

Lledoner Roig?

As is the case with many old European wine grapes, Grenache Gris has a number of synonyms but one of the names you very rarely hear is “Lledoner Roig”. By no means is this due to ignorance on the wine drinking public’s part as it has much more to do with how the grape has been regarded by the regional winemakers who use this old name.

There are precious few vineyards which are comprised of only Lledoner Roig. As the story often went, when one of the Carignan vines would die, peasants of yore would plant one of these Lledoner Roig vines in its place as it’s a vigorous grape. Historically these grapes were then used in the quite exquisite dessert wines of Empordà but several cellars are now focusing on single varietal dry wines from the grape.

A tasting was held at Espelt recently, allowing the various winemakers in Empordà to showcase the new wines they’re making with this grape. Styles were all over the map and while most chose to make a white wine from this pink grape (“roig” means “reddish” or “ruddy” in Catalan and is often used to describe sunburnt tourists), there were two rosés in the crowd as well but following are two of the most notable wines overall.

Celler La Vinyeta, Microví Torrats 2013

Old vines of 90 years near the village of Espolla. Wondrously profound aromatically with pronounced mineral notes, light vanilla, and a lovely tinge of rose petals. Floats on the palate with a lingering acidity. 15€

Vinyes d’Olivardots, V d’O 7.13 2013

From a 91 year-old vineyard in the village of Capmany. Straw color in the glass with pronounced minerality and grapefruit aromas as well as a touch of sweet caramel. Balanced, full, and of medium plus body that keeps the minerality as well as new oak notes in check. 20€