



February 27, 2015 Spain:

...I looked to very small producers crafting tiny quantities of wines, (*in La Mancha*) as there are plenty of large enterprises that focus on quantity rather than quality. **The single most exciting name here is Más Que Vinos (more than wines), also known as Ercavio.** It is the venture of oenologists Gonzalo Rodríguez, his wife Margarita Madrigal and their German partner Alexandra Schmedes. Gonzalo, born in Dosbarrios (Toledo) where they are located, is really proud of the local varieties and is one of the handful of growers trying to do something with the ubiquitous Airén, once the most planted grape on earth, but destined mainly to bulk wines and for distilling into alcohol. Yes, it's quite a neutral grape, but they show it can make some wines. When I visited, I made them uncork a number of vintages of their Airén (to their surprise), and the wines showed some aging potential, better for sure on the second year and sometimes improving for up to four or five!. He distinguishes Cencibel, which he considers to be the local strain found in the old vineyards that has adapted and evolved for a long time, from Tempranillo, the one sourced from nurseries and a clone that comes from anywhere. When he talks about Gamacha it's always Gamacha Tintorera (aka Alicante Bouschet), a grape he has taken from the old vines and planted in his vineyard, as he has done with the white Malvar, a rare variety also found in Madrid.



La Plazuela, benchmark old-vine Cencibel from Dosbarrios in Toledo

If their entry-level range offers good quality at a very reasonable price and is a little technical - they are winemakers after all - he kept reminding me that the top of the range is something else, especially La Plazuela. There are no reference points for quality wines that have aged in bottle, and I feel a bit of frustration talking about them as they are isolated. Compared to working in Rioja or Ribera del Duero, where there's a wine atmosphere of wineries and winemakers, they are on their own and lack local historical wineries for reference. Their 2001 La Plazuela is one of the few "old" quality wines from the region at some 13-14 years of age.

- 2009 La Plazuela: 93 points.
- 2010 La Meseta: 91 points.
- 2010 El Señorito: 90 points.
- 2010 La Buena Vid: 90 points.
- 2012 Ercavio Roble: 89 points.
- 2013 La Malvar: 89 points.
- 2014 Ercavio Blanco: 88 points.
- 2014 Ercavio Rosado: 87 points.