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points

Drink: 2014-2020

2010 Raul Perez El Penitencia

As much as I admire El Pecado, for this writer it is the 2010 El Penitencia that constitutes Raul's best wine. A blend of 85% Mencia, 10% Ciano and 5% of the gloriously named Bastardo, it comes from vines over one century old at an altitude of 380 meters and sees 12 months in French oak. It offers a sublime bouquet of dark cherries, raspberry leaf and Alpine streams that is beautifully defined – reminiscent of a Cote de Beaune. The palate is beautifully balanced with finer tannins than the El Pecado. It is very pure and alluring with crisp, taut red cherry, blueberry and a twist of sour lemon on the vibrant finish. This is superb. Drink 2014-2020.

The wines of Raul Perez have been rightly feted by many commentators and it was just "one of those things" that we were not able to meet up when I visited the region. But I was able to receive the samples, since a report upon Ribeira Sacra without his wines was unthinkable.

Importer: Ole Imports.
www.oleimports.com

- Neal Martin (February, 2013)

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Drink: 2015-2025

2011 Raul Perez El Pecado

The 2011 El Pecado is very deep in color compared to its peers. It has an intense nose of black cherries, sloes and stuffed dates with fine definition, although despite decanting this wine later at home, it remains compact and broody. The palate is medium-bodied with a sweet, caressing entry. There are plenty of fine tannins lending this symmetry and focus with a tightly wound, crisp finish that shows just a touch of heat on the aftertaste. It will need two or three years to reach its full potential. Drink 2015-2025.

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Drink: 2013-2018

2011 Raul Perez La Claudina

The 2011 Ultreia La Claudina is pure Godello from Valtuille, raised in an oxidative manner, without refilling the barrels (in some vintages it even develops some flor). The vinification has changed over the years, and this wine has nothing to do with the 2007 vintage; only the name and the source of the grapes are the same. The soil is mainly sand in the upper part of the Cova de la Raposa zone of the village of Valtuille, a warm area. It is straw colored, and an intriguing nose, full of personality, showing soil notes, with some incipient complexity. The palate shows the volume of the Godello grape and the effect of the sand. A soil rather than a fruit wine. A bit of a radical white, clearly not for all palates. A wine of strong personality. Drink 2013-2018.

I had the chance to spend a few hours with Raul Perez trying to understand his wines for you, as he keeps changing (almost) everything (nearly) every time you talk to him. Well, I might be exaggerating a bit, but not much. Raul Perez now has two separate wineries in Bierzo, one in Salas de los Barrios, where the Ultreia wines are produced, called Bodegas y Vinedos Raul Perez, and a new one in Valtuille de Abajo, called La Vizcaina de Vinos, but I'm including them all her...

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Drink: 2013-2019

2011 Raul Perez Ultreia St Jacques

The 2011 Ultreia St Jacques, pure Mencia, is the evolution of a wine that started as an unoaked red, but now spends one year in barrel before bottling. The previous vintage for this wine was 2008. As all the wines from Perez it is made with the whole grape clusters. The nose is an explosion of flowers and ripe fruit, with an intriguing herbaceous note. It is now a more serious wine than the initial vintages, a full grown-up rather than a kid. The medium-bodied palate shows dried roses, and is long and uncomplicated, a touch sweet. It is great value- if you can find it! It's the bigger-volume wine of the winery, but only 9,000 bottles are produced. Drink 2013-2019.

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Drink: 2014-2020

2011 Raul Perez Ultreia

The 2011 Ultreia, produced with the local red Mencia grape, is somehow less approachable than the St Jacques of the same vintage. In this wine they are reaching their goal, as it is only 12.5% alcohol, the result of early harvesting. Here all the wine is aged in barriques, but it's quite accessible and has the complexity of blending different vineyards from different zones within Valtuille. It has a straight palate, good acidity, a pure wine, maybe showing the effect of the stems. A wine for purists. Bravo! Drink 2014-2020.

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Drink: 2014-2025

2010 Raul Perez Ultreia de Valtuille

The 2010 Ultreia Valtuille is produced from old-vine Mencia vineyards from the Villegas zone within the village of Valtuille. It has a very Burgundian feel to it, even if the texture is more redolent of a Crozes-Hermitage. This is a medium-bodied, ultra-elegant, mega-mineral wine, built to last, but approachable from right now. The sense of balance and harmony is amazing. A truly great wine. Some 3,500 bottles were produced. I had a preview of the just-bottled 2011 of this wine and it was closed for business, but it shows great potential and I'm looking forward to tasting it next year. Drink 2014-2025.

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Drink: 2013-2017

2011 Raul Perez Sketch

The 2011 Sketch is just wonderful – pure Albarino from vines planted in 1972 on sand and granite soils, it sees 12 months in French oak. Interestingly, Raul opted to age some lots underwater in order to see how the lack of oxygen impacts upon the elevage (although some of the lots were spoiled and of course, did not enter the final blend!) The nose is reticent at first, but over one hour it unfolds to offer subtle notes of lime and a tinge of sea-foam, the oak barely noticeable. The palate is exquisite: beautifully balanced and with real race and tension. There is an adorable twist of bitter lemon that keeps this Sketch on its toes. Taut, pure and effortlessly speaking of its place, this is just a delightful Rias Baixas that you will savor to the last drop. Drink now-2017+.

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