

Casal Caeiro

HARVEST REPORT 2002

Summer 2002 in Galicia will not be remembered for endless days of warm sunshine, but ironically, whilst the rest of Europe was suffering from disastrous flooding, the region that is traditionally the wettest part of Spain, enjoyed a dry August and first half of September.

In the middle of September things changed a little, and after a few days of rain growers were naturally a little anxious. However, contrary to forecasts, a window appeared in the weather, and our harvest started on Wednesday 25th September, under virtually cloudless blue skies.



José at work in the vineyards

In contrast to 2001, when a record volume was picked, 2002 was to be a more modest harvest, and, at first, the degree of natural grape sugar also appeared to be lower than the previous vintage (actually more like the normal level for Albariño).

Grapes are collected in small well-ventilated 20kg baskets, that not only prevents any fruit oxidation, but also makes the monitoring of quality very much easier.

As always, as in any good wine cellar, we employed very strict quality control of the grapes coming in, eliminating any under ripe grapes, or any with signs of rot.

Right from the very start grapes were appearing from all directions, and in every shape and size of vehicle (including one Fiat Panda!). Growers, who were keen to take advantage of the fine conditions, patiently queued into the early hours of the morning to deposit their harvest – the presses were working flat out to cope.

Disaster on day two! Just as things were going perfectly, one of our two pneumatic presses stopped working, and the engineer (who unusually arrived in record time) only succeeded in rupturing the rubber membrane inside the machine! Using something akin to a huge puncture repair kit, a temporary repair was effected – however, 12 hours precious pressing time had been lost.

By Saturday the sun continued to smile down on us, and if anything the degree appeared to be slightly improved (or perhaps it was just that by now we were harvesting our home vineyards of ‘El Pazo’ and ‘Castrelo’)

Such is the consistent quality of these two vineyards, that not only are they used for our ‘Barrica’ wine, but I rather suspect that some time in the future we may well add a ‘Seleccion’ wine to our range, made exclusively from these grapes.



Part of 'El Pazo' (as featured on our label)

Sunday lunchtime saw the first (and only) short, sharp downpour, but by this time nearly all the grapes had been collected and safely lodged under cover. Pressing continued throughout the night, and on a grey, cloudy Monday morning we calculated that we had gathered nearly 175,000 kilos of grapes – the equivalent of 9,000 baskets.

Job done, time to close the doors on Vintage 2002..... (And just before more persistent rain fell on Monday night!)

THE QUALITY FACTOR

Most winemakers will tell you that quality is determined in the vineyard, and remembering this, we should have no fears about this vintage. Almost every single grape brought in was completely healthy, and as the week went on, so the sugar levels increased. (We estimate that the alcohol level for 2002 should be between 11,5 and 12°, which is very respectable for Albariño). The grape 'must' is sweet and highly perfumed, with powerful floral overtones, and to balance this we have a good acidity level. So all

the indications, at this very early stage, are that we should have a very good wine in 2002 (unlike many other wine producing regions of Europe). But, as we still have good stock of 2001, we will be in no hurry to vinify this vintage too quickly, and we will use slow temperature controlled fermentations to give our wine the maximum character and elegance.

NEW CLOTHES

For those who don't already know, Casal Caeiro now arrives with smart new packaging. In fact every thing about it is new..... new bottle, revised label, new capsule, and dare I mention, a new hi-tech synthetic cork! After much research we have taken this radical step because we firmly believe that not only does this product prevent cork taint, but more importantly, will keep your Albariño fresher for longer, and thus preserve those wonderfully intense, fresh fruit flavours!



The resplendent 'new look' Casal Caeiro

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