

Cíes Albariño



In 2012, Rodrigo Méndez decided to establish a personal project under his own name. His goal was to produce wines that authentically express the terroir of Galicia's Rías Baixas region while adhering to biodynamic farming principles. Rooted in his family's legacy and inspired by his grandfather's teachings, Rodrigo emphasizes simplicity and a deep connection to the land. Using ancient winemaking techniques, he crafts age-worthy wines that capture the history and character of the region's soils.

The winery, located in Meaño, Pontevedra, operates on a small scale and produces very limited quantities each year. Traditional methods are employed, combining stainless steel tanks with oak barrels to create wines that reflect the true essence of the landscape.

Cíes Albariño, named after the Cíes Islands off the coast of Pontevedra, is a small-production wine that embodies a traditional expression of Albariño from the Val do Salnés subzone. Fermented with indigenous yeast, it is partially aged in old wooden vessels without temperature control, a technique once common in the region before the introduction of stainless steel in the 1980s. Reviving this method, Rodrigo Méndez crafts distinctive, age-worthy Albariños like Cíes that honor the region's winemaking heritage.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: Old vines dating back to 1954. 100% indigenous yeast fermentation. Half of the wine is fermented and aged without controlling the temperature in old wood vessels. The other half is fermented in stainless steel tank. This is a village wine from Meaño, an area of 7 villages less than 1 km apart, within the Salnés subzone.

RATING HISTORY: 2024 95WA, 93VM; 2023 95WA, 94JS, 93TA; 2022 94WA, 94TA, 92VM; 2021 95WA; 2020 95WA; 2019 93WA; 2018 94WA, 91WE; 2017 93+WA, 92VFTC; 2016 94 W&S, 92WA

GRAPE: 100% Albariño. Vines planted from 1954-1964. Tended in sandy and granite soil at sea level.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: Cíes shows clean acidity and a strong mineral character that together are a perfect match for shellfish, seafood and lighter salads. The length and acidity of this wine make it an excellent candidate for aging in the cellar.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Half the wine is oak aged for 12 months and half is aged in stainless steel tanks. The portion aged in oak goes through ageing (elevage) in two large 2,000 liter barrels. The wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Cíes is produced from grapes grown in three vineyards: two high on the slopes and one low in the valley floor. All three vineyards are located in Meaño, within the Val do Salnés subzone of DO Rías Baixas. Located in Spain's upper northwest corner, Rías Baixas sits just above the border of Portugal. The name "Rías Baixas" means "low estuaries," a reference to the area's many rivers that lead to the Atlantic Ocean. Of the three vineyards farmed to make Cíes, we find predominantly two soil types, 75% granite and 25% dark soil. The landscape is low undulating hills and the vineyards are planted on the slopes and on the flat valley floors. This area's climatic conditions give this wine an "Atlantic" character. Of the 5 subzones in Rías Baixas, Val do Salnés is the coolest due to the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean. Yearly rainfall is above 1,700 millimeters (66 inches), or what one would expect in one of the wettest regions in Spain. The area is quite foggy with an average temperature from April-October of 63.4F.

TASTING NOTES Pale gold. Vibrant, mineral-accented aromas of orange, pear and honeysuckle, along with a spicy topnote that gains strength as the wine opens up. Lively and sharply focused on the palate, offering intense citrus and orchard fruit flavors underscored by chalky minerality. Finishes dry, nervy and impressively long, leaving resonating orange zest and floral qualities behind. -- Josh Reynolds

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 12.5%

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