

# BODEGAS CASTRO MARTIN

## Harvest Report 2012 – Our 30<sup>th</sup> year!

The construction of our current bodega was completed in 1981, albeit that the first vintage was not produced until 1982. This year celebrates our 30<sup>th</sup> vintage (and our 10<sup>th</sup> annual vintage report!).....



Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday to BCM!

After such a poor summer in 2011 there is a certain irony that, after the damp harvest period, Galicia was blessed with a period of warm dry weather. Indeed, local people were still frequenting the beaches until the middle of October.

The autumn temperatures refused to drop, and even at night it was rare to see less than 10°C, virtually until the end of the year. In these circumstances it meant that our pruning was delayed as we simply could not start until sap in the vine had started to recede for the winter. By Christmas we had only just begun, albeit that we did not see any frost until the early part of January. A short succession of sub-zero nights followed, perfect for killing vineyards pests.

It transpired that this relatively mild, sunny weather continued throughout February, with daytime temperatures in the mid-teens (centigrade), and just above freezing at night – perfect weather for pruning. Possibly the only downside to this was the lack of rainfall. The normally wet Galician winter weather simply did not materialise.

We could not have known at the time, but this dry spell, with virtually no rain at all, was to last until Easter (the first week of April). Temperatures during this prolonged dry spell were often around 20°C (68°F), sometimes

pushing the mid-20's. After the Easter break came a significant change, and not necessarily for the better. Yes, a period of long overdue rainfall arrived, but the thermometer also fell by several degrees. A long period of cooler, very unsettled weather was to follow, the only really positive development being the rain itself. The problem was that cycle was all a bit upside-down and out of sequence. For example, the months of March and April could have easily been reversed, the month of March being much dryer and warmer than April.

These cooler, wet conditions continued into May when eventually a break in the middle of the month, gave us an opportunity to apply the first treatment of the year in our vineyards. After a sustained period of cold, damp conditions spraying regrettably becomes inevitable.

Amidst all these relatively poor conditions we had the flowering, which quite miraculously passed off almost without incident. Yes, there were a couple of damp, grey days thrown in, but these did not appear to affect the process too adversely, with just a few traces of 'millerandage' (some undeveloped berries).

The first half of June was also pretty poor, and our beachwear stayed well and truly locked in the wardrobe! It ended up just being one of those summers where the sun simply didn't quite dominate as it should. July and August continued to be very unpredictable and temperatures struggled to reach more than 25°C interspersed by frequent showers. At this point it appeared that the quality of 2012 was going to be mediocre at best.

It was back in 2009 when I last wrote about a potentially poor vintage being saved by a late surge of heat. In 2009 it was a hot August, this time it was to be the turn of September. From almost the very first day of the month the cloud disappeared and for the first time we enjoyed a sustained period of hot sunshine – regularly into the high 20's C (75-85°F)

Towards the end of September, still enjoying the warmer temperatures, we started to gather the first grape samples in preparation for the harvest. Certainly the berries were small, with a very thick, viscous juice, but most importantly the potential alcohol was high, and the acidity pretty much in balance.

A couple of days of rain just before picking served only to clean the fruit, and did not detract in any way from the quality. As soon as this rain cleared the sun returned and the 2012 campaign got underway. It was Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September, almost exactly one month later than our start date in 2011.

Under blue skies and with a fresh breeze behind us our 50 strong team of pickers got to work, and in no time at all the first grapes were being swallowed up by our presses. After only a few hours it became apparent that yields were low, and that the juice was concentrated and highly perfumed – fantastic for quality, but there was already no doubt that our overall volume would be down.



Collecting fruit in El Pazo

The first weekend was, as always, a busy time as our grape suppliers took full advantage of family and friends to assist them in collecting their fruit. Indeed, the first three days of this, our 30<sup>th</sup> harvest, passed off pretty much without incident. In the meantime a forecast of showers looming just over the horizon certainly helped to focus our efforts.

It was as we arrived on day four that we encountered a serious problem – the temperature control system for our tanks had broken down during the night. We soon discovered that an important circuit board had burnt out. As the cooling system forms an integral part of the wine making process we temporarily suspended picking until such time as it could be repaired.

Having lost half a day under clear skies waiting for the engineers to do their thing, it was made even more frustrating by losing a further 4 or 5 hours the very next day as the predicted showers moved in. Fortunately this was to be the first and last rain to fall during this campaign.



One small blown circuit causes chaos

On our sixth working day, the end was in sight and only the lower part of our 'El Pazo' vineyard remained unpicked (this is usually the last block to reach full maturity). Unfortunately we could not quite complete this section in one day and so our harvest spilled over into one seventh, final day.

Our 2012 harvest was not without incident (they never are!), but thankfully this was only an equipment failure, which could be repaired, and most importantly the fruit itself appeared to be of a very high quality.

Before we even started picking this year our local Consello office had predicted that the 2012 vintage would be 50% down on last year. At first we thought that this might be a bit exaggerated, but in the end it actually proved to be quite accurate (albeit that 2011 was a record vintage). The most significant feature of 2012 is the grape must – our first tasting has shown a highly perfumed and highly concentrated juice, which should provide us with an excellent wine..... It's now just down to the wine making!

As always you can find a detailed day-by-day account of this year's harvest by visiting our blog on [www.castromartin.com](http://www.castromartin.com)

#### Technical details of 2012 (all measurements at harvest):

**Total kilos harvested: 136,974 kg**  
**Potential alcohol: 12,4°**  
**Total acidity: 8,63 gm/litre (tartaric)**  
**pH: 3,08**

### BODEGAS CASTRO MARTIN

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