

## MARIA RIGOL ORDI (Spain, Penedès, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia)

**AN OLD AND MODERN TRADITION:** Maria Rigol Ordi is a cava winery originated in 1987



returning to a family tradition that began in 1897. The estate's cavas are an expression of the wish to preserve a family heritage and the will to produce quality sparkling wine by reviving traditional blends of Penedès grape varieties and using a long aging process.

The family members are involved at every stage of the vineyard cycle, and strictly control the process of

turning the grapes into base wine, being fully aware that this is the only way to assure high quality levels and meet the client's expectations.



Founding member is Maria Rigol Ordi, now 90 years old, and her granddaughter Anaïs Manobens Mora now is at the helm of the business. Cava here is just a female business and Anaïs explains how the estate started and how it was discontinued till 1987 where the foundation for a new wave was ready to sparkle once again.

*“Let me explain you a little bit our family story. Maria Rigol Ordi cava winery is a project born in 1987 with the only aim of preserving my grandmother's family heritage. In 1897 the grandfather of my grandmother, Modest Rigol Tubella, who was involved in marketing wine, entered the world of producing what at that time was still known as champagne. He created a cava producing cellar which grow and passed on from generation to generation.*

*It was first his son, Ramon Rigol, and after his wife, when he unfortunately died too young, who took the reins of the estate in a time when there were not many women in front of a business.*

*For all these reasons, when the company experienced difficulties due a crisis that could not overcome and had to close in the '70s, my grandma Maria Rigol Ordi, together with his husband and his son, started to produce cava, mainly for own consumption because she missed to have the family cavas she was used to drink.*

*Little by little and without practising any commercial activity, we have grown by word of mouth among circles of relatives, friends and acquaintances up to the current production. We have been working like this, more like a hobby rather than a job, until*

*few years ago, when we decided, for the first time, to go out to sell our sparklers in the common trade channels after making a restyling of our cellar, products and webpage.*

*We have been working hard this five years to introduce our products in gourmet and specialised shops and mid and high-class restaurants. Since we are not playing in the high volume league, we know that this is going to be a long journey”.*

**NO PROPERTY VINEYARDS:** When asked about the option to work without property vineyards, Anaïs has her ideas pretty clear: *“At the moment we do not work with our own vineyards. Let me explain you why we do consider this as the best option for the cava’s profile we like and for the limited production we have”.*

Cava’s production requires three different grape varieties: Macabeo, Xarel·lo and Parellada. *“Since we consider it fundamental for the final product to have the best expression of each of these three grapes, we need to select different plot of vineyards throughout the Penedès region.*

*We think that the best way to produce intense cavas is to cooperate with a vinification producer which gives us the opportunity to select the very best base wines of each variety and vintage. On the other hand, we like producing long-aged cavas which, as you may know, need to be made from very high quality base wines in order to be able to undergo such long aging as we do, for example, with our Gran Reserva (more than 70 months)”.*



Maria Rigol Ordi chooses growers throughout the Gran Penedès, which allows to capture the essence of this incomparable region that brings to life cava and wines of unique great personality. Harvesting is done by hand only, in 18 kg boxes. Pressing of whole grapes, without destemming or treading, and separation of the first portion of juice. Maximum yield of 55% to achieve a good balance of sugar and acidity. Static cold racking and controlled fermentation at 16 °C.

In the cava-making process, the estate remains ever faithful to the traditional craft of riddling and disgorging by hand, and that essential requirement for producing the best cava - giving it time. Production levels are up to 50.000 bottles per year.

**“ALL OUR CAVAS ARE BRUT NATURE ...”** The wines for the blending are selected in November. After allowing the Macabeu, Xarel·lo and Parellada wines to settle, the various *coupages* are then made up by blending the right ratio for each cava in order to acquire the desired characteristics of freshness, structure, acidity, palatability, etc.

When the wines are stabilized, the process of preparing the *tirage* begins with carefully cultured yeast to produce the *pied-de-cuve* starter for the second fermentation.

When the *pied-de-cuve* is ready, the *tirage* is then carried out, usually in mid-February. For a period of 8 to 12 weeks, and at a constant temperature of 14° C, fermentation

takes place in the bottles, which lie horizontally in traditional stacks, producing carbon dioxide.



From that point, the aging process begins, ranging from a minimum of 15 months, for the Brut Nature, up to 70 months for the Gran Reserva.

At this stage, the organoleptic properties of the cava are determined by the interaction between yeast and the cava. This is an important aspect of production and it's given by the manual *poigneta*, a technique involving shaking the bottles to keep the lees in suspension and encourage cell breakdown. Over a period of 3 weeks, the bottles are manually turned and tilted on traditional racks until the lees are deposited in the neck of the bottle (the so called riddling).

The cava is then clean and clear, and ready for disgorgement which is performed manually without freezing. After removing the lees, the cork is inserted and secured with a wire cage. At this stage the bottle is ready to be dressed and boxed.

Anaïs explains the bottom line of all their cavas: *“All of our cavas are vintage sparklers and all are brut nature. This means that the residual sugar level is under 3 grams and that we do not add any sugar after the disgorgement. We like cavas without the addition of any product. When we disgorge, in case we need to refill a bottle a little bit, we do refill it with the same content in order to preserve the essence of the base wines after the 2<sup>nd</sup> fermentation in the bottle”*.

**ORGANIC CERTIFICATION:** Maria Rigol Ordi cavas are all eco certified since the 2016 tirage. The entry level Cava Brut Nature with the white stripe (coming from vintage 2015) has been released in the market in the middle of 2017: this is the first ever organic cava released to the market. Obviously the grapes are certified as well. What about sulphites? After disgorgement the estate doesn't add anything. This is the house philosophy.

When asked about Cava producers that she admires, Anaïs, once again, is not shy at all: *“We may say Recaredo for their conception of long-ageing cavas and for keeping evolving to a concept of natural and sustainable wines with a consistent narrative. Llopart and Nadal for being the true reflection of cava tradition in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia and Penedès. And finally Rimarts for mirroring a project lead by new generations who have succeeded in positioning quality cavas. On the other end of the spectrum there a lot of commercial cavas lacking any soul”*.

**MICROTIRAGE:** Maria Rigol Ordi will continue to focus on cava confirming that the estate is not interested at the moment in still wines production: *“Furthermore, we think that there are lots of creative possibilities to do with cava. In this sense, in 2013 we also began producing the “microtirages”, limited experimental productions of cava.*

*The last one we launched to the market was our **Microtiratge 3, Pell Bruna Reserva Brut Nature 2015 (organic)**, a 15 month aged with cork reserva cava made from a blend of red Garnacha vinified as white with a touch of Macabeo, an aromatic, subtle*

and fresh cava. These microtirages, which has gained a good interest among wine critics and public, stem from the desire to offer unique and innovative products made from coupages selected from exceptional vintages. They are, therefore, ephemeral and one of a kind, resulting from a particular harvest. That is a good way to keep offering new cava's interpretations to our clients who love to discover very personal products”.

**EXPORT MARKET:** Maria Rigol Ordi exports to Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Canada and these sales represent 10% of the total billing. The estate is still focused pretty much on the domestic market, but expects to be balancing this breakdown in the future. Currently these are the cavas imported by Steep Hill to the US market:

**Brut Nature 2016 (Organic Certified):** This is the youngest cava marked by a casual style and easy to drink. 45% Xarel·lo, 35% Macabeu, and 20% Parellada.

**ORIGIN** Macabeu: Area of lower coastal Penedès, at a height up to 200 m. Xarel·lo: Area of the Penedès depression, at a height between 280 and 350

m. Parellada: Pre-coastal area, at a height from 450 m. The tirage has been performed in February 2017. Disgorgement date: August 24<sup>th</sup> 2018. The production level reaches 25.000 bottles.

Alcohol content: 11.5% vol. Best before: 18 months from date of disgorgement.

Just for bureaucratic reasons during the labels' approval process, the bottles exported to US do not carry the organic certification logo.



**Reserva Brut Nature 2014:** Powerful dry and full-bodied. Creamy spicy aging notes. Tremendous structure and complexity with very fresh undertones of white fruit and lemon peel. Certain vinosity and good citrus acidity. Wide aromatic expression, buttery smoothness and full mouthfeel. Long and precise on the palate. Grape mix: 50% Xarel·lo, 40% Macabeu and 10% Parellada.

**Origins:** Macabeu from lower coastal area in Penedès, at a height up to 200 m. Xarel·lo: Area of the Penedès depression, at a height between 280 and 350 m.

Parellada: Pre-coastal area, at a height from 450 m.

Tirage took place in February 2015. Disgorgement: June 28<sup>th</sup> 2018. Limited production of only 6.000 bottles. Alcohol content: 11.5% vol. Best before: 18 months from date of disgorgement.