

La Seca, March 18th 2015

AB Last December, when we last spoke about the 2014, many of your lots were still fermenting, and you were allowing some of the barrels to complete their malo-lactic fermentation? Do you now have a more precise idea of the 2014 vintage?

Didier Belondrade We've recently had a series of tastings with different groups of professionals –sommeliers and critics- and I'm very encouraged by the development of the different lots. The 2014 vine cycle was far from easy, which makes the good results all the more satisfying.

AB The high acidity you found in the wines was a positive aspect for you. Do you still have that opinion?

Didier Belondrade Yes, the high acidity in the 2014 was a positive feature of the vintage. It's the signature of 2014.



AB You mentioned that this 2014 vintage wasn't easy. What difficulties stick in your memory?

Didier Belondrade Mainly the heatwave in the summer, which suddenly shrivelled some of the berries. We had to either leave these raisined berries on the vine or eliminate them at the sorting table. There was no way we could accept them because, though they looked ripe, they weren't. It was a false ripeness. So we ended up sacrificing a part of the crop.

AB How is the 2014 tasting right now?

Didier Belondrade Along with that lively acidity, there is very nice length on the palate. It's a very attractive vintage. I think it's going to be a good wine to age in barrel.

AB What makes you say that?

Didier Belondrade The time in barrel and the working of the lees will provide some flesh, which will complement the lively acidity.

AB It's a vintage for competent winemakers...

Didier Belondrade I believe so, yes.

AB You mentioned in December that 2014 would follow a new trend in the style of Belondrade. Can you confirm this, now that this vintage has started to develop its character?

Didier Belondrade Yes, very much so. And I'm sure that the small changes we have recently introduced in the vinification (fermentation for a part in pure concrete and barrels with acacia barrel ends) have not only fine-tuned the style but also enhanced the quality of the 2014.

AB In what way?

Didier Belondrade There is extra freshness.

AB Isn't that freshness simply because of the high acidity?

Didier Belondrade The freshness I'm talking about is not just acidity-related. There is a purity and freshness that come from an adjustment in the wine-making that we have slowly introduced and which is turning Belondrade into exactly the wine I personally want to make. I'm very happy about this evolution. I know that we are on the right road with our wines.

AB Apart from the freshness you mention, what are the changes we can notice in this evolution?

Didier Belondrade The wines are a bit less opulent, but they are much deeper and longer. Less immediately appealing but longer and more mineral.

AB Are you in danger of disappointing some Belondrade consumers who might prefer it the way it used to be?

Didier Belondrade I may get some comments or criticisms from people, but I no longer wish to make wines that can be a little over-rich. Wines evolve in style everywhere –look at Bordeaux and the Rhône valley, and that in my opinion is a good thing.

AB Has Belondrade evolved towards a more French style?

Didier Belondrade Occasionally, people will make that kind of comment, but I quickly remind them that the only French aspect of my wine is me. All the rest is Spanish. The Verdejo grape variety is indigenous to Spain, and the winemaking team are all Spanish.

If there is an aspect which is more French in the way we do things it is that we only make wine from our own grapes, and blending and terroir play an important role in the selection of the First and Second Wines. But that doesn't make Belondrade taste any more French.

AB You mentioned before that 2014 was a vintage in which the malo-lactic occurred in some barrels in a natural way and that if it started you wouldn't intervene to stop it. In the end how much of your 2014 underwent a malo-lactic fermentation?

Didier Belondrade About 10 to 15%. In the past we sometimes decided not to do it at all, such as in 2012 and 2013; at other times we have provoked it, but in 2014 we let nature decide. It seemed the right thing to do in 2014. It has given the wines extra charm and roundness as well as balance and more aromatic complexity.

AB How much of the final blend will have undergone the malo-lactic fermentation?

Didier Belondrade I can only answer that question in July when we have completed the final tasting sessions and decided on the final blend.