

Finca Casa Balaguer 'Picofino' 2019

Producer - Andres Carull, Marta Ribera

Provenance: Alicante, Spain

Farming: Organic w/ Biodynamic practices

Grape(s): 100% Monastrell

Vineyard(s): 20 ha total. Villena - 7 ha, 500-700m with varied chalky soils. La Mata - 13 ha at sea level 30km from the coast, old bush-trained vines in fine, sandy soils.

Fermentation/ Aging: *Mille-Feuille* technique: Layers of destemmed (but uncrushed) grapes are alternated with whole clusters until the tank is full. Aged in stainless steel.

Sulfite: none added.

Misc: 'Pico fino' means 'a fine beak' but is used to mean a good nose, capable of distinguishing real quality.



The Producer:

In 1740 a family of Catalan aristocrats from the village of Balaguer in Leida moved south to Alicante in search of riches, founding Finca Casa Balaguer. Centuries later, in the late twentieth century, the name was made inseparable from the burgeoning Spanish natural wine movement by a legendary figure named Rafa Bernabé. Rafa's role in defining this region and elevating its distinct terroir and heirloom varieties brought him international renown. When his health began to take a turn for the worse, the vultures of the international wine world circled, hoping to buy the legendary estate. Instead, Rafa approached Andres Carull, son of a proud winemaking family, who had been working with Rafa for three years.

Andres and his wife Marta Ribera, along with their assistant Mick, have taken Rafa's vision and expanded on it. Rafa always farmed organically, but Andres and company have introduced biodynamic practices. Rafa made his wines with very low sulfite additions, but today the wines are made without any added sulfite. The wines were always compelling, but now they are precise as well as lively.

The Vineyard

Andres' 7 ha family vineyards are located in the continental, mountainous region of Villena with elevations between 500-700 meters above sea level. A huge diurnal range imparts acidity that serves to highlight the varied terroir. Although the vineyards are predominantly defined by chalk, there is substantial variation between plots but they all have a high concentration of salt minerals, left over from when the area was covered by sea water many many millennia ago.

In addition to adding to Andres' family vineyards in Villena, they have been able to extend Rafa's lease of 13 hectares of vineyards in El Parque Natural Las Lagunas de La Mata in Torrevieja in return for their commitment to protecting the soils and the ecosystem there. The Vines in la Mata are on the coast at sea level and barely 30 metres from the sea. They are ungrafted bush-vines predominantly moscatel but also some merseguera. The soils are of course very sandy and loose. "The vines drink salty water and breath salty Mediterranean air!"

Between the early ripening La Mata fruit and some of the later red varieties that grow in Villena, harvest can easily stretch from July all the way through to October. They believe it is one of the longest picking cycles in the world.

The Cellar

100% Monastrell is vinified with a variation on the *Mille-Feuille* technique: Layers of destemmed (but uncrushed) grapes are alternated with about 1/3rd whole clusters until the tank is full. After 7 days the must is pressed to finish fermenting and age in stainless steel. Bottled without fining, filtration or added sulfite.

For more details email info@OlmsteadWine.com

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