

Zona Zepa



Zona Zepa is a single-vineyard wine produced by Señorío de Barahonda, the oldest winery in the Yecla DO region. The name 'Zona Zepa' refers to a government-delimited zone in the area where wildlife is protected. Made in miniscule quantities (1,400 bottles), Zona Zepa is a wine made from pre-phylloxera Monastrell vines planted in 1940. Organically grown grapes produce a wine of extreme purity and balance. With incredible precision, the wine expresses the dried wild herb aromas one can smell in this vineyard, along with dried thyme, oregano and licorice. Zona Zepa communicates a very clean, profound expression of Monastrell. The Candela family established the bodega in 1925. Winemaker Agustín Carrión is one of the key figures whose work has shown the potential of the Monastrell grape in Yecla. Monastrell is better known as Mourvèdre in France's Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation, where the terroir and climate are similar to Yecla; however, the grape is native to Spain. Located in the warmer southeast part of Spain, Yecla is one of the country's oldest wine regions, with a rich history that dates back to the 6th Century. In recent years, the astounding rediscovery of Yecla by American journalists and consumers has prompted international acclaim for wines based on Monastrell.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: One barrel is produced. Made from a single vineyard planted in 1940 and organically farmed. Located in the highest elevation area of Yecla. The soils are limestone and gravel. The grapes are 100% pre-phylloxera Monastrell vines that yield only 0.9 hectoliters per hectare.

RATING HISTORY: 2014 90WS, 91JS; 2008 92 RP

GRAPE: 100% Monastrell. Planted in 1940, these vines are head-pruned in the traditional manner and dry farmed (no irrigation). The vineyard is sited at 780 meters (2,559 ft.) elevation in Yecla's Campo Arriba district.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: This wine is a great match for any main course that has similar characters of intense, pure flavors with depth: Peking duck, grilled rare porterhouse with horseradish sauce, and marinated lamb skewers sprinkled with coarse sea salt.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Harvest takes place during the cool morning hours. After careful selection, whole clusters remain in a refrigerator at 50°F for 24 hours. The grape bunches are de-stemmed, crushed and the must goes into an open-topped tank for maceration and fermentation. After fermentation, the wine goes into large, 500-liter French oak barrels in which extended maceration takes place. The wine is aged for 20 months in new 500-liter French oak barrels. During barrel aging, stirring of the lees (batonnage) is periodically employed.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: This vineyard is situated in Yecla's Campo Arriba district, at 780 meters (2,559 ft.) elevation. Monastrell (Mourvèdre/Mataro) is the most planted grape in the area and is the second most planted red grape in Spain. Yecla's higher altitude makes it significantly cooler than neighboring Jumilla. The area's soils are composed of limestone and chalk with subsoils of clay and gravel. The clay subsoil retains water, essential for the health of the vine in this arid climate. Due to the low content of nutrients in the soil, the vines have low vigor and yields are only 2 kilograms (4.4 lbs.) of fruit per vine, which produces smaller berries with a higher skin-to-juice ratio. These grapes produce wines with greater concentration and complexity in aromas and palate flavors. The climate is Mediterranean with a light Continental influence due to region's higher altitude. The Mediterranean Sea's cool breezes help moderate the arid and sunny climate. The area receives a high amount of sunshine per year (3,893 hours).

TASTING NOTES A glass-coating opaque purple color, it surrenders a captivating perfume of Asian spices, wood smoke, underbrush, lavender, blackberry, and plum. Dense and succulent on the palate, it has plenty of rich fruit, excellent balance, and a lengthy, pure finish. Give it 2-3 years to round out and drink it from 2012 to 2023. Notes by Jay Miller of The Wine Advocate.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 15.5

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