

**2013 Bodegas Casa Castillo Pie Franco**

There is no 2012 Pie Franco so I tasted the 2013 Pie Franco, the leading old-vine, ungrafted Monastrell wine from Casa Castillo. This is an indigenous wine showing the character of the place, grape and vintage quite transparently. 50% full clusters were foot trodden and fermented in cement vats and aged in used 500-liter barrels. I had the chance to taste the wine a mere week before bottling and it was showing truly superb. It reminded me of a hypothetical blend of 2010 and 2006, perhaps more elegant at this stage, with subtle earth and tree bark aromas under notes of violets, red and blue berries, aromatic herbs (thyme, rosemary) and fennel (even aniseed and licorice). It shows no traces of oak only distant spices and even more timid hints of graphite. The palate is medium to full-bodied with a truly Mediterranean character, as it should be, along with density and tannin to keep the balance and freshness. It is quite poised and noble with great depth and a backbone of acidity that will keep it for many years. This is a model of what Mediterranean wines could (should) be; a wine that retains the character while being really drinkable and pleasant. This is approachable already, but should age for a long time. Since 2010 he's bottli...

- Luis Gutierrez (February, 2015)

**2012 Bodegas Casa Castillo Las Gravas**

A cuvée that has been changing over the years (and getting more focused and Mediterranean, I'd say) the 2012 Las Gravas is a blend of Monastrell with 15% Syrah and 15% Garnacha; the Garnacha vineyards in the state come into production so the winery has more grapes to use. This wine saw a big change with the 2008 vintage, when Cabernet Sauvignon disappeared from the blend and got more focused and true to its birthplace. 2012 could be the finest vintage to date, as there was no 2012 Pie Franco, as quantities were really short and those grapes are in this blend. It starts off with some notes of smoke, toffee, fresh fruit and orange peel in harmony with well-integrated oak and a stony profile that develops more and more notes of esparto grass with time in the glass. The palate is medium-bodied, with some polished, very fine tannins and a good mid-palate that is very balanced and fresh (I saw a note of pomegranate, is it the Garnacha?). It is a serious, very young wine with ripe flavors that make it very tasty. This is clearly riper than the 2013s and shows the character of the vintage quite transparently. The price is a dream come true. Super! 26,500 bottles.

2013 is a great vintage for Casa Castillo. While 2012 was very dry with s...

- Luis Gutierrez (February, 2015)

**2013 Bodegas Casa Castillo El Molar**

A new kid on the block, the pure Garnacha 2013 El Molar carries the name of the vineyards where the vines were planted in 2006 on sand and chalk soils covered with gravel. It was foot trodden and fermented in cement vats and aged for nine months in used 500-liter oak barrels. In 2013 the vines worked until the very end as it was a year where there was more rain than average and a relatively cool summer (sometimes ripening occurs because of dehydration rather than true ripening) resulting in a perfect ripeness but quite contained. It is light ruby color, very bright acidity (low pH?) and there's no indication of alcohol plus the oak is also perfectly integrated. It shows a pinch of spices over the core of red berries along with some spring flowers and perhaps a distant lactic touch. The supple and tasty palate is medium-bodied and has a fluid texture, very fine tannins and good acidity. The well-defined flavors are clean and offer floral notes plus developing notes of orange peel. I think this is the best Molar so far. A real bargain. 28,000 bottles.

2013 is a great vintage for Casa Castillo. While 2012 was very dry with some rain during the harvest, for José María Vicente it's still better than 2011 but clearly below 2010 and ...

- Luis Gutierrez (February, 2015)

### 2010 Bodegas Casa Castillo Syrah Valtosca

The 2010 Valtosca, which is pure Syrah, has a very reductive profile and should be decanted and aerated in advance. It's very smoky, with some dry flowers and a mineral touch, juicy and meaty. The finish is a little drying, which suggests the wine might need a little bit of time to tame those tannins. Drink 2015-2018.

Casa Castillo is the leading producer of southeastern Spain, and their pure, un-grafted Monastrell Pie Franco is one of the greatest wines from Spain. Jose Maria Vicente is the third generation associated with the bodega, and is in charge of the winery today. The property was purchased in 1941 by his grandfather who was in the wood and esparto grass (jute) business. There were vineyards and other cultivars, but only as a side business. It was Vicente's father Nemesio who in 1991 fermented and bottled the first Casa Castillo wine, so their wine history is still quite short. The property is quite big, over 400 hectares, and besides the 170 hectares of vineyards (70% Monastrell, 15% Syrah and 15% Garnacha), there are also almond and olive trees. All the vineyards are strictly dry-farmed. The Mediterranean-influenced continental climate has very cold winters with low temperatures often below zero and dry, hot summer...

- Luis Gutierrez (October, 2013)

### 2010 Bodegas Casa Castillo Pie Franco

The 2010 Pie Franco was aged for 18 months and bottled in February 2012. It might be going through a difficult phase, a little reductive, but shows denser, meatier, spicy, and at this moment needs a lot of air. It slowly develops and can be the successor of the 2006, with a fine-grained texture, notes of Mediterranean herbs and a long finish. 15% alcohol. Drink 2014-2022.

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### 2013 Bodegas Casa Castillo Jumilla

Yields for the 2013 Monastrell (100% Monastrell aged six months in neutral French oak barrels, concrete and foudres) were 16 to 25 hectoliters per hectare, which is about half of that permitted in Burgundy. An amazing value, this wine boasts a dense blue/purple color as well as a sumptuous nose of blueberries, blackberries, scorched earth, licorice and forest floor. Stunningly pure and medium to full-bodied with oodles of fruit, this is a remarkable value to drink until the cows come home. Consume it over the next 2-3 years.

Considered by many observers to be the finest estate in Jumilla, Casa Castillo is a treasure-trove for fabulous values, particularly from the Monastrell (Mourvedre) grape that loves the chalky terroirs and cool slopes of the Sierra del Molar.

Importer: European Cellars - Eric Solomon Selections, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565; [www.europeancellars.com](http://www.europeancellars.com)

Importer(s):

Eric Solomon. European Cellars, 2129 E Seventh St., Charlotte, NC 28204, (704) 358-1565, [www.europeancellars.com](http://www.europeancellars.com)

- Robert M. Parker, Jr. (June, 2014)

**2012 Bodegas Casa Castillo  
Jumilla**

A spectacular offering from Jumilla, Casa Castillo's 2012 Monastrell (100% Mourvedre aged six months in neutral French oak barrels) comes from old vines and yields averaging between 16 and 25 hectoliters per hectare. It exhibits notes of black raspberries, blueberries, acacia flowers, a dusty, chalky character no doubt from the limestone soils, and a medium-bodied, ripe, rich, concentrated mouthfeel that lingers in the mouth. It is nearly impossible to find a wine at this price with such intensity and richness. Buy it by the case and enjoy it over the next several years.

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- Robert M. Parker, Jr. (November,  
2013)