

Alvaro Palacios

“L’Ermita ... is arguably the finest individual red wine in Spain.” John Radford, The New Spain

If anyone embodies the promise and spirit of “The New Spain”, it is 43-year-old Alvaro Palacios. His L’Ermita is widely considered—along with Peter Sisseck’s Dominio de Pingus—to be the most important Spanish wine in a generation.



its own. Alvaro relies on some of Priorat’s finest small growers to produce this wine; to get the best fruit from the steepest and oldest vineyards, he has been known to offer them three times the going rate. Les Terrasses consists of approximately 30% Garnacha, 60% Cariñena, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

One of nine children born to the owners of Rioja’s respected Palacios Remondo, Alvaro studied enology in Bordeaux, while working under Jean-Pierre Moueix at Ch. Pétrus. He credits his tenure at Pétrus for much of his winemaking philosophy and for showing him “the importance of great wines.”

Alvaro could have returned to the security of his family’s domaine. Instead, he was drawn to remote and wildly beautiful Priorat, 60 miles from Barcelona, which had been one of Spain’s important pre-Phylloxera wine regions. With its unique *terroir* of steep hills and terraces Alvaro believed that here he could make a wine that was like a cross between Pétrus and Grange.

He acquired his first vineyard, Finca Dofi, in 1990. Then, in 1993, he located what is now regarded as the crown jewel property in Priorat, a precipitous, northeast-facing Garnacha vineyard on well-drained schist that had been planted between 1900 and 1940. Alvaro named it for a small chapel, or hermitage, that sits atop the hill.

In 1995, the flow of critical praise for Alvaro’s L’Ermita began, and it hasn’t stopped. But while L’Ermita has received most of the attention, Alvaro produces two other wines compelling in their own rights: **Finca Dofi** and **Les Terrasses**.

Finca Dofi is a blend of Garnacha, Cabernet, Merlot, Syrah and Cariñena. Like L’Ermita, Dofi combines power and richness with great breeding and finesse. In most Priorat tastings that do not include L’Ermita, Dofi is the clear winner.

Due to its extraordinary quality and attractive price, **Les Terrasses** has acquired a passionate following all

L’Ermita

2003 — “...tremendous structure, great definition and purity ... **94-97** rating” *Robert Parker*

2001 — “...a remarkably well-balanced wine of great intensity ... **96+** rating” *Robert Parker*

2000 — “... an almost medicinal suggestion of sheer concentration ... **95-98** rating” *Steve Tanzer*

1998 — “... explodes on the mid-palate and in the finish ... **97** rating” *Robert Parker*

1996 — “It is super-intense, but exceptionally well-balanced ... **95** rating” *Robert Parker*

1995 — “Deep, powerful and rich ... **96** rating” *Robert Parker*

1994 — “A modern-day legend ... **97+** rating” *Robert Parker*

Finca Dofi

2003 — “Super-expressive, rich, and full-bodied, with wonderfully integrated acidity, tannin, and wood...” **92-94** rating” *Robert Parker*

2001 — “... intense, opulent, full-bodied, seamless...” **93** rating” *Robert Parker*

2000 — “Thick, dense and suave, with vibrant flavors ... **92-95** rating” *Steve Tanzer*

1998 — “terrific ... with great purity, symmetry and length.” **92** rating” *Robert Parker*

1995 — “A dense, massive, beautifully proportioned wine ... **95** rating” *Robert Parker*

1994 — “Exquisite ripeness and overall equilibrium. **95** rating.” *Robert Parker*

Les Terrasses

“As for a collectible wine in Priorat that sells for under \$50, my vote goes to Alvaro Palacios Les Terrasses ...” Tom Matthews, *The Wine Spectator*

The Press on Palacios

Alvaro Palacios has become a media superstar, not only in the U.S. but in Europe. Here is a sampling of some of his press.

2004 "(Palacios') prime vineyard is L'Ermita, where 100-year-old Garnacha vines produce grapes which make wine of such incredible complexity and structure that they are hard to describe." **John Radford, The New Spain**



L'Ermita

2002 "Through grit and talent, Alvaro Palacios has become the most exciting winemaker in Spain." **Bruce Schoenfeld, Wine Spectator**

2000 The 1997 L'Ermita is voted "Wine of the Year." **Spain's Sibaritas**

1999 "Several months ago, I was able to put together a tasting of the most important half-dozen wines of Priorato . . . The tasting was extremely revealing: the finest, best-balanced wines in both vintages were L'Ermita and Finca Dofi, both made by Alvaro Palacios ..." **Steve Tanzer, International Wine Cellar**

1998 "The first vintage for Clos Dofi was 1989, and the first for L'Ermita was 1993. Having recently done a vertical tasting of both wines, I can unequivocally state they are spectacular wines..." **Robert Parker**

1998 "What does the new Spain taste like? 'Nothing like the old Spain' is the answer if you are lucky enough to taste a glass of Alvaro Palacios' L'Ermita." **Britain's Daily Telegraph**

1998 "One of the rising stars of Spanish wine-making is making his mark ... Alvaro Palacios has just released his 1995 red wines from

Priorat, and they are stunning. His '95 L'Ermita scored 97 points on Wine Spectator's 100-point scale, the highest rating ever given to a newly released Spanish wine" **Wine Spectator**

1997 "The young shooting-star Alvaro Palacios cannot be stopped: his 1994 L'Ermita was chosen

this year's best Spanish wine; the 1995 repeats the honor." **Germany's Feinschmecker**

1997 "Alvaro Palacios is the star of the Priorat appellation." **Switzerland's Vinum**

1996 "1994 L'Ermita is a monument ... This is the Petrus, the Le Pin of Spain" **Germany's Degustation**

1996 "For 1995's red wine of the year, two wines of historic dimensions tied: Vega Sicilia Unico 1970 and L'Ermita 1993." **Victor de la Serna in El Mundo**

1996 "How can we judge 1994 L'Ermita? With 20.5 points (out of 20)?" **Austria's Sonntags-Zeitung**

1995 "Without any doubt Alvaro Palacios is one of the most outstanding producers in Spain. The question is how long it will take before his prestigious wine L'Ermita will join the elite with Guigal La Turque, Petrus, Grange..." **Denmark's Vin & Sprit Journalen**

ALVARO PALACIOS

Priorato, Spain

OVERVIEW

Established: 1989
Les Terrasses debut: 1990
Finca Dofi debut: 1989 (no 1991)
L'Ermita debut: 1993
Proprietor & Winemaker: Alvaro Palacios

VINEYARD INFORMATION

Soils: Friable Schist on steep, terraced slopes
Appellation: Priorat
Elevation: 250 to 600 meters above sea level
Harvest: by hand

VINTAGE NOTES

2007 – Early indications are for a very fresh vintage of mid-weight, pure wines.
2006 – Another dry year, but well-timed rain before harvest appears to have allowed complete ripening and beautiful freshness.
2005 – A drought year, coupled with a poor flowering, produced some of the lowest yields ever. The top wines have unparalleled levels of concentration and pHs as low as 3.3.
2004 – May equal 2003 in quality, though in a more refined style. The wines are concentrated and harmonious.

ADDITIONAL WINEMAKING NOTES

No filtration, fining with egg whites (all wines)
L'Ermita destemmed by hand, others by machine.
Maceration: 25 days (L'Ermita and Finca Dofi); 15 days (Les Terrasses)
Fermentation in oak vats with punching down (L'Ermita and Dofi); fermentation in stainless steel with pumpover (Les Terrasses)
Malolactic fermentation in barrel for L'Ermita and Finca Dofi.
Biodynamic viticulture for Dofi & L'Ermita.

The Wines

L'Ermita

Fruit Source: Arguably Priorat's greatest vineyard: a dramatically steep 2-hectare hillside of 70-year-old, head-pruned vines.
Yields: < 10 hL/hA (2005)
Blend: 100% old-vine Garnacha (a little Cabernet was added prior to 2006).
Harvesting is by hand, with multiple passes to pick optimal fruit.
Oak Aging: 100% new French barrique.
Production: 250 cases.

Finca Dofi

Fruit Source: Estate-grown, from a single vineyard, with an average vine age of 15 years.
Yields: Less than 20 hL/hA
Blend: 60% Garnacha and 40% Cabernet, Syrah and Merlot.
Oak Aging: 100% new French barrique.
Production: 1250 cases.

Les Terrasses

Fruit Source: Estate grapes, with the addition of selected lots of purchased Garnacha and Cariñena grapes from vines averaging 25-30 years of age (but some as old as 60).
Yields: ~25 hL/hA
Blend: 30% Garnacha, 60% Cariñena, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah
Oak Aging: 12 months in French barriques (20% new).
Production: 17,000 cases.