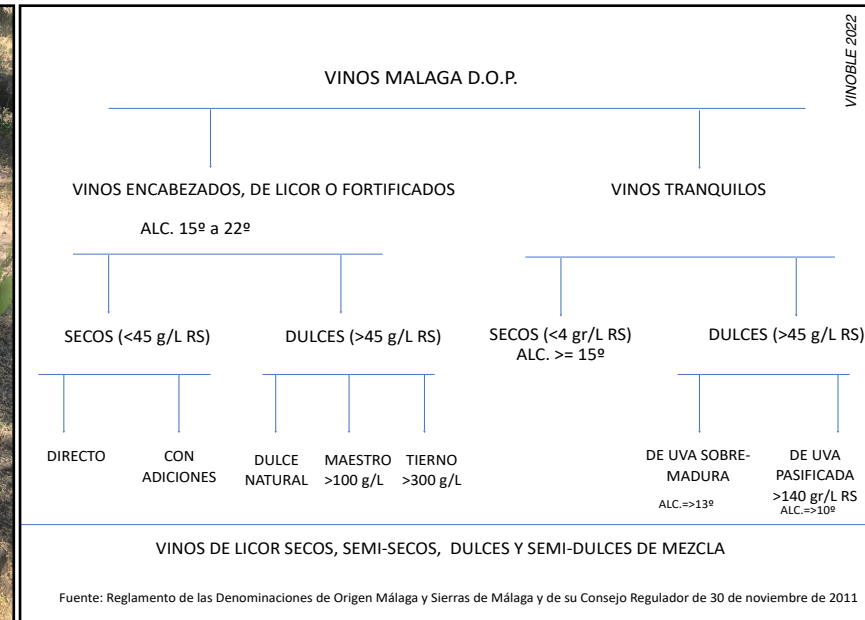
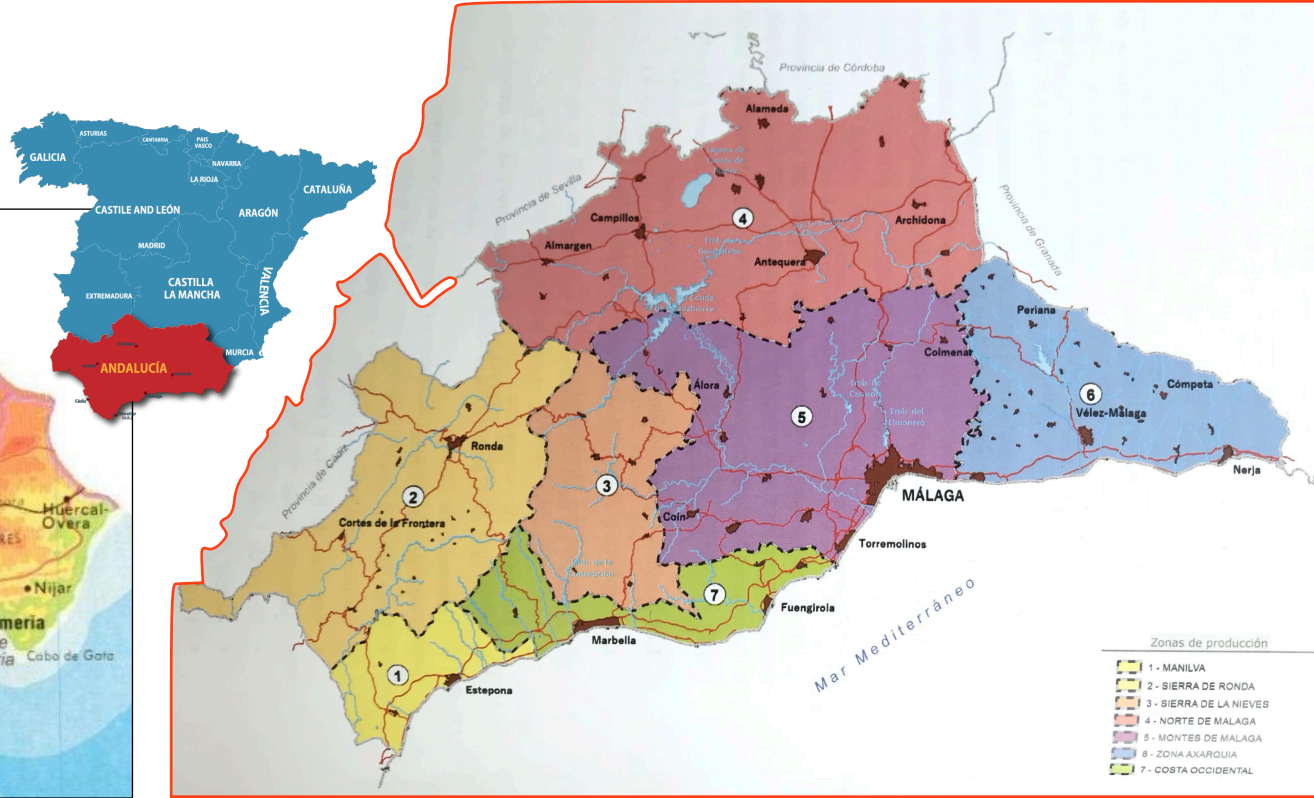
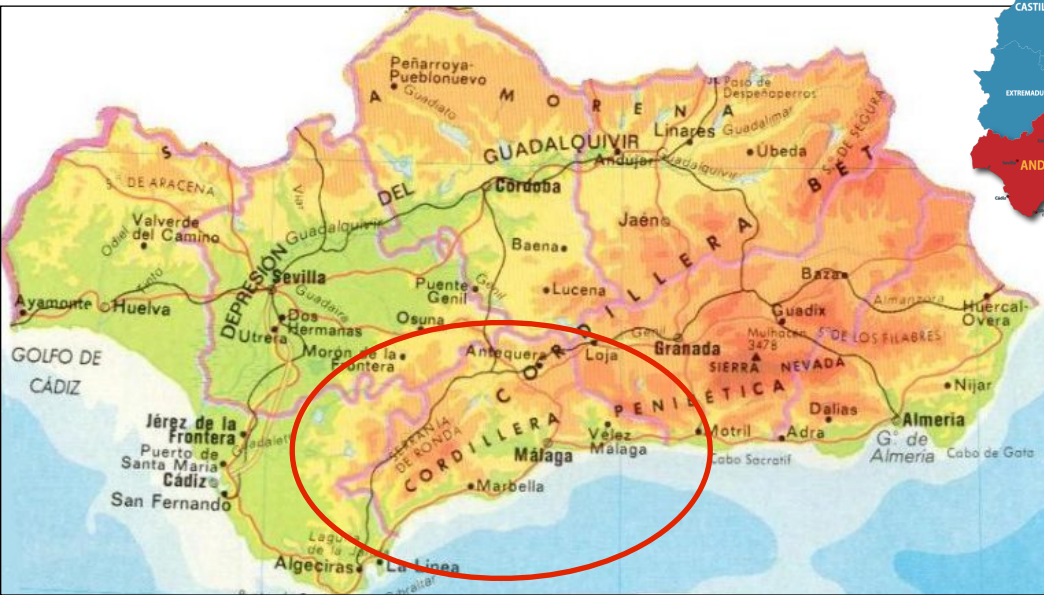


# MALAGA & ANDALUSIA



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St.-Saphorin, June 1st 2023

# WINE ROSE TASTINGS MALAGA: TWO CENTURIES OF HISTORY

## FOREWORD

The historic vineyards of Malaga seem to be lost in the mist of time.

The slopes that were formerly covered with vines are now a home to olive trees, pines and spontaneous vegetation to limit the already strong erosion.

The very same erosion seems to have affected the local culture and the memory. How can this be happening ?

The high costs of production are not (yet) supported by the market, for the region is un-trendy and the selling price for their wines is too low. The sweet (& fortified) style of wines traditionally produced do not encounter the market taste no more...two factors, among the many, that initiated a doom spiral that hasn't been reversed yet.

Being forgotten by the trade, also means being out of the spotlight for quality research journalists and writers.

Gathering RELIABLE information for this tastings has been some kind of a maze, for the many sources available on the web and in esteemed references books are erroneous. I invite you to appreciate that all information in the brief introduction the participants received has been validated by Malaga experts and living witnesses. The portrait reflects the actual regional situation in 2021-2022, but I deeply hope that these figures will soon be outdated, for it means that the Málaga renaissance will have gained momentum.

All this said, we have experienced a memorable tasting that has the ambitious target of repositioning Malaga on the map of the great wine regions of the world, and show that the phoenix is rising from the ashes !

Hope you'll enjoy the reading,

Michele

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## THE PROGRAM OF OUR EVENING

Wine n.1 - Sierras de Málaga DOP Voladeros 2020 - Bodegas Victoria Ordoñez (Santo Pitar area - 1000m asl, some pre-phylloxera vines, in the cellar free run juice only, ageing in 500l barrel)

Pale lemon, grey hue

The nose offers an array of wild aromatic herbs, oily - balsamic components, no fruity nuances in the horizon.

It expresses a sort of “cold maturity”, for certain induced by the altitude.

In the mouth, the texture is oily and dense (dry extract) supported by the wise choice of sappy and L-toasted barrel aging, bringing in some white tannins in the middle palate. The finish stretches on the tongue to a mine-salt, precise and fresh conclusion.

### BODEGA VICTORIA ORDOÑEZ

The Bodega Victoria Ordoñez manages around 7ha of vineyards owned or under contract. The scattered plots are home to old vines, 50y.o. for the youngest, to pre-phylloxera (1878) for the oldest specimens. The grape varieties planted are in accordance with the ancient traditions (Pedro Ximenez & Muscatel de Alexandria) and a modern touch for the reds (Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon & Petit Verdot).

Victoria's first professional life was devoted to medical research, but she was drawn to wine by her brother in 2004, to accompany the expansion of the Jorge Ordoñez group.

After years of hard work and historical research to spot the most prestigious vineyard plots in the Montes area, she decided to set the bases for her own personal quest, the Bodega Victoria Ordoñez was born. The sourcing of the grapes focuses on the municipalities of Málaga, Benamargosa and Comares.

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## FLIGHT 1 - ANDALUSIAN “CULTURAL EXCHANGES” & THE CONCEPT OF DRY WINES

### Wine n.2 - Málaga DO (?) Amontillado Viejo “Fino Don Paco” - Compañía Mata

Almost for certain à parcel purchased by Mata in Jerez to answer a client demand, then labelled with the Malaga seal.

Amber colour, with orange hue, clear and brilliant

Nose on fine oxidation without any acetic element. It follows with toffee, burnt orange peel, iodine elements and a metallic, “old” impression for some.

Mouth coating dry attack, followed by a creamy middle palate. The amontillado style shows through with a yeasty-bitter & iodine elements of the decayed “flor” that structures the texture. Medium + alcohol, conveying warmth but no burning. The finish is medium to long, saline and briny.

### Wine n.3 - Málaga DO Bénéfique Año 1800 - Bodegas Larios - 18,5% abv

Bénéfique from the name of the Lagar, i.e. estate, located in the Montes

The concept of Año stems from a single vintage barrel ageing that might have been topped up with other old wines in the cellar to compensate the “angels’ share”, till bottling, supposed to have taken place before 1960s.

Golden - amber tinge

The nose expresses poise and elegance with an extremely integrated alcohol perception (18.5%) and a fine rancio lift. The aromatic profile displays tobacco, incense, caramel, dried fruits coated in a peach compote.

The mouth perception is fairly dry (c.a. 40g r/s), vertical with a refined tannic-bitter frame. The finish is long harmonious and almost nutty-fruity.

The bottle was prepared and opened 3 months before the tasting, with no further oxygenation and in between it gained in breath and complexity after at least 60y since bottling.

### Wine n.4 - Málaga DO Bénéfique Solera 1866 - Bodegas Larios (under screwcap)

Clear amber colour, brilliant

Camphor ashes and incense on the first nose, toffee and liquor, cognac spirit, less integrated alcohol in the beginning, which quickly gains in elegance and refinement with some time in the glass.

Same goes for the mouth that starts tight and dry, moving into a profound, harmonious acid-sugar balance. The finish is long and slightly drying out with bitter wood tannins. After taste of vanilla and pastry.

## NOTES ON THE PRODUCERS

### COMPAÑIA MATA

Compañía Mata, Unión de Bodegas Andaluzas, was based on Purificación street, on a large lot near the Guadalmedina riverbed.

Thanks to the researcher Manuel Martínez Molina, we know that José Mata Marrodán started in business with an alcohol store in the Perchel neighbourhood and with a flotilla of fishing boats. In 1917 he acquired the ancient Adolfo Pries wineries, in activity since 1770 until Mata’s purchase, located on the beaches of La Caleta. Mata, associated with his brother Manuel, moved the wineries to Purificación street to a large industrial building dedicated to aging wines and preparing dried fruits for export. The company adopted a lion’s head as its logo and expanded its stock of old soleras with the purchase of those that belonged to the Heredia house and later with those of Hijos de Quirico López.

The winery opted for quinado wines under the Anibal brand (see last flight), which was advertised as an effective restorative in the middle decades of the 20th century. At the end of the sixties the company was liquidated. The wine inventory was transferred to Hijos de Antonio Barceló and the headquarters buildings to a pharmaceutical company.

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## BODEGAS LARIOS

It all goes back to the beginning of the 19th century, when Pedro Larios, a merchant originally from La Rioja, settled in Malaga. Once settled, the great protagonist in the city would be his son who became the first Marquis of Larios, Martín. Martín Larios, upon his arrival in Malaga, began with small businesses that bore great benefits in the sugar and textile industry for they managed to adopt the same model of the textile industry that was established during the British industrial revolution. The family acquired a great economic power and they invested in many economic sectors, both in the real estate and in the trade.

Evidence of its great influence is that in 1848 the Larios family created Banco de Málaga, backing all their companies and generating important profits. It was the third Marquis of Larios, José Aurelio, that purchased JIMENEZ Y LAMOTHE winery in 1918, founded in Malaga in 1852, renamed BODEGAS LARIOS which was then sold to Pernod Ricard in 1974. Currently the company is owned by Japanese capital and only produces and sells one gin (ref. J Krauel)

**Interesting anecdote:** The JIMENEZ Y LAMOTHE wineries distributed wines in Switzerland in the 19th century through Alfred Zweifel, a businessman from Lenzburg, where he founded a winery in 1889. The building was called VILLA MÁLAGA and his leading brand was called EL FARO in reference to the Malaga lighthouse. The winery disappeared upon Zweifel's death in 1917. His descendants were prominent toy makers and currently own a potato chips company. The wines coming from the soleras that are presented for tasting from Bodegas Larios were already marketed in Switzerland in the 19th/20th century.

## FLIGHT 2 - THE IMPACT OF BOTTLE AGEING FOR MALAGA

### Wine n.5 - Málaga DO Solera 1857 - Bodegas Larios - 17% abv (bottling 1960s)

Bright amber colour

Nose of brown caramel, dried papaya, rancio, medicinal elements to it, constantly evolving onto garrigue and mushroom scents.

Palate offering a mellow attack, beautiful aromatic concentration, slight perception of heat in the middle of the mouth.

The rancio cuts through with great elegance and leads to a fresh finish. The distinctive iodine notes...simply call for more !

### Wine n.6 - Málaga DO Transañejo Seco 30y.o. - Bodegas Málaga Virgen (bottling 2000s?)

Brilliant clear amber tinge

Notes of rancio - nutty on the nose, then opening up to toffee, smoke, peat and petrol, and again balsamic tones of eucalyptus.

Great balance and depth in mouth with splendid interplay between sweetness and the bitterness. The lingering aftertaste offers a significant

developpement on rancio and peaty - menthol...According to some tasters, the wine is still too young J if compared side by side with a far older bottling and more poised wine.

## NOTES ON THE PRODUCERS - BODEGAS MÁLAGA VIRGEN (former LOPEZ HERMANOS)

At the end of the 19th century (1885), an entrepreneur and loving man of the world of wines, Salvador Lopez Lopez began with wines produced in his own cellars. A few years later, in 1896, his brother Francisco Lopez Lopez (who later became mayor of Malaga) joined the company.

Known for their faith of hard working attitude, they received the affectionate nickname “Los Leones” (the Lions). They launched their first 3 brands: Malaga Virgen, Sol de Malaga, and Trajineru.

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### FLIGHT 3 - THE KEY GERMAN FAMILIES

#### Wine n.7 - Málaga DO Solera 1885 - Bodegas Scholtz Hermanos

An experienced taster's comments: not the best bottle he had, lacking punch.

Mahogany opaque hue

On the nose fig compote, orange marmalade, tobacco, cedar wood, cinnamon, toffee, peat and wet earth, possibly from a mature bottling. The first mouth displays a viscous and silky texture and a baroque style. Warmth and burnt-caramel in the finish.

#### Wine n.8 - Málaga DO Pedro Ximenez "blanco semi-dulce" - Carlos J. Krauel

The harvest dates back to 1920s, bottled after civil war (1937), then stored during WWII for, during 10 years no wine bottling/shipment was made, the market was completely stuck (no sales to Germany in WWII).

Orange - brown tinge, brilliant hue

Coffee beans on the nose, tobacco leaves, camphor, quinine, toffee and dried nuts underpinned by a subtle rancio, with great depth and perfect integration. Elegant mouthfeel, medicinal - incense and peat elements in the long finish.

All in all the wine shows great, with accomplished harmony and youth !

### NOTES ON THE PRODUCERS

#### BODEGAS HERMANOS SCHOLTZ & CARLOS J. KRAUEL

The importance of the Malaga wine trade in Germany during the 18th century led many merchants to settle in Malaga and found their wineries there: Gross (Hamburg), Pries (Rostock), Scholtz (Berlin) or Krauel (Rostock), etc. According to the records of the port of Hamburg, 63% of the wines imported from Spain for the German & Northern European market between 1733 and 1798 came from Malaga. From Cádiz (Jerez) merely 7%.

Christián Scholtz, (from the illustrious Prussian family Scholtz von Hermensdorf) arrived in Málaga around 1797 as a employee of the Lambrecht Roose house and in 1807 he founded, with his brother Emilio, the Scholtz Hermanos trading house, which can be considered the pioneer in large-scale winemaking, becoming a business of great importance and enjoying well-deserved credit and fame.

On the other hand, the KRAUEL family, whose origins are in Rostock, had been in the wine trade since the 16th century, and established in Malaga in the year 1803. The winery produced Málaga wines that were sold mainly in Germany and the northern European markets.

Malaga wineries of German origin had many problems during the 20th century due to the two World Wars. Contrary to the Sherry bodegas of English origin. The Krauel family tales continue today with Javier, attending our tasting, who represents the 7th generation of the Malaga Krauel branch. He produces a Vermouth made according to the regional tradition of mixing dry and sweet wines from the Málaga area, a family recipe dating back from 1892.

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## FLIGHT 4 - IMITATIONS & COUNTERFEITS

It would be incomplete to organise such historical tasting without mentioning the role of imitations...even after the introduction of the DO system.

To prove this, I took the liberty of joining a page scan of the respected ouvrage from Joseph Audibert ("Audibert, Joseph François (1854-1921) "L'art de faire les vins d'imitation : madère, malaga, etc., vermouth, bitter, sirops..." - Paris, Librairie Centrale des Sciences, 1882)

### Context of 1882

Followed the drastic drop in production caused by fungi (mildew and powdery mildew) and the Phylloxera crisis in 1878 (for Malaga), to be able to sell, imitations kept on developing to answer the growing market enthusiasm.

J. Audibert quotes "1851, Le procureur générale décrète que c'est normal justifie et encouragé de faire des vins d'imitation si cela peut répondre aux besoins du marché"  
All methods of imitation are allowed.

In his book "The Art of Making Wine with Raisins", Joseph Audibert reveals some recipes and explains the function of the main ingredients:

The raw material, used to produce Malaga, for example, was raisins (dried grapes) because it was cheaper than fresh grapes and above all it was possible to work it all year around, producing upon demand, without aging or storage added costs.

Then grape syrup is added (less expensive than sugar), white spirit, aromatic plants, walnut husk and caramel to enhance the colour.

All this said, How can you tell the difference between a Malaga wine of controlled origin and an imitation?

**Wine n.9 - Málaga DO Pedro Ximenez "very old sweet" - Bodegas Larios**

According to the Consejo, a Málaga DO wine obtained by blending Vino Dulce Natural + Vino Tierno + some old dry whites.

Average sugar concentration (<180 g/l) and less than 2 years of ageing, otherwise the Añejo mention would appear on the label vs the unregulated mention "Very Old Sweet")

Mahogany dark tinge

Nose of quinine, roasted meat, rancio, liquorice. A moderate alcohol integration, almost lack of refinement.

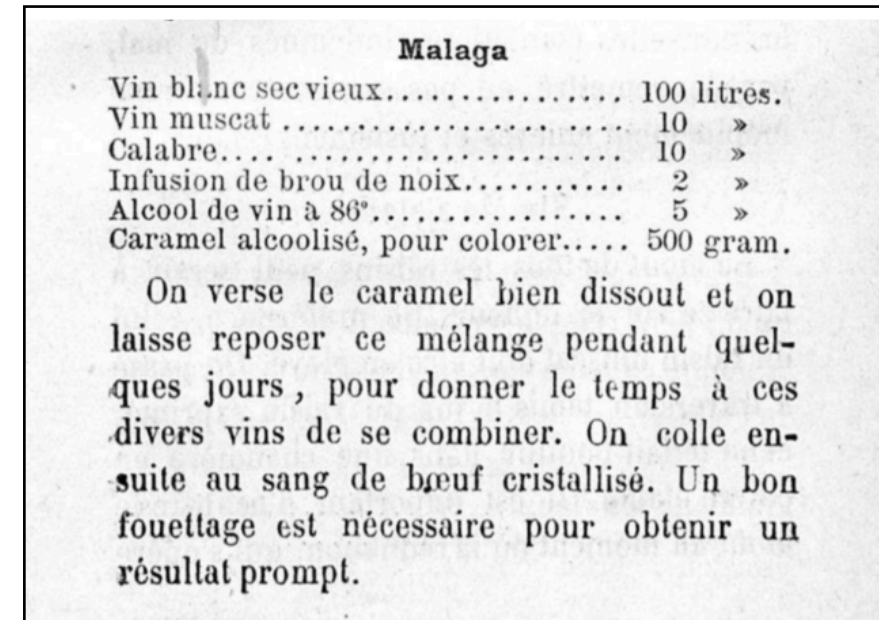
In the mouth it offers a viscous - syrupy texture sustained by a quite high refreshing touch. Not too much complexity in there.

**Wine n.10 - Málaga DO Original V "reserva especial"- IBASA (unknown producer)**

Brown-mahogany, opaque appearance.

Nose and mouthfeel that I tend to associate with the heavier clay soils (barro) of Montilla-Moriles (much cheaper than Málaga), and the chocolate, medicinal elements tend to confirm. The wine shows an unbalanced alcohol, medium body despite the sugar concentration, slightly diluted, lacks depth.

The finish is on the sugary side - caramel, according to some, a perceptible muscatel profile.



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## FLIGHT 5 - TAKE A WALK...ON THE DARK SIDE

**Wine n.11 - Málaga DO Pedro Ximenez Dulce Oscuro añejo n.22 - Bodegas Larios (wine since 1930s, bottled in 1950-60s)**

Mahogany, dark colour

Multilayered and complex nose on syrupy, medicinal, eucalyptus, amaretto notes.

Mouth is very complex, long and creamy, milk chocolate, coffee, perfectly integrated alcohol, burnt earth & burnt curry, monolithic & long finish.

**Wine n.12 - Málaga DO Pedro Ximenez “Don Juan” (bottling 1980s) - Bodegas Lopez Hermanos**

Mahogany, dark colour, brilliant and “young” bottling

Dark and spicy elements, dark roasted chocolate, stewed plum, bell pepper, acetic tones in the background that offer complexity and lift.

The mouth shows extremely rich, coated and viscous texture with vibrant acidity, high alcohol, acetic finish and a great aromatic - balsamic development in the aftertaste.

## FLIGHT 6 - WINE...A MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL & MORE

**Wine n.13 - Málaga DO extra añejo “Anibal” - Compañía Mata (bottled before 1950s)**

Mahogany, brilliant, green tinge

Medicinal nose on quinine, mint jelly, meat stock, umami character.

Concentrated and syrupy - quinine & wood bark bitters, peat, medicinal herbs, long and highly sweet perception.

Not everyone’s cup of...Málaga, maybe for we were we’re not in need for such medicine ? :)

**Wine n.14 - Málaga DO Colmenar Moscatel Solera 1868 - Bodegas Larios (bottled probably since 1960s)**

**The most famous Solera from Larios, from the municipality of Colmenares (eastern border of the Montes area) that do not blend with arrope, offering therefore the truthful and complex concentration of pure cask ageing.**

Brownish amber with brilliant hue

Muscat style, grapey and therpenic elements, sticky and deep medicinal notes, orange marmalade, rancio of extremely fine integration.

Different mouth structures with evident lower acidity than PX, refined, balance and velvety elegance, perfect alcohol integration, deep and long finish leaving with coffee powder and noble wood bitters.

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## CONCLUSIONS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

The tasting was terribly rich and articulated...to be expected...reason for which almost half of the “pata de jamon” was sliced to energise the panel before we got started :) The challenge now, is how to resume the commentaries and information we gathered...

### Useless concern to begin with: how to taste and assess the quality of such wines

I thought necessary to focus on evaluating elements such as the quality of the spirit, of the arrope (when applied), etc. Well, nothing more useless as the quality level of the wines we tried was so high that no “parametrage” was needed.

The real focus was to capture the moment and the complex evolution of the wines in the glass!

Beyond the quality of the bottle itself, one of the factors contributing to harmony is evidently the bottling time, same as for Madeira’s tasting last December.

The wine schools I attended used to teach that bottling time coincides with the best drinking day, i.e. no improvement with bottle ageing for fortified / oxidative wines. Well, it happens to be totally wrong, for some great wines improve massively with bottle ageing, but of course not the majority.

In support of common education, nonetheless, is that the bottle improvement has to be evaluated in decades, not in years, which makes the concept unapplicable to 99% of the oxidative wines commonly produced and consumed.

### Observations on bottling time (and not age of the wine) vs harmony

0:30y = almost no relevant change

30:50y = mature beauty

50:100y = outstanding

>100y = even better or flawing? There I lack experience :)

After so long being kept prisoners in a bottle, oxygen is needed to express themselves. **Advice:** allow enough time for them to breathe before consuming (the classic Madeira expression: one day decanting per decade of bottling should work just fine).

### The PDO system...and before it came in force

Victoria and I prepared a user guide to introduce the participants to the diversity among the sub areas within Malaga with a focus on the Montes & Axarquia. In there too, an overview on the multiple styles of wines produced (16 admitted today). Before the DO application in 1930s and even today, if we consider all the Brands based on a unique recipe, the number of admitted styles is far larger than 16.

How can the customer interpret this unique array of immortal, fortified & blended wines ?

Does it make sense to look for “transparency” ? I believe not...for, even the experts in charge of the Consejo of Malaga knew very little or nothing about those bottlings we tried.

Despite the trend worldwide of simplifying the communication to reach the global market, Malaga’s communication strategy opted for a valorisation of its unicity and historical diversity of styles. I totally agree, as the planted surface is so small and costs of production increasingly high, that it makes no sense to try feed the big dogs. More interesting is to address the message to curious wine lovers with a certain engagement. For certain, transparency isn’t a real problem for the old bottlings, cause they are mainly reserved to experienced wine collectors who know them in depth.

In modern times this style of fortified everlasting wines is reduced to some few labels, ‘cause not one recently-founded-bodega has the stock to create this style of technical / blended wines, nor the treasury to invest in inventory for 2 to 3 generations at least.

Javier Krauel cited a regional expression saying something like: “ it easy to run a bodega once you’ve been through the first 100 years !”

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### The market today

The sweet wine market being stuck, Málaga tends to focus on varietal dry wines, whites, rosés and reds (PDO Sierras de Malaga) which seem to achieve a good market appreciation, largely absorbed by the affluent tourism in the region (Malaga is among the 3 most frequented and connected airports of Spain).

Another key to interpret the return to dry, unfortified wines is a leap back to the ancient Málaga tradition, before the mid-XVIII-century introduction of spirit fortification to withstand the long sea voyages.

Does it still make sense to perpetuate the tradition of fortified wines (like Douro & Port wine region) in this market environment ?

Is dry wine production the only key to affirm Malaga's unique terroir ?

In support to the last sentence, careful studies are being held to recover the ampelographic patrimony of the region since before phylloxera, as some endemic varieties can still be found among the old vines scattered on the hills. The international grape varieties that have been planted in the last 30 years can certainly offer an interesting complement on PGI level but, in my personal opinion, the PDOs should show a more "original" character by adopting native grapes exclusively (see the Greek PDO - PGI appellation structure).

I'm pretty confident that the future of Malaga will be prosperous, in a market where Sierras de Málaga wines will take the lead. Nonetheless I do wonder if the story of these immortal fortified wines should come to an end...

This deep-dive in Málaga's past offered us a taste of something that is no more and, most probably, will be never again.

For this unique moment of beauty we're all deeply grateful.

Long life to Málaga and cheers to its bright future !



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## THE APERITIF & THE DINNER

Pata de jamon Iberico de bellota selected by El Indiano, Malaga...sliced with plenty of love and goldsmith precision by Javier Krauel

**Sierras de Málaga DOP Moscatel Monticara 2019 - Bodegas Victoria Ordoñez**

Cuscus inspired by the spring 2023, with stewed asparagus, roasted almonds and of course, Pasas de Malaga DOP

Marinated asparagus tips

**Sierras de Málaga DOP PX Voladeros Ghiara 2017 - Bodegas Victoria Ordoñez served in magnum**

## CREDITS

I address my sincere THANKS to Victoria, the real catalyser of this historical encounter !

We worked together during almost 8 months, to gather some old references, the information behind them, coordinating the visits in situ...somehow getting to rediscover the history behind the incredibly rich “cultura malagueña”.

With Victoria’s help I could have access to the major reference books since the end of the XVIII century and share our sources and outcomes with the team of the Consejo Regulador de Málaga DOP, Sierras de Málaga & Pasas de Málaga.

José-Manuel Moreno et Javier Aranda of the Consejo have contributed to our cause with precious tips, material and the didactic approach to the DO structure I was so much in needed of.

Another mention is needed. Javier Krauel, that helped reuniting most of the background and portraits of the historical producing families, the family competitors back then, whose activity ceased at the end of the XX century or earlier, as much as his own, the Bodegas Carlos J. Krauel. On top of it, despite being a lawyer and an intriguing vermouth producer, he’s a real “cortador de jamon”...I see I’ll need few more years before I can get any closer !

Last but not least, a great thanks to my better half, Laura, that supports all the crazy ideas that come up to my mind...

Another splendid journey that lasted several months, reached a first peak of adrenaline with this historical evening, and will certainly feed the flame of my passion for Málaga, the old and the new one, for the decades to come !

As ever,

Michele

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