



# MARQUES DE IRUN

## RUEDA

### FACT SHEET



#### OWNER

Emilio Lustau S.A. (part of the Luis Caballero group of companies)

#### PRODUCTS

Rueda Superior (Blanco), Verdejo, Marques de Irun

#### SIZE OF THE VINEYARDS

75 hectares in the Rueda DO, planted with Verdejo, Sauvignon Blanc and Viura.

#### LOCATION OF THE VINEYARDS

The vineyards are located near La Seca, 4km east of the town of Rueda itself in the heart of the DO area.

The climate here is continental, with cold winters and very hot summers, but the high altitude of the vineyards, 500 to 750m above sea level, means cool nights even in the middle of summer. Therefore valuable acids and aromatic flavour compounds are not lost during ripening. This is particularly important for the quality and balance of the white wines produced.

#### SOIL

The bedrock is limestone, ideal for white wine production. The topsoil is composed of alluvial deposits, including much gravel, and sand.

#### GRAPE VARIETIES

Majority Verdejo, with a small percentage of Sauvignon Blanc to add acidity and complexity

#### AVERAGE AGE OF THE VINES

15 - 25 years old

#### AVERAGE PRODUCTION

Irun crush a total of 400 000 kg of grapes per year.

#### VINIFICATION AND AGEING

The small bodega is equipped with all the latest technology - stainless steel vats, computerised cooling systems, pneumatic presses etc to give the control required to make successful light wines in this hot climate. The particular challenge for producers working with Verdejo is to protect this delicate grape from oxidation, to which it is easily prone. At Marques de Irun, all must handling takes place under a blanket of inert gas, from the moment the juice is liberated until the wine is safely in bottle.

The use of inert gas allows Irun to extract maximum flavour from the Verdejo grapes. After crushing, the juice is given 5 hours of skin contact before a slow and gentle pressing that delivers only 70% of the must. Fermentation is controlled at 16°C, and takes as long as 25 days



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to complete. Clarification and settling are in tank, under gas, before early bottling to preserve freshness and primary aromas.

#### TASTING NOTES

The Verdejo is crystal clear, and pale straw in colour. The nose is fresh and aromatic, with delicate hints of pear and white peach, flower blossom, beeswax and mineral notes. On the palate, the wine is light and dry, with a surprising concentration of soft apple fruit, a crisp finish and a slight prickle that refreshes on a hot day.

#### MARKETING

About 70% of the Rueda production is sold through the Caballero network of wholesalers in Spain. The remainder is exported, mainly to the USA, Japan and European markets.

#### NOTES ON THE PROPERTY

In 1990, a small bodega called Lagar Noble, situated in the prime white wine DO of Rueda, was purchased by Bodegas Emilio Lustau, part of the Luis Caballero group. They renamed the estate Marques de Irun, using a brandname they had inherited from another sherry company they had recently acquired. The aim was to produce white wines that reflected Lustau's guiding philosophy of quality and value.

Lustau were prepared to put their enormous reputation on the line because they believed in the potential of the Rueda district, one of the few good white wine areas in Spain. Located right in the heart of old Castile, a region dominated by red-wine culture, Rueda became Spain's premier white wine region almost by mistake. The scorched-earth policy of the retreating Moors in the 10th century left this area uninhabited for many years, and the only plant that took to the ravaged soils was a wild vine which became known as Verdejo. Once resettled, the locals found a ready market for the heavy, oxidised whites this grape naturally produced. The thirsty royal court was nearby in Valladolid, and the already famous white wines of Jerez were unobtainable owing to continued Moor domination of Andalucia. By the 17th century, the white wines of Rueda were so highly valued that half the annual production was reserved for the court. But phylloxera hit Rueda hard and Jerez recaptured the quality market. Most Rueda vineyards were replanted with high-yielding Palomino, which produced bulk quantities of dull wine, and those who continued to make the traditional heavy, oxidised Verdejos found international tastes moving towards the light and fresh.

But modern technology has come to Rueda's rescue. Cold fermentation and protective handling under inert gas gives the winemaker the tools he needs to make fresh, light whites. And Rueda is naturally blessed with a favourable climate (especially the cool nights), great wine soils and a grape of real character, the Verdejo. Lustau were correct in identifying Rueda as one of Spain's few top quality white winemaking terroirs. The 100% Verdejo bottling is already confirming that potential.