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Spanish quality continues to rise

6:30am Thursday 6th August 2009

By Sarah McCleery »

I have been in Spain a lot in the last year; visiting vineyards in the north, south, east and west. No matter how many times I go, I can't get accustomed to the 3pm lunches and the dinners that seem to go on into the wee small hours but it's no more than a minor irritation when there are so many delicious wines to taste in between times.

From almost nowhere the white wines of Spain have becoming increasingly hip. Albariño is a variety that has long been revered by the Galicians who grow it but its fame is now widespread.

I confess to being a massive fan; I love its ability to deliver ripe orchard fruit flavours with hints of spice with precise, no-nonsense acidity. The Fefinanes Albarino is a fine example that is widely available in the UK. The Oxford Wine Company is selling it for £17.99 a bottle.

A white variety that I've only come to know in the last 12 months or so is Godello. I came across it first on a visit to Valdeorras; a wine-producing region that sits within Galicia. Godello is richer, silkier and – for me – more aromatic than Albariño and whilst many compare it to the Rhône variety, Viognier, I find it much more elegant and subtle. Some of the finest examples I tasted were at a winery called Val de Sil. The wines were crystal clear and wonderfully generous and elegant.

The **Val de Sil Godello** undergoes lees stirring; a process by which all the 'extra bits' such as grape skins and the like are stirred into the wine.

It's a technique that adds richness to the wine. Like Albariño, Godello has impressive acidity and the final package is undeniably impressive. You can track down a bottle at the Harrogate Fine Wine Company (www.harroagtefinewinecompany.com) for

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