

Best Cellars

Maria Ferrer (Store Manager) tries an amazing lineup of Vega Sicilia wines...

Summary: A wonderful line-up. All wines were powerful but not dominating, if that makes sense; and all in all, every wine I tried showed real complexity and were very interesting. All Class. There were 10 wines. 6 blocks...

Tasting 1: Oremus Mandulas Dry Furmint 06

Notes – Talk about a wine that's so left of field! Golden colour. Bone Dry. Slight oxidised muscat-like nose. The bouquet was unusual...the winemaker said it's akin to white flowers (A few tasters had question marks above their heads when trying to pick an aroma (me included!)...palate showed some minerality Acid was present but nicely structured – Although when I tried it with Guyere cheese, the cheese brought out a little bit of sweetness in the wine. 100% Hungarian Oak. Grown on Volcanic soils. The Winemaker suggested that it's a great match to Asian cuisine. Notes from Winemaker "They were trying to achieve balance between fatness and minerality with this wine."

Tasting 2: Pintia D.O Toro 2006

Notes – This wine showed some real power...and pronounced tannins (That's the first impression.) Savoury nose with charcuterie/meaty notes and scents of crushed berries and cherries. A very youthful wine. But it shows some rusticity – so yeah – really nice complexity...The palate was so so long. The Vineyard is at 750m above sea level. Apparently, the climate is quite extreme. And in some cases, the temperature can vary by 25 degrees from day and night. Soil is composed of chalk and very similar to Chateneuf.

Pintia D.O Toro 2005

Notes – Shows vintage variation. My initial thoughts "I personally prefer this vintage as it was noticeably softer and more elegant." The winemaker did also say that they found the 06 to be the Masculine wine, whereas the 05, the feminine wine..5 minutes later, the wine went through a quick transformation and looked a little more youthful than the 05 vintage...and tannins more prominent with a good whack of oak....

Tasting 3: Bodegas Alion 2005

Notes – 100% Tempranillo. Grown on chalk soils. This wine can typically see between 14-18 months in new French oak...and released after a years' bottle age. I thought this was quite a modern style...again, first impression was mouth coating tannins...which dried the palate somewhat....and again, the length was continuous. Cherry Spice nose with savoury notes on the palate. The Alion was first made in 91.

Bodegas Alion 2004

Notes – This is one of the wines I really enjoyed. Again, noticeably different to the '05 vintage. I was mesmerised by the bouquet...there was so much going on that I couldn't stop shoving it up my nostrils hahaha...To summarise this wine, I would say "Complex and Beautiful"...I was getting meaty/savoury characters and hints of spice. All different spices like cherries and cloves and stuff that I couldn't pick. Compared to the 05 vintage, this one showed much less tannins...beautifully structured and nice acid balance.

Tasting 4: Vega Sicilia Valbuena 2004

Notes – First impression was "Wow!" So feminine but there was so much power and complexity. It was almost odd to see a wine so contradictory...This one's a real stunner. At this stage I really thought that the tasting was getting better and better. The bouquet was savoury and earthy and mushroomy/fungus-like. The acid was just nicely balanced....Sorry I enjoyed the wine so much that I forgot to write about it. The Sicilia Valbuena is a blend of Merlot and/or Cabernet and grown on Chalk soil.

Vega Sicilia Valbuena 2003

Notes – I only wished that we didn't drink the Alions ahead of the Valbuena because I felt that the tannins from the Alion were still lingering and may have changed the profile of these 2 beauties. (Also, these 2 wines showed much less tannins than the Alions). Another pair showing vintage variation...To me, these 2 wines were the stand-outs. These are wines that I could drink all night and not get bored. They were so exquisite.... only problem was – I couldn't select a favourite between the 2. The '03 showed some sweetness (perhaps, vanillin oak?) ...and that vanillin character came through (the palate) with a hint of chocolate (dark & milk). Beautifully structured with an amaaazing length.

Tasting 5: Vega Sicilia 'Unico' 1999

Notes – These wines were double decanted in the morning. I actually thought that they were still quite tight...perhaps they should've left it open overnight? Wow..the flagships....In spite of the price, I still preferred and enjoyed the Valbuenas. (Todd from Five Ways agreed.) This wine was quite fragrant. Feminine and elegant and a little bit more feminine than the '98...Aniseed characters were apparent, but not dominating. Nice spice touch. (At this stage I was pretty sure I was getting tipsy..hehe...Wines these good – why use a spittoon??) hence, I wrote less....sorry....

Vega Sicilia 'Unico' 1998

Notes – This wine was perhaps "more-so" elegant than the Valbuenas. Typically a blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet...although the winemaker conceded that they will not blend in more than 20% Cabernet in the Unico. The '98 vintage was slightly greener/raw (sooo needed time!) ...but oddly finished with old leather notes....it kinda made me think about sitting in the woods in a cabin on a rocking chair...I think they said this wine is 15% alcohol, but the heat was not at all evident. In fact, none of the wines showed any hotness – they were beautifully made and beautifully balanced....So this is what super expensive Spanish wines taste like?!

Tasting 6: Oremus Tokaji Aszu 2000

Notes – This is like the second Tokaji I've tried in my lifetime....Beautiful! ...Again, another 'Wow/Superb!' wine with loads of complexities..Botrytis but it doesn't have that botrytis richness like Noble One – this one was quite restrained but it didn't need to be ethereally rich – it was perfect just the way it was. Sweet but very clean and expressive. ...Long long finish. A great drop to finish a tasting. Colour was like a golden honey tan. ...The Tokaji is aged in massive old oak casks.

Other Notes from the Masterclass – 2004 was a great vintage in Spain, whilst the '05 was challenging – it was a hot vintage and they lost about 1/3 of production because the grapes they tossed, they didn't see fit for their wines.