

# FONDILLÓN, from a glorious past to an uncertain future

## ABSTRACT

This Thesis is about Fondillón, a classic Alicante wine that was important in the past and nowadays is a perfect unknown. In it, I try to demonstrate its past splendour, and that can face with a little help a bright future, as a premium wine, available in a modest volume of approximately 15,000 bottles a year. Not only it could be saved as a product but also to the historical vineyards, almost centennial still existent in the High Valley of the Vinalopó of which the ideal grapes are obtained for its elaboration.

Fondillón is a historic wine from Alicante. Since the Middle Ages, but especially during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, its name is famous in the European Courts, intellectual and artistic circles, and for the merchant navy and naval officer.

It is a wine referenced in the e-Bacchus catalogue of the European Union and pride for its producers. Its definition is simple: Wine of "Alicante" PDO, elaborated with grapes of the Monastrell variety, over-matured in stock and with exceptional conditions of quality and health. In the fermentation native leavenings are used solely, and the acquired alcoholic strength (minimum of 16% vol) shall be, in his totality, natural. Aged at least ten years in oak containers.

Currently, it is made with the Monastrell / Mourvedre grape, although there are reasons to think that it was historically made from other grapes such as Graciano, Tintilla or Garnacha.

Its current production area is the border area of the province of Alicante with its neighbours Murcia and Albacete, although historically it was the wine from the orchard of Alicante, an area quite close to the city itself and where archaeological remains of the Greco-roman time have been found.

It has always been a wine that needs many years of ageing to develop its full potential. At the moment the minimum breeding is recorded in ten years, but there is no wine in the market after the harvest of 1996, just released to the market this year, and that replaces the one of 1987 that in turn was the youngest until 2016.

It was a Court wine, and therefore of a high price, its consumption was by delight; It was not created to drink it in volume, but to enjoy it almost as an elixir, as the Duke of Saint-Simon tells us in his book "Memoirs" to Louis XIV during his last days.

It also has the advantage of being able to maintain its organoleptic qualities for weeks after opening the bottle.

Current producers are interested in maintaining it and regaining its prestige. Studies of areas suitable for grape production have been improved; The selection of the grapes too; Fermentation methods; And the conditions of the ageing cellars. Little by little we see an increase in the volumes of the young wine that are destined to be bred to reach Fondillón (although its final characteristics may differ from the current model and approach the historical one). That model that changed with the first crisis of overproduction in the early twentieth century and almost extinguished wine shifted its production to the interior of the province and adapted its palate to a more contemporary taste for drier wines.

If it is possible for the new producers to take the generation change correctly, adopt measures of bottling, image and joint promotion, and define the product more widely, the wine will be saved.

The bottling of Fondillón can grow to its maximum possible "current" of about 15,000 litres years in the hope that in the 30's of this century have sufficient maturity the wines that are currently being aged.

After the first decade of the 21st century, when there was almost no replenishment, now the producers have doubled and triplicated the compulsory reserves, and they have done so with exceptional quality wines, not only with the right products.

Bodegas Monovar, the largest producer, has raised in the harvest of 2016 almost 20,000 litres of wine "fit for Fondillón" (with 4,000 litres would cover the regular annual replenishment) an absolute record, and an investment that will continue in the coming years if the quality of the grapes allows it.

Also, Bodegas E. Mendoza will release in about two or three years a new Fondillón to the market with a modest volume but of exceptional quality, about 500 litres year.

And Bodegas Alejandro is waiting to restart its bottling, suspended more than ten years ago.

A better future for Fondillón is possible.