

## AIDA i LUIS (Spain, Alicante, Marina Alta)

**BACKGROUND:** By joining forces, the two young winemakers Aida Cissal Roig and Luis Serra Bernabeu have created Aida i Luis, a small craft winery located in the village of Xalò (roughly 80 km north of Alicante).

Aida and Luis established this tiny wine project in 2017 and the young couple has been one of the most active trend setters in this area, elaborating flawless natural wines and bringing the local terroir on the central stage. Already with the debut vintage (2018), the Wine Advocate blessed the couple with enthusiastic reviews (90 points for Tahulla and 91 points for both Ou Yea and Maboi).



The vineyards are organically farmed and the couple would love to gain the official certification, but given the circumstances it will be pretty difficult. Why? Well ... the vineyards are all rented and some of the owners are not really into doing extra papers! Call it a pragmatic attitude towards life or just laziness, if you want and we are here not to judge!

**ALICANTE DO & MARINA ALTA:** For a long time wines from Alicante and its surrounding ranked almost at the bottom of the winemaking in Spain. The 20th century witnessed a slowdown in wine growing as the productive and economic model in the province underwent change in favor of tourism and industry, as well as other more profitable crops more suited to current trends.

The DO was created in 1932 and the regulatory body was set in 1957. The Subzona de la Marina in the north was added ten years after the foundation of the DO and it covers the area next to the coast and goes from Mirafior on the north to Calpe on the south.

Lower vineyards and the influence of the sea make this wine suitable for white wine production, while the terraced vineyards planted on the mountains are an excellent terroir for red grapes.

Generally speaking, the soils in Marina Alta are dominated by iron and clay with a very good water retention.

On the opposite the other areas in the Alicante Designation of Origin area are loamy-sand and sandy, so they have the ideal texture and grain size for growing vines. They are extremely porous and permeable soils, with good drainage and poor water retention and this prevents the growth of any fungal disease.

During the last years, the area has been trying to regain the national wine scene due to an unprecedented qualitative rebirth driven by young winemakers.

**TWO HEARTS BEAT OS ONE:** The couple's philosophy is to produce wines that are a Mediterranean liquid postcard of the local cultural heritage. No international varieties planted and a strong belief in the local heroes Muscatel de Alexandria and Girò. Aida and Luis follow the low intervention philosophy as well: wild fermenting, no filtering, no additives except for a very low sulphur dose (always less than 30ppm total), no fining agents, etc. The 2020 vintage (the one first imported here in NY state) doesn't have any added sulfites.

The local grapes are historically grown here and adapted pretty well to the harsh summer conditions on the coast and its surrounding hills. This district is literally just like hell for at least 4 months (from June onwards), while during the rest of the year the climate is very moderate with low rainfall's level.

The climate changes with regard to location. Along the sea, temperatures are warm. The farther up in the mountains you go, it gets colder helping the grapes to retain freshness and acidity.

The couple manages only 4 hectares (all rented) and skips any synthetic chemicals or pesticides, Harvest is done manually. Sheep are free to roam among the vines till April providing a natural compost and fertilizer. In the cellar, the vinification starts from spontaneous fermentation with indigenous yeasts, avoiding filtration and clarification and other useless invasive practices (adding color, enzymes, protein, liquid tannins, etc).

The estate is a proud member of Vella Terra which is the most important exhibit for natural wines in Spain. The production is very limited with roughly 12.000 bottles yearly (quantities may change according to vintage's characteristics).

**MOSCATEL DE ALEXANDRIA:** Wines from Marina Alta are relatively unknown, but it is a region with great vineyard heritage and wine potential. The region combines coast and mountain landscapes, and unique micro-climates. Muscat of Alexandria is the beloved local white variety and the vineyards create a very distinctive landscape and culture in La Marina Alta, providing a wonderful example of the region's environmental diversity.



This variety has fantastic organoleptic properties with a particularly powerful aroma, and is incredibly versatile, producing white wines, sparkling

wines and a wide range of fortified wines. The large size of the vines, especially the older ones, and their exuberant growth in the fertile soil, make a green and extremely charming landscape.

The grapes are some of the earliest to be picked in the whole of Spain, as the Mediterranean summer temperatures mean that the fruit ripens gradually and at an even rate. Harvesting can start as early as mid-August.

The other outstanding feature of this variety is its health, as it grows in an area with few pests. This is probably the most widely known variety in the whole of the Mediterranean region, for its uses, its presence in all the great civilizations throughout history and its relationship with people at all levels (from growers through to users, as this variety often grew alongside other Mediterranean crops in country estates). In Sicily Moscatel de Alexandria is called Zibibbo.

**GIRO'**: This is a local red grape variety cultivated in some areas near the Mediterranean coast. In Italy is cultivated in the province of Cagliari and Oristano (West e South West Sardegna) and wine historians and ampelographers have speculated that the grape has Spanish origins and may have been brought to Sardinia in the 15th century.

There has been a long association between red Girò and the Girò Blanc grown in Majorca, one of the Balearic Islands. French ampelographer Pierre Galet was a pioneer in speculating that Girò and Girò blanc might be separate grape varieties and not just the result of the color mutations. Galet's hypothesis was confirmed by DNA analysis in



2007 showing that the two grapes were, indeed, different varieties.

Girò was in danger of disappearing because of the advent of phylloxera in the second half of the 18th century - many preferred planting more productive and less problematic varieties.

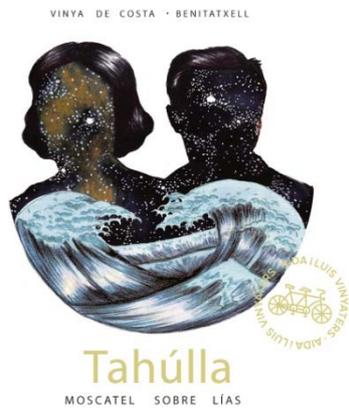
The Girò planted in the Alicante area comes from Mallorca and well adapted to the local soils and climate. Not all the Girò found here

are the same, meaning that the variety presents some differences from plot to plot and ampelographic studies are still searching the scientific truth. Anyhow we are happy to represent the Girò produced by Aida I Luis!

The Girò grape has shown itself to thrive in very hot and dry climates and, when cultivated with moderate yields and green harvest, can produce juicy, fresh, dry wines marked by soft tannins and appealing salinity. A touch of earthiness (leather and herbs)

brings more and more excitement. Overall the acidity is high and almost unusual, if compared to other Spanish varietals.

**THE WINES IMPORTED:** Steep Hill is proudly introducing in the NY market two wines from this estate made with the local heroes Moscatel de Alexandria and Girò.



2020

**Tahulla 2020:** this is a dry unoaked wine made with Moscatel de Alexandria (part of the endless Muscat family) variety from vineyards located nearby Benitaxell village in the Mediterranean Coast in Alicante area. The plots receive constant sea breeze bringing the salty freshness which works greatly for the Moscatel grapes. The soils in the area are mainly white clay.

The label of this wine is inspired by the location of the vineyards that face towards the sea, and the silhouettes of the couple behind the winery project impersonating the starred sky. The nebula is a sophisticated representation of the wine lees.

Winemaking notes: pre-fermentation skin maceration for 3 days, spontaneous fermentation with native yeasts at low temperatures, afterwards several months aging on its lees. No added sulfites (only natural sulfites generated by the alcoholic fermentation). Total production: 4.000 bottles. 13% AbV.

**Maboi 2020:** 100% Girò (12,5% AbV). The fruit is sourced from the highest vineyards in the local natural park of the Sierra de Bernia (620 meters of altitude), located only 6 km from the sea. The soil is marked by iron clay soils with limestone layers.



This is a total handmade wine: manual harvest, natural fermentation with indigenous yeast in small stainless steel vats. Part of the grapes are destemmed and part are whole bunch. The lees stirring were manual done with a soft touch. Unoaked

No clarifying, filtering or other invasive practice. No added sulfites (only natural sulfites generated by the alcoholic fermentation). Total production: 4.180 bottles.

Maboi means “come and see” or/and “my friend” in the Maori language and this is a reference to the time spent by the couple in New Zealand. The label focuses on local festivities costumes, representing the duality between innovation and tradition.