



Gramona: The Art of Cava

Cava is a sparkling wine made in the traditional method in Catalonia in Northeastern Spain. It gets its name from the stone cellars in which it is matured, i.e. caves or cavas in Spanish.

The Gramona family is one of Spain's (and beyond) most distinguished producers of the sparkling wine called cava (voted among the Top of 100 Wineries of 2010 in the Wines & Spirits magazine). Gramona is guided by a philosophy that places a premium on producing cavas that can be aged and express the unique character of their terroir. The vintage cavas we review below offer exciting aromas and flavors, rich texture and elegance, and a sense of terroir. They are wines that evoke emotion.



Located in Sant Sadurn d'Anoia in the center of the Penedès region, this family estate known as "Celler Battle" combines traditional and new technologies in crafting world class sparkling wines from mostly Xarel·lo and Macabeo, two grape varieties indigenous to the region. Gramona sources its grapes from 150 hectares of impeccably managed estate and neighboring vineyards.



Their small production belies its status as one of Spain's most iconic Cava houses. The winery itself is over 135 years old, and its cellars go down 10 meters below the ground and hold over

2.5 million bottles. The vineyards have been 100% biodynamic since 2011- this means that not only do they use no chemical pesticides, weedicides or fertilizers, but also that they follow ancient practices in sustainable viticulture.



In addition, Cava, from the seventies onwards, has grown on an industrial scale, neglecting, in the quest for volume, those finer artisanal features which underwrite all of the world's best wines. Gramona is an extremely honourable exception to this flight from quality which **Jaume and Xavier Gramona**, from the sixth generation of a family which was created in **1881**, are extraordinarily competent winemakers and very fine ambassadors.



Ambassadors who are both trained in oenology and passionate about their wines and about redefining the reputation of the Cava category. To this end, they take advantage of the best Penèdes locations, specifically La Plana and the steep slopes of Mas Escorpi, and an approach to winemaking which centres on extensive ageing and low levels of sugar.

Gramona has achieved spectacular results in aging cavas for extended periods and stands out as Spain's leading producer in this field. The winery celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2006, even though its cava was not produced until the first quarter of the 20th century, under the direction of **Bartomeu Gramona and Pilar Batlle**. The first bottles date from **1921**. Gramona strengthened its brand in the 1940s; the fourth generation created the **III Lustros** and **Celler Batllé** labels, based on long aging periods, and the fifth generation, led by cousins Jaume (winemaking) and Xavier Gramona (management), are in charge of strengthening their cava style and developing a wide range of still wines. Indeed the wines are aged in the Champagne method, that is to say in bottle on



the yeast that has allowed the second fermentation and for a period of between 18 months and ten years. Only the very best Vintage Champagnes benefit from this kind of regime, and it should be no surprise, therefore, that the Gramona wines can take on qualities more usually associated with the most regal of their Champenois cousins.

Gramona's prestige rests on cavas with an aging philosophy similar to Champagne's. Most of them could belong to the **"Gran Reserva"** category, which requires a **minimum aging of 30 months**, but they thoroughly surpass it. The winery favours the use of cork stoppers for cavas aged for three or more years as the most effective method to combat oxidation.





Xarel.lo forms the backbone of their cavas. It is one of the white grape varieties with higher resveratrol content. Numerous vertical tastings carried out by the winery in the past years prove the good bottle evolution of long-aged cavas. This led to the creation of **Enoteca**, a new Gran Reserva range launched in **December 2013**. The two initial **Brut** and **Brut Nature** cavas, both from the **2000** vintage, have been in stacks for 160 months.

Their highest producing Gran Reserva is **Gramona Imperial**. It is aged for **three to four years** and is a blend of **Xarel.lo** and **Macabeo** plus roughly 20% **Chardonnay**. The amount of Xarel.lo increases up to 70% in the longest aged cavas. The blend in Ill Lustrós, Celler Batlle and Enoteca is exactly the same in every new vintage. In fact it is the same wine, although it's not always able to reach the latest stages of aging. The rest of the blend is usually **Macabeo**, but Jaume Gramona likes to have the flexibility to make changes based on harvest conditions. These Cavas are marked by their creaminess and volume in the palate, two regular features in Gramona's style.

Having mentioned all the great Cavas that Gramona have, for those who associate Cava with earthy, almost rubbery flavours, the legacy of mass-market mediocrity, this will come as something of a surprise. Instead the wines are astonishingly complex and take on nutty biscuity and autolytic notes, with exceptional balancing acidity and low levels of added sugar in the name of structural harmony.



Gramona also produces some easy-to-drink semi-sparkling wines. Still wines start with **Gessamí**, an aromatic blend of Moscatel, Sauvignon blanc and **Gewürztraminer**, followed by single-varietal wines like the slightly oaked Gramona Sauvignon Blanc and a Pinot Noir called **Bru de Gramona**. The Xarel.lo collection is particularly interesting given Gramona's deep knowledge of Penedès' most distinctive white grape.

As the expression goes, 'the proof is in the pudding.' In this case, the confirmation is in the Cava!! Most cava is simple, fresh cheap wine to be drunk on a hot day or blended in cocktails. The Gramona Cavas have a taste and texture more like a fine champagne with tiny, elegant bubbles that tickle your tongue and make you want more!

The Gramonas have not achieved this by evading their heritage; on the contrary, it is an alchemical manipulation of the historical grapes (Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada) added to a little Chardonnay, that has forged a distinctive style. These are great wines and a source of as well as for great celebration as they broaden the quality sparkling wine category, fuelling it with interest and diversity.

Credits: Christine Faith L. Lopez | © 2016 Txanton Torre Wine & Olive Oil Co., Inc.

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