



ABOUT CHICLANA

If you listen to the DO, Marco de Jerez can otherwise be termed 'The Sherry Triangle'.

Like so much else with the appellation, if you play the game, you lose. Under the auspices of DO Jerez (and it's vapid photocopy, DO Manzanilla-Sanlúcar), from 1969, we lost:

- Palomino de Jerez in favour of the high-yield UC Davis travesty, Palomino California
- dozens of other local wine grape cultivars
- the identities of the 111 *pagos*
- all focus on the complex terroirs of chalk (and wind), and ...
- a host of gorgeous, all-too-hastily abandoned local wine styles.

And, the other six villages of el Marco disappeared from view.

On December 4, 2019, I left the 'triangle'.

I went south, to the limits of el Marco, below the bay of Cadiz. I met Primi Collantes, young gun head of his family bodega, and exemplary producer of Chiclanan village wine. They are a fabulous expression, in one village, of the Palominos-Finos continuum (plus!). A rich statement on the possibilities of wine in el Marco.

I went down to Chiclana.

Driving south to Chiclana is a really interesting 60km ride. If you leave from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, you pass the coastal Pagos Sanluqueños on your right side, such as the famed Miraflores, just a few KM in from the Atlantic. Then you'll be in Puerto territory, passing Pago Balbaina. All the while, your left-hand view takes in the atlantic-continental mix of Jerezano Pagos like Añina. Peeking 15km east between the pagos you'll glimpse the mighty Pago Macharnudo and the like, hunkered above Jerez. Soon, you pass the causeway going west to the coast and over to Cadiz town, across the Bay of Cadiz, and outside of the DO. Along our way, we've passed minor villages of el Marco such as Chipiona, Rota and Puerto Real. The vineyards have fallen away, and now we are in *las marismas* (the marshlands), with pink flamingos on salt flats everywhere (and millions more water birds besides). Soon, we pass a sign to la Isla de León, home to Camáron (de la Isla) himself. It's steeped deep and dirty in flamenco down here. But then it starts to get green and hilly again, the vines return and we drop down into Chiclana.



If we glance to notice, just 15km further south across town loom the first mighty mountains of Greater Andalucía, in the *Sierra de Cadiz*, home to gorgeous *pueblos blancos* like Vejer de la

Frontera. We're probably too busy processing the last smells of marshland, the pungent reach of the atlantic and the curious mingling of fresh mountain air winking in from the sierras, not to mention the sloping tumble of houses and restuarants signalling a new *pueblo* to get to know.

Chiclana is built (much like Sanlú) onto the side of a fairly steep rise from the coast. There are bodegas down below on the coastal flats where *Río Iro* exits to the Atlantic, splitting the town into northern/southern divisions, and often flooding. There are bodegas up top and out the back too, on the road out to the Pagos. On the gentle slopes to the south and east out back of town, bustling dry winds predominate, but the atlantic's felt too.

The main vineyards of Chiclana are both under the mountains and reached by the ocean. The usual complexities of el Marco are here and playing out in a fascinatingly local form. The *poniente-levante* alternation is strong here, and the vineyards are *monte-y-mar*, wedged between Sierra Cadiz (*montaña*) and the Atlantic (*costera*). Chiclana has the driest and freshest *ambiente* in el Marco. Harvest here typically starts after Jerez is all said and done. Very cold, dry, but windy means late harvest, and the winds also reduce yields, to a maximum of about 8 tonnes. It's very healthy grape-growing, as the mountain winds dry out oidium and mildew otherwise caused by the coastal humidity. Chiclana is *interesting*.



As elsewhere in el Marco, the vineyards are planted in uplifted marine soils. It's a land turned inside-out. What were sedimentary deposits in a seabed (the *beticus* depression) have since been uplifted and inverted. At sea level you have sand, higher up you get clay and above 45 metres or so are the old seabed calcareous (chalk) soils, which nowadays we call *Albarizas*. These are full of diatoms – marine soils full of algal and (mainly) phyto-plankton fossils.

In Chiclana, they have the savoury, dry, wheaty-earthy *Palomino*, of course. Also, *Moscatel de Grano Menudo*, giving sweet juice which is also wonderfully fresh and acidic. There's a road you can drive up, out the back of town towards the mountains, which has red dirt *Lustrillos* soils on one side and chalky *Albarizas toscas cerrradas* on the other.

“no compro nada”

Primi (Primitivo) Collantes is the 4th generation of Primis running his family property. Right now this numbers 39 hectares of owned vines, and he doesn't work with anything he doesn't own and control). The Collantes family has two properties: Finca Matalian is 20 hectares of *costero* land, while Finca Pozo Galbán 19ha of *montaña* (they are planted 60-40 to Palomino California and P de Jerez). Primi's are the most significant of Chiclana's paltry 100 hectares of vines. In 1977, around when “Sherry” collapsed, Chiclana had 4,700 hectares and was the second biggest producing town in the region behind only Jerez itself. Chiclana is just 2% of what it was 40 years ago. My money's on Primi putting it right back on the map.

The vineyards are at around 100m altitude, situated directly out back of Chiclana towards the mountains. Galbán is *barro lustrillo*, under Sierra Cadiz, just 12km away. Below it, Matalian is 8km from the coast, and the soil is pure *Tajon* ... a very hard block version of *Tosca cerrrada*, and 80-90% pure chalk. 2 hectares are Moscatel Grano Menudo, and the rest Palomino (Cali, Jerez, 84).



THE COLLANTES WINES

'Tivo' Uva Rey de Chiclana 2018 \$100 luc/\$150 rrp

A very rare local cultivar, one of nearly 40 varieties lost to el Marco during the 20th century (a few of which the Manifiesto 119 crew are recovering as we speak). There were just 75 vines left in Chiclana when Primi re-planted (1200 new grafts) in 2015. TIVO is the only varietal example of Uva Rey (King of Grapes) in the market (Ramiro has some in a Cota 45 blend). Fermented in old *fino bota*, In late '19 tasted this after 12 months in stainless with 12 to go and it's now released after 24 months' neutral ageing. 'Tivo' is a diminutive, or nickname of Primitivo.

Tivo first of all tastes truly regional, a tutorial in el Marco. There's talcy chalk, blue steel and wirey herbs, it's lightly salty with good acidity and some gentle tannin roundness. "Southern Gruner" in style, with a green vegetal touch. The delicate phenolic structure is fine and clean, long and lingering, talcy, really lovely.

'Matalian' Palomino de Chiclana 2019 \$37.50 luc/\$56 rrp

Unaged, made in stainless. The chalk in this *pago* is a variant of *Albariza tosca cerrada*, the nut-hard *Tajon*. With this wine, Primi simply wants to show the Palomino and the chalk, untouched, balancing white stone fruit with a subtle thread of chalk, rimed by atlantic salt.

Dry, linear and punchy, this is a fresh and direct wine, salino, delicately chalky with a melon tendril herbal line, and deeper touches of 'bajamar' (the smell of low tide) and a lash of marine fossil in an almost anisey register. For a 'simple' stainless wine, there's no reduction and excellent openness: the weight is perfect and the wine has great ease of passage, with a thirst-enhancing chalky grip in one's cheeks.

'Socaire' Palomino Vino de Pasto de Chiclana 2018 \$55 luc/\$105 rrp

First released in 2014, Socaire is from old vines, fermented without control and aged 24 months in old, neutral *Fino botas* with no ullage, no *flor*. Here, Primi intends to further thread the wine with structure and secondary aromas. Socaire ages beautifully in the bottle, taking on a pronounced *pasto* character of dried maize, *esparto* and an enhanced *azahar* orange scent. The term 'socaire' is to take the lee, to shelter from strong winds.

Summer fields, wheat liquor, old marigolds, the rustling golden smells of corn plants after harvest. The tastes and textures are concentrated and dried like vegetable chips, glazed with orange caramel scent and herb spice low in the mouth. The palate is beautifully round and centred, leaving space for time and the warmth of one's mouth to fan savoury earthen perfumes, complex and gentle at once. A truly contemplative, but not heavy experience.

'Socaire' Palomino oxidativo de Chiclana 2015 \$100 luc/\$82 rrp

Aged 60 months, 24 in bota as with Socaire (2014 was the 1st of both wines) followed by 24 in steel, 12 in glass. To 'socaire' is to face away from damaging winds.

Weeeee! The nose here really runs, like an oat cookie on a spree! Spiced gingersnap, lots of grass liquor, and green pollen florality. Everything's on a line, but there's no tightness, plenty of space for aromas to gather and to haunt. Densely redolent of albariza, damp and salty. Salts and bitters prick the tongue and line the cheeks, while the mouth is left free to aerate it's wild perfumes and dance them above the pebble suck chalky draw drizzling long down one's gullet. Remarkable wine.

'Ceballos' Fino de Chiclana (saca diciembre 2020) \$30 luc/\$150 rrp

Ceballos comes from Finca Pozo Galván, and thus grows in *Albariza lustrillos*. It's fine Palomino de Jerez, all free run juice, aged 3 years under *flor*. Ceballos is Primi's grandfather's middle name.

There's powdered sea shell, with green olive brine, rising dirty through it, then a seaspray-ozone wash and green herb aftertaste. Juicy, round and easy on entry (all dry barley liquor) it opens to

spicy, powdery dry white tannin and closes out to fine and steely, nicely angular with a bitter cabezuela full stop (the smell/taste of dead yeast cells).

'Arroyuelo' Fino de Chiclana en rama (saca diciembre 2020) \$65 luc/\$105 rrp

An *arroyuelo* is a spontaneous little river, and these occur in the street right outside Primi's bodega in Chiclana Baja, just in front of the Atlantic, along the Río Iro. The solera for Arroyuelo is 5 year old *Fino* from Finca Matalán, most of which is bottled as conventional (filtered) wine, selected from 825 *botas*. Occasionally, some wine is bottled to order as utterly untouched *Fino en rama*.

The nose features a whack of azahar, with pistachio skin under the orange blossom and the slightest touch of brass. In the mouth, it's deep and soft, golden, super savoury, gentle, rolling and gliding. It finishes with olive brine mingling with spent yeast and a nutty touch. The wine's lifted and alive, with heaps of algal maritime action.

