

# BODEGAS CASTRO MARTIN

## Harvest Report 2004 - "An over abundant year"

Typically, whilst writing my annual vintage report, I would include a quick summary of the weather patterns that we have experienced during the growing season. Perhaps owing to the effects of global warming or whatever, it would seem that the world's weather is becoming much less predictable, and that these so-called "patterns" don't really exist any more!

Here in Galicia the year started with an unseasonably warm and dry month in February – only one day of rain, the rest cloudless blue skies, and daytime temperatures reaching the mid 20's C (mid 70's F). The first half of April, pretty much the same, before the more usual damp spring weather returned. With alternating rain and sun during May, we were obliged to spray against mildew (which of course, thrives in these conditions). A healthy flowering and fruit set took place at the very beginning of June, again under perfect blue skies.....



*Pergolas in winter - prior to pruning*

As the buds developed into bunches of tiny grapes it very quickly became apparent that (once again) we were in for a **bumper harvest**. The weather was consistent during July, with only minimal rainfall, but then as the tourists arrived for the peak first "quincena" of August, so did the rain!

Ironically it transpired that August was to be one of the wettest months of the year, with very unsettled weather throughout the month. Not only was the rainfall unseasonably high, but also the average temperatures were much lower than normal for the time of year - in the low 20's C (low 70's F). The first day or two of rain was quite welcome (as the early part of the year had been so dry), but as it continued growers started to worry about disease, high acidity and poor levels of ripeness.



*Our new "Caeiro" vineyard at the Bodega*

This cool wet weather continued until mid September, when by this time there was a fear that all might be lost. Potential alcohol measured in the vineyard varied between 11° and 11,5° - barely enough to satisfy the minimum requirements of our D.O., but our main concern was the acidity level that was worryingly high.

And then, a minor miracle..... we gratefully welcomed the arrival of an "**Indian Summer**" that heralded dramatic changes in the vineyards. With temperatures approaching 30°C (86°F) for the latter half of the month, sugar levels jumped as much as 1,5° (potential alcohol), and acidity levels dropped dramatically.

With the weather set fair we started to pick on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September, albeit that this year our harvest would be organised slightly differently.....

With our growers indicating much bigger yields than normal we decided that **controlling the flow and quality** of grapes was going to be of paramount importance. We simply would not have the capacity to accommodate these higher yields, so each grower was given a weight allowance - based on past history, and accepting only the very cream of their crop. (Possibly not the most popular arrangement, but certainly the most fair and equitable to all). In fact we later learned that similar systems were being adopted all around the region, whereby some of the poorer grape producers were actually having problems placing their harvest. In the long term, not a bad thing for the Denomination, as perhaps this would oblige growers to review and improve the quality of their crop.



*Let the harvest begin....*

Unlike previous years (with traumas such as broken presses etc.), this vintage appeared to pass off comparatively uneventfully. Apart from one or two disgruntled growers, unhappy that we were implementing even tighter controls, our Albariño grapes appeared to arrive at a much more manageable pace; just enough to keep our two presses ticking over.

In our own vineyards we employed a team of more than 35 pickers, headed up by the inimitable Herminda. A larger than life character and veritable sergeant major type - Herminda keeps her troops on the move, and within one week they had

swooped through our 11 hectares like a swarm of locusts.



*Herminda stops the traffic in our 'El Pazo' vineyard*

So, after seven days of sweat and toil (that always leaves me feeling at least 10 years older) the sun finally set on yet another harvest. A similar volume to last year (196,745 kilos) but with **more sugar**, and consequently a higher degree of alcohol.

First tasting of the grape must confirms the high sugar content – ripe, concentrated and mouth filling, with already quite a deep colour. The dominant flavour is that of apple compote (not as floral as 2003) but also showing the distinctive citrus fruits of the Albariño variety, albeit slightly more honeyed than in recent vintages.

**For the technically minded the spec of the 2004 harvest is as follows:**

**Total kilos picked: 196,745 kilos**  
**Alcohol Av: 12.4°**  
**Total Acidity: 10,5 gm/litre (tartaric)**  
**pH: 3,08**

(N.B. At this stage our figures are only the estimated average)

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