



## TAG ARCHIVES: DURONA

### Making a Mountain Out of a “Sumoll” Hill

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— Thursday Tasting Time at Despaña Vinos y Mas! (Left to right) Jesus Carmona, Simon Buck, Celina Gonzalez Garaño, Lindsey Lovel, Zach Moss

After a very enjoyable Thursday Tasting with **Celina Gonzalez Garaño** of the Penedés winery **Heretat Mont-Rubi (HMR)**, I felt compelled to finally write this long-awaited article. This is about the magical variety Sumoll; a grape of obscurity, devotion, & awe. A grape that has never failed to inspire anything other than the most primal & emotional interpretation of its wine, at least for this oenophile. A grape that teetered, until the turn of this century, on the very edge of extinction. It could be for any or all of the aforementioned reasons that I am so infatuated with Sumoll, but the fact remains that if such a high-potential variety such as Sumoll can exist in anonymity, then how many more like it are out there?

The first time I ever had a Sumoll consciously (its most often used as a coloring varietal in rosé Cava blends) was before I made the decision to make wine my career. Having moved back to



New York after trying my hand at restaurant management, I was much in need of inspiration. I remember reading an article (the name of which escapes me) that gushed about the crystalline purity of a wine called “Els Jeligins” & its rarity. Intrigued, I picked up a bottle of the 2005 & brought it home. Never had a wine entranced me such as the Els Jeligins. It was like falling in love for the first time, but without any fear of rejection or heartbreak. Ethereal, yet bold, it glided from the glass directly to my core & I was forever changed. In hindsight, that might have very well been the moment in which I new wine would be my calling.

I needed to know more about my new love. What other examples were out there? How big of a secret was Sumoll's magic really? Until very recently, the only information an inquiring mind could find online about Sumoll was the following:

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**Sumoll Black**

Grown in the area of Artés (Barcelona) and in the DO Conca de Barberá, although it is not covered in the regulations governing this denomination.

Thanks for all the info, Lords of the Web!



Uneven ripening is just one of the difficulties in growing Sumoll

Now, with the wealth of quality wine blogs (<http://catavino.net>) & detailed reference publications (specifically "Wine Grapes" by Jancis Robinson, Julia Harding & Jose Vouillamoz) the floodgates of information are open. Indigenous to Cataluña, Sumoll spread to Andalucía & the Canary Islands because of its natural ability to flourish in arid conditions. Its large bunches & late ripening made it a grape well suited for warm vintages when other grapes perished. Unfortunately its strengths are also its weaknesses: late ripening means that it has a higher probability to be negatively affected by bad weather & a cool rainy vintage will result in under-ripe or rotten bunches. Sumoll berries are large & its clusters few, so the crop is further threatened by predation, temperature swings that could shatter the thin skin, & bunch rot. For these reasons & the growing popularity of "international" varieties, many Sumoll vineyards were torn up during the 1950's & 60's. Today only 250 acres of Sumoll exist in Cataluña with nearly insignificant plantings in the Canary Islands.

All this started to change in the year 2000 when Australian scientists came to Penedés in search of a varietal that could be used to breed a new hybrid grape with drought-resistant properties. "We thought to ourselves 'what do these Australians know that we don't'" Celina told me when asked why Heretat Mont-Rubi chose to focus on Sumoll. "The following year



(2001) we made our first vintage of **Gaintus (\$54.99 at Vinos y Mas)**, the first 100% Sumoll wine & we haven't stopped since". HMR owns roughly half the Sumoll plantings in Cataluña & has expanded their offerings with "**Duroña (\$21.99 at Vinos y Mas)**" a blend of 50% Sumoll, 30% Garnatxa & 20% Samso. The '06 Duroña has been overwhelmingly successful since we brought it in at the beginning of December, displaying Nebbiolo & Etna Rosso (Nerello Mascalese)-like qualities of sweet black earth & black cherry skin & balsamic herbs for a fraction of the price of its look-a-likes. If getting more than what you pay for makes you a smart shopper, picking up a Duroña is an act of pure genius.

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**Despaña NY**  
9 de octubre a las 12:00

HMR is a special bodega that is known for their use of Sumoll, a varietal native to Penedes and almost extinct, with only 100 hectares remaining.

There are three different bottles you can try today at our Vinos y Más store's free tasting (5-7:30pm).

[Ver traducción](#)

**Despaña Events**



Needless to say, the wine making style of Els Jelpins is "au naturel"

The wines of Heretat Mont-Rubi prove to me that the potential of Sumoll as a quality varietal is a fact. Even more so, we just received the 2009 vintage of my first love **Els Jelpins (\$84.99 at Vinos y Mas)**. This wine is so good that I feel like I should be writing in iambic pentameter when talking about it. Luminescent ruby red in the glass, many would think Els Jelpins could pass for a rosé wine. The gauzy cloudiness gives away the non-interventionist leanings of Glòria Garriga, Els Jelpins winemaker. Sweetly floral with sour cherry & wild red raspberry liquor notes that float from the glass like silky incense smoke. The more technically minded will note that there's a slight note of VA, but this is not a flaw for this wine. In fact the reductive notes seem to lift the sweetness of the nose to another level. The palate is crushingly delicious. I put it that way because it is way too easy to drink this wine. Feminine & pure, the palate mirrors the nose & leaves an impression of possible residual sugar. Earth, love, sweet red



berries, & passion; they are all right there in the glass, every sip. Recently, we tasted the new vintage of Els Jelpins with a few of our wine distributor friends & they seemed as impressed as we were. After sharing my feeling that the wine tasted like something that could sell for \$250 or more everyone agreed. Luckily that's not the case! I can't say there's much else out there that can get you so close to heaven for \$85.

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## Yelp Reviews

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Luke C. 12/7/2013

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17:00	Wine Tasting at Despai
<b>sábado, 24 de octubre</b>	
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15:00	Wine Tasting at Despai
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