

José Luis Mateo

QUINTA DA MURADELLA

VIGNERON, HISTORIAN, AND PRESERVATIONIST José Luis Mateo began to plant vineyards by hand with his father near his hometown in the Ourense province of interior Galicia thirty years ago, a decade before Monterrei attained Denominación de Origen status. Although he humbly refers to his early winemaking efforts as merely a way of producing “a decent white and a decent red” to serve at the family bar, José Luis is known today among his Spanish and international peers as *the* expert in Monterrei, where winemaking history dates back to the pre-Roman Celtic era. A true asset to DO Monterrei, he is also a passionate advocate for its potential to rank among the world’s greatest winemaking regions, of which he has explored and studied as a personal invitee of Eric Texier’s lauded Haut Les Vins winemaking group, and as an individual, spending time in Burgundy and Barolo.

The elegant wines of Quinta da Muradella hail from over 26 different organically farmed vineyard sites ranging from 360 meters to over 900 meters above sea level. A transitional climate zone, Monterrei draws influence from the frigid Atlantic Ocean, yet is drier and considerably hotter than coastal Galician DOs like Rias Baixas, and much more geologically diverse because two tectonic plates collide at its center. Though he feels his work is never truly done, José Luis Mateo has successfully identified at least 18 different soil combinations (based in either granite or slate) in his vineyards, with a potpourri of quartz, mica, wolfram, and iron mixed in. He also labored for years to master the elaboration of nearly two dozen

native varieties before beginning to incorporate them into his field blends; these include broadly-used grapes native to Monterrei’s valley floor (Mencía, Treixadura, Doña Blanca, Bastardo) and lesser-known varieties (some of which he alone grows), such as the white Monstruosa de Monterrei and the red Sousón, which hail from the mountains, an area currently without recognition by the Denominación de Origen. These can be found in the 100% varietal bottlings, yet even when blended, speak proudly for themselves in Mateo’s wines, which are fermented using only indigenous yeasts, made with zero adjustments, and bottled without fining or filtering using a minimal amount of SO₂.



While still committed to ancient winegrowing traditions such as “*villages-level*” co-fermented field blends like Alanda, José Luis also looks to the future, spending recent years racing against the clock to recuperate centenarian vineyards—the first to be planted after phylloxera arrived to Galicia in the late 19th century—so their genetic material, wisdom, and rich history will be available to future generations. Unlike the vineyards in the valley, these remote *fincas* are hours apart and worked completely by hand, often by elderly villagers, who have given their trust and friendship to a man who has spent his life’s work devoted to the deep understanding, preservation, and promotion of Monterrei. He has recently released to Olé tiny quantities of these new wines as part of a “mountain series,” and the proceeds from their sale will go directly to the work needed to maintain these at-risk sites. More broadly, cuttings taken from the mountain vineyards also find a home in Mateo’s flagship vineyards Muradella and Gorvia, parts of which serve as nurseries for these forgotten varieties, and which produce most of Quinta da Muradella’s wines, communicating in every bottle his patient, inspiring work.



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