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This is the most anticipated new project in Rioja in the last few years. After all, how often does the Rothschild family of Lafite fame in Bordeaux and Vega Sicilia from Ribera del Duero, one of the most prestigious wineries in Spain get together to make wine in one of the classical regions of the world? I met with Pablo Alvarez and Xavier

Ausas, Vega Sicilia's director and winemaker respectively, to taste and discuss the wines, as it's important to understand what they are aiming for when tasting the first vintage. They had been working quietly in the region for years before deciding to go ahead. The Rothschild and Alvarez families started working together in the early 2000-s and vinified up to four vintages in rented facilities until they were convinced the wine was what they wanted. They

created the company in 2009 when they rented a winery in the village of Leza in Rioja Alavesa where they have the capacity to process 120,000 kilos of grapes. As you can guess they are building their own winery aiming for a future total of 350,000 kilos, which they hope to have ready for the 2014 harvest. They started talking about it 14 years ago and they had Rioja in mind, Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa to be precise; they were also looking (and keep

looking) in Bordeaux. They thought it was going to be impossible to buy old vineyards in the north of Rioja and their idea was to plant. But they started buying, looking for calcareous and argilo-calcareous soils, kept buying and now they have 75 hectares of vineyards. All of them are 35-40 years old (some much older, the oldest registered one is from 1920), from before they started using highly productive clones in Rioja, which they want to avoid. Most of these vineyards (70-80%) are in San Vicente, but they also have some in Leza, Abalos and Samaniego. Their idea is

to have 80-85 hectares in production and some more in rotation, as they don-t want to use any grapes from vines younger than 11 years old. Pablo is a fan of the Vina Real wines from the 1950s-1960s and those are the kind of wines he'd like to produce. They do not like the international, modern style of Rioja, but want to get the best of

both worlds, the acidity and finesse of the classics, and the aromatic purity and fruit expression of the modern wines, the low yields of the past (no more than 4,000 kilos per hectare) taking advantage of the fact that today there-s more precision in the harvesting, the knowledge of varieties, etc. The work in the vineyard is like in Ribera,

getting ready for the worst (frost and so on), which allows them to harvest earlier. They only use destemmed Tempranillo grapes (they have a couple of thousand kilos of white grapes from the field blend in the old vineyards which they are vinifying experimentally), two thirds fermented in stainless steel vats and the rest in 8,000-kilo oak vats. They do separate fermentations by soil type, with not much extraction, aiming at keeping the fruit, the acidity

and a low pH. 30% of the wine carried out its malolactic fermentation in barrel and the rest in vat. Only French oak barriques are used, 70% of them new and the rest second fill where the wine ages for 14-18 months. They look for finer grain wood, not Nevers like they use in Ribera and Toro, so they buy their barrels from other suppliers.

Here everything is more subtle and finer. They bottle two wines which are produced in exactly the same way and the two are just barrel selections; Individual barrels are tasted and selected for Macan Clasico or Macan. This might change in the future when they gain experience about their vineyards and might be able to do separate wines right from the source. The first wines are from the warm, ripe 2009 vintage, and I-d say that save for the American oak, the wines have a certain Vega Sicilia character, clean and pure. I had tasted the wines a couple of times before and found them too powerful. Now they seem finer, more integrated. The wines have improved and integrated in bottle,

so I think they will age well. Even though they think Macan Clasico is for drinking, both wines should develop in bottle. In case you were wondering about the names, they explained that Macanes are the inhabitants of San Vicente de la Sonsierra.

Vicente de la Sonsierra.



Orders due by August 1, 2015  
Wine scheduled to arrive October 2015

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EUROPVIN  
*Christopher Cannon*



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**PRESALE**



Putting my nose in the glass of the 2011 Macán Clásico took me immediately to Rioja, which is very good, especially for such a young wine. This is aimed for early consumption where they search for polished tannins, good acidity and drinkability. It has the telltale combination of wild berries, spices and hints of leather, showing some aniseed and cured meat notes after time in the glass. It's a delicate wine, with subtle aromas and a fine thread of acidity coated by fine-grained tannins and pungent flavors. This is accessible from today, but should also develop well in bottle, gaining in complexity. 43,190 bottles produced.

The 2011 Macan feels young, a little backward and still marked by the barrel-aging. It presents a nose that is somewhat closed, but with good depth, mixing black berry fruit with vanilla and other aromatic spices. There is good weight of fruit in the palate framed by abundant tannins and balancing acidity through a finish that is very long. It's a modern, well-made Rioja that should improve in bottle. I'd wait one or two years before pulling the cork, and for sure it will evolve for a good decade. 55,500 bottles.



**92**  
points



**93**  
points

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*Christopher Cannon*