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Spain's Termanthia: Putting Toro on the Wine Map

Winemaker Manuel Louzada presents four vintages of Numanthia-Termes' boutique red

Robert Taylor

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"Over the past 20 years, Spain has become the most dynamic wine region in Europe," *Wine Spectator* executive editor Thomas Matthews said at the start of Saturday afternoon's seminars. "In the 1980s, a new region began appearing on our radar screen: Toro." The first wines were rustic, but "they had real power, distinctive character and were great values too."

Then, the sleeping giant awoke. "In the 1999 vintage, five wines from four wineries received 90 points," Matthews said. "The star was a new bodega called Numanthia-Termes." Of 31 Numanthia-Termes wines reviewed since, 28 have earned outstanding or classic scores—"that is an impressive track record."

The audience was about to taste four of them—the tiny cuvée called Termanthia—led by winemaker Manuel Louzada.

Toro's inhospitable *terroir* affords it a unique opportunity to create world-class wines. Just west of Rueda, closer to Portugal than to Rioja, Toro has a dry, extreme continental climate, with summer temperatures of 110° F and winters that dip 30 degrees below freezing, with less than 16 inches of annual rainfall.

The 12-acre vineyard from which Termanthia is sourced, planted to Tinta de Toro (Tempranillo) between 1870 and 1890, sits at an altitude of 3,000 feet, with rocky, sandy soils and a clay subsoil that spare the ungrafted, 100-plus-year-old vines from phylloxera.

Louzada said his approach to the Termanthia vineyard is that of a caretaker: "You have to preserve this amazing treasure that you have, so you try to use only organic practices."

"The yields are ridiculously low—0.7 tons per acre—we don't mind," Louzada continued. "Termanthia has the reputation of being able to combine the concentration of the Toro region with elegance. To do that we must have very precise winemaking techniques, harvesting and grape sorting by hand, foot treading and aging in new barrels." After six months in new oak, Termanthia is moved into other new oak barrels for 16 months to give it additional complexity. There are only about 500 cases made each year.



Jon Moe

Numanthia-Termes winemaker Manuel Louzada (seated), with Wine Spectator executive editor Thomas Matthews

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Louzada brought four vintages: 2009, 2007, 2006 and 2003. "These are rich, powerful, expressive wines, sleek and balanced—modern-styled but firmly rooted in *terroir*," Matthews said. "What I've come to know and love as the New Spain."

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

Featured Winemaker: Justin Smith of Saxum

The Numanthia-Termes Toro Termanthia 2009 (94 points, \$200) is showing very deep color. "I taste very red fruit, but also amazing freshness, a peppery note, some chocolate and maybe vanilla, and an almost floral finish," Matthews said. The grape skin pigments were particularly intense that year, said Louzada; "The date of harvest is *critical* for Toro."

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Featured Winemaker: Bordeaux's Prince Robert of Luxembourg

The 2007 (93, \$200) came from a cool year—"probably the most different vintage that we ever had," Louzada said. "In the aromas, here, it's very fresh cherries," he added. "My tasting notes for this are boysenberry, floral, spiciness—that red fruit character really comes through," Matthews commented.

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Moving on to the 2006 (95, \$200), Matthews said, "I fell in love with it. ... The floral, graphite, mineral finish took it into a different realm—a powerful wine with modern structure and distinctive character. This really knocked me out."

Monday, October 28, 2013

Featured Winemaker: Michel Chapoutier

At age 10, the 2003 (95, \$182) "maintains an amazing color," Louzada said. "Chocolate, rich fruit ... very silky," said Matthews.

Monday, October 28, 2013

Cristal Shines on Through the Years

Comparing the older and younger wines, Louzada said, "As we learn the *terroir* that we are interacting with, and the different expression of the vintages, it's interesting to see how the elegance grows." He expects Termanthia to be able to age at least 30 years.

Monday, October 28, 2013

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Before wrapping up, Matthews played devil's advocate: "I have a voice in my head saying, 'Jam job. New World. Too modern. Where is the authenticity? Where's the rusticity?' Is this an authentic Spanish wine?"

Friday, October 25, 2013

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"It's funny, Toro wines used to be known as wines to be eaten with fork and knife," Louzada replied. "What we try to do as part of the winemaking philosophy is to be respectful to where the grapes come from, and this is what you naturally have in Toro. The only thing that you have to do is express it with a little bit of help."

Numanthia-Termes Toro Termanthia 2009 (94 points, \$200)

Numanthia-Termes Toro Termanthia 2007 (93 points, \$200)

Numanthia-Termes Toro Termanthia 2006 (95points, \$200)

Numanthia-Termes Toro Termanthia 2003 (95 points, \$182)

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