

Written by Jancis Robinson 23 Mar 2016

## Equipo Navazos - sherry genius

There's not too much to say about this exceptional curator of some of the finest wines in Andalucia that we have not already published. See, for example, [The world's least appreciated fine wine](http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/the-worlds-least-appreciated-fine-wine) (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/the-worlds-least-appreciated-fine-wine>) and [Highest scores ever? For sherry!](http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/highest-scores-ever-for-sherry) (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/highest-scores-ever-for-sherry>) Academic criminologist Jesús Barquín (left) and Eduardo Ojeda of the house of Valdespino carefully select what they reckon are the finest casks of sherry languishing in the far-too-neglected bodegas of Jerez, Sanlucar and further afield and bottle their contents in numbered releases, all carefully detailed on their generally well-curated (for once, this word is apt) [website](http://www.equiponavazos.com/en/index.htm) (<http://www.equiponavazos.com/en/index.htm>) - although at the time of writing the descriptions of the wines in English had not yet been added to it. Because of that, we include Jesus's excellent background notes in italics before my woefully inadequate tasting notes.

As you can see below, they have now released their 61st numbered cask, butt or *bota*, and over the years have supplemented this range with other wines, including a less expensive Manzanilla, I think, a fine introduction to their exacting standards, a sparkling wine from Penedès and a table wine from sherry grapes conceived in conjunction with Dirk Niepoort of Oporto during the tour of Jerez with me and David Schildknecht described in [Reviving the sleeping sherry giant](http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/reviving-the-sleeping-sherry-giant) (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/reviving-the-sleeping-sherry-giant>) .

Purple Pagers have been asking for the latest set of tasting notes since the beginning of the year. Here they are – based on a tasting in London at the end of January when Jesús came over to present the latest wines to a drooling pack of wine writers and sommeliers.

The wines are listed in the order they were presented in the tasting.

- **Colet-Navazos, Extra Brut 2011 Penedès**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582079>)

*The first contacts between Sergi Colet and the members of Equipo Navazos took place in 2003. The starting point was our certainty about some structural similarities between champagne and biologically-aged sherries: vineyards grown on white chalky soils, the relatively neutral character of the base wines, the importance of a second yeast intervention in the production process, etc. There was also the idea of playing with dosage wines in order to produce different sparkling wines, inspired by the different types of sherries. In May 2007 we started fieldwork and tests. The original idea was - and still is - a joint effort where the added know-how and experience of both parts would enable the production of quality sparkling Palomino-based wines in the sherry region where the character would come not as a result of fruit and primary aromas but from the chalky minerality and the action of flor yeasts, as well as gentle oxidation notes. This part of the project (Navazos-Colet) is still in progress, although commercial releases are not to be expected yet. In the meantime, Colet and Equipo Navazos have experimented with other parameters, eg combining small amounts of flor yeasts and/or lees for the second fermentation of Penedès sparkling wines. And also*

*experimental disgorgement tests, trying different base wine profiles and dosage combinations with traditional Andalusian types (be they from Jerez, Montilla, or Sanlúcar): dollops of fino, manzanilla, amontillado, palo cortado, oloroso, sweet PX, cream... The initial approach was to test how far we could go with the Andalusian sparkling project, but with time Colet-Navazos realised that some of these Catalan sparklers of southern spirit (a cross-breed described Josep Rocaas saleroso mestizaje) were truly serious and elegant wines, so we have decided to release some of them to the market. In the first months of 2015 we have released Colet-Navazos Reserva 2010 Extra Brut, and this Colet-Navazos 2011 Extra Brut, each of them bottled in one single lot with a disgorgement date printed on the back label: October 2014. This is therefore a sparkling wine under the appellation Penedès produced according to the traditional (champenoise) method of secondary fermentation in bottle, starting with base wines sourced from Colet vineyards. The southern presence is felt in the secondary fermentation and especially in the use of different dosage wines. This wine has been aged for 29 months. Bone-dry, it has virtually no residual sugar. The base wine is 100% Xarel.lo coming from the Colet vineyards in the hills of the Penedès, and the southern contribution gives it characteristic caramel-like notes.*

Low-key nose. But very nicely balanced and fruity on the mid palate with a zesty dry finish. Very clean if not that complex.

12.5%

Drink 2015-2017

£23.35 RRP 16 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582079>)

- **Navazos-Niepoort 2014 Vino de España**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582080>)

*Everything suggests that the origin of Andalusian biological ageing should be dated back to the second half of the eighteenth century, half way between Sanlúcar (providing the wines) and Cádiz (providing the market and commercial channels in the form of the tabancos de montañeses where the beneficial effects of the flor were first appreciated). Everything likewise indicates that in those days the practice of fortification was infrequent in the white wines destined for local consumption. We gather that from Agustín Fernández's 1801 article on 'Vineyard and winemaking practices in San Lucar de Barrameda', published in issue 213 of that admirable source of information that was the *Semanario de Agricultura y Artes dirigido a los Párrocos*. After stating that the best grapes were the listanes (Palomino Fino) and the best vineyards those of tierras blancas (albariza soils) he continued as follows: 'if the grapes are of top quality, the whites need nothing more; it is true that some add a quarter of refined spirit to stabilize them, but they risk the wines becoming coarse as a result of this' (p 59). If to this we add the fact that the local classification of vineyards according to quality criteria was well settled at the turn of the 18th century, we can infer that the parameters that a top-quality wine of the age had to meet were the following: (a) the Palomino Fino variety, (b) sourced from the best vineyards, (c) fermented in butt, (d) using indigenous yeasts, (e) aged under the layer of flor that was formed immediately after the fermentation yeasts finished their job, (f) with no added alcohol. This wine, before the generalisation of the term 'vino de manzanilla' (for which Cádiz was responsible), was plainly known locally as 'vino blanco' (white wine). This is what we offer as the sixth vintage of Navazos-Niepoort, produced by Equipo Navazos following exactly the same rigorous quality criteria employed by the best winemakers of the Bajo Guadalquivir some 200 years ago: Palomino Fino musts sourced from a historic albariza vineyard, fermented in butt with indigenous yeasts that impregnate the vines and the fermentation vessels themselves, aged for eight months under a layer of flor thanks to the action of more indigenous yeasts that take control immediately after fermentation, and of course with not a single drop of added alcohol. After a mediocre 2013 vintage, particularly taking into account that 2011 was outstanding and 2012 was, like Mary Poppins, 'perfectly perfect in every way', vintage 2014 came back to excellence in the*

sherry region in general, and specifically in the historic vineyard located in the Pago Macharnudo Alto, whose grapes give birth to this wine. Additionally, every year we learn something else and gain some experience in the winemaking and respect of the terroir of this wine. It is best enjoyed chilled at around 9 °C, with any type of lightly cooked fish and seafood, as well as lighter rice and pasta dishes, and salads of delicate flavours. Bottled December 2015.

Firm and dense though at the moment you are not that aware of its Jerezano origins. Salty/vegy finish. Most unusual! As usual... This would be a really interesting partner for salt cod. Lots to chew on.

13%

Drink 2016-2018

£19.88 RRP 16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582080>)

- **Equipo Navazos, Navazos En Rama Fino NV Jerez - Xérès - Sherry**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582081>)

*This wine is a **Fino en Rama** from Jerez de la Frontera. It is 100% Palomino Fino grapes from the vineyards Cartera and Macharnudo Alto, in one of the noblest vine areas or pagos in the sherry district, located four kilometers west-northwest of Jerez de la Frontera. The wine ferments with local yeasts and, after a small fortification so as to increase its alcohol content from ca. 12.5% to 15%, the wine enters the solera system where it has aged under a layer of flor for an average of five years. It is therefore a well aged fino, far from the ten or more years of age of Equipo Navazos' La Bota de Fino (whose most recent release is no. 54), but also well above the minimum legal age of two years. As a result, this fino is pungent and lively, but also complex and profound. A relevant feature is that it is bottled en rama (as in fact are all sherries by Equipo Navazos). This means that no aggressive means of filtration or clarification have been used in the bottling process of this wine, only a minimal light filtration, without any cooling, so as to prevent that the flor yeasts getting into the bottle. This is therefore an exact example of what you would taste directly from any of the casks from which it has been drawn. This is a return to the tradition of bottling the finos as they are, keeping their natural complexity and depth, as well as its natural colour, far from the extreme paleness and clarification that has been the rule in the last few decades. Bottled May 2015.*

Really pungent nose with some breadiness. Peachy start and then very fresh and actually quite soft. Not that much evident acidity. Quite an easy drink already.

15%

Drink 2016-2017

£9.93 RRP per half 16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582081>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 54 Macharnudo Alto La Bota de Fino NV Jerez - Xérès - Sherry** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582082>)

*This is a saca made in June 2014 from the same batch of casks that already gave us the six previous editions of La Bota de Fino. This new release, of an estimated average age of ten years, comes now from a selection of casks of the solera and the second criadera. The nose shows very complex and intense aromas, and a remarkable roundness in the palate (the traditional buttery touch of old finos) as a result of the autolysis of dead flor yeasts resting on the bottom of the vessel. This is particularly true of the solera, where the flor is almost exhausted, while in the second criadera the yeast is still very lively and active, which provides the spiciness and pungency that are also notable features of this extraordinary wine. Bottled almost unfiltered in order to preserve its golden colour and racy character. It can be enjoyed upon release, but it will continue to*

*evolve in bottle if it is stored with the same care as any other fine white wine. It performs best at temperatures ranging from 10 °C, where it shows a lighter and fresher profile, to 13 °C, where it fully displays its rich and complex aromatic range. On the table it is a most versatile wine, successfully matching a wide array of diverse foods: of course Ibérico ham, but also seafood dishes, shepherd's pie, a feira octopus, grilled vegetables, not too mature farm cheeses...*  
Really intense and powerful on the nose with strong rancio influence. Much more concentrated than the much younger En Rama version. Really gets the saliva flowing! Great intensity and with a smoky finish. Hint of oyster shells.

15%

Drink 2016-2020

£29.86 RRP 17.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582082>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 57 La Bota de Florpower MMXII NV Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582083>)

*We are determined to extract the full potential of biological ageing under flor at natural (unfortified) abv. It was following that path that the white Navazos-Niepoort was produced in its day (there are quite a few vintages in the market now). More recently we have started a number of experiments ageing in butt and vats, using both Palomino Fino and Pedro Ximénez sourced from different terroirs in the sherry district and Montilla – and even other projects in Spain's north east and north west. In 2015 we bottled the second vintage of La Bota de Florpower MMXII (ie 2012), as release number 57. This is an unfortified white wine, with the same origin and winemaking as La Bota de Vino Blanco MMX 44 Florpower. Made exclusively of Palomino Fino sourced from the blessed plot known as Pago Miraflores (albariza close to the ocean), it fermented in stainless steel tanks. After fermentation, it was transferred to 20 butts where it was aged under flor for 8 months. In July 2013 it all went to a single stainless steel vat where - still under the by now much milder influence of flor yeasts - it remained until bottling (burgundy bottle) in March 2015.*

Smoky gunmetal nose. Mouthfilling. It really does taste rather floral, and chock-full of flavour. Raw cooking-apple flavours.

12.5%

Drink 2016-2018

£21.88 RRP 16 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582083>)

- **Equipo Navazos, I Think En Rama NV Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582084>)

Bottled October 2015. Salted walnuts on the nose. Very substantial – a real mouthful. Lots of chew and far from ethereal. Correct but less racy than some Manzanillas.

15%

Drink 2015-2016

£9.93 RRP per half 16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582084>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 55 La Bota de Manzanilla NV Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582085>)

*This is our seventh release from the same solera that has already produced editions number 4, 8, 16, 22, 32 and 42 of the 'La Bota' series. This new one, while keeping the unmistakably fresh and*

*lively style of previous releases, belongs to the group of the somewhat more settled and 'serious' among them. For its selection we have returned to our favorite toneles (750-litre butts) of the oldest solera of Manzanilla hosted in a small almacenista-like bodega in Sanlúcar, of which on this occasion we have selected 22. It was the location of this house that inspired our choice of the name that we gave our project, as our first wine, La Bota de Amontillado nº 1, was sourced from the cellars of this Barrio de la Balsa, between the streets called Banda Playa and Divina Pastora. This was a zone gradually stolen from the Guadalquivir estuary and traditionally surrounded by - today almost gone - navazos [ground by a river that rarely dries]. La Bota de Manzanilla 55 has an intense nose as well as a delicate, salty and cheerful palate; perhaps less powerful but fresher and more jovial. An unbeatable match on the dinner table, it excels with dishes from the Spanish seafood tradition: mackerel potatoes, tuna stew, baked dishes and boiled shellfish; international cuisine: toro sashimi, marinated herrings, mussels; and especially with the spicy dishes from south-east Asia. It has been bottled after only the slightest filtration in order to preserve its genuine character and its deep golden colour with green hues as if straight from the butt. This manzanilla should be handled with just as much care as any other great white wine. It should be served at about 9/11 °C in fairly large glasses, never in the cliché copita.*

Wonderfully aromatic – positively piercing! Great smoky, bready finish. Really flies up the air. Beautifully creamy texture. So dry and appetising on the finish. Easy to see a relationship between this and long-aged champagne somehow. Long and creamy. A throat-caresser.

15%

Drink 2016-2020

£28.88 RRP 18 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582085>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 59 La Bota de Manzanilla Pasada Capataz Rivas NV Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582087>)

*From Hijos de Rainera Pérez Marín in Sanlúcar de Barrameda. 3,500 bottles produced. Rafael Rivas, capataz for several decades at La Guita cellars at Sanlúcar's Calle Misericordia until his retirement in 2011, started in 1986 this 15-butt solera with a well-aged manzanilla. The plan was to produce an old manzanilla of exceptional quality, should one be required to add some extra kick to the commercial releases of the house. But no such kick was ever required, and so, in order to preserve its character and prevent its turning into an amontillado, capataz Rivas pampered these 15 butts and 'touching' them only sparsely, sometimes as little as only every two years, with testimonial sacas of only four or five arrobas (roughly 5x16=80 liters) and refilling them with wines sourced from the best solera of La Guita. The result is a true manzanilla pasada, extremely singular in style. Like the good old ones. Another feature that contributes to this wine's singularity and unmatched biological character (intense and steely notes of salinity on the palate) is the way the butts are filled almost up to a tocadodos (within finger reach from the top) - well above the customary five sixths in the sherry region. This way, the yeast layer or flor (truly weakened now by the wine's age and lack of nutrients) in these butts is more reduced and can be maintained with those scarce refills. It still performs its function as physical barrier against the wine's oxidation, but in its diminished state it cannot be fully effective and so this manzanilla offers elegant oxidation notes and a rise in its alcohol level, at about 16%. This prodigious wine was never bottled until Equipo Navazos selected it in 2008 for its tenth release of 'La Bota de...', followed two years later by edition number 20 'Bota Punta', and then a few more that have been celebrated by many wine lovers who are absolutely crazy for this superb manzanilla pasada. The real average age of La Bota de Manzanilla Pasada 59 must be around 15 years. It is a complex and powerful wine, of balanced freshness and elegant oxidation notes that make it truly unique. Stunningly versatile on*

*the dinner table, it matches a wide variety of dishes, from the most easygoing (rich fish dishes, fish-based rice recipes, charcuterie) to the most difficult (scrambled eggs with boletus edulis, runny sheep cheeses, spicy Asian food). Best served around 12 °C, in moderately large glasses. Pale greenish gold. Tingly and intense. Vibrates. Very substantial and intellectual. Smells of cigars! A glass of the sea transformed into a riveting wine - one to linger over.*

16%

Drink 2016-2022

£34.71 RRP 18 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582087>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 60 Bota Punta La Bota de Manzanilla Pasada NV Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582088>)

*This wine had never been bottled until Equipo Navazos selected it in 2008 for its 10th release of 'La Bota de...'; followed two years later by edition number 20 Bota Punta, and then for a few others in different years. Then there have been a few very limited releases until we launched this wine in August 2015, again from a single cask of very peculiar character, located at the extreme of the solera. This is a very special wine that takes the astonishing quality of the previous releases of this wine (editions 20, 40 and 50) to an amazing level of finesse and chalky minerality. What makes this wine truly unique, with unmatched biological character (intense and steely salty notes on the palate), is that the butts are filled up to a tocadados level - well above the 5/6 mark that is common in the sherry district. In this fashion, the layer of yeast/flor inside these butts (much weakened by the age and lack of nutrients of the wine) is significantly smaller and thinner and can be kept alive on the basis of rare periodic refreshments - acting as barely sufficient barrier between the wine and the intensely oxidising effect of air. On the other hand, its very weakness implies that this protective effect is only a mild one, which is evidenced in the elegant oxidative notes of this manzanilla as well as the rising level of alcohol, climbing above 16%. The real average age of this wine must be around 14/15 years. Stunningly versatile on the dinner table, it matches a wide variety of dishes, from the most easygoing (rich fish dishes, fish-based rice recipes, charcuterie) to the most difficult (scrambled eggs with boletus edulis, runny sheeps cheeses). Best served around 12 °C, in moderately large glasses.*

Pale tawny. Hint of coconut – something sweet – on top of the sherry tang. Dry finish but some treacle toffee on the way there. More intense and demanding than La Bota 59. A bit more concentration and obvious age on the end. Very appetising.

16.5%

Drink 2016-2021

£49.44 RRP per 50 cl 18 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582088>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 58 La Bota de Amontillado NV Jerez - Xérès - Sherry**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582089>)

*Since the 1980s and until very recently, the amontillado soleras of Rainera P Marín were made of very different soleras labeled within the cellar as Manzanilla Pasada: from the third criadera of Amontillado M. Pda all the way to the little shrine of 1/3 M. Pda. Viejísima, including solera 1/10 M. Pda. Vieja (from where we have sourced our editions number 31 and 61 Bota NO of La Bota de Amontillado). After its purchase by the Estévez Group, the greater part of these confusingly labeled stocks was strictly restructured. The finest and deepest butts were selected, their contents refreshed with true (and unfortified) manzanilla pasada (this is a natural amontillado), in order to*

*create an amontillado solera that was slightly over 100-butt strong and located at third and fourth in one same row. This time we have selected fifteen of these butts which shine for their superior freshness as well as intense notes of aromatic herbs, baked sweet potato, and caramel. The resulting blend is a perfect amontillado, extremely dry, long, serious, complex, and still deliciously drinkable. The additional three years of age - compared with the previous release of this wine (La Bota de Amontillado 37) - can be appreciated in terms of additional complexity and maturity. The average age of this wine is around 22 years. It is best enjoyed in a sufficiently large white wine glass towards 14/15 °C - so it should be served slightly below that to allow for aeration. An excellent aperitif on its own, it also works beautifully with some dishes: powerful crudités such as morcón or bull negro, spring haricots with black pudding, sautéed lamb sweetbreads with garlic, fabada asturiana, spicy Asian food... Needless to say, it is an excellent match to a wide variety of cheeses, both hard and soft.*

Pale tawny. Smells cheesy, and honestly that is independent of the plate of cheese not far from the wine. So savoury! Lots of age and some caramel flavour (not that I am suggesting for a moment that caramel was added to this). Pungent and almost aggressively dry. Tingles and with just the merest suggestion of astringency. Very drying finish.

18.5%

Drink 2015-2020

£49.84 RRP 17.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582089>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 61 Bota NO La Bota de Amontillado NV Jerez - Xérès - Sherry** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582090>)

*In the wine cellars owned by La Guita there are several Amontillado soleras identified by the number of butts that exist of each one. They have survived practically untouched since La Guita moved its stocks to new cellars in 1980. Among them the source of this bottling, the Solera 1/10 of Manzanilla Pasada Vieja, which is in fact an exceptional Amontillado, very old and elegant, that shows the typical character of Sanlúcar. This is the second time we come to it, since in 2011 there was a release with the same name and source numbered as La Bota no. 31. Due to its evident age and depth it can be sipped mid-morning on quiet leisurely days, or after a meal. It also displays a harmonious palate that makes it especially appropriate for intense dishes such as a hearty stew, arròs de muntanya, or lobster bisque, and also of delicate pieces of sushi with a dash of wasabi. Come to think of it, at a lower than usual temperature, this amontillado can be sipped successfully side by side to a refreshing ajoblanco or gazpacho. It should be served in sufficiently generous glasses at around 13-14 °C, to account for the expected temperature rise once it is in the glass. Pale lioness tawny. Very high-toned indeed – lots of wood ageing and rancio. Super-pungent and on the way to treacle. Attention-grabbing but a bit too demanding in terms of acidity and intensity for me. Maybe this comes alive with the right food? Jamón? But it's bone dry on the end.*

20%

Drink 2016-2019

£49.44 RRP per 50 cl 17 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582090>)

- **Equipo Navazos, 56 Bota NO La Bota de Pedro Ximénez NV Jerez - Xérès - Sherry** (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582091>)

*The greater part of the wine ageing at Bodegas Rey Fernando de Castilla dates back to purchases made some two decades ago when our friend Jan Pettersen took over the management of this small and refined sherry house. Once, while purchasing old sweet PX wines to refresh their own*

*soleras, he realised that their provider had dismantled the PX solera in order to sell the empty butts separately. Fortunately, inside these there was still some very old and (necessarily) extremely dense PX, almost muddy at the bottom of each butt. Jan insisted that this be part of the deal. Since then he has preserved those butts under his care. This is therefore a wine that is different from the old PX from RFC bottled almost three years ago as number 36 in the La Bota series. This PX has a somewhat Montilla style, originally low in alcohol (around 12.5%) that needed adjusting to reach the minimum legal requirement of 15% - which is why it has additionally benefited from the extra age needed in terms of integration and rest. The wine, very dense and concentrated, is now spectacularly delicious. We fell in love with one specific butt and so chose this one for bottling as number 56, in this case a single cask edition and necessarily a limited release. While its average age is hard to determine, our conservative estimate is well above forty years.*

Blackish mahogany. The sweetness dominates the nose. Brown sugar. This is making a beeline for my dodgy tooth. Not quite as distinctive as most of these Equipo Navazos releases. It is quite difficult to haul off the syrupy sweetness from the wine. Licorice syrup. My fault perhaps but I cannot discern that much complexity.

15%

Drink 2016-2018

£91.34 RRP per half 16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/582091>)