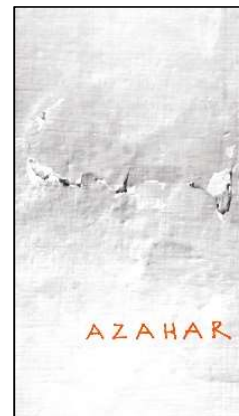


'Azahar' Manzanilla Vieja en rama

A barrel selection by Scott Wasley [Bodegas Callejuela, Sanlúcar de Barrameda]

'Azahar' is bottled to celebrate the 20th anniversary of TSA. It's released exactly 20 years since my first research trip to Spain and Portugal in September 2000, and celebrates the 20th anniversary of my first visit to el Marco de Jerez. We have bottled 108 x 500ml bottles and 12 magnums.

'Azahar' is a mature *Manzanilla* with a brief secondary, oxidative ageing. Scott swiped this wine from a new *criadera* of *botas* which were removed from the Callejuela *Manzanilla solera* in 2018 and set to age unprotected as a new feeder base: it's a *Manzanilla Pasada's* version of *sobretablas*. 'Azahar' snapshots a fleeting, unrepeatable moment of loveliness in the evolution of this wine, in between being one thing and becoming another.



The brief post-*Manzanilla* ageing simply adds a line to the makeup of the *Manzanilla*. The wine still rings clearly of the fresh pollen-hay-surf roll-and-glide of a *Manzanilla en rama*. But now it's underscored by a wedding-ring-width line of golden praline which etches, lines and orders the wine, strikes its form, after the manner of a margarita's lime-salt riming. This does not (yet) affect the basic flavour of the *Manzanilla*. It's no longer (quite) *Manzanilla*; but nor is it yet (not quite) *Manzanilla Pasada*. It's simply 'Azahar'.

Tasting botas/finding 'Azahar'

During a visit to Callejuela in November 2019, Leah and I were shown all the Blanco brothers' *Fino* variants, *en bota*. The house style is full, savoury-earthy and quite rounded for *Manzanillas*.

The 'Manzanilla Variations': a very Glenn Gould experience ...

- the regular (outstanding) Callejuela *Manzanilla*
- a selection of which is held for bottling *en rama* in Magnums.
- Then, two distinct *soleras* of *Manzanilla Pasada*.
- a dazzling trio of statically-aged vintage *Manzanillas de Pago*.
- Small reserves of these Vendimia de Pago wines are currently being held aside to age, and will become a vintage base for an ongoing *solera*-blended, *Pago*-specific *Manzanilla*.



At the end of a lengthy tasting, Pepe approaches an anonymous cluster of 8 *bota*, with his *caña* drawn. A draft is poured into our tasting glasses. Paco's studiously looking the other way, while Pepe looks on, stone-faced, commentless as we taste ... it didn't take me long.

[translated very loosely from the *castellano* in play ...]

"Pepe, what *is* this? It feels like a *Manzanilla* with an *Amontillado* thread, like a packet of white printing paper (the *Manzanilla* part), the bottom 4 sheets of which are praline gold (the *Amontillado* thread). The heart of the wine's the same, but the wrapping has changed."



"Yes, Scott, very good, it's a young *Manzanilla Pasada*. It's the feeder *criadera* (the *sobretablas* equivalent of a *Manzanilla*) for Blanquito *Manzanilla Pasada*. It was recently our Callejuela *Manzanilla*, and has been in topped *bota* for a year or so without *flor*, ready to feed into Blanquito."

"Pepe, has anyone else seen this?" "Only you, Scott."
So, it hasn't been commercialised?" He's smiling. "No."

"Pepe, as *un proyecto* could you maybe do a little one-off *saca* for me, just do a single bottling ... maybe we could sneak a few litres out, take a photo of this moment in its transition?"

Pepe's smiling quite broadly now, "Si, por supuesto, Scott."

Azahar is a developed variant of ...

BODEGAS CALLEJUELA Manzanilla

Lemon tea cake, fresh chalk, tendrils of green herb.

Round with earthy texture and richness in the Callejuela style.

Appley bite and a delicate nip of bitter floral (the cabezuelas of spent flor) mingle with some aldehyde to finish.

Roomy, delicious.



Azahar?

Orange blossom.

We view the *Finos* of Marco de Jerez as wines expressing in four colours:

- white for the chalk and sea salt;
- yellow for the cereal character of Palomino and the camomile scent of the *Flor*;
- blue for the umami ocean memory of old seabeds, now uplifted as terrestrial *albarizas*;
- and orange for the delicate 'night scent in a mandarin grove' smells of light wines, through to the essence orange tea cake richness of developed wines.

Here's Azahar's flavour basics organised by Palomino's 4 colour spectrum:

- ALBERO (richly yellow)

Pickled hay, wheat chaff, rolled bran, a nugget of spent yeast, toasted camomile butter all come together in a glaze of yeast-saffron-camomile bitters

- TIZA (chalky white)

Surf spray, salty chalk, tide wash (mainly on nose)

- AZAHAR (orange blossom/rind)

Tangerine glaze, orangey oat cake

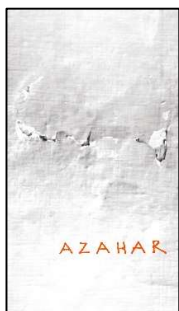
- MARINA (smoky/metallic blues)

Dried kelp, ikan bilis, fried basil leaves, an unrolling sencha coil and the incredible clear blue of the andalucian sky



This wine was withdrawn from casks (*sacado de botas*), then bottled in accordance with phases of the moon, and with careful observance of the prevailing breezes. Under the calm breath of a delicate *poniente*, and with a favourable moon, the *saca* took place on Monday March 9th, 2020. 'Azahar' was bottled in similarly benign circumstances on Sunday March 15, 2020. It was bottled '*en rama*' (as raw/unfiltered as we dare) after a light 1 micron fining.

AZAHAR Manzanilla Vieja seleccionado por Scott Wasley



Camomile lawn, orange blossom (Azahar), melon tendrils, sea-spray, densely spongy honey-lemon tea cake. Full and rich in the mouth, excellent abstract line. Extra ageing doesn't necessarily mean development and body, though: it's actually sleeker, with a better defined linear aspect, more nimble with sense of movement.

The abstract threads which contribute line and freshness (including acid and diatomaceous minerals, that algal herb aspect) develop and work together. Chalk, mineral, flor, acid, aldehyde and a brassy textural weight (the looming pasada character) are six fibres lightly spliced together, and work beautifully through the dense sponge, earthen richness.

The pasada character appears as a line of burnished bronze, a metallic thread wound gently with the other elements and functions as an edging shadow, sliding through the wine, aligning the round Callejuela style. Magically, it rings pure Palma with a twist.