

Jose Gil

Vinos del pueblos San Vicente and Briones, la Rioja



Jose Gil is the village-specific Rioja wine project of husband-and-wife viticultural and winemaking team, Jose and Vicki Gil. The Jose Gil wines are our window into the north-central Riojan village San Vicente (with a bonus wine from Briones village). The full title of this *pueblo* is San Vicente de la Sonsierra, but this gets us into murky waters, for 'de la Sonsierra' buys into the *basque* versus *castellano* division in la Rioja. While culturally important, this division plays out badly in wine logic, under-pinning the bogus sub-regional divisions of Rioja Alta, Alavesa and Baja. We'll just keep it to San Vicente, short and simple. These wines are the best expressions of place we've yet seen from San Vicente.

What to expect?

Great, terroir-specific wines made by a committed, hard-working wife-and-husband team. Atlantic blue note and tannin silkiness melded with Mediterranean red note, earthen and gravel-tanned aspects. Wines you can't find in Haro, nor Lantziego, and certainly wines you can't get from a factory banging out yet more fucking *reservas*.

The beginning of the project is a *vino de pueblo* of micro-volume (especially considering the lovely low price!). In 2019 the project consisted of just 1500 bottles, blending four little vineyards: La Canoca, La Camino de Ribas, San Martín and El Bardallo, which are planted to Tempranillo field-blended with a small percentage of Garnacha and Viura. The 2000 vintage will see the advent of *parcela*-specific bottlings and a more realistic total production of 6,500 bottles.



Jose and Vicky

Jose is from a multi-generational line of Gils working their family's Rioja winery, so it's kinda in his blood. Vicki previously worked in the Bilbao restaurant trade. Jose and Vicky started their project as a hobby with two releases in 2016. Prior to that, Jose had been doing small patch/small batch experiments with non-industrial practises within the family winery: no herbicides, yield control, sulphur reduction, whole clusters, foot treading, and experimenting with the impact of location choices for ageing (the family bodega versus underground in the town castle). Frost caused them to skip 2017, but they successfully made fresh Atlantic wines in 2018 and more rounded 2019s from that warm but also frosted harvest. By 2020, they were finally able to commit entirely to their wine business, working it full time as a couple, and considered themselves practising *cosecheros* – working the full circle from pruning to label design across their six hectares (1ha rented, the rest owned). In 2020 they also shifted from fermenting in 300L to little 500L 'foudres'.

San Vicente

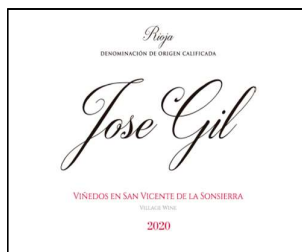
San Vicente sits in between Labastida (just 5km to its west) and Laguardia (15 km to the east), in the heart of the emblematic progression from the Atlantic end of Rioja to the Mediterranean, from Haro to Logroño. The drive under the peaks of the Sierra Cantabria (specifically the Sierra de Toloño) is some of the most gorgeous road work you can do in any wine country.

A typical geographic feature here in Rioja are conical Tors rising out of the valley floor, and which wouldn't look out of place in Monument Valley – they certainly give a medieval wild west look. San Vicente is the most spectacularly-sited of several such hill peak towns scattered across the valley floor as the Ebro River winds its way east (Briones is another such). The village started out as a walled fortress housing Navarrans within the Davalillo castle and is now home to about 1,200 folk. To its north are tiny Riojan mountain pueblos, Peciña and Rivas de Tereso, which are considered part of the San Vicente municipality.

Fun fact? Along with Ábalos, it's the only wine village of Rioja on the left bank of the Ebro. Unless you've been there and understand the crazy mutations of the local orography, you can't possibly understand what a meaningless fun fact this is!

JOSE GIL *vino de pueblo* San Vicente

Village wine made from four vineyards located in the highlands around San Vicente, at an altitude of 500m and above, from different sites and soils: La Canoca, Camino de Ribas, San Martín and El Bardallo. Tempranillo, 20% Grenache and a small percentage of Viura. Manual harvest. 100% destemmed; all the plots are made separately, then blended to bottle. Ageing is in used 300L barrels for around ten months in the medieval cellar of San Vicente's Castle Davalillo. Bottled in November the year after harvest. 2019 gave only 1,500 bottles; from 2020 there are 3,600. Australian allocation 180 bottles.



Very approachable, even before decanting. Opens with a deep, bass note perfume of darker flowers (violet, etc), blue fruits and an earthiness that keeps it grounded. Very open, not in a simple way, but rather vibrant with a subtle, strong energy. Middle weight. Classic red and blue fruits, and clear about the garnacha in the mix. Raspberry and damson plum, red and blue. Silky, open weave texture, classy long tannins, super balance. Oak? Didn't notice it. Made with a set (or sets) of very sure, careful hands by the feel of it.

(note by TSA guest super-taster, Dave Worthington).

Or, by Scott

Cherry tree boughs, vital, purple fruits, boysenberry, juniper, olive leaves, river silt, warm dry spices, really nicely modulated tannin and fructose, mid weight without heft, savoury but alert. Front loaded with tannin and then releases like spring water.

JOSE GIL *Vino de parcela la Canoca* (Paraje la Canoja, San Vicente)

A note on the new place name schema in la Rioja: for the first time, we can have village wines, *Vinos de Pueblo*, in this instance San Vicente. More specifically, we can then have special places within the villages, and these are called *Parajes* (the same term applies in Bierzo and in Priorat, where in Catalan it's *Paratje*, and this equates to the *Pagos* of Marco de Jerez, the *Crus* of Barolo and France's *Lieus-dits*). Then, within the places are the special vineyards, or *Parcelas*. In Jose and Vicky's case, it happens that three of their vineyards have identical *Parcela* and *Paraje* names ... let's assume that's because they are the definitive, peak example vineyards with the place!



La Canoca is a goblet-planted vineyard about 50 years old, at an altitude of 540 metres. The soil of la Canoca is silt with a high percentage of limestone, surrounded by aromatic herbs such as fennel, thyme, rosemary ... planted to Tempranillo with a small percentage of Viura. Harvested by hand, 100% destemmed. Aged 10 months in 500L French oak in the castle cellar. Bottled in September 2021. Limited production of 600 bottles. Australian allocation 18 bottles.

JOSE GIL *Vino de parcela 'Camino de Ribas'* (Paraje la Cóncova, San Vicente)



A 130 year old goblet-planted vineyard in the area of La Cóncova, at an altitude of 610 metres. Sandy soil on sandstone rock with calcium carbonate stratas. Strong exposure to the north wind from the Sierra Cantabria mountain range, surrounded by many scrubland grasses (lavender, thyme, rosemary...). Tempranillo with a high percentage of Garnacha and a small percentage of Viura. Harvested by hand, 100% destemmed. Aged 10 months in 500L French oak in the castle cellar.

Bottled in September 2021. 620 bottles. Australian allocation 18 bottles.

JOSE GIL *Vino de parcela el Bardallo* (Paraje Bardallo, San Vicente)



Goblet-planted dry grown bush-vines, about 40 years old, located in Bardallo, at an altitude of 515m, with northeast orientation and calcareous soil. Tempranillo with a small percentage of Viura. Harvested by hand, 100% destemmed. Aged 10 months in 500L French oak, bottled in September 2021. Limited production of 650 bottles. Australian allocation 24 bottles.

JOSE GIL *Viña el Fugas* (single vineyard located in Briones)

This is a goblet-planted single vineyard over 100 years old, located in Briones, at an altitude of 550m. Clay soil with calcareous gravels and some vegetation cover crop. Tempranillo, 30% Garnacha and a small percentage of white varieties (Garnacha Blanca, Palomino, Viura ...). Harvested by hand, 100% destemmed. Aged for 10 months in 500L French oak barrels in San Vicente. Bottled in September 2021. Limited production of 650 bottles. Australian allocation 24 bottles.

