

2011 Aalto

2011 Aalto is the cuvee produced with Tempranillo grapes from nine villages across Ribera del Duero, some in Valladolid and the majority in Burgos. It was fermented with indigenous yeasts and was aged for 20 months in 50% new barrels and 50% used ones. Most of the oak is from France, but 15% of the barriques are made of American wood. The wine shows the house style of ripe, exuberant and well-oaked reds, with some lactic hints and surprisingly, fresh red fruit intermixed with the aromas of riper, darker fruit and plenty of spicy oak, developing pine needle-like notes with time in the glass, and later, ripe peach. The palate is medium to full-bodied with abundant, fine-grained, slightly dusty tannins. It shows good balance and moderate acidity ending with some lactic flavors. 230,000 bottles produced. I tasted from half bottles (that is not ideal), which are not sold, only used for tastings. The wine evolves quickly once the bottle is opened, so I think this ripe vintage should be drunk in the shorter term. Drink now-2017.

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- Luis Gutierrez (August, 2014)

2011 Aalto PS

The 2011 Aalto PS is their top cuvee from selected plots (Pagos Seleccionados), old Tempranillo vineyards around La Horra and La Aguilera in the province of Burgos. The nose has the characteristic dill-like aroma imparted by the American oak (malolactic is carried out in new American barrels and the aging is in French oak only) and plenty of notes of incense, cigar ash, nutmeg and clove over a core of ripe black fruit. The palate is full-bodied, and shows both elegance and power, with grainy, fine tannins and a silky, slightly dusty texture and moderate acidity. The wine aged for 20 months in barrel compared with some 30 months in the past. Regardless, the wine is still quite marked by the oak, quality oak, but plenty of oak nonetheless. This is one for the long haul that would benefit from at least a couple of years in the bottle. Drink 2016-2021.

2011 saw a warm end of the summer and an early harvest (it started on September) in Ribera del Duero. In Aalto they finished harvesting very healthy grapes on October 11. 2012 was extremely dry, but not as warm during the last months of the cycle. I tasted these 2011s from half-bottles that are far from ideal, especially since the half-bottles are not sold, and are used uniquely for...

- Luis Gutierrez (August, 2014)

2012 Pingus Psi

Let's start with the 2012 PSI, from an extremely dry vintage, produced with Tempranillo grapes with 5% Garnacha (a percentage that will be increased in the forthcoming vintages) that fermented in cement vats and aged for 18 months in a combination of used French barriques, oak foudres and cement vats. 150,000 bottles were produced. It was bottled in May 2014 and it feels closed and inaccessible, a bit stubborn or perhaps suffering from the recent bottling. It takes a long time to open up, finally revealing a core of sweet red fruit and notes of flowers, perfectly integrated oak. The palate is medium-bodied, delicious, more in line with the 2010s than with 2011s, sleek and pure, very balanced. It feels like a cool vintage, but it was not. A real triumph. Drink 2014-2017.

I had a relaxed and superb tasting with Peter Sisseck, where we had time to discuss the wines and Ribera del Duero in general as Sisseck is now part of the Consejo Regulador. It was also a great learning experience as he showed me some experimental wines that resulted in adjustments from the 2012 vintage onward, and a big jump in precision for the wines, with the yet unbottled 2012 Pingus verging on perfection. He explained the range of wines he produces as it...

- Luis Gutierrez (August, 2014)

2010 Pingus

I have tasted the 2010 Pingus a number of times since I published a note on it in issue 207 in June 2013, my first and probably the shortest article ever published at The Wine Advocate. I have consistently found it significantly better than when I first tasted it, so I decided to put it together with the latest releases, 2011 and 2012, to compare. The Pingus vineyards had been converted to biodynamic in the year 2000 and after the warm and dry 2009, 2010 was almost perfect. The vineyards yielded a disastrous 11 hectoliters per hectare, and the grape selection provided enough grapes for 6,000 bottles that were obtained fermenting in 2,000-liter oak vats and aging the wine for 22 months in second-fill French oak barrels. The 2010 is extremely aromatic, open and hedonistic and one extra year in bottle has only done the wine good, the oak feels much more integrated and the toasty aromas have all but disappeared. The palate is medium-bodied, with very fine tannins good acidity and freshness. This is really superb, with astonishing balance and power. With time in the glass it develops more complex aromas, with things like orange peel that really reminded me of the Riberas of yesteryear. I think I was mistaken last year, and the 2010 wil...

- Luis Gutierrez (August, 2014)

2010 Pingus Flor de Pingus

The 2010 Flor de Pingus is raised in 40% to 50% new French oak (Darnajou and Taransaud). It has a superb bouquet that is taut at first, but unfolds beautifully with very pure small dark cherries, cassis, orange blossom and a faint, attractive note of strawberry cheesecake. The palate is medium-bodied with sumptuous, plush tannins counterbalanced by the crisp thread of acidity. It has great clarity and tension with vibrant allspice and white pepper notes towards the finish that closes down a little, suggesting that it will need two or three years in bottle. Excellent. Drink 2015-2025.

Available from The Rare Wine Company:
\$90 per bottle.

- Neal Martin (August, 2012)