

[Back to all articles](#)

Written by

Ferran Centelles

31 Jan 2020

What Spain's MWs like – Norrel Robertson

**TASTING ARTICLES** **SPAIN** **MW**

In this first part of an exploration of the tastes of the eight Masters of Wine most closely associated with Spain, Ferran quizzes Norrel Robertson MW. See Ferran's [introduction to this eight-part series](#).

Norrel Robertson MW

Norrel is a vineyard discoverer, happily in love with the vineyard and the land. He is co-owner of El Escocés Volante, a family company that specialises in the production of mainly Garnacha-based wines from old rescued vineyards in the heart of the Iberian mountain system. Besides his work in Aragón, he is also a consultant for other companies, not all of them in Spain. Scottish by birth and resident in Spain since 2003, he previously worked in Italy, Portugal, Australia, France and South America and completed a postgraduate degree in viticulture and oenology at Lincoln University, New Zealand. He has been a Master of Wine since 2000.

What wine trends do you foresee in Spain?

‘In the last 10 years we have seen more focus on the vineyard (rightly so) and winemaking which has focused less on extraction and oak ageing, especially outside the traditional wine regions of Spain. Climate change in my 17 years making wine in Spain has come with some vintage extremes. This will be a real challenge now and in the future: maintaining longevity and style while preserving a sense of place in your wines.’

Regions and/or varieties to keep an eye on

‘Given the comments above, for my own region we will continue to focus on late ripeners: Garnacha, with the inclusion of Garnacha Gris, Moristel and perhaps

more Mazuelo (Carignan). Chenin Blanc could also be very versatile in Spain (just think about how it adapts in the Loire and South Africa). Monastrell from Bullas (I have been saying this for 16 years), Godello (hopefully we will see plantings in other areas of Spain outside Galicia), Extremadura (still a gold mine for searching-out hidden terroirs).’

Five favourite wines

Gramona, III Lustrós Brut Nature Gran Reserva 2010 Cava 18

75% Xarello, 25% Macabeo from Font de Jui, mainly planted with Xarello (15 ha) and a minor part of Macabeo vines (7.5 ha). Located between the river Anoia and the Mas Escorpi hill. Organic and biodynamic farming. Manual harvesting. Secondary fermentation and ageing in bottles with cork stoppers. Manual riddling and manual disgorging without freezing (à la volée). 70 months of ageing. 45,000 bottles.

Very ripe apple flavour. A wine with energy and complexity. The mousse lifts the wine. It is very bone dry to the point of being bitter, but it's delicate. There is toast, an earthy scent and hints of nuts. Very tasty and with a delicate mousse. Great delineation because III Lustrós is always a great wine. (FC) 12%

Drink 2019 – 2030

Marqués de Murrieta, Castillo Ygay Especial Gran Reserva 2009 Rioja 19

81% Tempranillo, 19% Mazuelo. Vineyards from La Plana, a small plot surrounding the better-known Finca Ygay (Logroño), at 485 m. Old bush vines managed by precision viticulture. Made only in exceptional years. Hand-harvested, bunches are destemmed and alcoholic fermentation took place by variety in stainless-steel vats. Ageing for 26 months in barrels of 225-litre American oak for Tempranillo and French oak for Mazuelo. 109,045 bottles.

Garnet without being tawny yet. Everything is integrated and very well done, so it clearly has a long life ahead. It holds the fruit intensity. Very promising. Its fine texture is great, with complexity and forest-floor sensations. Polished tannins over layers of fruit. It is young for a 10-year-old! It has not yet developed any tertiary notes. Amazing potential. I am moved by it! (FC) 14%

Drink 2019 – 2050

El Escocés Volante, El Cismático 2016 Calatayud

17.5

100% Garnacha. 75- to 85-year-old bush vines at 890–900 m. Three small plots within Villaroya de la Sierra (Calatayud). Hand-harvested.

Fermentation took place in a concrete vat with extended maceration, and 12 months of ageing in French oak barrels of 650 litres. 3,100 bottles, 150 magnums.

The aroma is spectacular, full of herbaceous aromas from garrigue, thyme and ripe red fruit. Round texture, the alcohol was kept under control thanks to the red fruit. A very deep and tight palate for a Garnacha. Good concentration and a high freshness. The acidity is surprising for such a mature wine. The archetype of the area's potential. (FC) 14.5%

Drink 2019 – 2030

González Byass, Añada Palo Cortado 1991 Jerez – Xérès – Sherry

18.5

100% Palomino Fino. Vineyards in Jerez de la Frontera. The free-run must is fermented in stainless-steel vats, then fortified up to 18%. Ageing for more than three decades in the Leonor criadera and solera system.

Acetaldehyde, nail varnish, cedar, toast. Extremely long. Concentrated. Saline. Stinging. Very impressive. It is almost an *essence de parfum* rather than a wine thanks to its concentration. All that time is powerfully imprinted on the palate. Maximum concentration! Extremely characterful single-vintage Palo Cortado. Acid, salty ... lots of woody character and caramel. Very racy and just the job for sherry purists. (FC) 20%

Drink 2019 – 2050

Norrel's fifth wine was [Vega Sicilia, Único 2009 Ribera del Duero](#), which Ferran didn't taste this time because he'd recently tasted it and scored it a stunning 19. Click on the link to read his tasting note in [Some stars of Ribera del Duero](#).

Thanks to Mar Guixé for the portraits of the Masters of Wine in this series of articles.

Written by

Jancis Robinson

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