whole-cluster, natural fermentations.