



MARQUÉS DE MURRIETA

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2007 Marques de Murrieta Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial – 95+



A worthy follow-up of the 2005, the 2007 Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial will be released in late 2015. This is a cuvée of mostly Tempranillo with the balance of Mazuelo (Cariñena), a very important grape for Castillo de Ygay in percentages that vary depending on the vintage, and it's almost 15% in 2007. 2007 was not an easy vintage and in Ygay they had a terrible mildew attack and they lost 50% of the bunches. It's a cold, rainy year, but because of that circumstance the wine is concentrated. This is still a baby, long and with depth and tannins that should melt in a couple of years. Compared with the 2005 it is fresher, perhaps not as concentrated, but for me the extra freshness compensates and puts it at a very similar quality level. And the rule of thumb is to wait at least ten years after the harvest to start uncorking any Castillo de Ygay. Cheap it is not, but very good value it is, for the quality it delivers. 110,000 bottles were produced. There will be no Castillo de Ygay in 2008, but there will be 2009, 2010 and 2011. That's something exceptional to have three vintages in a row.

2011 Marques de Murrieta Dalmau Reserva – 94pts



Same as they didn't do Dalmau in 2008 they didn't bottle it in the 2010 vintage, and the next one will be the 2011 Dalmau Reserva, which will be released in March-April 2015. Dalmau is the most "international" of all their wines, but is a wine from Ygay because the Cabernet they have in their vineyards is now 56 years old and is part of the estate and you also feel more the smoky notes and the earthy, peat-like minerality. The maximum amount of Cabernet Sauvignon (or other experimental varieties, generically referred to as "Others," any varieties that were planted before 1956) is 15% and it also contains 6% Graciano, the rest being, of course Tempranillo. The varieties are fermented and aged in barrel separately, then assembled and matured in cement vats for a good 8-9 months. This 2011 is considered internally a perfect vintage for Ygay and has a very Atlantic, Bordeaux-like nose that is serious and concentrated. This is a cuvée that used to be quite oaky, but this has changed radically and the earthy personality is much stronger, and the oak is perfectly integrated, and even if it's extremely young is perfectly drinkable and showing classical aromas of cigar box, cedar wood and lead pencil. The texture is creamy and even if the tannins are velvety and the acidity is fine, just the complexity you will gain with a couple of years in bottle would payback a little patience. It's a matter of personal preference and the style in this wine is quite strong, but this is objectively a great vintage for Dalmau. 20,000 bottles produced.

2010 Marques de Murrieta Rioja Reserva – 93pts



The blend for the 2010 Rioja Reserva varies depending on the growing season. In the warm and ripe 2009 it was 93% Tempranillo, 4% Mazuelo and 2% Graciano and 1% Garnacha Tinta, always from their own vineyards and hand-harvested between October 2 and 23. Maria the winemaker thinks the Garnacha does not add much to their blend. The grapes fermented separately in stainless-steel vats and the wine aged for 21 months in American oak barrels. There is gob-smacking precision and elegance here. It's a pure wine with no oak that is super harmonious, floral and fragrant. I simply fell in love with the nose. Now onto the palate. The entry is really fluid, and then it explodes in your mouth, filling it along a thread of fine acidity making it long and tasty. It has the same astonishing purity and harmony, focus and precision found in the nose. This has to be the best Reserva from Murrieta in recent times. Bravo! One million bottles produced, but all the wine is one single lot and all the bottles you can find are exactly the same just they are bottled continuously for four months. Mind boggling quality for the price asked.

2010 Marques de Murrieta Capellania Blanco Reserva – 92+



The 2010 Capellania Blanco Reserva is an old-style white Rioja fermented in stainless steel and aged for 17 months in brand new French oak barrels. The grapes from the specific plot that names the wine are the first to be harvested in the Ygay estate and come from very old Viura vines at the highest point at 480 meters altitude. The nose is full of beeswax, white flowers, chamomile, fennel and licorice with smoke and sweet spices. It is very intense and powerful, obviously oaky, but Viura is a grape that takes very well on the oak aging and helps it develop in bottle for a long time. There is no astringency or edges in the palate as the wine is very unctuous and fuller when tasted next to 2009. Very balanced with a good alcohol level. These wines really grow in complexity in bottle and develop nuances for a long time, so there is no rush to drink this beauty. Very good value for the quality it delivers. 39,000 bottles.

I visited the revamped facilities of Marqués de Murrieta in the outskirts of Logroño. After eight years they finished restoring the historical Castillo de Ygay building, all done with great taste. But the real focus has been on their vineyards and their wines, which are back at the top of the Rioja hierarchy. María Vargas, the winemaker, is ecstatic about the quality of the wines from 2011, which she calls perfect 2011, like 2005 and 2001.

I found all the wines to be showing great, but perhaps the highlight is the 2010 Reserva, which might be the best vintage for this wine ever. The best part of it all is that it's available in good quantities and at an unbelievable price for the quality this vintage offers. Next time I hope to be able to taste and publish the note on the bottled 1986 Castillo de Ygay Gran Reserva Blanco which should be released in 2016 to coincide with its 30th anniversary.