

# Peter Sisseck's Ψ PSI

## *A New Vision of Ribera del Duero's Future*

**H**aving established Pingus as a new benchmark for greatness in Spanish wine, Peter Sisseck has embarked on a new quest: to produce a wine that captures the soul of Ribera del Duero. And he intends to do so by harnessing the passion of the region's growers who have, for far too long, lacked the tools, capital and vision to make a wine that is truly "theirs." And thus Ψ PSI was born.

It is a Utopian idea, the basis of which is Peter's passionate belief in organic and biodynamic farming, as well as his gratitude to the region for giving a young Danish winemaker the opportunity to make arguably Spain's most coveted wine.

### Ψ PSI

Named after the 23rd letter of the Greek alphabet, Ψ PSI emerged from a thought that had haunted Peter since he first arrived in Ribera del Duero in 1990.

He always felt that though region's old vineyards had enormous potential, the quality of local farming was poor. Historically, growers had been paid by the ton, in other words, for quantity and not quality; they therefore had little incentive to cut yields. And the excessive use of chemicals in this region gave substance to Claude Bourgignon's vivid description of vineyard soils having less microbial life than the Sahara Desert.

Much work would be needed to restore the soil and improve viticultural practices, but Peter realized that buying the oldest vineyards was unlikely, given the growers' deep attachment to their land. But what if he could involve the growers in a cooperative project, to produce better, more natural grapes?

By changing the economic incentives, and actively engaging the growers' passion for their land, he might be able to obtain the kind of healthy, balanced fruit that he desired, while also

Ψ Psi 2007



helping to augment the health of vineyards (and wallets of their owners) throughout the region.

### The Long View

Of course, a region with Ribera's long history does not change overnight. But since 2006, Peter has worked tirelessly with former Alonso y Yerro winemaker Pablo Rubio to identify the vineyards and growers with the most potential.

Their aim is to move these growers, step-by-step, towards farming healthier vineyards and getting better fruit.

The duo is making available to each grower not only their expertise in organic and biodynamic farming, but locally made preparations. They supply technical advice without being "didactic." And, as the quality improves, they are rewarding growers with higher prices for their fruit.

### A Search for Soul

While the goal for Pingus is to test the upper limits of Tinto Fino, the goal for Ψ PSI is subtler but perhaps just as profound: to find the soul of Ribera del Duero. There will be experimentation with winemaking as the project develops, but the primary concept is to eschew many of the modern techniques used in the region today.

The partners will employ long, gentle macerations to get the most harmonious extraction possible from their grapes. And they are using a relaxed *élèvage* in a mix of large and small oak casks and cement tanks, with virtually no new wood. The early wines are subtle, delicate, and as compelling as anything seen in modern Spain.

Between the time commitment with growers, and the relatively modest prices, it's clear that Ψ PSI is a true labor of love. It's an astonishing long-term obligation, but Peter feels this is a way to give back to a region that has given him so much.