

## Albero Manzanilla en rama

Scott's personal blend selection of *botas* from Bodegas Barbiana, Sanlúcar de Barrameda  
Original label art by Leah Teschendorff.



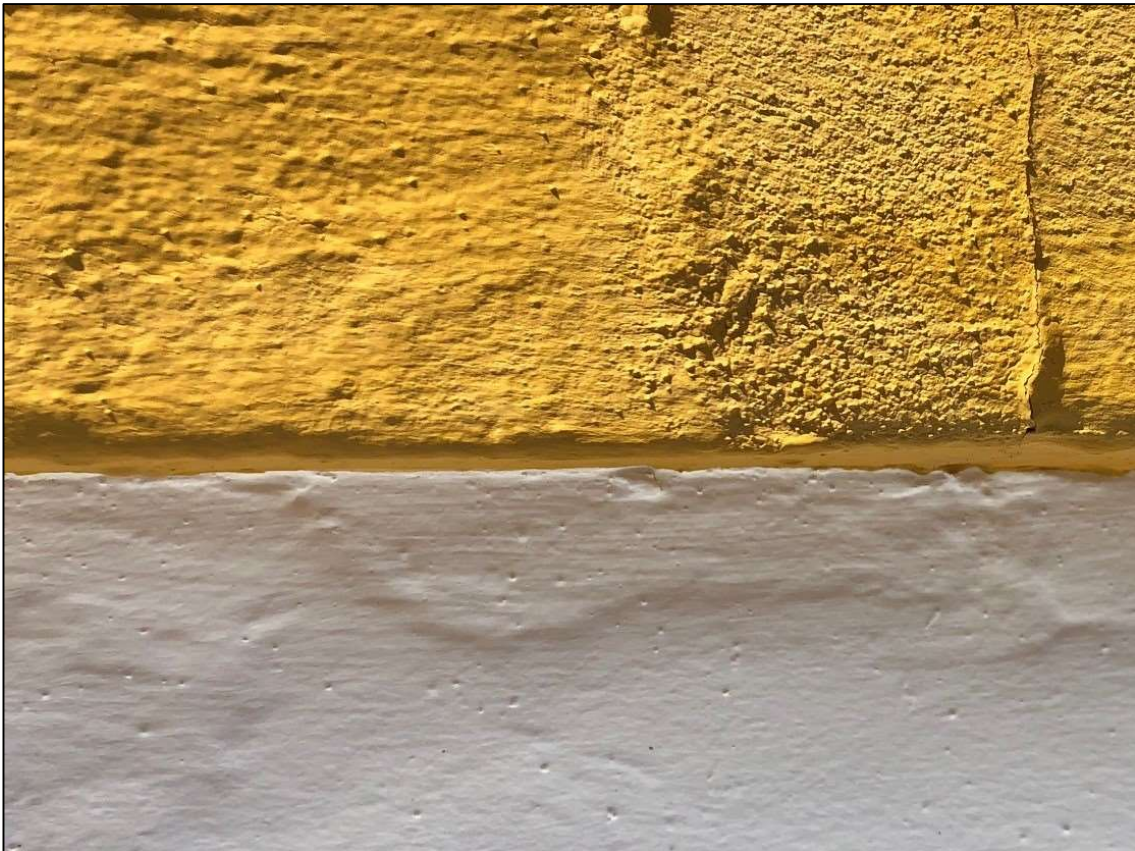
*Albero* is local dialect (rather than *amarillo*) for the particular colour of earthy yellow ochre commonly painted on *bodega* walls, alternating with rich chalky whites. Between them they suggest the peachy-wheaty golden character of Palomino and the salty white chalk of the soils.

### **ALBERO Manzanilla en rama, saca de marzo 2020**

(Seleccionado por Scott Wasley en Bodega Barbiana)

500 x 500ml bottles and 40 magnums, bottled *en rama*.

*A very fine nose of fir apple, crab apple, lemon balm, lemon drop, neroli, chalk dust. It's floral from flor and noticeably 'salino' (salty). The chalk is mineral fresh, with a bit of peachy richness tucked inside, marrying perfectly with the ozone surf reach on the nose. It's exactly mid-weight in the Manzanilla spectrum. Finishes soft but with some tang, like biting into an apple, the juicy openness run through and framed by salt, cabezuelas (spent flor bitters), acidity and an iodine point. There's a hint of brown spice in the flinty crunch finish, which lingers beautifully.*



### **La Solera de Barbiana**

Barbiana is a solera maintained by Delgado Zuleta, famed for their 'La Goya' *Manzanilla* (which I have imported since 2002). Delgado Zuleta acquired the 275 year-old Barbiana *solera* in 1978 and have maintained it separately since. By rapid series of chance, in November 2019 I happened to taste, select and blend a bunch of *botas* from this venerable collection. Let's blame James Vercoe ...

It all started one morning during a lengthy stay in Sanlúcar de Barrameda.

Leah and I went for breakfast in a local bar in *Barrio Alto*, before a long day's hiking in Parque Doñana across the estuary of Rio Gaudalquivir. We chose the bar on the basis of the giant La Goya label emblazoned in the *azulejo* tile panelling of the façade. If they prefer La Goya ...

We ordered tortilla, but all that was on offer was Jamon. Kindly, they made us a tortilla from scratch, which gave me plenty of time to work up thirst for a brunch la Goya.

"Una copa de La Goya, porfa ..."

"Perdona, no lo tenemos hoy. Olvidamos comprarlo de la bodega ayer ..."

Very Spanish. We forgot to go to our sponsor's bodega (five minutes away at the top of town) yesterday to pick up our La Goya, so today we have none.

RATS!

Then I noticed something. A barrel on the bar ...

"Es una Manzanilla a granel alli?"

"Si, es Barbiana en rama ..."

"Quiero un vaso por favor!"

'*Vino a Granel*' is common throughout Spain, especially in the country *co-operativas*: quality, often organic local village wine is held in bulk and sold direct in BYO flagons, plastic jugs, ceramics, whatever. *En rama* is unfiltered (in fact very lightly filtered) Manzanilla, with a little more earthen body, a little more soil richness than the water-white, ultra-light filtered wines we have all loved for so long. Here was la Goya's sister label, Barbiana, fresh and unfiltered direct from *bota* to bar. It's brunch-time and rising, "I'll have a glass thanks!"

It was gorgeous:

*Open, round and free, smelling of the sea, feeling the Andalusian sky, lightly wheaty, chalk-crunched, sparkling with salt, pricked with cabezuelas (spent flor yeast) bitters on the finish.*

By the third glass, the tortilla arrived, and another dreamy day in Sanlúcar was underway.

Back to James.

I called him at the end of the day, when the TSA office was open at the start of the workday in Australia, and told him the story ...

"Jefe. You know it's coming up for your 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with TSA? While you have time there in Sanlúcar, why don't you do some wine selecting of your own?"

It's a thunderbolt outta nowhere.

Five minutes later I'm on the phone to the GM of Delgado Zuleta.

"Jose Fede! Any chance I could access the *solera* of Barbiana and do some wine selections? I want to buy a single barrel ..."

"No wuckas, Was!!"

Two days later, Leah and I are with the young *Capataz* (cellar foreman), Manuel in the cellar, with hundreds of barrels at our disposal. He has pre-selected 34 for us to taste. My sole and absolute intention was to find a single *bota* to buy and call my own. It's an idea I'd held loosely since reading Kermit Lynch's 1988 'Adventures On the Wine Route' when I was just a baby wine importer.

Find it I did: *Bota* #4 of 34 was perfect. Foursquare, more *Fino* in style than *Manzanilla*, and deeply expressing *albariza* terroir and Palomino more than *Bodegas* and *Flor*. But bloody gorgeous! I wanted it deep and bad, in the loin of my mind (next year I will in fact buy and bottle it). But then, but then ...



### The Matrix and/or Switchboard Lights

Barbiana starts from a *Mosto* (base wine) of 12.5%, all chalky lemon with great acidity. This is fortified and aged as *sobretablas* for a few months before entering the *solera*. After it has passed through all the *criaderas* of this *sistema*, it's a lovely *Manzanilla* with four years' aged character.

You'd expect a few hundred barrels that have been run through with identical fresh material and re-blended literally thousands of times over many years, would be more-or-less identical, wouldn't you? A little more oxidation here, a little more chamomile there, flat-out *cabezuelas* over yonder, some a bit sharper, some a bit rounder ... but samey-samey, *si*? Nonsense! They were all as different as chalk, and, well, chalk (and some a bit cheesy). Barrel #5 has this but lacks that; barrels #1 and #10



bring other bits ... It was like seeing The Matrix in your mind. Imagine a telephone switchboard, a rectangular grid with a couple of hundred potential lights a-flashing. Grade the grid left to right in the colours of Palomino – white, yellow (our *Albero*), blue and orange from left to right.

- Chalk and salt. Apple or lemon?  
*These flash high up on the left.*
- Blue smoke from *Albarizas lentejuelas*? Perhaps the clear, blue Andalucian sky (ok, ok, it has no smell, but romantically it's in there, right?)  
*Switchboard flashes these guys under the salt bottom left.*
- Wheat, barley, rice. Peach. Sponge cake? Whiskey mash?  
*The switchboard goes crazy deep and low in the centre.*
- Fresh *Flor* impact as Camomile and/or spent yeast bitter-pointed *cabezuelas*?  
*Lights go on above the wheat and peach.*
- Brushed steel? Ozone, nori, iodine, reflecting the soils as old sea beds?  
*Way down low and out to the right, like night lights over the ocean ...*
- Orange blossom, neroli, a mandarin grove at night?  
*Super-imposed on the deep marine smells high and right.*

And then there are all sorts of weights and textures to draw across this matrix. It was a complex tasting, yet easy, as each barrel rang out with individuality and lit up the switchboard in our minds.

What we see in the market as Barbiana is homogenised to a historical house style from this crazy spectrum of divergent *botas*. Our minds started to tick.

"Fuck, man, we have to make a blend! It's irresistible ..."

We ended up selecting five of the 34 barrels to blend, and started making up ratios in our heads. The next day, a trial blend from four *bota* was made (one of the barrels having been omitted) and I went and collected a sample bottle of the *Mezcla* and another straight from *Bota* #4. These went on the road with us for trial tasting over several days in Sanlúcar and then Sevilla. A second pair of bottles filled with these two selections was express couriered to James back in Australia, for him to taste in parallel. Slowly we made the agonising decision: To bottle the *bota* or the blend? Finally, the blend won out.



#### **TSA turns 20 in 2020-2021.**

I started research in September 2000. We landed and sold our first cases in August 2001.

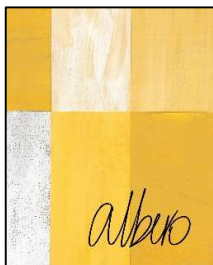
September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 through August 31 2021 is TSA's 20<sup>th</sup> *fiesta*!

We started TSA's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with TSA Fino #1, *Azahar*, a barrel selection.

We continue with the proud launch of *Albero*, the Barbiana solera blend.

Later, we'll bottle *Bota* #4 in 2021 as TSA Fino #3.

#### **ALBERO Manzanilla en rama, saca de marzo 2020**



*A very fine nose of fir apple, crab apple, lemon balm, lemon drop, neroli, chalk dust. It's floral from flor and noticeably 'salino' (salty). The chalk is mineral fresh, with a bit of peachy richness tucked inside, marrying perfectly with the ozone surf reach on the nose. It's exactly mid-weight in the Manzanilla spectrum. Finishes soft but with some tang, like biting into an apple, the juicy openness run through and framed by salt, cabezuelas (spent flor bitters), acidity and an iodine point. There's a hint of brown spice in the flinty crunch finish, which lingers beautifully.*

**Man, it took some time getting here, though! Here's the back story.**

Our Saca took place on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the wine was bottled on Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>. The wine was polished without any aromatic loss or scalping of body, by a very light two micron filtration, under the supervision of Barbiana's winemaker, José Antonio Sánchez Pazo.

We wanted it to be bottled with the moon in mind, and not just the right moon conditions for the *saca* (withdrawal from *bota* for blending) but also for bottling (as a separate process). Getting these processes done during a beneficent moon is important, but making sure the right gentle, moist *Poniente* breeze would be ascendant, rather than a hot, bustling *Levante* from the interior, was equally critical. It was *not* straight-forward ...



I wrote to Ale Muchada (the only genuine moon man as I knew it in el Marco) and explained the gig: "I need to do a *saca* and then a bottling and want to get energy in the bottle right according to the moon." He said the best dates were March 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>. I cross-checked with Ricardo Perez Palacios, who got a bit more specific, saying we should do the *saca* on either 5<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> and then the bottling on 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>. He added that we of course needed to consider the wind, not just the moon, knowing a *levante* can knock a *Fino* off-kilter and into *Cortado* or even *Oloroso* in a blink.

I was working on bottling another selection with the Blanco brothers at Callejuela at the same time (now released as 'Azahar', and like 'Albero' with labels by Leah and me). I instructed both producers on the target dates, noting that we were as interested in winds as moons. The withdrawals took place without a hitch on good weather days. In conversation with Callejuela, it was decided that the 15<sup>th</sup> was an ideal moon-wind nexus and they would bottle that day ... a *Sunday*. They understood the wind on the 13<sup>th</sup> would be a hot inward *levante* and that date was risky. Delgado Zuleta, however, insisted that the 13<sup>th</sup>, a Friday, was a great day for bottling, with an excellent moon and cool breeze from the south ...

Now, I know the Callejuela boys and they just don't do frivolous, loose or fanciful. Not even a bit. So I had a bit of a think. Are the Spanish just being the Spanish here? Are Delgado Zuleta being sketchy 'cos they don't work weekends? Paco and Pepe are like me – they've not yet met an hour they didn't think was fit for working in and I was damned sure they were selecting Sunday for a reason. So I wrote to the Barbiana winemaker in *castellano* (he has no *ingles*) as I had been doing ...

So, I said (translated), "hey, a mate of mine tells me he reckons the wind on Friday might turn out to be a bit of a *levante*. Obviously I trust you guys entirely, but if things change, I just wanted to make sure you knew that as well as SUNDAY being a good alternative moon, that MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> was also an acceptable lunar day for bottling ..."

5 minutes later, the email reply: "We'll bottle on Monday."

Then, it was just a matter of four months getting Leah's beautiful labels successfully printed and attached: it was a nightmare process which we won't bore you with, but anyways, and finally ...  
HERE THEY ARE!

*Leah's and my special thanks to Peter Bessey, Adele del Signore, Cesar Saldaña, and James Vercoe.  
With Marcelino in mind always.  
Ànimo!*