Meet Pedro Guímaro

His name is Pedro Pérez, and he's the best producer in Ribeira Sacra, a radically steep river valley appellation in central Galicia, where rivers Sil and Miño intersect (they flow west to the Atlantic from here as a conjoined river Miño. Steep?

As Pedro says, "this isn't a Valley: it's a Canyon!"

Pedro heads his family's winery, Adegasⁱ Guímaro in Ribeira Sacra's Amandi sub-zone. He's responsible for deft, heart-breakingly beautiful wines that justify this DO all by themselves. Guímaro was Pedro's grandfather's nickname – it's *Galego* for rebel. Usually, people just call him Pedro Guímaro. His wines are alive, wild and free, pure expressions of the countryside in which they are grown.



Adegas Guímaro

The Pérez family own 11 hectares and control another 20 leased from *colleteiros* (ageing subsistence growers), across a range of cold slate soils nuanced with sand and granite. Around 50 parcels in total are farmed from the steepest south-facing (50-70 degree) slopes above Rio Sil in between the towns of Amandi and Doade in the Amandi sub-zone. The soils are hard-packed dark slate with quartz, iron and mica. The *bodega* itself is in the hamlet of Brosmos. Pedro's holdings are planted at around 4500 vines/hectare and yield about half a litre of wine per vine. The plots are tiny, planted between 300 metres to 550 metres altitude. New plots planted into the dense stone (there's no soil until they create it) average about 4-5 vines per day per worker.

Until 1991, the family sold their wine in bulk (mainly in 20 litre glass *garrafones* to local bars) before commencing estate-bottling. Pedro has run the family business since 2000 (he retired from legal practice to take over the family business). His ascension saw a reduction in yield, the banishing of chemicals and an increased focus on specificity of handling (in particular, the picking times) of the various key plots, thus enhancing the acidity and structure of the wines.

Guímaro's handling is deliberately and meaningfully 'old-fashioned': organic viticulture, wild yeast fermentations, foot treading, inclusion of *raspónes* (stems), a low sulphur regime and ageing in old wood. While the varieties listed on bottle say Mencía and Godello, most plantings are field blends, with some Albariño and Treixadura in the whites, and other local reds such as Caiño, Merenzao, Sousón, Alicante Henri Bouschet and Mouratón (aka Juan Garcia) in the mix.

Guimaro's slate soils are interpreted via a pair of Godello-based whites, a pair of multi-parcel Mencía red blends and five single-vineyard Mencía-based expressions. The single vineyards (including Ladredo which Pedro co-makes with Dirk Niepoort) range from west to east in this order:

- Ladredo faces naciamento (east-oriented to the rising sun) and to easterly hinterland winds
- **Pombeiras** (70yo granite and quartz over *pizzara*, south-east facing)
- Capeliños (95yo poniente vineyard facing s-w towards Pombeiras across a valley)
- Finca Meixeman (has a both a slate part facing naciamento and a granite-iron poniente face)
- and **A Ponte**, which sits above Meixeman. This is a young vineyard of great quality planted by Pedro, and which had its first crop in 2015.

A new regional pair!

From the 2020 harvest, Pedro has introduced a new pair of wines which break down Ribeira Sacra into its two key components. Ribeira Sacra's subzones are scattered across a frame formed by two rivers, the Sil which flow east down from Bierzo and which crashes into the Miño as it runs south from Picos de Europa. After the two intersect, they continue out to the Atlantic as the Miño. In 2020, for the first time Pedro released a pair of wines which express Ribeira Sacra in *a Miño versus the Sil* schema. Meet **Mundin** and **San Pedro**!



Guímaro is a perfect realisation of Mencía in Ribeira Sacra.

The challenge of Mencía is balancing tannin and acidity. Broadly speaking, it's a high tannin, low acid variety, but it's a fickle balance. It really only 'works' in 3 appellations, in the eastern half of Galicia, strewn along the course of Rio Sil. The question of tannin-acid balance plays out in concert with 'Continentality': higher altitude means higher daytime temperatures than coastal-Atlantic climates.

It's a pretty simple equation: more daytime heat equals more tannin ripeness and less retained natural acidity ... Atop Rio Sil, plenty of continental daytime solar energy means that Mencía wines in DO Bierzo tend towards chocolatey, soft (ie low acid) which many producers structure with oak to paper over deficiency in acid freshness. 70km downstream from Ponferrada (the source of the Sil in Bierzo), in DO Valdeorras tannin and acid balance neatly. It's curious that only a couple of interesting producers work here!

Drive another 80 km downstream from Valdeorras, to DO Ribeira Sacra and things really shift. Ponferrada sits at 550m, while in the heart of Ribeira Sacra, Monforte de Lemos is at 360m. 80km downstream in a direct line and 190m less altitude means Ribeira Sacra's Mencías have plentiful acidity. There's not enough sun to get tannins ripe, unless your vines face south and hang over the river, which acts as a heat sink, helping tannin ripen deep into the afternoon. The problem in Ribeira Sacra is a predominance of wines with green tannin. Many Ribeira Sacra wines try to paper over greenness with quick dunks in toasty American oak. You can't hide green tannins ...

Which gets us to Guímaro.

Pedro's wines come in two shapes and sizes.

The outliers are Finca Meixeman and Finca Capeliños. These are *relatively* chunky, earthen wines with broadband tannins, being warmly oriented to the south-west, and in the case of Meixeman featuring iron-rich alluvium. They are barely mid-weight, however, and finish with excellent acidity.

The 'classical' Guímaros, are the 4 wine line-up from Guímaro's *Joven* Ladeiras de Sil-Miño blend, through the Amandi selection wine, Camiño Real, and two Amandi *parcelas*, A Ponte and Finca Pombeiras. Here you have Mencía's tannin in a pin-bone form, delicate, a trace line, but perfectly ripe and married to exquisite, electric-zap acidity yielding a lip-smack finish.

A Guímaro Mencía has:

Red fruit tea, hibiscus flowers, raspberry leaf
The mystery of smells at a forest's edge
A shower of rock roses
Fruit without glycerol
Sour wild cherry, pomegranate, plum skin
Pickled bramble berries, and the brambles' stems and flowers
Apples and the wood of a cherry tree
Beets, blood, game
Lightly smoked blackberry canes
The smell of cold, dark rocks, fresh minerals
Soy without glycerol, dry native peppercorn casings
Gently pressed wild cherry juice in mountain air



Guímaro Mencía Joven

Guímaro make two estate blends. There is this *Joven* and another wine named Camiño Real, which is gently oak-aged. As well as stylistic variances, they are also sub-regionally distinct. Camiño Real (and all of Guímaro's *parcela* wines) is from the Amandi zone, while this *Joven* is a blend of Ribeiras do Rio Sil (70%) and Ribeiras do Miño (sub-zones immediately south and west of Amandi).

Guímaro Joven blends granite, slate and sand soils from many parcelas (some yielding as little as 200kg), which are fermented separately by soil type then blended. The plots have an average vine age of about 40 years, at 350-500m altitude. Half of the Joven is fermented and macerated in large, old open wooden vats and half in steel tank. There's no oak ageing. A small proportion (20% usually) is whole-cluster, otherwise de-stemmed fruit is fermented after 6 days cold maceration. 20-30 days of indigenous yeast fermentation is followed by six months in tank on lees, before bottling unfiltered, cold stabilised, egg white fined.



Spiced cranberry, sour cherry, pomegranate, smoke, brambles, hibiscus tea. A steely mineral, earthen, mossy-vegetal, botanical mainframe. Fine tannin cups the palate - my mouth feels like I've just chomped into an apple plucked direct from the orchard. It's a gentle, open frame for a majesty of vegetal, brightly earthy fruit. Delicate, perfectly rounded, tangy with minerals, sweetly acid, finishing like a trickle of rainwater.

Guímaro 'Camiño Real' Mencía

This is the estate blend of Guímaro's soils in the Amandi zone, this time with a little oak ageing. Summing six hectares, it's effectively a field blend, about 85% old vine Mencía co-picked with Merenzao, Mouratón, Brancellao, Caiño, Sousón, and Alicante Bouschet. Like the *Joven*, it sums slate, granite, quartz and sand. Hand-picked fruit (40% whole bunches) spontaneously ferments in open old oak vats for 40 days. Half the wine spends seven months in old French oak vats followed by

four months in old *barricas*, the other half swaps vessels and ageing ratios. Bottled unfiltered, unfined. Camiño is the *Galego* variant of Camino in *Castellano* – its name is thus 'The Royal Way'.

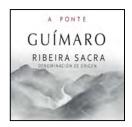


Compared to its unwooded little sister, this is a little deeper and more bold, but still barely mid-weight. It starts in a red fruit spectrum, but there's darkness in the depths. Pomegranate, sour cherry, smoked thyme, forest bracken, mace, pepper pods. Typical to Guímaro wines, it has a lovely agridulce (sweet-sour) pulse. There's some red earth as well as typical slatey mineral, and a waft of game, which deepens with time in the bottle. Classical Guímaro in its round, open presentation and

structural harmony and delicate acid persistence. Pin-bone tannin organises brambly purple fruit with a hint of smoked berry towards a lip-smacking finish studded with aromatic bitters.

Guímaro 'A Ponte' Single Vineyard Mencía blend

A recently introduced wine (the inaugural vintage was 2015) from a very old plot above Finca Meixeman. In the late 2000s, Pedro re-planted this *parcela* to Mencía (30%) and 17.5% each of Sousón, Brancellao, Merenzao and Caiño on granite, slate and sand at 420-550m. Hand-harvested, spontaneously fermented whole clusters, 50 days maceration and 6 months resting on skins. Then ages a year in old 500L Burgundy barrels. No fining/filtration.



Literally, ethereal. You smell and sense fresh mountain air with an atlantic nibble. It's floral-spicy and red fruited: red apples, hibiscus, cinnamon, ink and mace, wild blackberry, rhubarb and damson. There are minerals everywhere — the dark spicy density of slate, spritzed with the freshness of granite. The tannins are a tracery - glorious layers of fruit skin lining fleshy fruit, leading to a perfect bitter finish lit up with briars. Lively, expressive, delicate and incredibly inviting.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía

At 350-450 metres' altitude, Miexeman is a 1.2ha plot of very old organically grown vines from a 'two-faced' vineyard: the larger part is relatively coolly oriented slate facing south-east, or naciamente (to the rising sun); the other is warmer iron-rich granitic soil facing a poniente (south-west to the setting sun). Both sections are streaked with quartz, iron and mica. This 'heritage vineyard' was replanted after phylloxera in 1907 by Pedro's grandmother, using remnants of the site's own genetics had which survived the pestilence. It's 80% Mencía, with half a dozen other local red cultivars. The grapes are foot-trodden, 40% whole bunch, and given a long maceration on skins and stems after wild yeast fermentation in open foudre. Very gently pressed, then aged 6 months in oak vat and another 12 months in old French barricas. Meixeman was first bottled as a single vineyard in 2006. "Pedro, what does the name Meixeman mean?" "No idea, Scott."



The earthiest of Pedro's single vineyards, Meixeman is freshened and lifted by a steely slate rim. The nose is wild with earth, tobacco, forest floor, autumnal undergrowth. Heather, leather, a mineral pulse. Tastes of wild red and black berries, smoked boughs, balsam, and mountain herb, with a typical Guímaro agridulce (sweet-and-sour) touch. Built on solid, leathery tannins, this sits deeper than its sisters, with lively spice freshness at the rim and a darting mineral finish.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía

Pombeiras is the coolest climate single site - 70 year-old vines at up to 450m. Roughly 70% Mencía in a field blend. It's planted on granite and quartz over slate, oriented south-east or *naciamento* (facing to the rising sun). Whole bunches are fermented in large old French oak vats for 60 days, then aged 10 months in 5yo 500l French barrels. 2010 was the first vintage. Pombeiras means "Pigeon".

Pombeiras faces Finca Capeliños, 500 metres away over a hillside blind. Both share Mencía's classical rose thorn, soy and blood tells and the shiny dark-but-fresh mineral thread given by Ribeira Sacra's brown-black schist. But they are wines of considerable terroir-gifted contrast.



This smells impossibly of time travel - weightless yet effortlessly vast. A constellation of spices weave through a cloud of savoury perfume, in a wine of majestic, elegant structure, free of glycerol and delicately bitter. Wild cherry, hibiscus, pomegranate, wild peppercorns and an umami hit. Ultra-fine tannin yields satin in a palate of grace, purity and elegance. Delicate and infinite, a wine of great poise and class. Incredible.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía

Just 4 *barricas* are made from this south-west-facing 0.6 hectare plot of centenary vines grown in dark slate. It's a field blend of Mencía with a little Caiño, Negrada and Mouratón. Capeliños sits below Meixeman at 350-400 metres and is vinified similarly. 45% stems, long fermentation in open foudre, 12 months or so ageing in 500 litre old wood. First vintage was 2002. The name means "little church". Capeliños is more strict and structured than the relatively ethereal Pombeiras. A wine of bright, full cherry fruit, great spice, the voice of the soil and well structured.



A wine of power and broad-band tannins, ferrous, tending four-square. For all its relative heft and structure, it's never heavy, has good energy and movement, and is just mid-weight in the end. Red florals float and the palate fills with Ribeira Sacras wild cherry, pomegranate, rose petal, spice and peppercorn tells. And the SLATE. POW! Some game comes to join the party and the whole thing's wise, slow and delicious.

MIÑO vs SIL

Two significant rivers collide and their intersection is the Ribeira Sacra wine land. The Sil flows down from Bierzo up in Leon to the east. The Miño runs south from the Asturian Picos de Europa. After they merge, Miño and Sil become a confluence, named Rio Miño,



winding west and south, becoming the border of Galicia with Northern Portugal, before flowing out to the Atlantic beneath the Rías Baixas sub-zone, O Rosal. Along the way, individually or collectively, these rivers influence a bunch of appellations: the Miño Continuum is responsible for DOs Bierzo, Valdeorras, Ribeira Sacra, Ribeiro and parts of Rías Baixas (Condado de Tea and O Rosal).

As well as being the sum of 5 sub-zone parts, Ribeira Sacra can be simply summed as Miño and Sil, and to demonstrate this, Pedro has release Mundin and San Pedro. Both wines are based in the key sub-DO zone of Amandi; so, with a degree of meaningful simplification, this becomes an exercise in granite (Miño) versus slate (Sil). Both are 80% or so Mencía, with Brancellao, Grao Negro, Garnacha Tintoreira, Merenzao, Sousón, Caiño Tinto ... as with all old plantings of Mencía.

On the map you can see the main town of the region, Monforte de Lemos in the centre. South of there, Sober is the village at the heart of Pedro's operation, in the core of the Amandi sub-DO. Mundin can be seen north-west on Rio Miño, San Pedro south-east on Rio Sil, roughly 30km apart by (extremely steep and windy) road. If you want to google map this for yourself, just enter Santa María de Nogueira (Mundin on the Miño and San Pedro de Baños (San Pedro on the Sil).

Guímaro 'Mundin' Mencía, Ribeira Sacra Mencía de los suelos granitos del Rio Miño

Mundin
RIBEIRA SACRA

Mundin is selected from granite soils in the zone known as Santa Maria de Nogueira. So, we are in Ribeira Sacra, in the sub-DO of Amandi, in the sub-zone of Nogueira and in a tiny 'place' or sub-sub-zone called Mundin. Come on, we can't say the Gallegos are not true Spaniards at heart!

Compared to their shallow slate sisters, these are relatively deep soils. The vines are about 60 years old. 2020 is one of the great vintages according to Pedro, early sprouting then a very long on-vine maturation. Varietal composition, winemaking and ageing are identical for Mundin and San Pedro; these are thus as close to 'pure' terroir comparisons as you'll see anywhere in the wine world. They are also not just delicious, they're Guimaro-delicious, wild and utterly free, yet orderly and coherent ... precision-free precision??

Earthy and vegetal, with soy and distinct granitic smells. Red spectrum fruits have a lovely sourberry edge, spiced by native pepper pod aromas. A whaft of musk, rooibos tea (Mundin's slate sister San Pedro is more chai-spiced). Agrodulce to the 9s, the sweet and sour tension working across the palate in a planar disc. Very mildly gamey with exquisite delicate tannins like they were just soaked fresh from the skins this morning and ultra-fine vegetally-infused acidity long, gentle and lingering out the back. Extremely gentle, delicate and pretty, but nobody's fool, there's tons of life and an almost electric feel of action without anything as bossy as drive.

Guímaro 'San Pedro' Mencía, Ribeira Sacra Mencía de los suelos pizzaras del Rio Sil



This is a selection of fruit from San Pedro de Baños, a special sub-zone sector of the Amandi sub-DO. Here, the "soils" are slate with ferrous intrusions, quartz and mica. "Soils"? To the extent they are actually soil (most accurately, bedrock!), they are extremely shallow and nutrient-poor. As with Mundin, the mixed vineyards here are about 80% Mencía and 65 years old or more. Other

varieties in the mix include Brancellao and Garnacha Tintorera. The wines are hand-picked, selected and fermented with 40% stems in 3,000L foudre and aged 18 months, then held another year in glass before release (Mundin winemaking is identical.)

Brighter, plusher red fruits, a touch of pure raspberry folds into Moroccan-spiced plums and forest floor vegetal nuances. Balances sweet and sour between compote fruit and a big dash of white pepper. The risk and thrill of life at forest's edge beguiles. If Mundin is all horizontal, like drinking a horizon, San Pedro is deep and round. It's simply the different ways that sweet-and-sour play out in distinct soils setting the scene here. More gamey to smell and taste, for sure, San Pedro's tannins are more central here, and remain centred inside



the spice-sour-edged earthy, savoury fruit, which is yet plush and fruitful. These are moebius strip wines, utterly coherent as they wander and swap between modes of fruit, earth and complex edges.

DO RIBEIRA SACRA

Heroic viticulture, heedless winemaking?

North-west of Ourense in central Galicia, Ribeira Sacra centres around the ancient mountain fortress town of Monforte de Lemos. Defined by two significant rivers, the Miño and the Sil, Ribeira Sacra pretty much marks the beginning of red wine country in Spain (imagining you enter from the west via the Atlantic). Here the granite soils of coastal Galicia starts to merge with continental schist. While there is some red wine west and south in Ribeiro, Monterrei and Rias Baixas, Ribeira Sacra is where continental climate influences allow red to take over from white.

Ribeira Sacra is breath-takingly beautiful, featuring crazy-steep deep slopes. Endless steps traverse the steep terraces from ridge-top to valley floor – a differential of hundreds of metres. It is no joke to call viticulture here 'heroic'.

Sadly, Ribeira Sacra is a little too pleased with being able to bang on about 'heroic viticulture', with little critical attention is going into whether they make delicious wine or not. There's a host of bad, bad wood in this hood. Short dunk *robles* wines abound. Shitty compound glue corks are in everything. If your *Joven* ain't wooded to all sorts of clunkiness, your *Barrica* is surely clobbered. And don't even think about ordering it if it's hubristically dressed up as 'Vino del Autor' – this will be an environmentally disastrous big heavy bottle with masses of 'winemaking' input! Right now, there is very little Ribeira Sacra wine worthy of recommendation.

DO Ribeira Sacra was commenced in 1996, like so many others in Spain, a region just now coming back to itself and attempting to discover its quality potential after the rupture of phylloxera, followed by the long bad years of bulk wine production. In that process, these are very early days, it must be admitted. The Ribeira Sacra 'Region' is listed at 2500 hectares, but only half of this is actually controlled by the CRDO, who organise 1200 hectares with 3,000 growers and nearly a hundred bodegas in production across five sub-regional zones. Production is 85% Mencía and red wine accounts for about 95% of the crop.

Soils are acidic granite and slate with traces of iron, mica and quartz. There's a little clay in some vineyards down near river level. Almost all vineyards are steep terraces, and impossible to mechanise, save for winches to haul baskets of grapes up the forbiddingly steep slopes. Until recently, vineyard workers would trudge the grapes up from the river to the *bodega* in a 35kg *cesto* (wicker basket) on their shoulders: in Guímaro's case, this was a 10km hike ... workers would make one trip in the morning and another in the afternoon.

There are 5 subregions (hand-drawn by Pedro Guímaro at right):

- Amandi, south of Monforte de Lemos, above Rio Sil, granitic and schist soils on steep south-facing terraces (home to Guímaro)
- Quiroga-Bebei, with north-facing slopes across the Sil from Amandi is the D.O.'s southern boundary
- <u>Ribeiras do Sil</u> in the east abuts Valdeorras, and have more granite in the mix with schist soils
- <u>Chantada</u>, is the western boundary of the D.O. on the left bank of the Miño as it runs south towards Ribeiro and ultimately becomes the Spanish-Portuguese border
- <u>Ribeiras do Miño</u>, is on the right bank opposite Chantada, north-west of Monforte de Lemos.

The climate varies from quite Atlantic in the west (Chantadi) to

relatively Continental in the east (Ribeiras do Sil). Depending on the sub-region, rainfall is from as little as 600mm near the Rio Sil, up to 850mm by the Miño. Autumn is cool, after a long and relatively warm Galician summer.

There are two levels of appellation in Ribeira Sacra.

- Wines labelled <u>Ribeira Sacra Summum</u> are required to be a minimum of 85% preferred varieties and 60% minimum Mencía. To be labelled varietally, eg as a Mencía, it must be at least 85% Mencía.
- The lesser category of <u>Ribeira Sacra</u> need only be 70% preferred varieties.

Yields are limited to 9.5 tonnes/hectare for red and 12 t/ha for whites.

Preferred varieties are:

Red: Mencía, Brancellao, Merenzao (Trousseau), Mouratón, Sousón, Caiño Tinto and Tempranillo. Whites: Godello, Albariño, Treixadura, Torrontés, Dona Branca and Loureira.

There are also 'authorised' (but not preferred) red varieties: Garnacha Tintorera (Alicante Bouchet) and Mouratón.

There is only one qualitative appellation: 'Barrica' indicates ageing in 500 litre oak or smaller for at least 6 months in case of reds and 3 months for whites. It's an entirely meaningless appellate.

GUÍMARO HISTORICAL TASTING NOTES Guímaro Godellos – Joven and Cepas Viejas



Godello here is finer and more minerally than wines from warmer climes up the river in Valdeorras and el Bierzo – crisp, clean lines are informed by local minerality with typical fresh orchard fruits.

Pedro gets Godello from 20 parcels of old vines, at different altitudes and orientations, mostly inter-planted with the Mencía. Some Godello remains in

the Mencía field blends, while about 4 tonnes of white are picked separately as Godello (in fact about 70% Godello with a lot of Treixadura and a little each of Doña Blanca, Albariño, Loureiro and Torrontés). This yields 3000 litres of Godello, making 3000 bottles of Joven Blanco and 1500 bottles of Cepas Viejas. 4x225 litre barrels are filled first and whatever is left becomes the stainless steel wine. The Joven is given a cold maceration with skins for a day, then has spontaneous fermentation in stainless steel for 15 days, and is aged on lees in stainless unstirred and without malo for 4 months. Cold stabilised, very lightly filtered and bottled with 15 parts free SO2. The portion fermented in Barrica rests unstirred on lees in 6 year old barricas, no malo, no racking, no battonage, bottled unfiltered after 6 months.

Guímaro Old Vines Godello 2015

A nose of barley water flavoured with orange rind and persimmon skin bitters, there's lovely richness and weight in a golden orchard fruits register. The palate is super graceful, with fruit richness fading to traces and picking up phenolic bitters as a coda lingering over quartzy-clay minerality.

Guímaro Old Vines Godello 2012

A rich and powerful wine, with golden fruit well balanced by earth and a rippling herb snap finish. Has a savoury nose of mealy lees and soft vanilla with peach skin and almond blossom. The palate is textural with savoury almond meal and viscous orchard fruit; fat lemons cut by grinding skin bitterness. There is an underlying cool minerality giving line and length and moderate acid. Old oak, musk, anise and fennel add to the sweet-savoury interplay.

Guímaro Joven Godello 2015

Smells of orange essence, hay, green grassy herbs and has a touch of lovely bitterness edging lemon drop. Apple-pear fruit is open, low, waxy and spicy, with long ripe acidity. There's plenty of richness

and power below the mineral-edged slate-smoke line. A wine of good volume and great style, easy and elegant.

Guímaro Mencía Joven 2014

Berry-bright (sour cherry, barberry) smoky-spiced red floral tea, freshened with blossom and carpasso. The palate is easy, light and savoury with great balance. The tannin is just ripe and light, almost a line or thread through the gentle fruit jelly glycerol up front, yielding to soil-fattened acidity.

Guímaro Mencía Joven 2012

Fresh and wild smelling with forest strawberry,. The palate has just enough glycerol to get the thing going, and is in a spare, foresty, scrubby register. Sere and beautiful with a light skin-grip frame, it's a pure country wine – light, earthy and clear. It's proud but not showy, and very real.

Guímaro Mencía Joven 2011

Fruit of the forest (barberry, wild strawberry and glace cherry) meet violets over a graphitic earthiness. The palate has the heady wandering like the smell of a warm day under a peppertree (pepper more as perfume than spice). The bright juicy palate has nice spice through earthy, gamey fruit with a subtle savoury texture. Fresh, softening acidity giving a really elegant and gentle line from entry to a long, sappy all-spice and mineral finish.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2015

High, wide and open, the fragrant nose of wild cherry blue bell, rose thorn and balsam is in a classic Mencía 'agrodulce' register: sweet-and-sour, and really elegant. There's also tuberose, moss, cold damp slate and a whip of granite. The agrodulce repeats in the mouth, as a rim of tannin-acid organises the gently plush, open, amenable fruit, laced with a samphire-like salted herb high note. A gorgeous, ever-so-slightly generous Ribeira Sacra, thanks to the warmth of the 2015 ripening season. It's gently earthy and bright as the sky. A billy-steel cold dark tea line faithfully tells the black slate.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2014

Liqourous cherry and some game, with wild heather and medicinal herbs. The palate lingers beautifully after releasing from a mid-palate granitic grip.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2013

Deep, dark violet florals, with pollen above and blood below and scrubby tree branch balsamics everywhere in the mix. Savoury, carnal, yet gentle, Meixeman's gamey-pastille fruit opens to wild spice and blossom prettiness out back, everywhere riddled with brushy botanicals.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2012

Spicy red fruits, pretty strawberry flowers wild raspberries and lots of cold rock. Lighter and fresher than Capeliños and Pombeiras, with pomegranate juice nicely gripped in a delicate tannin frame.

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2011

Bluebells, country air, electric dirt, wild cherry and wildflower hedges – marjoram, lavender and more... Terrific composure and subtle complexity rule nose and palate. Silky fruit is run through with serious crunch – there's a nervous rip of textural acidity from end to end, gaining layered ultra-fine tannin and perfectly tucked in delicate oak. A small masterpiece? No doubt ...!

Guímaro 'Finca Meixeman' Single Vineyard Mencía 2010

Spicy black lozenge fruit with a lift of shiso, field herb and autumn vine leaves. Palate mingles licorice, leathery black cherry and sweet raspberry with slatey-mineral rock, the meaty and the vegetal in a long, fine structure. Holding its cards close to the chest at this stage.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2016

Steel-brewed fruit tea with striking angles, slate-edged tart squished berries, scrubby brush herb botanicals, spiced morcilla bloodiness is light with all the rose thorns and a titch of soy.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2015

Only 3x500 litre puncheons made.

Satin perfumed, with richness, great structure and spice. Red berry fruit, red florals too, with the typical billy tea tin tang, but here with a peachy-fleshy outreach, hibiscus floral and plummy, but never wandering too far from the steely underpinning memory of the slate. Marvellously agrodulce, sweet and sour twitch and swap around a fleshy and fluid core of delicately floral, evanescent fruit.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2014

Black raspberry on a black metal minerals, the fruit is soft with floral lift and carries touches of lavender and thyme. The palace is delicately oily, expressing just a touch of pithy weight over a delicate schist soil ashiness. The mid-palate is round and the wine has gentle fleshy-spicy reach, with a touch of fresh apple crunch.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2013

Rock, rock and rock – the mineral aspect finds its greatest expression in Pombeiras. Sweet, vegetal spicy tannin in a mineral palate. Structured but with good perfume release and nice easy run on the palate. Delicate glycerol, fine with very good integration of spicy oak and delicate lingering sweet fruit finish. Integration? Check that graphite character in the mouth – bet you can't decide if it comes from rock or oak ...!

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2013

Pickled rhubarb and konbu, scrubby herbs moss and forest floor, and those 'exotic spice aromatics' (Asiatic/Moorish), pomegranate ... solid and for-square, deep and wide, fantastic fan back half draws back in thanks to wonderfully twinned tannin-acid train of mid-impact, perfectly judged, deftly effective without shutting anything out.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2012

Mineral fresh lift on nose, with ink, game, blood, rose petal and field florals. Palate has great volume, savoury with black pepper-spiced tannins.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2011

Smells like an old heavy red velvet curtain at your grandmother's with lots of exotic spice – cardamom, anise, peppercorn, pimiento. Liquorous fruit is beautifully textured with fabulous herbaceous tannins working slowly along the boysenberry and spice palate. Layered with tobacco and elderflower, it's vibrant, energetic, vivid, alive.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2011

The spirit of the wild bear in a forest ...

Wild strawberry and violets, subtle chocolate, deeply textured and embedded in lovely damp earth aromas. Perfectly integrated oak with tiny sweet plums, leather, heathery herbs and delightful spice.

Guímaro 'Pombeiras' Single Vineyard Mencía 2010

Whole bunchy aromatics of sap, pepper and incense rise from the glass. The palate has a purity of red cherry and cranberry fruit with violets and a silky powerful mid-palate core. There are aromas of mineral earth, truffle and forest floor. The wine keeps evolving every time you look into the glass. Amazingly ethereal and incredibly sexy.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2016

Tobacco and sage, it is heather more than rose, but some of that too. Both nose and palate have a tangible breadth (well short of heft, however) with a touch of meat and chocolate.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2015

Here there is a snarl of testosterone and some meaty grunt, flowers turn to briars, a touch of brick dust adobe tells of Capeliños's clay intrusion and yes the steel can to make billy tea remains in the back letting everyone know that the schist is the boss. Despite a butch suggestion, this crackles with witch hazel, tea leaf and black raspberry and is a remarkably calm and composed unit. The palate is a unified field, utterly harmonious, so laid back you could be fooled that nothing much was happening at all ...

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2014

Leads with root vegetables and a big hit of dried mixed herbs. The palate is mid-weight (which is plush for here), with fleshy vegetal tannins giving plenty of structure (compared to the satiny waft of Pombeiras). Closes out with fascinating spicy sourness winding out of the earthy tannins.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2013

Fine cherry fruit, bramble tea, strawberry flowers and old roses – delicate wine with crushed rock, a squeak of spice and a nice tannin fuzz touch. All delicate, all about balance and harmony with fruit, earth, tannin and acid all interwoven, an integral, quiet conversation.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2013

Soy, dark rose, cold dark rock, a touch of moss and humussy soil warm depth below. Nicely edgy, but only at the edge, the mid-palate is delicately juicy-succulent, perfectly ripe and utterly pared back, great nutty tannin textured like a squozen rose thorn. With Capeliños, the tannin-acid helps the back third open out, whereas with Pombeiras it provides equally what that wine needs, not expansion but definition, restraint and closure ... here the wine squeaks out and back to affect great length and persistence of flavour despite a relatively meagre (albeit perfect) fruit frame earlier on in the journey.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2012

It's very well composed with cool blue fruits over cold rock, a lovely touch of bloodiness and nice ferrous earthy undertone.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2011

Blueberry skinsy fruit, with floral lift, barnyard and pimiento over cold dark rock and the lovely smell of soft ripe fruit tannin from old vines, gently extracted. Wonderfully composed, it's bloody and dense with glorious dark fruit and inherent 'cut' from full, long vegetal tannins yielding to a mouthfeel of stones, stones and more stones as the palate wanders off, long and fine.

Guímaro 'Capeliños' Single Vineyard Mencía 2010

Fleshy, purple-gamey nose with decadent rose florals cut with vegetal blackberry canes, glyceric cherry sliced through with minerality. There's a beautiful velvet smell of mature tannin, like an old tapestry curtain. Long, caponata-fleshy slick, slinky and supple tannin palate is soft and leads to a very graceful exit, textural tannin flow given balsamic grip and finishing with gentle spice-acid crunch. The vegetality of 2010 compares nicely with the ripeness of 2011. It's a smoky, coolly mineral reflection of place. Intense, stylish, harmonious with satiny exotic perfume everywhere.

Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía

A south-east facing schist vineyard, which lies beneath Finca Pombeiras, facing over a ridge towards Miexeman and Capeliños (below Meixeman). Technically, this is a Niepoort wine, as that's the

company ID on the label. It's a Guímaro-owned vineyard, which Pedro makes in conjunction with Dirk Niepoort. It's marketed by the Niepoort machine as part of Dirk's swag of co-production 'projects'. Mencía with about 30% Garnacha Tintorera (Alicante Bouchet).80% whole bunch fermented in small foudre for 60 days; malo and lees ageing in foudre, then 12 months in old French barrique. All the whole bunch makes for serious wine needing time to evolve. 4-6 barrels only.

Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía 2013

Beaune-like Burgundian — boozed, brambly fruit of the forest with a deep, cool graphitic sense (slate or oak, or both in harmony). Fantastically integrated, harmonious winemaking. Lots of spice with the slug of graphitic slate in a long, cool gliding finish. Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía 2014 Sweet and sour 'agridulce' beet-rich fruit, tightly wound and spicy, very long working deep and complete into the back palate.

Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía 2011

Floral with lots of 'cowpat' gaminess, wild rose, rosehips and bitter herb nose. Palate has a lovely fresh cast, ashy tannins clearly reflect the slate, florals, nice sense of chew with outstanding mouthfeel and balance.

Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía 2010

Beaune-like Burgundian — boozed, brambly fruit of the forest with a deep, cool graphitic sense (slate or oak, or both in harmony). Fantastically integrated, harmonious winemaking. Lots of spice with the slug of graphitic slate in a long, cool gliding finish.

Guímaro-Niepoort 'Ladredo' Mencía 2009

Serious, with chewy oak and tannin heart still to soften into cherry liquor fruit. Dense, earthy wine which loves the chance to breathe and round out. Opens to floral rosehip, medicinal cherry juice, black rock aromatics and chewy oak and tannin working together nicely.

¹ Spanish wine is scattered across several regional and historical national language groups. Here, the word *Adega* is our introduction to *Galego* (as spelt in Galician, or *Gallego* in *Castellano*), the dialect/language of Galicia. *Adega* translates to *Bodega* in 'Spanish'. In this text, we refer to Rio Sil and Rio Miño, and in doing so, we are preferencing *Castellano*. In *Galego*, rivers are feminine, hence the name of the Albariño appellation, *Rías Baixas*, or low rivers, referring to all the estuarine water at the Atlantic coast.