

The Sweet Lent

For those that fall prey to the virulently spreading American tradition of Valentine's Day, the 14th is coming. For those more religiously minded, Lent is quickly approaching starting on the 15th. While the tie in with Valentine's seems like a natural fit for having one of Catalonia's sweet wines (say a Grenache along with dark chocolates, candle light, and an evening without mobile phones) there is actually a tradition of drinking sweet wines along with eating *brunyols* during the Lent as a form of sustenance. How this is fasting exactly, I don't know, but it sounds damned delicious.

I came to Catalonia not a fan of sweet wines as those I had tried from most New World cellars are often all sugar with no acidity nor backbone and seem best paired with a sorority hazing. But here, especially up in Empordà which is just a stone's throw from the much more known Banyuls and Rivesaltes sweets in Roussillon, France, winemakers create the most elegant sweets typically from either Muscat or Grenache grapes. If you haven't tried them, here are two gateway sweets to give you an introduction but there are others to look out for such as: Vinyes dels Aspres, Martín Faixó, Coca i Fitó, and more.

Empordàlia Sinols Moscatell 2013

Touch of minerality which frames in the typical, funky muscat aromas. Light on the palate and easy to drink with a balance of sweetness and acidity that lingers wonderfully in to the finish. 7€

Espelt Airam NV

A blend of the more traditional Red Grenache along with the less seen Grey Grenache it's fantastically complex in the nose with raisin, vanilla, and roasted apple notes. It manages to stay fresh in the mouth and doesn't overwhelm in the least while delivering lovely flavours of orange peel in the finish. 14.50€