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## Miguel Torres Maczassek

With an enviable level of worldwide brand recognition – they are found everywhere from Michelin-starred restaurants to the social centre at the UN compound in Kabul – the wines of Torres are the essential definition of modern Spanish wine.

Founded in 1870, Torres has weathered many a storm, including an aerial bombing during the Spanish Civil War. But it was Miguel A Torres (Miguel Sr) that brought about major change. Miguel Sr, who ushered in the fourth generation when he joined the Penedès-based family business in 1962, pushed the approach of not only his own winery into the modern era, but also that of winemaking in Spain.

He saw great, untapped potential in Catalonia and introduced temperature-controlled fermentation tanks and modern winemaking techniques to a region dominated by basic wines made in co-ops and sold off in bulk.

Growing the company, Miguel Sr looked towards the future and his children. Two of them, Mireia and Miguel Jr (Miguel Torres Maczassak), have decided to follow in their father's steps, with Miguel Jr taking over as general manager in 2012.

He says: ‘My father has been very encouraging with myself and Mireia. It was a very different situation from when he took over from his father.’ Despite the relative ease of the

handover, Miguel Jr had to prove his mettle by running Miguel Torres Chile for three years before he was given the keys to the Penedès kingdom.

Miguel Jr has continued and greatly expanded upon the work his father did future-proofing the winery against climate change. ‘We’ve observed a 1°C rise in temperatures in Penedès over the last 25 years,’ he says. ‘It’s an undeniable fact and it’s affecting our production, as it’s increasingly difficult to wait long enough for maturity without having wines that are too alcoholic and lacking in acidity. We’ve found that small changes such as shifting the trellis height from 60cm to 90cm have allowed us to pick a week later.’

One of the most newsworthy changes in the last few years has been the company’s planting of vines near the town of Tremp in the Catalan Pyrenees, at 900m altitude. ‘Tremp will be a key region in Catalonia’s future. The acidity and balance we’re getting from these grapes is absolutely stunning. I’m personally very excited by what we’re seeing there.’

The high-altitude vines are tied in with another long-term project. ‘Mireia and I have been investing a great deal of energy in finding old pre-phyllloxera varieties in Catalonia, and so far we’ve isolated 46, with six we feel have great potential.’ People might wonder why they would

bother, given that many old varieties were abandoned due to being less than suitable. ‘Everything we do today has to be focused on climate change, and we hope some of these grapes, once approved for production, will be well-suited to a warmer planet. I’m not looking to grow the company any more in terms of size. My focus is on the wines, and our work with variety recuperation is a large part of this.’

Much like his father, Miguel Jr is looking to the future for his children: ‘If I can leave the company to them in an even better state than I found it, I will consider my time here well spent.’

### Two to try

#### **Torres, Reserva Real, Penedès, Spain 2010 93**

£99.99 **Vintage Marque**

Rich, dark plum aromas with a touch of earthiness, cigar and vanilla. Medium body and acidity with lovely harmony across the palate. Finish lingers forever. **Drink 2016-2025 Alc 14.5%**

#### **Torres, Mas La Plana, Penedès, Spain 2010 92**

£38.90-£44.99 **Handford, Hedonism,**

**The Oxford Wine Co, Waitrose**

Herbal notes along with cured cherries and a hint of vanilla. Weighty, rich and textured with excellent integration at this point. **Drink 2016-2022 Alc 14.5%**



*Miquel Hudin is a wine writer, certified sommelier and tour guide based in Catalonia >*