

## A Swedish Winemaker on Costa del Sol

/ [News](#) / [Articles](#) / [Companies](#) /

In 1998 the Swedish Winemaker Rickard Enkvist was planted his first plants on a west-facing slope in Sierra de la Bota in the Ronda Mountains. Today he produce thousands of bottles and even won first prize in the competition VinOjén.

Read about how his old dream of being a wine-grower was realised:



**[More about Rickard Enkvist and the Wine](#)**

### The Story

My first contact with wine production was at the early age of five years. I helped my father to make wine out of fruit from our garden. He fermented the mashed fruit in an open oak cask and sieved the must through a sheet and drew it off before the second fermentation into large demijohns fitted with a glass fermentation lock.

I recall how fascinated I was by the constant bubbling in the fermentation lock. My father must have succeeded well. At the weekends relatives, friends and neighbours came to get their bottle of finished wine that was of the fortified strength type.

My first contact with French wines was at a parent-free party at the home of a good friend. Eighteen years old we stole our way down into his father's wine cellar and got our hands on some bottles. The crime was never discovered, but it served as the launch-pad for my interest in wine.

My work involved a lot of travel. Wherever I found myself in the world I attempted to combine business with pleasure. I searched for the most able wine-growers, studied, enjoyed and took some bottles home with me.

When, at the end of the 1970s, I bought a house in Spain, my collector interest started. The great Spanish wines (Vega Sicilia, Tinto Pesquera and others) captivated me completely. The collection grew and, in order to find space, I acquired a naturally excavated catacomb in the Ronda Mountains where I was able to accumulate my treasure. I still have many of those wines and I will not be able to drink them all, so feel free to get in touch with me if you are interested.

In pursuit of my collecting enthusiasm I visited one vineyard after the other. Very interesting but certainly trying for those I visited. I suspect that there were quite a few who felt that I had too many questions to ask. During a visit to a vineyard in northern Spain their oenologist pointed out somewhat acidly when he clearly tired of all my questions: why doesn't Señor Enkvist make his own wine?

A week later I was back at home in the Ronda Mountains and the oenologist's words echoed in my head. That was when I said to myself: that is exactly what I intend doing. An old dream of being a wine-grower was now going to be realised.

Up in the Ronda Mountains that lie some miles up from the hot sun-drenched coast, wine has been made since the Roman era. Probably not distinguished wines, but mostly for local consumption. The hot climate makes it difficult to make wines with finesses and elegance. When I found my vineyard 650 metres above sea level and investigated the microclimate as well as the geological conditions, I became more and more convinced that, with the aid of modern technology and an able oenologist, it would be possible to achieve a result far above what was the norm for the district. I suspect that there were many who, to begin with, looked upon me as "El Sueco Loco". The first vine section was planted in 1998 on a west-facing slope in Sierra de la Bota in the Ronda Mountains. To change direction and do something entirely different is something that many of us dream of doing. To build your own bodega up from nothing is, perhaps, not the easiest of undertakings, but I am hard pressed to think of anything more stimulating.

Choosing Tempranillo went without saying. There are few grapes that display such diversity and complexity. In addition it withstands the heat well as well as the cold winters up there in the mountains. But what, initially, was the crucial factor is that, for me, the Tempranillo is the Spanish grape with a capital G and that is at home here. The world does not need more Cabernet, Merlot or Syrah wines. Certainly not from southern Spain.

### RED WINE

If one wants to produce uncompromising wines, the work starts in the vineyard. Not even the best technology in the world can compensate for sub-standard grapes. The best way of achieving the best raw materials is to limit the harvesting so that each remaining grape attains optimal concentration. This means, for example, that we remove the unripe grapes so that only two or three bunches remain on each vine.

The red grapes are picked by hand around the end of September, beginning of October at Baume 14-15. They are laid in small plastic boxes (max. 15 kg) in order to avoid crushing the grapes during transportation. From the time that the bunches of grapes are cut off until they are taken off the stalks and chilled, a maximum of 30 minutes has elapsed. The grapes then go directly down into small jacketed stainless steel tanks. The advantage of using small tanks is more rapid temperature control of the fermentation.

Some of the grapes are passed through extraction pumps again in order to obtain maximum colour. Others are re-processed in tanks with CO2 gas in order to gain

maximum fruitiness and aroma. The wine is then blended prior to a second fermentation..

Fermentation takes place during the first three days at a low temperature (18°C) before being raised to 22°C in tanks with pump reprocessing and to 25°C in the gas tanks.

The wine then spends about a year in new French oak casks and then another year in the bottle before labelling.

The red wine is unfiltered but clears both in the steel vats and in the oak casks.

A wine then has to be given a name. A more suitable name than simply Sueños (dreams/visions) is hard for me to imagine.

#### WHITE WINE

We soon noted a demand for dry white wine. It transpired that there were able growers to be found in the district who were pleased to sell their grapes to us. This was very convenient as the vinification of the white takes place some weeks before the Tempranillo which means that, in this way, we are able to use the equipment more cost-effectively. Muscatel accounts for 70% of the mix and, in order to subdue its quite distinct character a little we make up the remaining part with Chardonnay. The Muscatel is grown 50 metres above sea level in vineyards by the Manilva and the Chardonnay comes from a high-lying plateau in the Ronda Mountains. The grapes are pressed and fermented separately in steel tanks at 22°C and are then blended after fermentation has ceased. The wine is then carefully filtered and bottled. The alcohol content is 13 14%. The wine has been named after my dear daughter Eleonor.

#### SWEET WINE

Every good meal should be rounded off with a delightful dessert. It seems only logical, therefore, to make a sweet wine version from our fine Muscatel grapes. In connection with the harvest in August we put about 6 tons of grapes out to dry in the sun for 2-3 weeks. These grapes are then pressed and fermented in steel tanks at 22°C. The fermentation process is broken off at a 14% alcohol content and we obtain a sweet wine that will be a good accompaniment to the dessert or the pâté de foie as a starter. We call the wine Sofia, my daughter's second name. Residual sugar 80 g/litre.

Total production 2006  
10.000 bottles Sueños  
10.000 bottles Eleonor  
5.000 bottles Sofia

*Rickard Enkvist*

#### **More about Rickard Enkvist and the Wine**