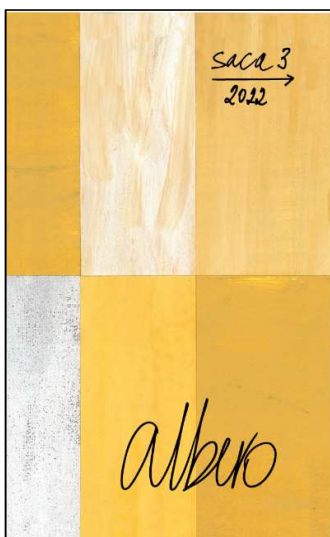


## ALBERO *Manzanilla en rama series*



### **ALBERO *Manzanilla en rama Saca 3/2022***

6 *botas* blended december 2022

### **ALBERO *Saca 2/2021 bota seleccionada 4/34 Manzanilla en rama***

a single barrel, one-off bottling

### **ALBERO *Manzanilla en rama Saca 1/2020***

A blend of 4 *botas* from the Barbiana *soleraje* in Sanlúcar

*Original label art by Leah Teschendorff.*

Albero is the result of a single annual *saca* (the castellano verb *sacar* is to take out or withdraw) of unfiltered or *en rama Manzanilla*, from the *solera* system of barrels, or *soleraje* which generates Barbiana *Manzanilla*. Barbiana is an Andalucian market brand (typically not exported) owned by Delgado Zuleta, and hence the little sister of the renowned La Goya *Manzanilla*. La Goya has seven *clases*, or different age levels within its *soleraje*. Barbiana is a little younger and has four *clases* (if we were in Jerez, these would be called scales).

Each year, we go to Delgado Zuleta to taste and decide upon a single release to withdraw, bottle and ship as our own selection wine for the following year; sometimes the result will be a *mezcla*, sometimes it will be a *bota seleccionada*. Scott and Leah do this tasting together and then collaborate on the label, which is Scott's hand-writing on Leah's artwork.

*Albero* is local dialect (rather than *amarillo*) for the particular earthy yellow ochre of the town streets, also commonly painted on *bodega* walls, alternating with rich chalky whites. Between them they suggest the golden wheaty character of Palomino, the saltiness of the Atlantic and the white chalk of the *Albariza* soils in and around the coastal/estuarine village of Sanlúcar de Barrameda.

In tasting to select *Albero* each year, we actively look to represent the Four Colours of *Fino*. Yellow and white for cereal, salt and chalk of course, per Leah's label. But also burnished blues to signify the *diatoms* (maritime fossil material) in the chalks, which once were deep seabeds. And then *Azahar*, the smell of a citrus grove at night, the orangey scents which time and air imbue in the best *Finos*.

Among many other things in back of this wine, motivation-wise, *Albero* stands as Scott and Leah's tribute to their favourite *pueblo* in España. If you have any idea how many great villages we've eaten and drink-drunk-drunked in, you'd know the size of this call ... Falset and Sajazarra have strong cases, but really, if we had to pick one place to call home? The Atlantic, Rio Guadalquivir, Flamenco, Chalk, Palomino, living life under a Clear Blue Andalusian Sky ... and the best bar in the world, Casa Balbino.

*Albero* is bottled *en rama*, virtually un-filtered (it gets a tiny three micron polish). Both the *sacar* and bottling processes are done in accordance with moon phases, making sure the wine is awake, but not riotously so when being handled. *En rama* bottlings of *Fino* are fascinatingly different wines to the more common filtered variants. Basically, *en rama* wines represent the whole of the barrel, while filtered wines edit out all the information at the bottom of the barrel. Filtered *Finos* are 'thinner' and over-state the importance of the *Velo de Flor* - the live yeasts populating the surface of the barrel. TSA is crazy about the *Cabezuelas* - the collection of spent yeast in the bottom of the barrel. Keeping this in the mix adds body and gives us much more rich, savoury earthen character, fully expressing the chalk. AND, the spent yeast cells add an incredible, highly gastronomic flourish of bitters to the wine.

*Albero Manzanilla en rama* will develop positively over several years in the bottle, especially in lovely magnums! On the next page, we'll detail the tasting/blending process behind the 2022 *saca*, which was bottled in December 2022. Expect a rich, golden, magnificently earthen wine, sapid-salty, ocean-blue-toned by *bajamar* (low tide pool smells) and brushed with orange bitters.

### **ALBERO Manzanilla en rama Saca 3/2022**

*Probado para mezclar Nov 8; sacado de botas Dec 8; embotellado Dec 16, 2022*

This wine was tasted in order to put together a blend on Scott's birthday, November 8, 2022. As it happened, this was the toughest wine tasting day, EVER! We decided on a final blend eight days later at near midnight on November 15. Just four weeks later it was in bottle, labelled and ready to ship to Australia. Albero 3 landed in Oz at the end of March 2023, and will go into the market after a suitable rest-rehab interval around June 2023.

So – The Tasting?!

Scott and Leah had post-international-jet head-and-chest colds, with ALL the phlegm. And, it was an apocalyptic root day (something called a double-node root day): a “stay in bed and drink gin, don't attempt anything gastronomic” the hell-mouth is here kinda day. All well and good, but we had a dozen folk joining us later the same day for a week of in-Marco learning, and Tuesday AM was the only possibility to taste and decide on this year's Albero. It ended up being one of the most challenging and – eventually - rewarding processes we've ever gone through!

Challenging, and not in a good way, but we did have one advantage. We already knew the barrels we were tasting. We simply started by re-tasting *Bota 4/34*, which we had selected three years prior to be a single barrel bottling. And then we re-tasted the four *botas* which we had blended as the very first Albero bottling. Three of these five end up in the mix, one fleshy and front-loaded, one fruitful and running, one with spice and grip. An hour in, we have a base blend. This time, we are working with both Manuel (the *capataz*) and the wine-maker, Jose Antonio. In *castellano* I tell Jose Antonio what I want and Manuel runs around with his *caña* (*vanencia*) making micro-blends to my whims. “Jose Antonio, I am not sure if it's the root day or my palate, or if it's actually the wine, but I feel we just need a bit more fruitiness here. Do you have a nice barrel a scale (*clase*) or so younger, that isn't marked by *flor*, just a lovely *bota* of vinous palomino?” J-A directs Manuel to a specific cask and when it comes back to me it's exactly what I had imagined and asked for. We now have a base blend of four barrels which will go on to be 80% of Albero *Saca 3/2022*. But, I'm not done yet ...

“Jose Antonio, now I need bitterness. Do you have a barrel with a long, strong driving *amargo* structure. I need me some *cabezuelas*.”

“Señor, I believe your rule is that we are not allowed to use barrels from La Goya, only from Barbiana?”

“Jose Antonio, there are no rules!”

“Well there is a barrel in the La Goya XL reserve solera of 10+ years old Manzanilla that is exactly as you describe ...”

“Please, let's taste it!”

A couple of minutes later Manuel is back with a *caña* of LGXL and it's magnificent. Shark-like bitter. We have a first blend to consider now, with a fifth part of this wonderful elixir. It's stern, noble, magnificent bitter wine with a dose of abstract aldehydic chisel to boot. But it is also this double-node root day apocalypse and our palates are kinda trash. It's hard to commit when you just can't be sure of yourself.

“Jose Antonio, I want to try another way, just in case this blend turns out to be too damned serious. Do you have an *amargo bota*, a bitter wine that's less stern, still bitter but vertical rather than horizontal, and just a bit less demanding?”

“Si, Señor! One of the *botas* we use to bottle for you each year as magnums of La Goya *en rama* is as you describe.”

Manuel races off to bring back a sample. Lovely, delicately bitter, vertical, free. We make another blend. And now we have two wines to choose between – the linear, running bitters or the more delicately touched vertical bitter component. Which to choose? Which one is Albero?

I ask Jose Antonio and Manuel to make a meaningful quantity of each blend and say I'll be back tomorrow to collect them and taste to decide which one is in fact going to be Albero. Wednesday

leaks into Thursday and on to Friday and over repeat tastings of the two blends, we just can't get the answer clear in our heads. Root days continue; head and chest colds fail to clear. I'm working 18 hour days translating *castellano* live in meetings with wine makers and our travelling school group of 13. Friday lunch time I make the call to Jose Fede, the GM of Delgado Zuleta.

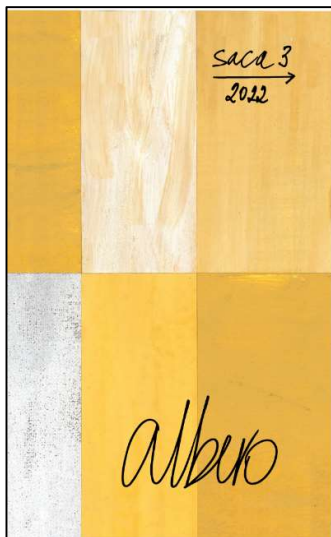
"J-F, I am sorry but I just can't make a decision on Albero this week, and the sample blends are getting tired. Can you ask the guys to make two fresh blends for me on Monday morning. I'll be going to Sevilla that afternoon and will start over on the tasting process Monday arvo/Tuesday AM and will let you know what we are going to bottle."

So, the group tour ends. Leah and I collect the new samples and drive up to Sevilla for some R+R. We taste on Tuesday, but are not clear on a preference between the blend marked with the strongly linear bitters versus the easier vertical bitter component. Now it's Wednesday and we are meant to be in Cordoba, to eat the world's best wet rice at Casa Pepe Sanchis. We just make our 3.30pm lunch booking. You eat rice. Then you need to walk. Then you need to nap. Holy fuck, it's 10pm and we have samples of our wine options on their second day open, it really is now or never! Down to the hotel bar, order a big gin and some cheese and sliced meat, get some nice wine glasses, and pull out the samples. Taste them and write them up, yet again ...

The light bulb moment.

Why am I limiting myself to thinking this versus that? Wine 1 OR Wine 2. I like both bitter components. I love the 80% base that's in common to both blends. What if I blend the bitters? There's only 1/3 of each bottle left by now. I blend the blends, 75mls each of both, stir and pour for Leah and me. Something's happening; this is going somewhere ... now my palate can finally get intuitive and tell me what I want. I re-blend the blends, 2/3 of the linear, more strongly bitter wine and 1/3 of the more delicate and vertically bitter touch. Bingo. Things lock in. Tectonic plates shift. Inter-galactic explosions go off. The matrix is code-cracked. Shit gets clear. Wow! Hello, Albero 3.

### ALBERO Saca 3, diciembre 2022



*Hay, curried straw liquor, lemon bitters, lemon tea cake punched into pumice. A praline touch.*

*Sandy, yes - Albero smells and tastes, sapidity punching into cheek corners.*

*Rolling wheat savoury, bitter tongue point finish and orange blossom rising.*

*Yellowy smells with hints of orange, backfilled with aromatic bitters and a wash of bajamar blues.*

*Salty and oceanic. Waxflower, salted pistachio hearts, and lots of the beach - sand and ozone.*

*Delta-spreading, lean, long and noble. Long, easy, stunning running bitters and vertical tension.*

*Delicious in the mouth, round, vertical, really pleasing.*

*Steely blue base rises ozone to the sky. Bitters punch down into chalk, roll out to a sapid and bitter, sea-spray end, oceanic like having your mouth open while boating.*

*The front palate rises up with richness, fill and presence, and then subsides with torque to a long, laminated finish with all parts in synch – a collaborative, twining harmony. Almost milky yellow chalk earthen-ness finds brushed steel and estuary waters as the palate unravels and begins to barrel. The sweet chalk, orange-inflected richness become glazed with bitters, releasing ozone, sea-spray and chalk white whispers. The internal X and Y axes of amargo frame and structure all.*

**'ALBERO 4/34' Manzanilla en rama bota seleccionada, saca de diciembre 2020**



(seleccionado por Scott Wasley en Bodega Barbiana)

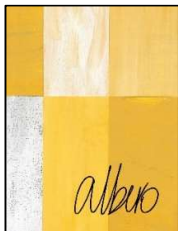
600 x 500ml bottles and 90 magnums, bottled *en rama* and in accordance with moon energies, 3 micron filter. Saca December 3, bottling December 7.

*Golden-smelling and floral with body, depth and edged by chalk. It's salino, fresh and finishes with a glorious touch of cabezuelas bitterness. Super-complete, it stands in the middle of the mouth and occupies without being bullyish, and when you swallow the gentle bitterness lingers perfectly, organising blue brush steel, wheat head, salinity, and delicate bitter, chalky acid.*

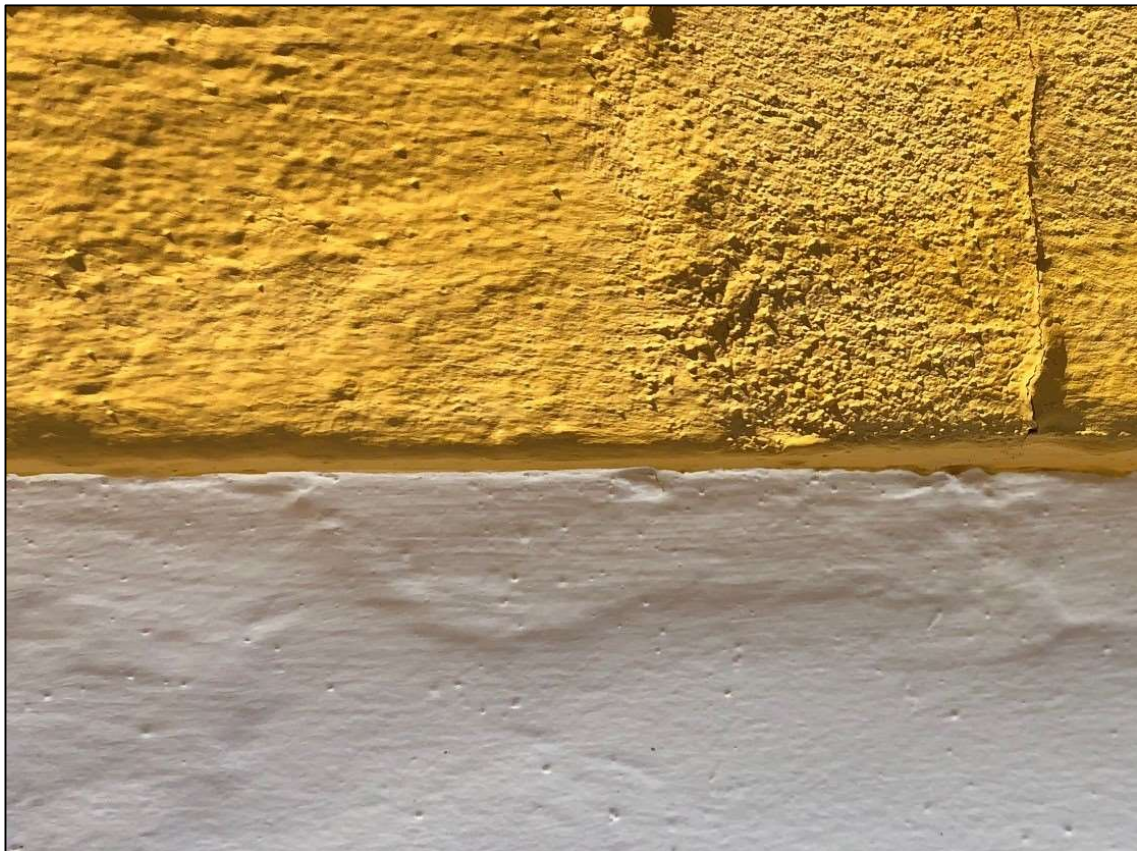
**ALBERO Manzanilla en rama, saca de marzo 2020**

(Seleccionado por Scott Wasley en Bodega Barbiana)

500 x 500ml bottles and 40 magnums, bottled *en rama* (3 micron touch).



*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 TSA has 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 Gaudalquiviver. 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* allí?"

"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 ..."

"Anything you want, Mr Wasley."

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. Four-square, more *Fino* in style than *Manzanilla*, and deeply expressing *albariza* terroir and Palomino more than *Bodegas* and *Flor*. Bloody gorgeous! I wanted it deep and bad, in the loin of my mind (next year I would in fact buy and bottle it). But then, but then ...

### The Matrix and/or The 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 *soleraje*. After it has passed through the four *clases*, 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. 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 Andalusian 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: being less stable than the single barrel, we bottled it first, thinking that barrel #4/34 had lasted 275 years in full magnificence, maybe another year wouldn't hurt too much.

### TSA turned 20 in 2020-2021.

I started researching Iberian wine in September 2000.

We landed and sold our first cases in August 2001.

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

We started TSA's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with TSA's own selection *Fino #1, Azahar*, a barrel selection of *Manzanilla Pasada* from the cellars of the Blanco brothers at Callejuela, and continued with the proud launch of *Albero*, the Barbiana solera blend in September 2000. Rounding out the 12 month celebration, August 2021 saw the launch of *Albero Bota #4/34* as TSA *Fino #3*.

**Man, it took some time getting here, though!  
Here's the back story to the arrival of the first  
Albero.**

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!*

