

Telmo Rodriguez, DO Rueda: 'Basa' and 'El Transistor' Verdejos

Bush vines of Verdejo, nurtured organically and very low cropped (while the government commits "bureaucratic vandalism" paying 'improvement' grants to convert old bush-vines to high yield trellises – Pablo Eguzkiza)

DO Rueda

1.5 hours north-west of Madrid, the Rueda appellation is located on a high (700-800 metres), sandy-soiled plateau framing the Duero River, west of Valladolid, on the fringe of DO Toro. Climatically Continental with extreme temperatures in summer and winter, Rueda is also within reach of the Atlantic's cool/damp influence, which provides frequent rain in autumn and spring.

Rueda is a white wine-only appellation. Verdejo is the main local variety, accompanied by the international Sauvignon Blanc and a smattering of native Viura (Macabeo). While single variety Verdejo wines are common, the variety is often blended with Sauvignon Blanc and Viura: Sauvignon enhancing tropical aromatics and adding length and snap; Viura contributing a touch of acidity. For a wine to carry the DO's 'Rueda Superior' tag it must contain at least 70% Verdejo. Pinks and reds in the region, from Tempranillo usually, are declassified as country wine.

The majority of Rueda's soil is heavy clay and over-productive. The zone of La Seca, adjacent to Rio Duero is a stoney fluvial plateau, with deep 'pebbly' (the 'pebbles' are bigger than a man's hands) sand over chalky clay, promoting higher quality fruit while giving balanced humidity in the soil for the vine to draw on in the heat. Here, around the Duero tributary Rio Archete, Pablo and Telmo work 9 different parcels.

Verdejo

Having developed in geographical isolation, Verdejo is considered autochthonous rather than as a clonal variant of Verdelho, with which it shares a somewhat glyceric palate and similar tropical fruit profile to Verdelho. In Rueda's sandy soils, Verdejo has evolved into an elegant, spicy variety with gentle acidity.

Telmo Rodriguez 'Basa' Verdejo



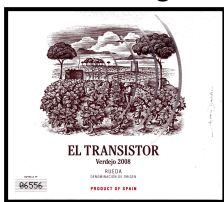
Basa is based on organically-grown 40 year-old bush-vines grown at 750 metres altitude, and cropped at about 1kg/vine. Basa is all about perfectly balanced sugar/acid/tannin in the berry which is then carefully nurtured into balanced wine, with no additions in the winery (save for a small amount of necessary sulphur at bottling). A great all-rounder with food, Basa's primary attribute is natural acidity, so it doesn't get cloying, metallic or soapy ... no matter how many bottles are gone

through! Basa is a not-so-fruity Rueda Verdejo with 20% Viura in the mix finessing extra palate nerve. Verdejo, like Godello (and some folks do confuse the two) tends to be front-palate heavy and a bit vague at the back; Viura, while relatively characterless is an excellent natural dilutant and serves to bring Verdejo down and stretch it out. Basa used to feature a little Sauvignon Blanc in the blend to add extra length, nerve and snap to the finish; however, the lessons learned from big sister 'el Transistor' (read below) have helped Telmo and Pablo texture and lengthen the Verdejo to the point where the Sauvignon in blend is not necessary. Basa is fermented in a mix of large wooden vats, concrete and stainless steel tanks.

TELMO RODRIGUEZ 'Basa' Verdejo, DO Rueda

Now without any Sauvignon, this gorgeous dry-grown Verdejo is blended with a little of floral Viura to lighten and lift. Basa is lovely, uncomplicated, and texturally pleasing. Basa smells of feijoa and fresh-cut pear with the faintest tropical wash and a gentle green herb tuck. The palate is mid-weight and of good length with a great mix of fruit flesh, earth and gently nutty tannin running out on natural acid. Textured without overt fructose, it's savoury, with minerality and good length, and perfectly blends richness and line.

Telmo Rodriguez 'El Transistor' Verdejo



El Transistor is selected from two old patches of pre-phylloxera dry-grown bush vine Verdejo which produce deeply flavoured, textural wines. One parcel is the classical stony clay soil of Rueda's plateau, the other is sandy soil down near the river. Why the name El Transistor? Telmo's Verdejo vines are plagued by wild boars (see the back label) coming out of the adjacent forest to feast at night on the near-ripe tangy green-gold fruit. To ward off the pigs, Telmo and Pablo decided to place a radio in the vineyard, banging out a truly Spanish transistor racket - odd, but effective!

Even more unique with this wine is Telmo's theory of 'disappearing winemaking'. Telmo and Pablo have, of course, performed acts of 'winemaking' to achieve a Verdejo as textural as this, however they are very keen not to put a winemaker's stamp on - to leave the wine un-signed. To achieve this, fermentation and ageing are in a variety of stainless steel, amphorae, concrete vats, concrete BD eggs and French oak (new and old, large and small). Each influences the wine but all cancel one another out in terms of legible artefact. Tranny's first vintage was 2008; Basa has benefited enormously in textural terms since, which was a huge motivation behind making el Transistor - to learn more about Verdejo and give back to Basa, for so long the uncomplaining cash cow of Telmo and Pablo's enterprises.

El Transistor 2014

El Transistor' is luscious, voluminous, spicy and textural. Rounded with lovely texture, it's a very calm and assured wine. El Transistor smells and tastes of golden apples, apple cucumber, custard apple and baked quince with a squirt of lemon and a lash of sand reflecting the Rueda soil. There's a beautiful earthiness throughout, it's golden and generous, cut by absolutely fabulous tart, spicy fruit-skin extract. Full, rich and round, it also goes on and on and on.