



- **Country:** Spain
- **Region:** Catalunya
- **Subregion:** Penedès
- **Vintage:** 2020
- **Colour:** White
- **Grape Variety:** Xarel·lo
- **ABV:** 13.5%
- **Bottle Size:** 75cl
- **Closure:** Natural cork
- **Style:** Distinctive, naturally
- **Vegetarian:** Yes (certified)
- **Vegan:** Yes (certified)
- **Organic:** Yes (certified)
- **Biodynamic:** Yes (certified)
- **Drink With:** Smoked foods, white meats, hard cheeses - it's extremely versatile

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## PARÉS BALTÀ AMPHORA

<https://gerrardseel.co.uk/products/pares-balta-amphora>

Parés Baltà Amphora is a pearl coloured, clear wine that is crisp and transparent. It has a soft nose with hints of almonds and some rounded dairy aromas. The palate is creamy, full bodied and rustic, with almonds again to the fore on the very long finish.

The remarkable versatility of the Xarel·lo grape allows Parés Baltà to produce this natural, unique and amazing wine. It's completely different from all other wines traditionally made with this grape. It was fermented and matured in amphorae which were specially made with clay from the estate, the same clay that was used for the same task by the Iberians thousands of years ago.

As is not always the case with many other natural wines, the porosity of the clay amphorae in which the Parés Baltà Amphora was fermented caused hyperoxidation, precipitating out all oxidable particles and resulted in a clean and clear wine without requiring the addition of stabilising sulphites.

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### ABOUT THE GROWER

The history of Parés Baltà dates back to 1790, when the first vines were planted on the estate that now surrounds the winery. In 1978, Joan Cusiné Hill purchased the winery. Coming from a family of vine growers and having helped his father to cultivate their vineyards since he was seven years old, he never stopped working. Even at the age of 80 he was working with his grandsons to care for a part of the vineyard.

His son Joan Cusiné Cusiné took over Parés Baltà in the 1980s and released its first still white wine, Blanc de Pacs, which is still produced today. At the end of the eighties the first Parés Baltà red wine was produced, and since then Joan has enthusiastically explored all avenues to increase the quality of his wines.

Since 2000, the Parés Baltà estate has been in the hands of Joan's two grandsons, Joan and Josep Cusiné Carol. They have brought fresh, new ideas to the company, whilst respecting its traditions and its heritage. Joan and Josep's wives, Maria Elena Jimenez and Marta Casas, are the winemakers and oenologists at Parés Baltà and they continue to develop new wines of the highest quality. Their efforts are reflected in the quality of the wines produced at Parés Baltà; they show fine character and concentration, along with beautiful elegance and balance.

The vineyards of Parés Baltà are spread out across a wide variety of soils and each experiences a different climate. These microclimates are defined by geography, i.e. the altitude, the rainfall, the proximity to the Mediterranean Sea or to the river Foix, the aspect of the slope and its exposure to the sun etc. As the climates and soils favour each grape variety differently, it is a delicate task to find the environment that gives the vines the best conditions to develop their unique personalities and

traits.

In the hills of Penedés to the south west of Barcelona, Parés Baltà's vineyards sit at altitudes ranging from 170 to almost 800 metres and they are only 10 kilometres from the sea. In the highest vineyards, thermal air currents and considerable diurnal temperature fluctuations allow the grapes to ripen slower and they are often harvested 4-6 weeks later than grapes grown in vineyards at lower altitudes. Vineyards planted on terraces along the river Foix have an entirely different set of conditions, with their own set of challenges and their own distinctive styles of wine.

There is also a significant diversity of soils, including calcareous, clay, and areas with important quantities of marine fossils. Different soil textures are visible; some are very rocky and are made up of sharp and edgy stones, but others feature small, stones that have been polished by water for millions of years.

The type of soil in which the vines are cultivated has a vital influence on the wines. The soils of Parés Baltà's best vineyards are poor in quality and have very little organic material. The area with marine fossils is closer to the Mediterranean Sea, and millions of years ago it was at the bottom of the sea. This type of soil is characterised by its permeability, and it retains little water. That makes the vines work hard to find water by sending roots deep into the earth, producing small quantities of grapes that are high on flavour, complexity and concentration.

At Parés Baltà, indigenous grape varieties such as Garnatxa (Grenache), Xarel·lo, Macabeo and Parellada are highly prized. However, thanks to the diversity of soils and microclimates they also have Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Noir, Mencía and Merlot planted in the higher, cooler vineyards. Lower down, in the warmer vineyards, Parés Baltà cultivates Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Tempranillo, Muscat, Petit Verdot and Touriga Nacional.

Alongside an emphasis on tradition and quality, the environmentally respectful cultivation of the vines is key to Parés Baltà's sense of identity. All of their wines are certified as organic and all of their vineyards are Demeter certified as biodynamic. As part of their commitment to innovation, in 2010 Parés Baltà began theoretical studies into biodynamic agriculture, which later would be applied in their vineyards. In 2011, the first biodynamic compounds were used on some experimental plots. One year later, the excellent results encouraged them to extend the practice to their entire vineyard holding. Biodynamic farming seeks to provide maximum vitality, self-balance and harmony to the vineyard. It utilises biodynamic preparations and homeopathic remedies to help convey the influences of the cosmos to the vineyard. Whether you believe in such things or not, it has been shown to result in high fertility, natural pest control and it is a form of agriculture based on biodiversity and astronomy (not astrology).

At Parés Baltà they cultivate the vineyards in an ecological way without the use of herbicides, pesticides or any chemical fertilisers. They have a flock of sheep that takes care of the vineyards after the harvest, applying its own fertiliser in the process. Some of their vineyards in the mountains of Penedés are planted on terraces created centuries ago. These terraces were abandoned because of the high cost of maintaining them, but Parés Baltà has gradually replanted them, often adopting a modern approach of growing grape varieties from outside the region in these most historic hillside plots.

The maturation cellar is annexed to the Parés Baltà winery and also dates back to the year 1790. It was built in different phases and with different materials, from

adobe to stones. This old cellar is now undergoing a major refurbishment, keeping the original structure but implementing the latest technology. A number of new tasting rooms are also being built.

Visiting the winery, one can follow the history of the bodega from the sizes of the stainless steel tanks used. When Joan first took over, a small number wines were made and a correspondingly small number of very large tanks were used to make them. Today, this has been completely reversed: they use many, much smaller fermentation vessels to enable the fruit of each vineyard to be vinified separately.

We originally discovered Parés Baltà via a recommendation whilst searching for a house Cava for a customer, and little did we know then quite how fortuitous this meeting would be. Each and every one of the Parés Baltà wines is distinctive, expressive and stunningly good; their Cavas are about the best value sparkling wines we offer and their still wines are unfailingly brilliant.