

Awards

Catalan Sparkling Wine Producer Of The Year Raventós i Blanc

The most remarkable aspect of Pepe Raventós' output is that it seems to hold no weak spots. Yes, there are favourites, vintage variations, the natural ups and downs that come with making sparkling wine on what remains the frontier for the style in today's climate. Each cuvée, though, from the exemplary entry-level offerings to Mas del Serral itself, feels utterly at home with itself, conceived with thoughtfulness and executed with an almost unnerving precision.

What the wines demonstrate, above all else, is that Raventós has harnessed every tool at his disposal in the vineyard to retain the essential brightness that many search for in vain. The whole estate is biodynamic, with Raventós's vision for "*the recuperation of the ancient Catalan farm*" plainly in evidence as he discusses the role the livestock, who live dotted amongst the vineyard sites, play in the dynamics of the estate. The topsoils here are remarkable, with the North-facing plots of old-vine Xarel-lo used for Mas del Serral gloriously springy and light as we cross them to reach the wooded area which provides much-needed shade to these valuable elders.

Raventós may have struck out on his own with the Conca del Riu Anoia appellation, remaining unwilling to join others in groups that do not aspire to his absolute standards when it comes to grape sourcing and vineyard leasing. Change, though, needs a whole cast of characters to play it out, and one senses Pepe is content to remain the lone rebel in the plot for now.

At one point, he points to a dramatic, swimming-pool sized rectangle of bright white boulders, the result of a scarcely-believable project to break up this hard limestone subsoil over a sizable part of an old Chardonnay vineyard on the lower part of the estate. A few square metres had been kept to show the visitors.

"There was a saying when I lived in America: 'Don't hate the players, change the game'", Raventós offers in reference to his decision to leave Cava.

From the ground beneath our feet upwards, there's little doubt that Raventós i Blanc have done just that.



Raventós i Blanc, with views of Monegas