

DOMINIO DEL ÁGUILA

RIBERA DEL DUERO 'ALBILLO VIÑAS VIEJAS'

ORIGIN

Spain, Ribera del Duero,
La Aguilera

WINE TYPE & VARIETIES

Still white, Albillo

SOIL

Sandy clay limestone,
clay, gravel

AGE OF VINES

100 years plus

VITICULTURE

Certified organic

VINIFICATION

Hand harvested, whole cluster
pressing by foot
into neutral French oak barrels,
long, slow natural yeast
fermentation taking
up to ten months. 35 months
on the fine lees in French oak
barrels, no bâtonnage or
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.

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.



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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 it has been classified under 'Castilla y León'.

It is safe to say that Jorge and Isabel with their Dominio 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.

Albillo is a catch-all name for a diverse collection of white grape varieties in Spain. Since the name derives from the Spanish word for white, Albillo can differ from region to region and can even be used for different varieties within a single D.O.! For example, in Ribera del Duero, several ancient varieties are called Albillo. Jorge makes it simple. He only selects Albillo with small clusters and a deep golden color when fully ripe to make his Blanco.