



Robert Parker
Uncensored and Live



Value-Priced Wines From Fine Estates from Spain

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Tasting Notes

Bodegas Alto Moncayo 2011 Veraton Campo de Borja 92
Bodegas Alto Moncayo 2010 Veraton Campo de Borja 92

One of Spain's finest estates, the still under-the-radar Bodegas Alto Moncayo is a joint venture of Dan Phillips, Jorge Ordoñez, Chris Ringland, Jose Miguel San Martin, Bodegas Borsao and others. The top wine is their old vine 100% Grenache cuvée called Alto Moncayo. Their value pick is the Veraton, and both the 2010 and 2011 are outstanding wines as well as terrific bargains. The **2010 Veraton** is 100% old vine Grenache grown in vineyards planted between 1910 and 1967. Aged in a combination of French and American oak for 17 months prior to being bottled unfiltered, it is one of the world's greatest Grenache values. Lots of crushed, chalky minerality intermixed with explosive notes of kirsch liqueur, lavender and spring flowers are found in this dense, full-bodied, pure red. Some background oak is noticeable, but the full-bodied, lavish concentration of fruit and glycerin are stunning and mouth-saturating. It should drink well for a decade. Remarkably, the **2011 Veraton** is just as strong with an even higher alcohol content of 15.5%. A fabulous nose of spring flowers, ground pepper, blackberries and black cherry liqueur is followed by a full-bodied, super-intense wine made from incredibly low yields, and aged 17 months in a combination of French and American oak before being bottled unfiltered. This superb wine easily competes with wines priced two to three times higher. It, too, should drink well for a decade.



A Vertical Tasting of Alto Moncayo

- 2002 Alto Moncayo Rating: 96
- 2003 Alto Moncayo Rating: 93
- 2004 Alto Moncayo Rating: 96
- 2005 Alto Moncayo Rating: 95+
- 2006 Alto Moncayo Rating: 97
- 2007 Alto Moncayo Rating: 100
- 2008 Alto Moncayo Rating: 92
- 2009 Alto Moncayo Rating: 100
- 2010 Alto Moncayo Rating: 92
- 2011 Alto Moncayo Rating: 95



This was a great opportunity to look at one of the flagship wines of importer Jorge Ordoñez's portfolio. Alto Moncayo is a 100% old vine Grenache cuvée (900-1,000 cases produced depending on the vintage) that is a joint project between Jorge Ordoñez and Barossa winemaker, Chris Ringland. Five generations of vigneron have farmed over 210 acres of primarily old vine Grenache at Alto Moncayo, a wine that is produced from incredibly low yields of 500 grams of grape bunches per vine. There are never more than six to eight bunches on these ancient head-pruned Grenache vines. The wine is fermented in open-top wood fermenters, and spends 19 months in 100% new oak prior to being bottled unfiltered. The fruit is all destemmed. I tasted these ten vintages of Alto Moncayo in September, and I was blown away by how well they were showing. I tend to drink Alto Moncayo during its first 5-6 years of life. Although I was sure they had aging potential, I did not realize just how much longevity these wines possess. They are generally full-bodied, powerful (with at least 15.5% natural alcohol), concentrated, rich wines made from very old vines and tiny yields. If you are not into flavor concentration or care about artisanal wines from great terroirs that have been ignored for centuries, this may not be the wine for you. Not one of these ten vintages was close to full maturity. For example, the **2002** is still a young wine. Most reveal a lot of licorice, lavender, kirsch liqueur, black currant and blackberry fruit. The sexiest, most up-front and ready-to-drink vintages include **2006** and **2003**, the latter coming from Jorge Ordoñez told me was probably the worst vintage in the area because of the appalling heat wave and stress the vines had to endure. I gave perfect scores to the prodigious **2007** and **2009**, two of the greatest expressions of old vine Grenache from the province of Aragon that anyone could have desire. The both possess plenty of black raspberry, blackberry, kirsch and licorice characteristics as well as an undeniable minerality and precision that are remarkable given their full-bodied, massive concentration and intensity. The two most recent vintages, **2010** and **2011**, were both late, cooler years and both have turned out to be sexy wines. I suspect that in many ways, 2011 will behave like 2006, being precocious and delicious, but not as long-lived as some of its siblings. These wines appear to have 20-30 years of aging potential, although the sweet spot for drinking them appears to be between age 8 and 15.