

Leirana Albariño



Rodrigo Mendez is a 5th generation winemaker from the tiny fishing village of Meaño in Val do Salnes, the most coastal of the subzones of DO Rias Baixas. Descended from the founding head of the DO of Rias Baixas, he is an astute historian of the history and heritage of this place, and makes wines to express and preserve this history and unique maritime terroir. He sources the parcels he farms through generational familial relationships, from families for whom winemaking is no longer their way of life. Indeed, his preservation of these historic vineyards is a vocation as much as it is a passion project – he feels compelled and bound to farm these parcels, because otherwise they would no longer exist. He makes wine in a way that harkens back to lost methods – painstaking work that eschews the tutti-frutti style that’s become the mainstream. Rather than allowing the wine to go through malolactic fermentation, Rodri lets his fruit hang longer than his neighbors in the appellation, allowing the natural weight and viscosity of the wine balance the searing acidity that this maritime zone produces. This approach is risky and requires expertise few can match, but the end result is a wine with weight that reflects the sea and the wind – unmistakably Salnes.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: This is a wine that is unmistakably maritime. Using almost forgotten minimal-intervention techniques learned through generational viticultural knowledge, Rodri recreates the Albariño of yesteryear. This is a wine of power, elegance and salinity that can truly stand among the best white wines of the world.

RATING HISTORY: 2019 93WA; 2018 94WA; 2017 93 WA; 2016 92+ WA; 2015 92 JS

GRAPE: 100% Albarino. Vines planted from 1952 - 1982. Tended in sandy and granite soil at 5 m (16 ft) elevation

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: The salinity of Leirana makes it a natural pair for scallops, oysters and shellfish of all kinds, as well as the classic octopus dish, pulpo gallego.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Naturally occurring fermentation with its own yeast. Aged in 80% stainless, 20% neutral foudre. No malolactic fermentation.

PRODUCTION: 2,000 cases

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Rías Baixas is tucked into the green rolling hills of the northwest corner of Spain, just above Portugal, hugging the deep blue Atlantic coastline. It is a breathtaking region overall, and the sub-region of Val do Salnes, the birthplace of Albariño, is no exception. Within the five unique subzones that fall under the D.O. Rías Baixas, Val do Salnes’ prime location is the coolest and most fertile area of the D.O. on the Atlantic coast of Spain. In fact, there is more Albariño vines planted there than any of the other four sub-regions sharing its Rías Baixas name. The soil here is pure granite with top layers of rocks and alluvial soil, perfect for the fresh, Albariño expression. With average temperatures of approximately 60F (16C) between April and October, Rías Baixas is also one of the rainiest areas in Spain with median annual rain falling 63inches (1600mm). This can often cause difficulties in reaching optimum sugar levels during the last few, very vital, weeks before harvest, often resulting in vintage variation.

TASTING NOTES Pale, green-tinged yellow. Bright and sharply focused on the nose, displaying incisive Meyer lemon, honeysuckle, quinine and mineral scents, along with a hint of ginger in the background. Dry, taut and light on its feet, offering intense, mineral-laced citrus and orchard fruit flavors that show no excess weight. Closes on a spicy note, displaying strong, floral-tinged persistence. -- Josh Reynolds.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 13%

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