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Veronica Ortega, Cobrana Bierzo (2021)

Producer	Veronica Ortega
Distributor	Zev Rovine Selections
Supplier/Importer	Selections de la Viña
Category	Wine - Still - Red
Grape varieties	Mencia, Palomino Fino, Godello, Doña Blanca
Region	Castilla y León, Spain
Appellation	Bierzo
Vintage	2021

Sizes

750 mL × 12 — SDIV-0071-21



Distributor's notes

Cobrana 2021 "Vino de Villa de Congosto" is the sixth vintage of this cuvée from the assembly of old vines located in the town that gives this wine its name. Medium bodied, aromatic, and refined.

From a small village at higher elevation (750m) in Bierzo Alto where grapes are usually ripened and picked two weeks later than in Valtuille. Blue schist generously mixed with clay is the dominant soil here. Verónica says that this schist, different from the one in Corullón, has the ability to retain acidity. Most of the eight plots that she works in Cobrana include white varieties that she co-ferments with the reds. Grapes are not destemmed and there is very little extraction: instead, the bunches are soaked and plunged into the must. Essentially the same thing as her wine "Kinki" only difference being later harvest meaning riper fruit, same proportions. By no means overripe, just picked at its due time.

A blend of 75% Mencia with the remaining 15% local grapes (Palomino Fino, Godello, Doña Blanca with Alicante Bouschet and Estaladiña) as commonly done in this region. Some of the vines are upwards of 90+ years old. All are farmed organically and harvested by hand. Whole cluster fermentation with indigenous yeasts and extended skin contact in large open 5,000L wood tanks (a local, old style for this region). Malo and aging are done for 12 months in 1,500L clay amphora and 4,300L barrel. The wine is bottled unfined, unfiltered, and with low (~20-50ppm SO₂) at bottling. Production is 7,750 bottles.

Cobrana is a wine with a light but vibrant texture, crystalline color and intense nose of red fruits, sour strawberry and raspberry, with a balsamic background of mint notes, which makes it fresh and elegant with a nice and precise balance on the mouth.

About the producer

Born and raised in Cadiz, Veronica Ortega came of age surrounded by the pungent aromas of flor, evaporating sherry and the ocean. Her first foray into winemaking happened in the Priorat where she worked with both Alvaro Palacios and Daphne Glorian. After this initiation she set out on learning more at Burn Cottage in Central Otago, Niepoort in the Douro, Comte Armand and DRC in Burgundy and Domaine Combier in Crozes-Hermitage. Upon her return to Spain she worked several years along side Raul Perez in Bierzo.

In Bierzo she found a variety, Mencia, that bears many similarities to both Pinot and Syrah - refreshing acidity, bright fruit flavors and a affinity for expressing terroir. Bierzo has a unique climate that straddles the divide between cool maritime Galicia and the torrid central plateau of Spain and two distinctive soils types: granitic sand and calcareous clay. In the right hands, these are the necessary elements to make wines of balance and complexity. While working with Raul, Veronica decided to settle in Bierzo and launched her own project in 2010 before moving into her own cellar in 2014.

Veronica organically farms several small plots, totaling about 5 ha, of 80 year-old Mencia near the village of Valtuille de Abajo. As was the fashion at the time they were planted, these plots are not entirely Mencia, and on close inspection one can find small percentage of other indigenous varieties planted along side the Mencia - both red and white. Instead of letting these grapes go to waste they get co-fermented with the Mencia. In any given vintage there can be an inclusion of 8% of white varieties (Palomino Fino, Godello and Valenciana) and 5% red (Garnacha, Tintorera and Merenzao.) The limestone soil has a high proportion of sand which give her wines aromatic complexity and lively mineral acidity.

Veronica works these vineyards manually including harvesting. When the bunches arrive at the cellar she destems only a portion of the fruit depending on vintage so that most fermentations include 30-50% whole clusters. Spontaneous fermentations take place in large oak vats with occasional and gentle pigeage. After a 25 day maceration the wine is pressed and malo occurs in second and third-fill 228L French oak barrels. Veronica Ortega makes two wines from her 80-year old vines, Quite which expresses a more floral and delicate side of Mencia and Roc which is more stern, structured and age-worthy. Quite spends 4 months in second and third-fill French oak while Roc spends a little over 6 months.
