

FONDILLÓN WINE – RAFAEL POVEDA BERNABÉ



Rafael Poveda Bernabé is a winemaker, son and grandson of winemakers and responsible for products and wine tourism at MGWinesGroup, 80% of whose production is consumed outside Spain.

What is Fondillón?

It is a unique wine, slightly sweet, full of scents, and ideal for an aperitif or a dessert. It is made exclusively in Alicante with the variety of Monastrell grapes overripened in the vine. Thanks to the native yeasts, it ages on its own without needing to add alcohol through biological fermentation. It is a very special wine because its commercialisation takes place after it has aged for at least 10 years in oak barrels and, after this slow process, the result is a slightly sweet wine, mahogany-coloured and with golden touches in it.

What makes Fondillón wine different?

Undoubtedly, its method of elaboration. The harvest is carried out late on old vines of more than 80 years and with a small production. The harvested grapes are sweeter than normal because of their overexposure to the sun for an extra couple of weeks. Then, in the tank, fermentation takes place thanks to the grapes' own yeasts without using any additives. Once this process has finished, a filtering of the wine is made, after which it passes to the oak barrels arranged on three levels. From this moment on, the wine ages through a traditional *solera* process based on transferring or mixing younger wines and older ones. The oldest wine from the barrels of the ground level (Solera) is extracted for marketing; only 25% of the barrel capacity is removed. We fill the liberated space with wine from the barrels on the second level. Next, the same process is performed between the barrels of the second and the third level. The wine is transferred from the upper level to the middle level, filling the freed space. Finally, we fill the barrels on the upper level with young wine in the same proportion. This traditional process allows the wine to age by collecting the shades of the wine extracted in older harvests.

Why is Fondillón such an important wine for Alicante?

This wine has been produced in the province of Alicante for centuries. It was an exclusive wine, highly appreciated in the European courts and exported worldwide from the port of Alicante. In the eighteenth century, over 100,000 hectares were dedicated to its production, and it was known by the designation “Alicante wine”. This wine has made the name of this province known around the world.

Why did Fondillón wine stop being produced?

At the end of the nineteenth century (1878), the phylloxera epidemic arrived in Alicante after devastating all European vineyards. Wine production was given up and one of its consequences was the disappearance of Fondillón. Only some families in the Vinalopó area kept small reserves of solera, from which it was subsequently possible to recover the production of this wine.

Why did your family decide to make this wine?

In the 1970s, my family decided to resume the production of Fondillón, thanks to the discovery of several traditional barrels that contained this wine. My father liked to say that he had returned Fondillón to the town of Alicante. This wine recovers a tradition, a way to exploit vineyards on a family basis and also to harness the resources available, even in old vineyards, which are thrown away in other types of exploitations. By bringing back the wine, we rescue forms of wine production that had been lost and additionally recover family traditions, such as tasting it on Christmas Day, or for other important celebrations and festivals. Nowadays, it is still a special wine with a limited production—only 8 wineries in the area. The elaboration of Fondillón today not only provides an exceptional wine to consumers but also guarantees the continuity of an ancestral custom or tradition that was preserved in Alicante for centuries. We must continue cultivating the field, making wine and producing Fondillón because, thanks to that, future generations will be able to enjoy this wine just as we currently enjoy the wines produced by our parents and grandparents.