

DIA DEL VINO 2010

BODEGAS OSTATU

Une interviewⁱ

J.F. Guyard: Could you please present us the winery?

Asun Sáenz de Samaniego Berganzo: Ostatu is a family-run winery that makes high quality wines from its own vineyards. These vineyards are our greatest asset, and they and our wines have been the way of life for various generations of the Sáenz de Samaniego family.

The winery is located in the village of [Samaniego](#), in the heart of the Rioja Alavesa region, at the foot of the Sierra de Cantabria Mountains, surrounded by dolmens, ancient churches, and old wine-making pits etched into the ground – traces of an age-old culture of vine growing in this area.

The winery [Ostatu](#) has been built around the family residence; a stately home dating from the eighteenth century.



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These days, our objective is to bring together three factors: continuous improvement along with common sense and a deeply felt respect towards traditional wine-making methods. These three factors, together with a constant focus on vine-growing and wine-making techniques, and the characteristics



that give our wines their unique character, meant that by the end of the 1990s. Ostatu was one of the first wineries in the Rioja Alavesa to apply new vineyard management techniques such as green harvesting, leaf pruning, constant supervision of the ripening process and carefully controlled low yields.

All this has led to a substantial increase in the quality of the Ostatu wines, and a growing recognition of this fact with our customers and within the wine world at large.



Sr. Asun Sáenz de Samaniego Berganzo im Weinberg

Your winery is located in the Rioja, a region which had serious problems in the past but seems to have been living a fantastic revival for now many years. How do you estimate the situation for your winery?

Denomination Rioja is very diverse, and it is formed by very different philosophies of working

the vineyards, the process of making the different wines...

We have known very complicated years; especially when one important sector of Rioja has lost the reference of his origins (personalized wines, wines with soul....) and they have gone to bet for fast business and big quantities of wine. This has caused an important loss of identity and quality.

Recent years, aided by their own economic situation of the markets had a good evolution, we are now located in major markets and have significantly improved the quality of our wines. Currently, when the economic situation of the markets has changed, [Rioja](#) has realized it has not been able to make real structural changes to consolidate this progress.

However this has been done by smaller wineries, with philosophy more focused on wine quality and the defense of the typicality of the vineyards, which represent the diversity of Rioja and different forms of work in the world of wine.

In 2010 a huge international promotion campaign was started by the Rioja wine authorities. What is the motivation behind this initiative?

Achieving greater awareness of Rioja in the quality markets, especially in countries where the quality wine is appreciated and where consumers want to know what is behind the wine.

On the other hand promote responsible consumption for younger generations.



Altogether you produce five wines. How do you position them on the very competitive wine market?

Our job as a cellar is oriented towards our wines which express the full natural potential of our vineyards. They are all different wines, with a very definite personality, and oriented to people who appreciate the small nuances. We are convinced that the world of wine will experience an increasing perception of the value of personal and different wines in the future.

The big success in your wine portfolio seems to be the Gloria de Ostatu. What distinguishes it from for instance the very fine Ostatu Reserva?

Gloria de Ostatu wine is much more complex and deeper than the Reserva. This wine translates the essence of the three plots where it comes from. The soil is very poor and demanding, the variety tempranillo very well adapted ranges from 70 to 90 years and the yield is very short.

The power of ripe fruit and sweet tannin translate an elegant wine, complex and structured.

The Reserva however shows the elegance of a very good tempranillo, ripped and tamed by a very good French oak aging, becoming a very long and elegant wine, with a great memory of ripe fruit.

Possibly I am not well informed. The Rioja region is not so famous for its white wines. How do you explain this fact?

Rioja has not been highlighted by white wines, because its image has always been associated with red wines. That has diminished attention to the white varieties such as Viura, Malvasia, White tempranillo...

Despite this, there have always been small white wine productions for selling ageing or for young and fresh wine, elaborated with white grapes from older vineyards.

We believe that in this field, Rioja has a significant way to go and show.



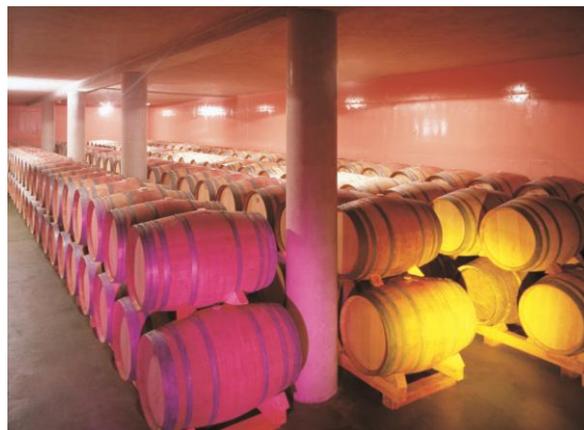
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What is your motivation to produce the Ostatu Blanco Joven?

With our white wine, we want to show the freshness and elegance accompanied by good warmth given by the Viura and Malvasia de Rioja Alavesa. These are grapes, that only exists in older and less productive vineyards and it makes a very important difference in the final organoleptic result. In our case, the Viura and Malvasia are varieties that can offer us very attractive, fresh and pleasant wines.

Actually we are developing a new white wine with 50% viura and 50% malvasia. The alcoholic fermentation was made in French oak, the bottling will

take place in a few days and the result is very good but we need to see the evolution of this wine that we keep in bodega during several month.



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Hubert de Bouard, from Chateau Angelus, advises your winery for the making of the prestigious Gloria de Ostatu (which I noted 18.5/20) in Zurich. Could you please explain us your collaboration and what Mr. de Bouard can improve in your wine?

It was in 2000, when [Hubert de Bouard](#), who already knew us, was interested in elaborating a great wine in Rioja Alavesa with tempranillo. Three very old plots were selected, with different orientations and soils.

Work began demanding selection of bunch of grapes, leaf interior, green harvest, and strict control of the production per vine, in order to see the true value of the very ripe tempranillo with a very good evolution in the vineyard.

This new viticulture line was very important for us because we used it for all our wines in which we are improving the natural expression, based in the viticulture on a quality-oriented rather than production, and very friendly with the environment.

Various wine experts like e.g. Robert Parker appreciate your wines very much. Right now you have not yet any representative in Switzerland. Is there any specific reason? What is your promotion plan for this specific country?

It is true, that our wines have been valued very well by several experts, like Robert Parker, Peñin, etc thank to the high quality of our wines and viticulture.

We started to work in Switzerland in 1998 in one or other form, we started with a exclusive distributor, but in 2008 we finished our commercial relation-

ships, and after that we have had different places of selling but for very short term.



Actually, without rush, we try to search one company that represents us for the Switzerland market, because we think that our wines can be successful in this market.

We are a familiar and medium size cellar, we don't try to sell big quantities but we need persons understanding our philosophy, our way of working, our respect for the vineyards and wines.

What are the consequences of global earth warming for the Rioja region and for your winery especially?

Clearly we see that our climatology is changing, that has influenced our viticulture especially for being situated in the most northern area of the appellation, and then actually we can see soils for which the grown of the vineyard was uncertain 20 years ago. Now they are able to get high quality grapes, with very good ripe.

And in other hand, in other much drier soils, this climate changing is causing an important decreasing of the quantities of grapes and it is reducing the harvest with one important improvement of the quality.

Les vins

Ostatu Laderas del Portillo 2007

Elevage de douze mois en futs neufs de chêne français. Assemblage très subtil à 98% de Tempranillo et 2% de Viura. Le Viura est dénommé Macabeu en France et est un cépage à raisins blancs. Celui-ci est particulièrement répandu dans l'appellation Penedes, où il est utilisé pour la production du Cava.

Couleur rubis profonde. Très beau boisé au nez dans lequel se retrouvent également d'exquises notes chocolatées. Les raisins du Tempranillo dégagent un parfum très mûr. Palais tout autant homogène que gouleyant. Un vin très réussi, doté d'un caractère bien personnel. 17/20. Peñin, pourtant réputé pour ses notes assez sévères, a noté les millésimes 2005 et 2006 de ce vin 90 et 92/100.

Ostatu 2007

Elevage de douze mois en futs de chêne français. Assemblage à 90% de Tempranillo et à 10% de

Graciano. Au nez il ressort de succulentes saveurs de confiture de baies sauvages dans une gaine de vanille résultant du bois. Un bouquet très profond qui fascine aussi par sa note lactée, d'autant que celle-ci ne résulte pas de la fermentation malolactique. Equilibre impressionnant entre la structure sans faille, les tannins ciselés et la palabilité globale de ce vin. Certes un vin sans prétention mais qui saura, chaque jour, séduire son public. 17.5/20

Gloria de Ostatu 2005

Avec ce vin nous pénétrons dans le domaine des grands vins espagnols. Ce n'est pas la seule motivation pour en acquérir quelques flacons, dont il n'est produit annuellement que 7.000 exemplaires. 6.500 bouteilles ont été produites du millésime 2005. Hubert de Bouard, du [Chateau Angelus](#), conseille le domaine pour l'élaboration de ce vin. Force est de reconnaître que sa patte personnelle est immédiatement reconnaissable.

Elevage de dix huit mois en fut. Pour ce vin, uniquement le Tempranillo est employé, bien qu'il provienne de trois parcelles différentes et réputées comme étant exclusives (voire interview). Le plus impressionnant dans l'élaboration de ce vin concerne le travail à la vigne: 30% des raisins sont vendangés en vert, les feuilles de vignes intérieures sont éliminées afin de faciliter la respiration du raisin,... Dans un grand millésime comme 2005 le perfectionnisme peut même poussé à son paroxysme.

Couleur carmin avec des reflets violacés. Un bouquet profond de grande complexité offrant une myriade d'aromes envoutants: des cerises noires, des baies sauvages, de généreuses notes torrifiées, voire même des réminiscences de vinaigre balsamique de longue garde, du cèdre, une touche de chocolat, des herbes provençales,... Et malgré cette profusion de senteurs sudistes, ce vin conserve sans peine son identité typiquement espagnole. Un palais exemplaire, une structure imposante et onctueuse, très belle constitution au caractère tendant vers l'extravagance sans ne jamais devenir grotesque, à l'instar de l'Angélus du même millésime. Un fruit très généreux et une fraîcheur tout simplement géniale qui avec l'acidité nécessaire à l'équilibre de ce vin lui permettent non seulement d'efficacement contrebalancer l'alcool mais aussi d'envisager l'avenir en toute quiétude. 18.5/20

Ostatu Reserva 2005

Assemblage de 90% de Tempranillo et 10% Graciano. Les vignes quinquagénaires sont les plus vieilles du domaine. Elles se situent sur une parcelle protégée du vent du nord.

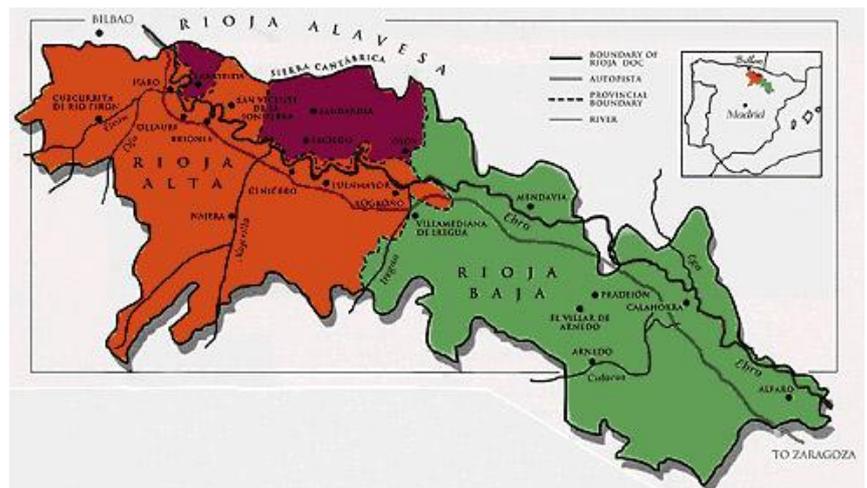
Elevage de quatorze mois, durant lesquels le vin est soutiré tous les quatre mois.

Très nette couleur cerise. Sans doute pas un bouquet aussi exubérant que le Gloria mais qui frappe par son élégance et les subtiles petites différences. Bouquet chaleureux de fruits bien mûrs. Palais tout en chair dans lequel deux composantes attirent immédiatement l'attention: D'une part l'excellente acidité qui transportera ce vin dans un lointain avenir, d'autre part les tannins actuellement quelque peu incisif. Absolument patienter. 18/20.



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ⁱ L'interview a eu lieu le 2 mars 2010 et s'est déroulée en anglais. Les commentaires relatifs aux vins (à la fin de l'entretien) sont naturellement en français.