

## Blai Ferré i Just – Priorat (massos del falset)



Blai Ferré i Just is a young Priorat winemaker, currently working for his wife's family Gratallops label, Celler Cecilio, and in his project from vineyards in Massos del Falset. Blai got his start working for Alvaro Palacios and Celler Capcanes before joining Celler Cecilio in 2000 and finally striking out on his own.

Massos del Falset is a Priorat Vi de Villa appellation located in the DO Montsant village of Falset, which has a municipal footprint encroaching on DOQ Priorat llicorella soils. Thus, in Falset one can produce either DO Montsant or DOQ Priorat wine, depending on the soils of one's vineyards. From two Priorat-soiled Falset vineyards, Blai makes an entry wine, 'Billo' and an old vine selection, 'Desnivell'. Blai purchased the two vineyards in 1998.

Desnivell is a 2.4 hectare 'Coster' – an old, steep-sloped vineyard planted to 80 year old Garnatxa Peluda bush vines planted on wild American rootstocks. Desnivell is a sunny vineyard oriented to the interior, and uncultivated. It's nestled among hazelnut and pine forest, and also some (more recently planted) Cabernet and Syrah.

The Mas del Billo vineyard is 6.3 hectares and contains an old (1720) Masia or farmhouse, called 'Mas del Billo'. Blai planted half of Billo in 1999 onto low vigour, drought-adapted 41-B rootstocks – a 6,300 vine mix of Garnatxa, Carinyena, Syrah and Cabernet, following the trend of the time. Billo is currently on trellis which Blai is working to convert. It's a poor site, very rocky and with little organic material and has a terroir slightly variant from Priorat llicorella, characterised by *Soldó*, a harder slate typical near Falset. A green harvest regulates fruit to around 1.5kg/vine.

Blai's style is to under-extract and gently nurture wines so that the dazzling minerality of Priorat's smoky schist can shine through in the wines. He picks on taste, ferments with wild yeast and does not acidify (the wines are around 5.5 g/l TA). A light sulphur addition is given pre-bottling, which takes place without filtration. Varietals are fermented separately in 2,000 litre stainless, temperature-controlled to around 27 degrees. Billo and Desnivell both spend about 25 days macerating (stainless) and are settled off lees before barrique ageing for Desnivell. Billo ages 10 months in stainless steel, without any oak addition. It's 35% Garnatxa 35% Syrah, 20% Samsó and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

### Blai Ferré Just 'Billo' Massos del Falset Garnatxa blend, DOQ Priorat



*This is as pure an expression of Priorat's amazing llicorella schist terroir as you are likely to see. Uncluttered by winemaking, and uncovered by oak, the soil rings out on the nose and sings through the palate. Everything is place (grape FX are in there somewhere, for sure): sweet blue-note licorice and smoke, cold and damp rock, balsam, boysenberry juice and flowers, a sparkly mineral ripple, really neat tannin carrying all along in an earthy gurgle.*

*Billo loves air and although not closed or big when first uncorked, really opens out to a gentle country wine style of considerable charm and grace. Red and root vegetable fruit aromas in a gentle earthen nose with baking spice, multi- botanical balsam and a touch of anisey soot telling the llicorella. Down in the extreme south of Priorat, the Massos del Falset schist is a little earthier and less pungently mineral-smoky-tangy than say Gratallops. The palate has nice volume – it's a generous mid-weight, but all sits nicely within the rim – there are no extractive bulges or heat flares, just nicely rounded fruit with a herbal-mineral-inflected gentle acid frame and a soft, easy landing. Very pleasant earthen perfumes linger and fill the mouth after swallowing and the last thing left is the pippy purity of lovely sweet, beautifully ripe seeds of grapes.*

#### **2014 harvest**

A warm, dry summer with cool nights led into a humid September and lowering potential alcohol. The moist Garbinada sea breeze was evident, but the drying Serè continental winds did not come, leading to some botrytis late in harvest. Picking commenced with Syrah on September 26 and Garnatxa on 29<sup>th</sup>, culminating with Carinyena and Cabernet on October 9. Ultimately, a very good yield was achieved, of very good quality grapes nicely ripe and plentifully acid.

**VIMEO:** A jaunty Catalan soundtrack accompanies this Vimeo presentation of Mas del Billo:

<https://vimeo.com/157084690>