

## **Luis Anxo 'VIÑA de MARTIN' and 'TORNO dos PASOS' DO Ribeiro (Arnoia Valley zone)**

Luis Anxo Rodriguez Vasquez, hereafter, Luis Anxo, calls his project Viña de Martin. The bodega name is taken from his oldest parcel of vines. The bodega is in the little village of Paixon, south of Ribadavia in the relatively dry Arnoia Valley, under the highest peak of the region, La Carniza. Luis was president of DO Ribeiro, for 5 years until 2012, and is largely responsible for the shift towards quality and local authenticity of late in Ribeiro. His family's wine-making tale stands in for all of Galicia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Economic pressures during the Civil War and beyond led to the abandonment of local grapes in favour of Palomino and Garnacha (high yield, low value maths held sway: 15 tonnes of Palomino at \$1 kilo versus 5 tonnes of Treixadura at \$2 says "grow Palomino"! ). Local genetics and historical viticultural ways were simply lost. When Luis turned his mind to replanting to local Brancellao genetics, his father was of no use, having farmed during the abandonment, and it was Luis's grandmother who was able to help with remembered viticultural folklore.



Luis has four hectares comprised of 25 small parcels scattered up the steep slopes above his bodega (which sits on a rise above Rio Arnoia). These are 60% white and 40% red vines planted on 'Sabrego' - very poor granitic sands. It's a very cold area and needs long sun exposure to attain proper ripening. The vineyards face south and south-west down to the river, from 150-250 metres altitude.

Consistent with history, most vines are 30 years old: the main white vineyards for Viña de Martin were planted by Luis in 1984 (early in Spain's viticultural re-awakening), with a few small parcels of 40 and one of 100 year old bush vines. These old vine parcels may contain as few as 100 vines. The white vines are mainly Treixadura, with a bit of local Lado for adding acidity, 10% of Albariño to promote aroma and a negligible amount of Torrontés. The red wine plantings, 'Torna dos Pasos' date from 1990 and are 50% Brancellao, 25% Caiño Longo, 20% Ferrol and 5% Caiño Redondo. Younger plantings yield 2kg/vine, older vines about 1kg.

Luis has a second sub-regional holding – 1.5 hectares in Ribadavia the main town, to the north of Paixon. Here, Luis makes a separate wine called 'Viña Teixeira' as an expression of the Avia Valley sub-zone, and it's a fascinating little project. The vineyard is a sinewy, downhill transect through 9 parcels over 8 levels in a connected line from high hilltop to river flank. The vines are around 30 years old, planted to 95% Treixadura, 3% Godello, 2% Albariño. Luis purchased this tract in 2010. The first release of this wine was the 2011 vintage.

Luis has been making the Arnoia wines since 1988. The wines are extraordinary. Subtle, slow and gentle to unfold and built for many years of bottle evolution. They are the epitome of contemplation wines. Those looking for bang, boom, winemaking or things expressible in a 100 point scale, look elsewhere. If you are happy to wait long by the river however, something extraordinarily pleasurable will surely drift by you.

### **Luis makes 4 wines from Arnoia and 1 from Avia.**

The Arnoia wines are two whites and two reds:

'Os Pasos' and 'Escolma' are Treixadura-predominant white blends incorporating a little each of Albariño, Lado and Torrontés. 'Os Pasos' simple means 'here' or 'this place'.

Escolma' denotes 'selection'.

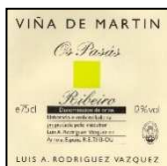
'A Torna dos Pasos' and 'A Torna dos Pasos Escolma' are red blends of Brancellao, Caiño and Ferrol. 'A Torna dos Pasos' is a variant of 'os Pasos', ie is a pointing term, which translates as 'a little part of here'.



### **LUIS ANXO 'Viña de Martin' Treixadura Blanco blend**

This spends 2 months unstirred on lees, no malo, aged 12 months in stainless, but I think it rude talking about winemaking in front of a wine such as this.

#### LUIS ANXO 'Viña de Martin' Treixadura blend



*Menthol herbs in sand aromas carry cereals, waxed florals, green herbs, and a tang of steel. To smell and taste, there is a lovely in and out green-gold interplay; the cereal kicks in at the front of the mouth, going barley water, then steel and then grassy acid. There's lovely roundness even as the acid draws out ... the round-straight tension is wonderful. At no point fruity as such, yet never fruit-deficient. Super.*

### **VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos Escolma' Blanco**

Harvested at about 1kg/vine, it's fermented and aged in a 500 litre wood on lees with some stirring. Consisting of a barrel each of six different parcels. Luis prefers not to have malo, but some barrels insist on going through.

#### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos Escolma' Blanco



*With ripe straw and barley sugar over fine sandy earth perfume, it's an extremely subtle wine. The palate has good concentration and is quietly rich but totally savoury with the sand soils clearly shown. Fine in the mouth, with a long slow release it's extremely complex with spice and acid in a sandy bitter amalgam leading to a gentle long and cleansing finish.*

### **LUIS ANXO 'A Torna dos Pasas' Brancellao Tinto blend**

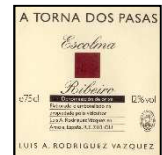
Aged a year in 1-5 year old 300 litre wood. Un-filtered, not cold stabilised. The reds come from the lower slopes above Rio Arnoia, and weigh in at around 12% a/v.

#### LUIS ANXO 'A Torna dos Pasas' Tinto



*This has a great nose: lovely ashen rose-floral red fruits, with bracken, garnet spices (toasted red fenugreek) and a hint of roast meat. There's a touch of saline at the rim of a gently round palate, beautifully balancing fruit, ash, flesh and spice with gentle tannins sloping outwards and yielding to the saline-acid fresh rim. Super.*

### **VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto**



#### VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto 2011

*Has a deep, oily-rich nose with decadent florals and is really carnal: meat, hung meat, gamey meat, yielding at end to roses and spices, haunting, succulent, wicked, bold, sensuous. Spiced leather carries multiple dancing exotic, savoury perfumes.*

### **Luis Anxo Ribadavia 'Viña Teixeira'**

This warmer site above the village of Ribadavia, makes a riper, fleshier Treixadura, which Luis hits a little harder with air and ages in foudre to soften.

#### Luis Anxo Ribadavia 'Viña Teixeira' 2013

*Herbal, with a touch of river water; humid, Vietnamese streets, little green fruits. Has a lovely long, lingering tubular carry and a sensational amount of spicy power at the finish.*

There are also a couple of occasional wines called Eidos Ermos (in local dialect, these are 'uncared for' wines), Luis's off-cuts.

#### Luis Anxo 'Eidos Ermos' Tinto 14

*Vegetal and ashy red fruits are softly mature with a purple perfume hint. It's immediate, with a lovely rose garden floral in dark red and spicy spectrum. Palate is fleshy-vegetal, damp soil and mature red berries, crunchy tannin but not much of it, nicely spiced and layered.*

## **DO Ribeiro**

### **Treixadura country**

Ribeiro is another young DO attempting to re-establish a sense of local and authentic. The use of personality yeasts mars the scene, but there are also several competent and assured producers making delicate granite-influenced savoury whites based on Treixadura. There's also a genuine superstar in the form of Luis Anxo, making probably the greatest white wines in all of Galicia.



### **Climate and Geography**

The region is temperate, damp and hilly, influenced from the west by Atlantic winds. Rainfall is about 1000 mm/annum. Altitudes for viticulture range from 100-700 metres. Three-fingered (like an elongated Y), the region is a constellation of valleys, each named after their river. Each is bound by a different Sistema, or mountain range, heavily forested with Galician Pine, Caravallo Oak and Chestnut. Rio Avia in the east has granitic schist soils and is home to good producers such as San Clodio and Sameiras. The Miño to the west is granitic clay and here the top producer is Rodriguez y Canovas. The Arnoia Valley south of Ribadavia is home to Luis Anxo. It has granite, clay and sand soils and is home to the relatively rare local white variety, Lado.

### **Grapes, Vines, Regulations**

All rules in Ribeiro are currently in flux as the association works towards quality and authenticity and tackles its historical over-production of dull exogenous varieties. Like Monterrei to the south, after the scourge of phylloxera authenticity was abandoned in favour of easy yields from the invader from Jerez, Palomino.

There are two types of fruit legal currently. Autochthonous varieties such as Treixadura, Torrontés, Loureira, Albariño, Godello, Caiño Blanco and Lado whites, with Brancellao, Souson, Mencia and Ferrón tintos. Historically, imported varieties, particularly 'Jerez' (Palomino) dominated, being 90% of the plantings in Ribeiro. However, the past 20 years has seen a reversion towards authenticity, which will prove irresistible, and currently sees Palomino pegged back to 50% of production. White dominates, with only 10% of production being red wine. Interestingly, like Rias Baixas, prior to the rupture by phylloxera, it was predominantly a red wine growing region.

The CRDO and growers are working towards quality. Maximum yields, once a whopping 30 tonnes/hectare, have recently been trimmed to 18 for 'Jerez' and 12 for Ribeiro grapes. Currently, there is no legal requirement to declare that there is Palomino in one's blend, but for credibility and authenticity's sake this will surely change soon. If a wine is declared as a 'Castes' (ie varietal) wine, it must be 80% or more that variety. There are no Crianza or Reserva classifications. Tiny volumes of a traditional wine 'Tostado de Ribeiro' are still made by 3 producers – it's a sweet, raisined and barrel aged wine where 4-5 kilos of fruit yield a litre of sweet wine with 12 degrees alcohol and 70 grams/litre residual sugar.

### **The Wines of DO Ribeiro**

There are a number of emergent quality producers. The best wines tend to favour Treixadura as the forefront of a blended wine. It is naturally savoury, but muted aromatically with a nice relaxed carriage and textural delicacy. It also transmits the terroir flavour of the local granite with truth, and can easily gain aromatic infill from Godello, Albariño and the like (I'm not certain that the underwhelming Torrontés contributes much, however).

However, the nasty side of being young and trying to fit in is as evident here as it is in nearby Monterrei and Ribera Sacra. Many producers in these three DOs are making awful wines with the

use of aromatic yeasts, sometimes in conjunction with enzyme treatments and various other elements of the (often Australian-inspired) grab bag of chemical wine making. Personality yeasts and character enzymes (the Goofy socks and Micky Mouse necktie of industrial winemaking) abound. Sadly, composite glue corks and silicon closures feature all too often.

## **HISTORICAL, VINTAGE-SPECIFIC TASTING NOTES**

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos' Blanco 2013

*With fine shale, meal and honey, there's a straw sweetness on the nose. Fat lemons run the palate, accompanied by plenty of granitic grip. A very fine, totally savoury wine, beautifully perfumed, it has good volume in the mouth, lovely taper and release with super clean phenolics running to mouth end and gently perfumed final impression.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos' Blanco 2008

*Super-ripe straw, possibly the tiniest touch of caramel, but certainly barley water, and lots of glinting fresh minerals as the sandy soil comes to the fore with time; beautifully rich in the mouth, but sour-herb-edged, never any fat, no sticking point at all, a touch of oiliness half way down the palate (outside of the mouth) instantly becomes a pucker of herb and a tang of steel can which ends with a dainty but definite acid point.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos' Blanco 2005

*Lemon drop, quince, green herbs and a lovely clear earthiness and subtle acacia honey on the nose. At 8 years' age, around its peak, now, a delightfully rounded savoury wine shot through with ripe glinting mineral granitic earth. There's so much (lovely) austere grip in these whites – sand, gravel, tannin, spicy acidity, finely integrated lees and meal, and the effect is subtle, clean and almost refreshing. These are wines for slow and gentle contemplation, not so much to swirl and slurp and attempt to grasp, but for allowing them to come, and to receive them.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos Escolma 2011

*Super-ripe straw, a touch of caramel, sand and cereal grain present here too, but less evident than in the stainless-steel-made wine. The palate is rich and round without any effort or weight, and finishes with ripe straw.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos Escolma' Blanco 2009

*With ripe straw and barley sugar over fine sandy earth perfume, it's an extremely subtle wine. The palate has good concentration and is quietly rich but totally savoury with the sand soils clearly shown. Fine in the mouth, with a long slow release it's extremely complex with spice and acid in a sandy bitter amalgam leading to a gentle long and cleansing finish.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'Os Pasos Escolma Finca Galiana' Blanco 2001

*This was the first Escolma made. Smelling of old, ripe citrus fruits, whole lemons, quince and persimmon, fallen fruits, praline, candle wax and hawthorn honey. The palate's almost brandy snap rich and savoury, dry and honied, with dried field herbs, hawthorn and acacia. There's good volume on entry still, lovely developed fruit tannin carries the palate through to the glide of sandy soil grip with delicate phenolics and fine earthy spice to end.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas' Tinto 2012

*Redolent of old, gently pressed red flowers, with delicate savoury fruit. There's pickled cherry and subtle wood spice, clean fruit tannins and lovely oak harmony. The palate is clear, savoury, dry and delicate; quite long, with a nice sense of chew despite its delicacy.*

### VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto 2011

*Has a deep, oily-rich nose with decadent florals and is really carnal: meat, hung meat, gamey meat, yielding at end to roses and spices, haunting, succulent, wicked, bold, sensuous. Spiced leather carries multiple dancing exotic, savoury perfumes.*

VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto 2009

*Fine, deep and savoury red fruit with subtle oak and lovely integration of all parts. Marked by vegetal sweetness, there's caponata and spicy tannin, a nice sweet and sour squeak hits the cheeks on the way through to affecting a long, salivating, delicate finish.*

VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto 2008

*Gamey and old spiced leather aromas lead out, with black raspberry leaf and lovely sweet-sour bracken and herb. The palate is leanish, with beautiful leaf mulch and spiced acid, it flows and rolls with lovely movement through the mouth and fabulous perfume release at end.*

VIÑA de MARTIN 'A Torna dos Pasas Escolma' Tinto 2000

*Like an old spatburgunder, this is fleshy, vegetal and earthy and still nicely fresh. Really harmonious, and the fruit flesh has not hollowed away from the almost saline austere structure and the granite is clear under the wine.*

Luis Anxo Ribadavia 'Viña Teixeira' 2013

*Herbal, with a touch of river water; humid, Vietnamese streets, little green fruits. Leaner than the Arnoia wines, it's quite spicy to finish with lovely long, lingering tubular carry and a really sensational amount of spicy power at the finish.*

Luis Anxo Ribadavia 'Viña Teixeira' 2011

*Pear, straw, bitter herb, lees and a touch of oak, river brine and riverbed pebbles on nose. Golden and glorious, the palate has lovely expression – a good guided walk of regional and terroir character, a slow reveal ... sandstone grind, lemon, green grassy herbs, powdered rock.*