

## M. Antonio de la Riva (by Willy Pérez and Ramiro Ibañez)

### *A project of recuperating vinous history in el Marco de Jerez*

Manuel Antonio de la Riva (pictured) was a winery in the historical 'Sherry Triangle', founded in 1858 by the eponymous Manuel Antonio de la Riva. Located on the famous Arcos Street in Jerez, de la Riva enjoyed great commercial success due to the quality of its wines, initially sourced from Manuel's vineyards in Pago Marcharnudo (Viñas La Riva and Sabel<sup>1</sup>). More than a century after Manuel Antonio established the winery, it was bought by Domecq, who added the *solejares* from La Riva to some of their best wines such as the 51-1<sup>a</sup> (considered a historical wine from Jerez). Regrettably, with the decline and devaluation of Jerez after the 1960s, Domecq slowly began eliminating the brands of La Riva until, finally, it ceased to exist as a winery and the brand names were owned by Beam International.



At the same moment, Luis Pérez (founder of Bodegas Luis Pérez) began his professional trajectory, working as a winemaker in several of the Domecq subsidiaries (Blázquez, La Riva, Florido, Hermanos y Sancho). Luis learned the vineyards, practices and wines of the de La Riva brands just before they were deleted. With the historical knowledge of Luis to guide them, next generation winemakers Willy Pérez (son of Luis) and Ramiro Ibañez decided to recuperate the brand and its historical wines before they became entirely forgotten. Willy and Ramiro bought back the rights to the de la Riva brands in 2017, and have since negotiated access to some of the famous plots which were source to them (and which had since become anonymous fruit sources for un-aspirational Sherries), in Balbaina Alta, and particularly Macharnudo.

The heart of the project is recuperating the M Antonio de la Riva Blanco.

Historically, this came from a single plot, 'el Notario', in the 'Majuelo' vineyard within Pago Macharnudo. It's partnered by the de la Riva Fino from Pago Balbaína Alta. Ramiro and Willy also include in the de la Riva family a range of wines united by their specificity – rareness and expression of place, as well as a certain pre-modern approach to growing and making. These other expressions include a Manzanilla from Pago Miraflores Baja and a Manzanilla Pasada grown in Pago Balbaína Alta Sanluqueño. There are also one-off *almacenista* bottlings which include an extremely rare bottling of Oloroso Viejísimo from Pago Balbaina Baja (Puerto), a Moscatel Viejísimo from Pago Loma Baja (Chipiona), and a PX Viejísimo from Pago Macharnudo.

### **M.ANTONIO de la RIVA Macharnudo Palomino Blanco**



The de la Riva Macharnudo Blanco recuperates a great wine based in the 'el Majuelo' vineyard of Pago Macharnudo<sup>2</sup>; a historical wine of el Marco de Jerez which disappeared under Domecq in the 1980s. The soils are *Tosca cerrada* with a high level of diatomaceous fossils promoting great freshness, at 115m altitude, 18km in from the Atlantic, in a mixed *poniente-levante* setting. The fruit (Palomino 84) is hand picked, with individual bunches selected in repeated passes over 2 months, and gains a degree or so of alcohol from an 8 hour *soleo*. It's then whole bunch pressed (only half the juice is taken). An ambient spontaneous fermentation in bota precedes 10-11 months ageing under a film of *flor*. It's bottled at 13.5 abv, 5.5 ta, and there are only 400 bottles/year, neither filtered, nor fined. It faithfully reflects the style of structured white wine elaborated under this brand in the past.

*Deep, and brilliant brassy gold; brilliant in mouth too. A biscuit of chalk, straw in flint, deeply textural, spicy with a touch of smoke and whisper of saffron, lanolin, deep long and slow. Ripe, but fresh with saline.*

<sup>1</sup> De la Riva's most famous brands were: Tres Palmas, Macharnudo La Riva Fino, La Riva Pedro Ximénez Superior, Amontillado Extra 1819, Amontillado Fino Copa, Amontillado Guadalupe, Macharnudo Oloroso Viña Sabel, Viejo Oloroso 1830, Manzanilla Los Caireles.

<sup>2</sup> Willy and Ramiro are able to source fruit from el Majuelo, and they own an adjacent parcel, 'San Cayetano', which sits above Majuela, facing back towards Puerto.

## M.ANTONIO de la RIVA Balbaina Alta *Fino*



*Fino* 'La Riva' comes from the 'Campanilla' vineyard growing on *Albariza Parda* within Pago Balbaina Alta, at 65m and 10km in from the Atlantic. Campanilla is 3.5 hectares in the north of Balbaina, and source for spectacularly delicate *Fino* material. The wine is bottled at 15% natural abv after 10 years of dynamic ageing, and only a single *saca* per year is taken, as there are just 5 botas distributed as one *criadera* and the *solera*. With such occasional withdrawal and refreshment, it effectively unifies aspects of dynamic and static ageing.

*Bracing and super fresh, it's alive and floral, like a sup on briny branch-water crazed with sour herb. It clearly reflects Jerez's coastal influence and the palate is vertical with deep, deep chalk. Within are walnut-amber tones, spicy wild honey, aged straw and a high level of nutty, complex aldehyde through the sea breeze salinity.*

## M.ANTONIO de la RIVA *Manzanilla Fina* de Pago Miraflores Baja

Grown on a combination of *lentejuelas* and *lustrillos* in the Casilla Verde vineyard, within the Sanluqueño Pago, Miraflores Baja, just 5km in from the Atlantic coast. The grapes have great acidity and a very slow evolution. Dynamically raised in a system of two *criadera* and a *solera* by *almacenista* Luis del Rio.

*Ash, oil, citrus, intense but fresh. Highly saline, light to finish with good body and expression mid-palate.*

## M.ANTONIO de la RIVA *Manzanilla Pasada* de Balbaina Alta

This wine is from a Jerez Pago, handled in Sanlúcar. The fruit is from 'La Blanquita' vineyard within Balbaína Alta, 9km in from the sea at about 65m and the most coastal vineyard of the Jerez zone.

The wine has an average age of about 10 years (twenty botas were left without withdrawal and freshening for 6 years). Only 2,000 bottles of *Pasada* will be drawn, before this *solera* is allowed to naturally on-mature until it is *Amontillado*.

*Straw yellow. Very elegant. In the mouth it is creamy and saline, with a bitter aftertaste and characteristic deep perfume of old straw.*

## M.ANTONIO de la RIVA Oloroso Viejisima Balbaina Baja (Puerto de Santa Maria)



'La Riva' Oloroso is 80 years old, 22% abv, 14.8 g/l TA, 18 grams glycerol.

This incredible old wine comes from the *Tosca cerrada* soils of the Limbo and Santa Ana vineyards of Pago Balbaina Baja (Puerto), 8km in from the Atlantic<sup>3</sup>. It was raised in Puerto de Santa Maria by Cuvillo y Cia in the 1930s. The house got into financial trouble and traded wine for payment of a debt to an architect, who then left it un-managed in a Jerez warehouse for 40 years, by which time 50% had evaporated. 1,300 litres were bottled in the one-off *saca* of September 2017.

*Volatile, salted licorice, leather, slightly sweet, fermented black bean, agrodulce, aggressively edgy! Thick and thin as well as sweet and sour ... crazy shit.*

## M.ANTONIO de la RIVA



Another extinct relic, this was made by the now defunct Bodegas Hermanos Florido in Chipiona. The fruit comes from the 'Pico Plata' vineyard within Pago Loma Baja and grows in *Cucanoches*, a sand over clay soil. Florido Hermanos was purchased by Pedro Domecq in the 1970s, along with other well-known quality small producers, such as Agustín Blázquez, Sancho and La Riva. Two members of the Florido family managed to stash a family reserve of two ¼-sized botas. Forty years of neglect later, only 50 litres remained! It has had roughly 40 years each of dynamic and then static ageing. In October 2017 a single *saca* realised 120 half bottles. Total acidity: 11.90, 15% abv, 420 g/l residual sugar.

<sup>3</sup>This close to the coast, most of the soils are *lustrillos* and *barrios*, but these vineyards are just high enough to protrude pure *albariza*.