

Bodegas Luis Pérez

El Marco de Jerez, vinos de pueblo de Jerez

Bodegas Luis Perez is run today by 'Willy' (Guilhermo) Perez, son of this family business's founder, Luis Perez. In 2002, Luis set up a bodega based on the singular premise that "Jerez must go back to the vineyard." Luis's first premise was to revisit historical Jerezano Pagos, such as Balbaina Alta, Añina, Macharnudo and Carrascal Jerezano, and reassert their particular, historical wine styles, delving deep to unpick generic overlays which had become habitual since the crash of Sherry. They also have the Corchuelo estate (where their main bodega is) which they planted from scratch, and in such a place have felt free to play with exogenous varieties and non-traditional methods.



Luis has been professor of oenology at University of Cadiz, and was formerly a chief winemaker at Domecq. At first (and which at the time was utterly revolutionary), the wines of Bodegas Luis Perez were entirely about table wines, with a very unusual focus on Tintos, working hard to recover the local Tintilla de Rota, but also working where appropriate with French varieties, Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot. In 2011, they released the region's first varietal bottling of Tintilla de Rota in living memory. Good Tintilla makes for a flavoursome, fresh and balanced wine of some delicacy.

After this achievement, Luis relented to Willy's desire that they also start to work with Sherry, albeit in the same historicising mode of rediscovering lost identity connections between particular lands and particular practises, resulting in specific historical Sherry styles not seen in years. Always, their aim in Sherry is to explore the influence of Albariza in preference to biological and/or oxidative ageing techniques. They also resist fortification, so these are rare examples of natural alcohol Sherries, with no exogenous material wines (if you are unfortunate enough to care about sulphur, there's none of that added either).

In the east of the Jerez zone, they have purchased a large single vineyard, 'el Corregidor' within Pago Carrascal. Here they get to work with a specific Albariza, 'Barajuelas'. These are a stratified marl of chalk with iron layers, stacked like a deck of cards (a *Baraja*), and give wines of density, serious and intense. BLP also have an estate within Balbaina Alta, closer to the Atlantic which makes the freshest, most elegant wines of the Jerez zone on the more common Albariza 'Tosca Cerrada'.

BLP work a transect of Pagos, which collectively sum the range of possibility in el Marco de Jerez. From near-coastal *poniente* freshness and elegance, through mid-zone ease and perfect balance, culminating in *levante*-influenced inland power.

WINES OF PAGO BALBAINA ALTA – freshness and elegance

Bodegas Luis Perez are the front line of the Tintilla de Rota¹ story, and their efforts with the local red variety are focused in Balbaina Alto. Having led the way towards recovering Tintilla under Luis, they have a majority share of the mere 50 hectares planted globally to this cultivar. They have a 100% Tintilla vineyard, 'Calderin del Obispo', from which they make two reds of different elaboration

¹ Tintilla de Rota is a grape native to el Marco de Jerez. Rota, the eponymous town, is along the coastal strip south from Sanlúcar towards Cadiz. Largely abandoned as a cultivar in the second half of the 20th century, Tintilla is increasingly being grown throughout the region to make Tintos and Rosados. Tintilla is low yielding, low in tannin and high in acidity, with very dark skin, and is capable of yielding fresh wines in warm harvests. The 'Wine Grapes' book of Jancis Robinson et al simply dismisses Tintilla de Rota as a synonym of Graciano, to which it is genetically akin. Tintilla has been planted in Jerez for over 500 years; much longer than the records of Graciano in Rioja. There are significant character differences in the fruit and resultant wines. Tintilla's little dark, round berries make softer, mellower wine than Graciano. Tintilla berries contain far fewer seeds than those of Graciano (1 seed per berry, compared to 5 or 6), and Tintilla has smaller leaves and smaller berries.

styles and a little bit of dry pink. Calderin del Obispo is an almost mythic historical vineyard within Balbaina Alta, on a mix of Barajuelas, Tosca Cerrada and Albariza Barrosa (containing some clay). The fruit is picked at night to enhance freshness, selected carefully, fermented in a mix of stainless steel and open wooden cask, and has carefully limited pumpovers to keep elegance and softness.

LUIS PEREZ 'el Triangulo' Tintilla de Rota

Aged 5 months in 5yo French oak, before 15 months maturation in concrete and steel vats.



Peppery, mulberry floral, grapey and gently herbal-vegetal, with nice cherry-blackberry elements. Really gentle and fresh, reflecting the cool, humid Atlantic breezes in play here, and also the thoughtful winemaking. It's soft with an open weave and really well moderated acidity, there's good spice in the juice and fine north Rhône tannin.

LUIS PEREZ Tintilla de Luis Perez

This is a selection wine, with a flip in ageing regime: it spends about 15 months in old oak, then 6 months settling in steel tank.

WINES FROM PAGO AÑINA – perfect balance

Pago Añina sits to the east of Pago Balbaina, as we move inland towards Macharnudo, and ultimately Carrascal. These are beautiful rolling hillslopes with classical white stone farmhouses atop each Pago (in times past, the young *mostos* were fermented right in the vineyard). Añina is 13km in from the Atlantic, and its viticultural history goes back to the Romans. Historically, it was home to wonderful Finos, featuring the freshness of Pagos near the coast, such as Balbaina, but also starting to exhibit the firmness of structure, a sense of layer in the mouth, more common inland in Macharnudo and Carrascal. BLP's holdings are an estate called 'el Caribe', a single vineyard within a sub-Pago of Añina, called 'Orbaneja'. The palominos of 'el Caribe' are grown on Tosca Cerrada, facing south on 8 degree slopes.

LUIS PEREZ Fino Añina 2016



These wines are from carefully selected Palominos which undergo 2 days of drying, or *soleo*. The berries are basket pressed, but only the first 40% free run is taken. Then a natural fermentation in 80yo Sherry butts takes place for 2-3 months, yielding an unfortified *Fino* of 15% natural abv.

LUIS PEREZ 'el Caribe' 2016 El Caribe 2016, Anina, 16%

Oxidatively handled Palomino from a special Finca atop Pago Añina, growing in a mix of Tosca Cerrada and Barajuela. Willy buys the fruit for this one, which is a homage to his grandfather who used to run the vineyard. Fermented in 2 botas with just 15cm air ullage. Willy was looking to make Fino but a week of *levante* pushed abv over 15 and the flor didn't take. Bottled at 16% abv after 24 months (including fermentation), it's somewhere between an oxidative white and an Oloroso.

Straw and dried fruit, citric-edged, a whack of complex volatile acidity, the smoke of a billy tea can, a whiff of orange and some caramel sweetness, salt-rimed, a neroli margarita.

WINES OF PAGO CARRASCAL – savoury muscle

In the Jerez zone's eastern jewel, Pago Carrascal ('the Oaky place'), Luis and Willy have purchased 'el Corregidor' (the magistrate). Once the showpiece vineyard of Sandeman Corp, it has been lovingly restored. It's a special parcel, with panoramic views from where the old winery sits atop the rise, looking down on 60 hectares of Albariza, half of which is outstanding quality old Palomino, the rest Tintilla de Rota and some Pedro Ximenez. Wines from the Barajuela Albarizas of Carrascal are deep, full, powerful and savoury (the Spanish like to use the ultra-vague term 'sapididad' here ... but much elsewhere, too!). The Palomino of 'el Corregidor' is taken in many passes (2018 had 18 different harvest selections), dedicated to various purposes. Firstly, a green Palomino becomes young *mosto* vinified with low alcohol and high acidity - extremely useful acidifying material. Another quality

control pass yields material which is distilled: one day, this will become the first real Brandy de Jerez, a single-vintage, single-vineyard Brandy with no exogenous material at all. For now, the first batch is ageing as *holandas* – young, but complete Brandy awaiting the character development which only time can yield.

Then, very carefully selected fruit is harvested designated as *palmas* – wines with the potential to make great *Finos*, deeply expressive of the *Albariza Barajuelas* of this estate. Because of the power of Carrascal, it's easy here to make *Finos* with natural alcohol in the 14-15% abv range. Sometimes, there is even no call for *soleo*!

LUIS PEREZ 'el Muelle de Olaso' Palomino Fino

El Muelle is named for a pier which used to facilitate fishing boats in Sanlúcar. It is a structured, intense white from a second pass fruit selection. During August, a first pass pick takes the lesser fruit of the estate for making Brandy de Jerez distillate. The best fruit comes off in a second pass, and part of it is given a brief *asoleo*. Most of the fruit is fermented in stainless, with 20% being dried just for 6-8 hours and then fermented in vats of cherry wood and aged a month under light flor.



Somewhat tropical fruit, with peach, apple and pear. After release, this fruit resolves into citrus and chalk. There's a touch of plumpness, then toast, cereal and floral aspects in balance, with the false sweetness of chalk filling out the flowers. Savoury and long, with the feel of chalk and lovely structural definition.

LUIS PEREZ Fino 'Caberrubia NV'

Caberrubia is BLP's answer to NV Grand Cru Champagne! It's a blend, without *solera*, of 4 vintages of statically-aged Carrascal *Fino* ... selection material which does not make it into La Barajuela (below). The first release of Caberrubia is the *saca de enero 2019*: 1 butt of 2013, contributes umami/soy; 2 butts of 2014 with great volume of citrus-inflected fruit depth; 1 butt of 2015 bringing creamy dried fruit character; and 2 butts of fresh material from 2016 giving a lick of finesse. 'Caberrubia' is the name of a local bird which has returned to these vineyards since they were converted to organics (it's also known as the 'Alzacola'.) All natural alcohol.



Preserved citrus rind, some meal, floral with golden apple skin, marzipan facepack mud, aldehyde in the form of elderflower gin, and with time becomes really peachy. It's brightly earthy, deep and soft to smell, and gloriously, endlessly effortless. Spiced with a touch of billy tea smoked steel, neither rounded nor vertical, it works down into the soil at a 45 degree angle.

LUIS PEREZ 'la Barajuela' Fino 2016

45yo low-yielding Palomino Fino grown on Barajuela Albariza: layered, structured, iron-proud. Like soil, like wine. 15.5% natural abv. Hand-picked grapes are collected over a two month stretch, then given 6 or 7 hours of *asoleo*. Only 35% of the must is taken from basket press and this ferments spontaneously in *bota* until December. The fruit is then classified as Fino or Oloroso. The Fino (classified as *uno Palma*) selection is then put to biological ageing for two years, but with a much-reduced ullage percentage, compared to the contemporary Sherry norm. This is to attenuate the development of the flor, and allow soil-related aromas to continue to dominate the wine, which is given a relatively short time under flor. 3 botas of 400 litres each result in this un-fortified *Fino*.



A collision of biological ageing with fruit and terroir. It's a Fino with fresh citrus depth, layered with iodine, ocean balm, soy, fresh ripe walnuts, pomelo and some glycerol. It's round and full, neatenened by fresh dancing spiciness and rimmed with chalk. Deep and savoury with a nip of bitter to finish, reflecting the soil. It has a salty-caramel tannin flow and a long splashing salt after-affect.

LUIS PEREZ 'la Barajuela Dos Palmas' 2013 (375ml)

Here we get a full five years of biological ageing. The resultant wine is a deep, developed *Fino*, classified as two *Palmas* – significantly augment character from ageing, but still entirely consistent with its original designation.



Increased volume, more salt, more acid: ripe fruit, dried straw, chalk drying on boots, ground nut meal, the smell of toast, the ocean and flor. Really classical Fino with fine, spritely secondary acidity, and a really complex volatile spectrum.

LUIS PEREZ 'Carrascal' PX 2014

On a separate vineyard in Carrascal, 'la Panesa', the Perez family grown beautiful PX, which is given 12 days *asoleo*, with the clusters turned regularly. Basket press crushing sees only 25% of the must taken to ferment 3 months in cask, and is then re-fermented the following spring, followed by 4 years' maturation in four topped up botas (two of which went to vinegar). It's 100 grams of residual sugar and 14.5% natural abv.



Fragrant rice grass, soy and citrus, saffron tea. Incredibly delicate and lovely, haunting, pure PX, sweetness balanced with chocolate bitterness, honey at end, and the soil evident throughout. Wonderful citrus rind winding structure, round and open, spicy but gentle and easy with EXCELLENT acidity and all threaded together.



The view north to Jerez from Pago el Corchuelo