

Week of 03-27-07

Red Bag Clues:

### **Serve in a Cab/Merlot Stem**

*Clues:*

Grape Clues –

- Though originally planted in France, it is now this DO's second most widely planted red varietal after Grenache.
- This garnet colored variety has intense black fruit aromas and a full dry finish.
- It's name might scare little children and they are often found under their beds and in their closets.

Where is it from?

- This region is known for its dryness and temperature swings between day and night.
- The dry climate allows for the grapes to mature without threat of mildew, rot or other diseases.
- This area's high altitude and large amount of yearly sunlight gives the grapes ample time to gain ripe skins which adds aromatic complexity and depth of flavor on the palate.
- Vines have existed in this area as early as 3000 BC
- Wine making has played a pivotal role in the local community and various groups that have passed through the area from the Phoenicians to the Romans.

**Answer – Lorca Monastrell 2005 from Bullas region of Spain.**

From the undiscovered region of Bullas in southeastern Spain, Lorca is a great example of what the Monastrell grape variety can offer. It is made from low yielding vines averaging 40 years old and fermented in stainless steel to retain all the fruit character. The result is a mouthful of flavor with a deep garnet in color, intense black fruit aromas, and a full dry finish. An everyday wine to be enjoyed with red meat and spicy dishes.

Located in southeastern Spain below Valencia, bordering the coastline of Spain, the Bullas D.O. region is contained in the larger subregion of Murcia. Bullas has been a very an up-and-coming winemaking area lately, and, similar to other D.O. regions in the south and eastern portions of Spain, new wines are being introduced by bodegas constantly. And the wines that have been on the market are progressively getting better with each passing vintage. With a dry, arid climate and at an altitude of 400 to 800 meters in elevation, Bullas is known for its dryness and temperature swings between day and night, and both these factors contribute to the area being a beneficial one for growing grapes of optimum quality and ripeness. In the dry climate of Bullas, grapes can mature without threat of mildew, rot and other diseases or pests that are problems in wet climates. The altitude and large amount of yearly sunlight give the grapes ample opportunity to gain ripe skins, and the large day/night temperature variation adds to the skins aromatic complexity and depth of flavor on the palate. These are ideal conditions for the Monastrell grape.

The Nuestra Señora del Rosario Cooperative (Bodegas del Rosario) was established in 1950 by 1,200 members and it is a winemaking cooperative that has been gradually expanding its production facilities and modernizing both its winemaking methods and equipment. The Las Reñas and the Las Reñas Selección, both made by Bodegas del Rosario, are two of the best examples of modern styled Monastrell wines from Bullas.



The 2004 Lorca Monastrell is a nice surprise in the strong field of lower-priced Spanish reds out there. It has heady tree bark, pine needle and black currant aromas, with a trace of menthol, and these become chewy, sour cherry fruit on the palate. There is much complexity on the palate with spices, bell peppers, and cassis with a note of tree bark. The wine's winning personality is borne out by its agile acidity, soft tannins and soft finish. This is great value Spanish red, and it will compliment most casual Summer and Fall foods. Enjoy.

## **Bullas information**

Bullas is situated in the sunny highlands the municipality of Bullas is an age-old vinicultural region, as shown by the statue of the god Bacchus found during excavation of a nearby Roman site. Visitors will marvel at the rich verdure of its vineyards, a highly prestigious winegrowing area that yields such distinctive wines as Carrascalejo: robust reds and brandies and especially the fruity rosés, combining all the savour of the countryside and its flora, which are bottled in the neoclassical palace of the same name. Apart from the wealth of monuments in the town, with such obvious examples as the Church of Santa María del Rosario, the former Melgares palace or the remains of a mediaeval watchtower by the Segura River, the potential, hidden wealth is to be discovered in the outlying districts: numerous archaeological sites (particularly from the Argar culture) and delightful landscapes invite visitors to explore this sprawling countryside of contrasting colours.


In Bullas we can find the origins of wine growing date back not only centuries but millennia. There is evidence that vines have existed in this area from as early as 3000 BC even if they only began to be actually cultivated in 800 BC. From that moment up

until the late 19th century when phylloxera devastated the vines in the area, wine-making has always played a fundamental role in the local community and the various powers that have passed through this area, from the Phoenicians to the Romans, to the knightly orders of the middle ages have all benefited from and added to this wealth of experience. Now the willingness to share these secrets and the innovatory spirit of local cooperatives and wineries have succeeded in combining modern industrial methods and time-eternal traditions, and this is the key to the superb quality of the wines that bear the Bullas D.O.C. label.

### **Terroir**

The area protected by the "Bullas" Denominacion de Origen is situated in the Northwest of the Murcia region and includes the towns of Bullas, Cehegín, Mula and Ricote. Compared to other wine growing areas the vines in Bullas grow at an extremely high altitude and most of the vineyards are situated at over 600 metres above sea level. As a result this area has a totally unique Mediterranean climate (the average temperature is 15.6° C), where the winters are cold but short and the summers are long and hot, and even if the yearly rainfall is low (450 mm) it is still higher than the surrounding areas.

### **Wines**



In Bullas the Monastrell grape is by far the most popular amongst wine growers (80% of total cultivation) as traditionally this has always been a red wine area and this type of vine grows well in balanced conditions. Nevertheless a number of excellent whites and clarets have always been made here and grapes such as the Tempranillo, (for reds and clarets) and Macabeo and Airén, (for whites) occupy an important place in wine-making traditions. Recently a number of new varieties have been introduced to the area and despite the fact that the zone is recognized at an official level as a Monastrell region, wines such as Cabernet-Sauvignon, Sirah, Merlot and Garnacha (Grenache) are rapidly making ground.

### **Local attractions**

From the maze of streets in the old town of Bullas, to the picturesque vineyards that line the Mula valley, this area lives and breathes its ancient wine-making traditions. The town and countryside are full of old cellars and even the ancient remains, such as the Roman sculpture of Bacchus in the Villa de los Cantos seem to whisper the word "wine". To help the visitor discover the unique and dramatic character of the countryside a number of facilities have been introduced such as camping sites, parks and the charming "casas rurales", beautiful old buildings, often in historical settings, that have been refurbished for use as holiday homes. Recently these initiatives have been extended to include a wine museum, a carefully signposted wine route and a number of the splendid old cellars have been opened to the public, including the offices of the D.O.C. authorities, situated in the town centre of Bullas.

All these innovations show just how proud the local people are to welcome visitors into their time-honoured world of viniculture and to share the secrets of a wine.

# Bodegas del Rosario

Bodegas del Rosario is located in the town of Bullas, 50 miles from the Mediterranean coast. Bullas sits 600 meters above sea level in the foothills of the Sistema Ibérico, the southernmost mountain range in Spain. Bullas, as a town and D.O. designation, enjoys the fame of having the highest Monastrell vineyards located 600 to 900 meters above sea level. It is not unusual to see a touch of snow in the vineyards during the winter.

The town has centuries of winemaking history. Many of the old houses in the town have air conduits that used to bring oxygen to the underground cellars. Residents would crush the grapes by foot allowing the must to run through a maze of conduits to the clay tanks in the basement where fermentation occurred. The best-adapted grape to this region is Monastrell, which accounts for 80% of the appellation's 5,500 hectares. Due to the altitude of the vineyard, this D.O. experiences some of the largest temperature oscillations (day to night) of the Spanish Mediterranean regions. The climate is integral in creating the distinguishing flavor profile of the Lorca wines.