

Autumn
landscapes

LO MEJOR DEL
VINODERIOJA

(the best of rioja wine)

LA RIOJA
SUNDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2007

THE HEART OF RIOJA – THE CENTENARY WINE TASTING

<p>1920 _The wine: A 1920 Federico Paternina red. _The vintage: An excellent season, at least for this firm. It gave strong (for the time) wines with intense colour. _ The tasting: Good length and persistence, the wine continues to look bright. It was one of the great successes, or even the most highly valued wines at the tasting by oenologists and sommeliers. Surprising really, when one realises that it is 87 years old !</p>	<p>1922 _The wine: A 1922 vintage Federico Paternina red. _The vintage: Excellent, producing strong wines with an intense colour, according to the notes of the firm itself. _ The tasting: Like all its fellow-wines the outstanding feature is its smoothness in the mouth. Less acidity can be noticed than in other years and it is in fact one of the flatter wines, though understandably one must bear in mind that it is now 85 years old.</p>	<p>1924 _The wine: A 1924 Federico Paternina red. _The vintage: Excellent, like all the ones tasted, in this case in a year with a large production (for the time). _The tasting: With greater structure and acidity than its closest predecessor. This is the wine with the brightest colour until this point and perfectly in line with the elaboration of the previous ones, which will not in fact drop in the whole tasting.</p>	<p>1934 _The wine: A 1934 Federico Paternina red. _The vintage: Excellent, with a limited alcoholic strength which gave rise to balanced wines. A harvest with a high yield per hectare. _ The tasting: The wine meant a change of decade at the winery, though not in the line. Smooth in the mouth with bright tones. In any event, the limited structure is appreciated in this case with an average acidity and shorter in the mouth.</p>	<p>1948 _The wine: A 1948 Federico Paternina red. _The vintage: An excellent year, with a warm winter and cool dry summer, though good rain in August. _ The tasting: A new decade in the history of Paternina. The smoothness in the mouth continues to be the dominant note, though this does not have such length as the first ones. Velvety on the palate and with lower acidity than its predecessors.</p>
--	---	--	--	--

The fine Haro palate

A look at the history of Paternina through ten excellent 20th century vintages: from 1920 to 1982

TEXTS:
A.GIL/C.SOMALO

Talking of those times when there were barely twenty wineries marketing Rioja, older oenologists say that if anything is outstanding about Federico Paternina wines it is the palate: fine, elegant and very silky wines... Palates that enraptured people like Ernest Hemingway or Antonio Ordóñez.

Today, many decades later, those bottles are hibernating in the cemetery of the ancient Ollauri house. **Lomejordelvinoderioja** had a chance to taste ten excellent years of Paternina from the 20th century: a trip back in time from 1920 to 1982. The centennial wineries preserve pieces of history in their ancient cellars which today continue to be faithful witnesses to Rioja oenology.

The event starts with a 1920 Federico Paternina, which surprised our tasting team. Intense colour has never been one of the features of classic wines, but the brightness and cleanness of this one, 87 years later, makes it quite unquestionable: this is a great centenary taste. The structure is still there, even the acidity. The winery's oenologist Carlos Estecha explains that Paternina is not in favour of opening the bottles hours before. «We like to observe the evolution in the glass ». Of course, reduction is the prevailing note, but the wine gradually evolves on the nose and begins to reveal its complexity little by little. «A great wine –Juan Carlos Somalo– a very elegant treat! ».

1922 and 1924 were years with high yields per hectare (for the time). «One should bear in mind that the vineyard was a marginal business then, located on slopes and poor land, with yields of hardly half a kilo of grapes per plant », Estecha explains. This is precisely what some of today's wine-makers are seeking so desperately, to get away from the genetic tyranny of the nursery. The two Paterninas have a bright colour, although the 1922 has precipitated slightly and its lower acidity means it droops in respect of its antecedent. The 1924 nevertheless stays there all the way.

The decade changes. This one dates back to 1934, a very smooth silky wine, but shorter than the 1920 and 1924, in line with that of 1948, which comes in the next glass. The greatest surprise continues to be the first wine, the one almost ninety years old. Oenologists and sommeliers are always going back to check its evolution. It continues to open up and display its essence more and more: «Historically, Rioja wines had low alcoholic levels », says Carlos Estecha. «We are talking about 10.5, 11 or, at most 12 degrees, but with an acidity that allows us to go on enjoying the wines today, very little to do with the present preparations ».

Marino Oliván sees it very clearly: «Wines are a reflection of our history, and we can see that they are very uniform as a whole: it is a privilege to taste these and for them all to come out with no defects ». He continues «Today wine is prepared for rotation, while before they were made to last a great many years ». Remarks like this arouse greater interest for the tasting session: historical vertical tasting will probably be unrepeatable in just a few decades. As a result of climate change, the vines or

consumers' tastes, today's wines cannot aspire to live as long as the old ones could: «I have seen, and I suppose many of us here have seen, many so-called *vins de garde* which are dead after six or seven years », points out Paternina's oenologist.

<p>1952</p> <p>_The wine: a 1952 Federico Paternina.</p> <p>_The vintage: Excellent, in a farming year with well spread-out rain, but a dry and very hot August. A long cycle lasting 212 days.</p> <p>_The tasting: Velvety in the mouth, with some metallic sensations. Shows that the wine, the bottles, are the history of Rioja itself, since in 1955 Paternina renewed its conduits (the reason for the copper taste).</p>	<p>1955</p> <p>_The wine: a 1955 Federico Paternina</p> <p>_The vintage: Excellent, with a 195- day cycle. There were frosts in April and the rain came evenly throughout the season.</p> <p>_The tasting: Average colour intensity, but a light bright tone. Very enclosed aromas, which improve as time goes by. Good acidity for a wine with structure and even slightly fatty. Also has a copper aftertaste.</p>	<p>1958</p> <p>_The wine: a 1958 Federico Paternina.</p> <p>_The vintage: Excellent, with a short 188 plant cycle, without any excessive rains, but well spread out, even in summer.</p> <p>_The tasting: A wine with lower alcoholic strength than the usual average, with medium acidity and also medium structure level. The animal and sulphate aromas stand out. A slightly short aftertaste.</p>	<p>1964</p> <p>_The wine: a 1964 Federico Paternina.</p> <p>_The vintage: Excellent, and also with quite a lot more grapes than usual. The rain was scanty, though some fell in July and August.</p> <p>_The tasting: It was the other great success of the tasting, along with the 1920 wine. Though it has a high acidity level, it was probably the longest wine. 1964 was the vintage of the 20th century as is vouched for by the wines kept in the historical cellars.</p>	<p>1982</p> <p>_The wine: A 1982 Federico Paternina.</p> <p>_The vintage: Excellent, with a 210 day cycle, warm winter and heat during budding. Moderate rains in July and August.</p> <p>_The tasting: Closes with a great jump in time in respect of the previous wine. It is the most different, also the youngest in respect of its sister-wines. Although it keeps up the characteristic smoothness, it has greater alcoholic strength.</p>
--	--	--	--	--

The frenzied struggle for colour has taken things too far over the last few years. But things are falling back into place, though some wineries have not received any support whatsoever from critics through not having black wines: «How can one define colour in a black wine? », wonders Estecha. «People have been using concentrators ». He goes on «As we see it a wine should have colour, but also brightness and tonality ».

The first two wines from the nineteen-fifties, 1952 and 1955, are the living proof that the bottles are the history of the winery itself. Carlos Estecha warns us that there are some metal sensations remaining, mainly of copper. What happened? This is a question that the oenologist was able to answer by having a look at the archives: «I found that in 1955 the Ollauri winery had an estimate for replacing the pipelines ». «It would seem that this aftertaste of copper comes through the bad condition of the conduits ».

The nineteen-fifties wines lead us on to another of the great stars of the tasting: the 1964. It is curious that with four centenary wines to taste now in the experience of the **lomejordelvinoderioja** team, all the wines of this vintage have been extraordinary. 1964 is the 20th century's greatest vintage and the wines, like this Paternina, keep a special brightness, structure and great persistence. «For me there is no doubt about it - Juan Carlos Sancha mentions-, the 1920 and the 1964, the first with a greater age than the average human life expectancy, are the best, but what really amazes me most is that the bottles have been opened at the same time and none of the wines have come out bad ». There then comes the 1982, which means a change in the uniform line of the rest of the tasting: «It looks like a new tendency. It is a smooth wine, but with greater persistence and greater alcoholic strength», Raúl Martínez points out. Perhaps the tasting is not fair enough with this *whippersnapper* which is nevertheless over 25 years old: «It strays a little from the general tendency, but it seems that when we compare it with the rest, we shall have to wait a little longer, since it is "only" 25 years old », Martínez insists, also agreeing that the 1920 and 1964 wines are the big successes of the tasting.

«Being able to try, give an opinion, reflect ... on the history of a whole 20th century through the glass is something marvellous», Iñaki Legorburu affirms. «It is incredible that the wines are still alive, and in particular the 1920 and 1964 are really superb ». Paternina is a great Rioja classic and this is vouched for by its wines: «This winery set a milestone in its day, with great success on the market and making wine 'popular', reaching further than the privileged few who used to drink a few decades ago », Juan Carlos Somalo explains. «With these wines Paternina reached the tables of people's homes and the line is just the same now as before », he adds.

<p>JUAN CARLOS SANCHA OENOLOGIST</p> <p>«The first wine is older than the average human being; it is amazing ! »</p>	<p>JUAN CARLOS SOMALO OENOLOGIST</p> <p>«Paternina reached the tables of Spanish homes with these wines»</p>	<p>RAÚL MARTÍNEZ SOMMELIER</p> <p>«There is a small change as compared with the 1982 one against a very specific general line»</p>	<p>MARINO OLIVÁN SOMMELIER</p> <p>«These wines are a reflection of our history and their great uniformity can be appreciated»</p>	<p>IÑAKI LEGORBURU VINTNER</p> <p>«It is incredible that the wines should have stayed alive, above all the 1920 and 1964, which are superb »</p>
---	---	---	--	---

THE CENTENARY WINE TASTING

BODEGAS FEDERICO PATERNINA

View of the wines at the tasting. Carlos Estecha at the difficult and painstaking work of uncorking./ Fernando Diaz

Mellow Gold

A 1914 Paternina semi-sweet breaks with the clichés and makes it very clear that Rioja was a great area for whites, with a wine that the tasting team sets on a level with the best French sauternes

TEXTS: A.G/C.S

Carlos Estecha, an oenologist at Paternina, had reserved an unexpected close at the historical tasting of the excellent 20th century vintages from the winery: a surprising tour de force which shattered any preconceptions that the **lomejordelvinoderioja** team might have had – a semi-sweet white, probably bottled with the Viña La Riva brand, from 1914.

Almost a hundred years old, this wine makes it very clear just why Rioja was a land of white wines and until the middle of the last century produced more white than red grapes. *Mellow gold* which, far from having anything to envy to the great French sauternes, brought praise from all the tasters: «This white wine will leave a mark on my memory all my life », asserts Raúl Martínez. «Recently - he goes on – I was able to try a Chateau D'Yquem with some friends and the Paternina has nothing to envy to this at all, though understandably the wine goes flat quickly through its age».

The wine flows in the glass with a density as if it were a liquor and on the nose gives off an extremely powerful aroma of mint: «This is a ten out of ten score, right on the mark, I have never tasted a wine like this before and never tasted this intensity of mint aromas », Juan Carlos Sancha says. The others from the team agree and the winery's oenologist has no explanations for this:

«We suspect that it could have originally been developed with *mistela* wines »and goes on «We have taken this wine to some tasting sessions in France and there has been general surprise: the old Rioja whites evolve even better than the reds ». Paternina is today one of the few wineries that continue to put their stakes on the classic white preparations, with the semi-sweet Graciela and its long ageing process. We don't know what will come of these wines in a few decades but indeed the mellow gold that is still kept at the Ollauri winery only goes to confirm something that is today almost relegated to history: Rioja used to be a great land of white wines.

The 1914 white, in front of the nine historic Paternina reds./ F. D.

he final tour de force encourages talk on La Rioja as a former land of great white wines./ F. D.

1914

_The wine: A semi-sweet white, probably Viña La Riva, from 1920.

_The vintage: Average, with very bad flower bonding. Few grapes and bad maturing.

_The tasting: Spectacular. Nothing but praise for a wine as regards which nobody knows what it must have been like when it should have been consumed. Mellow gold with an explosion of mint when opened. Quite understandably this has to be consumed quickly or the wine goes flat in half an hour.

THE CENTENARY WINE TASTING CONDE DE LOS ANDES WINE CELLARS

Entrance to one of the impressive cellar caves in what is known as the Sistine Chapel of Wine./ Fernando Díaz

The cave with the **treasure trove**

Under the mountain range of Ollauri, a million and a half bottles of Paternina sleep in the impressive grottos of this wine cellar, some of which date back to the 16th century, spread into four galleries of 150 metres each, dug out into the living rock

TEXTS:

A.G/C.SOMALO

This history of Bodegas Paternina, half way between Ollauri and Haro, is the history of Rioja itself. The business was founded in 1896 in a small village in the highland Rioja with a great wine-making tradition, where one can see today the full scale of the region's great wine-making tradition, with original 16th century caves finished with Mozarab style arches.

Conde de los Andes (the 'top' Paternina brand, with which the ancient winery has been re-baptised), won the "Best Of" Wine-Production Tourism prize awarded by the Network of Major Cities and Vineyards in 2005 after restoring the incredible caves which cut through the subsoil of the high part of the mountain range on which Ollauri rests.

A visit that cannot be missed by wine and architecture lovers, who will be surprised to discover four cellars fifteen metres long in which four million bottles are kept, among these the latest 20th century years, which, alone in the silence, the dark and the uniform temperature of the rock, remain absolutely alive, as has been vouched for at the tasting of the excellent 20th century vintages.

The caves cross the subsoil of the Ollauri highlands at a depth of 40 metres and the visitor returns to the surface, rather disorientated, in any of the three buildings of cut stone which form the winery as a whole, one of these being the Conde de los Andes restaurant, open to the public with or without an arranged visit to the winery. The work on the stone (four streets which come in all to over 600 metres in length) was done with pick and shovel. In fact the "Banda Azul", one of the historic Paternina brands, has this blue label in honour of the Galician quarrymen who once dug out the caves of the wine cellars. This is the Sistine Chapel of wine, a counterpoint to the colossal works that famous architects have built in several strategic points of Rioja.

There are many tourists who, after visiting the impressive titanium hotel by Gehry in Elciego, end up in Ollauri and just cannot believe their eyes!

Conde de los Andes, where a million and a half bottles are stored./ F. Díaz

This is the counterpoint to
the colossal works that
have recently been built
in Rioja

CONDE DE LOS ANDES WINE CELLARS

Welcome down to the caves./ F.D.	In the social area, just over the caves./ F.D.
----------------------------------	--

Stone dug out by hand, with bottles, walls and mould creating a fantastic atmosphere impossible to find in the more spectacular buildings. This is the most classic Rioja, the home of the wines so smooth on the palate, at a winery where there are no machines, where work is done by hand just as in the 19th century because this is what is required by the structure.

Paternina is today a great stock exchange-listed company purchased in the mid-eighties by Rioja businessman Marcos Eguizábal after the expropriation of Rumasa, with wineries in Jerez and Ribera del Duero (Marqués de Valparaíso). The firm is part of the memory of wine lovers in Spain and many other parts of the world. Its historic “band” wines (Blue, Golden and Gold) have grown at the same pace as wine ceased to be the exclusive privilege of a lucky few.

The original Ollauri winery moved its business to Haro in 1922 to make running this operative with much bigger and modern facilities to cater for needs of one of the great companies of Rioja at that time.

But the heart of Paternina is in Ollauri, where the wines are aged and sleep, where Ernest Hemingway uncorked bottles and where, forty metres down, he found inspiration for some of the great works of universal literature.

Bottle rack where the oldest wines are kept./ F.D.
--