

La Seca, Rueda, March 19th 2014

AB *How has your Belondrade Y Lurton 2013 developed since the vinifications?*

Didier Belondrade **I remember saying in December that I was optimistic about this vintage. After tasting the different lots recently I was so pleasantly surprised by the freshness of the 2013, I'd say it's now even better than I expected.**

AB *Will it be as good as some of your best vintages?*

Didier Belondrade **My impression is that it's like the 2007.**

AB *Which was excellent! What about all that rain in 2013, particularly at harvest time? Didn't it have an adverse effect?*

Didier Belondrade **We stopped and re-started the picking according to the weather and managed the situation very well.**

AB *Wasn't botrytis a problem in Rueda?*

Didier Belondrade **The harvest at Belondrade was well underway before the rain came. And when it came, botrytis didn't affect us very much. Coincidentally, the situation was very similar in 2007.**

AB *Were your vines healthier than your neighbours'?*

Didier Belondrade **At Belondrade, we escaped the worst I believe thanks to all the vine canopy work we did in the summer. Crop thinning and de-suckering of the vines provided good ventilation for the bunches and helped protect their health. Also our vines are trellised and therefore well exposed to air and light. Then we pick by hand, not by machine, and can sort bunches as we go along. All those things make a difference.**



AB *Some might say that the mechanical harvester is a great help when you need to go very quickly in order to avoid rot.*

Didier Belondrade **Yes, if you're making big volumes and need to rescue your crop, but that's not us.**

AB *So there were no significant losses of crop?*

Didier Belondrade **On the contrary, our normal yield is around 5,000 kg per hectare (32 hl/ha). This year we were above that with 6,000/6,500 (around 37 hl/ha).**

AB *Traditionally, by the end of winter you have made a pre-selection of barrels for your Belondrade Y Lurton. Do you have an idea now how many bottles of 2013 you could release?*

Didier Belondrade **The total number of barrels in 2013 was 320, from which 250 to 260 will perhaps go into Belondrade. We'll make our decision in 3 months or so. In any case, about 70 barrels have already been de-selected. That represents a strict selection.**

AB *We can expect a high quality vintage...*

Didier Belondrade **I tasted barrels yesterday with a group of sommeliers from top Spanish restaurants, and all of them were surprised by the high quality of the wine, despite it being a little less powerful than they might have expected, which by the way is not a worry for me at all.**

AB *You've said before that your preference is fine, elegant wines...*

Didier Belondrade **It's my preference, but in very hot years it's not easy to make that style of wine. I do prefer more Atlantic-influenced vintages, such as 2007 and 2013.**

AB *How is the 2007 tasting today?*

Didier Belondrade **Actually, when the 2007 was released it didn't get good press. It came after the opulent 2006, which completely overshadowed it. Today, the 2007 is astonishingly elegant and delicate. It's not just me; I think many Belondrade consumers prefer the freshness and acidity of the 2007 to the more powerful 2006, 2008 or 2009. The 2007 appears younger, and I think that's because of its balance.**

AB *2006 was a commercial success...*

Didier Belondrade **At the time, 2006 won more plaudits, because it flattered more. I was very pleased that it had that success, but from a personal point of view I'm more drawn to elegant, delicate wines, such as the 2007, and I've a feeling that 2013 is going in the direction of 2007.**

AB You mentioned the influence of the climate on the style of your wines. Are you able to exert your own influence in the way you make the wine in order to find more elegance?

Didier Belondrade **Yes, by being proactive in the vineyard and responding to weather patterns. This could mean less de-leafing and crop thinning to avoid concentration in the fruit. You can also adapt the vinification, but the main work is in the vineyard. You cannot change the weather, but you can temper its effects.**

AB If a majority of your clients expressed a preference for those more opulent, powerful vintages, would you still go in search of elegance and finesse instead of power?

Didier Belondrade **I've never really sought to please the market, but admittedly in the early days I needed to run a profitable business. As Belondrade became more established and was listed in the top restaurants, I was able to concentrate more on producing the type of wine I personally love.**

AB And maybe your consumers have followed you?

Didier Belondrade **Since we started 20 years ago, Spanish white wines have evolved a great deal. Before, they were just an aperitif. Today there are more and more great white wines in Spain, and they are being enjoyed as wines in their own right. Pazo de Señorans, As Sortes, Abadia Retuerta are top wines. Vega Sicilia is apparently bringing out a white wine, which if true is a sign that Spanish white wines are moving in the right direction.**

AB From which vintage did the style of Belondrade begin to change?

Didier Belondrade **It was 2007. That year, we made a much smaller quantity; it was the first year we didn't use any American oak, and it was the year in which we began moving towards 100% spontaneous fermentations, a move which was completed by 2010. Suddenly, the way forward for Marta, our winemaker, was clear. 2007 was definitely the turning point.**

AB *So 2007 was a landmark vintage for you, and today, as you said, that vintage is alive and full of freshness and finesse. Do you predict that the 2013 will age as well and as long?*

Didier Belondrade I'd love to say yes. But I'm incapable of knowing that answer right now. I'm always surprised when I open an old bottle and discover how wonderfully it has developed over the years. In 2007, I wasn't particularly pleased with the wine. I had no idea that it had that ageing potential. And look at it today! I'm pretty sure it's now the most sought-after old Belondrade vintage. Will 2013 be the same? Who knows? All I can say is that with its acidity, citrusy character, freshness and balance, it could well be on the same road.