



Unto each bike its own chain

By Álvaro Tello

First day at uni kicked off with a lecturer firmly grounded in the room. Each word was a lick that brought out the sheen of all his professional experience. He wanted to impress us and make us fix our stares on him, and he succeeded.

After all his spit stockpile seemed to have been depleted, he quickly changed his tone, warning us about the pitfalls of our future trade. One was rotational or deferred payments known as "the bicycle". They could mean, he explained, three, four or even five months of waiting.

All other lecturers refrained from touching the subject in fear of retaliation from the university authorities, as they didn't want complaints from their student/clients. The few lecturers that dared to explain to us what this pitfall consisted of only gave us broad brushstrokes of submissive actions. Because that's what it was about: of getting used to until accepting it and, without arousing suspicions, keep liquidating anguish.

As internships were awarded further down the line, we became aware that our feet were burning on a stage filled with tax informalities and of scant commutative value. If we dared to refuse these payment conditions, well good luck to you, others would grasp the opportunity.

For decades, the bicycle has been interpreted as a simple deferral of payment; another twist in the countless turns between debtors and

creditors that never count as deceit. Neither all the high-mindedness and noisy wokeness that permeates these times have been able to phase out its existence, because it's still considered harmless and easy to consent to. There is nothing else but to wait for the debtor to open up a chance of payment in between other debts. It doesn't seem that serious, except for those struggling to breathe while waiting, hearing the same excuses over and over, the same imaginary deadlines, the same promises, the same faked apparent calm, using indifference as a strategy to wear out complaints.

Denial awards the debtor a powerful vantage viewpoint, seizing control, while the creditor can only pretend and remind, at most, that the debt must be honoured, knowing full well it may not happen.

As the restaurateur business grew in an ambitious and formless way, converting whole neighbourhoods into omnipresent and panoptical dining areas, it forced us to observe and be observed without suspicion. Scents and bustles were shared in order to forget about our intimacy. Within this explosion of tables, we began to huddle together and talk about wine. I retain a sharp mental image of that new beginning, of glass-raising nights and bottles parading in praise of commitment, where the slightest chance of hearsay against our wine and cuisine was fenced back as if in presence of a conspiracy.

It was a harsh milieu, where image was valued over reviews even when that was unsustainable. We didn't really know if it was a call to caution or complicity, because the complaints of victims and culprits were heard at the same table. A few times we got to talk about payment deferrals to suppliers, at which it was kindly suggested to us to look the other way. With all these clues we may be able to understand the true issue and success of the bicycle: it's invisible, as happens with any other misfortune, hidden under a thick strata of fair and well-intentioned people. This is

strengthened by the apparent spotlessness of agents that point out to us what is right, and aim to correct us when they think we have strayed from the path. Under this bitterly tender morality that calls to silence and papers us up with warnings, we become victims to the loyalty and sanctity of appearances.

We knew that many restaurants practiced the bicycle with small and medium sized wine producers. Not all of them of course (I'm talking to you, my dear soft-hearted reader). In one way or another we found out and just recently, we confirmed it.

Across the usually infertile sites of social networks, some producers commented on an explosive increase in sales during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic. It was all about the unexpected encounter between producers and end consumers, that sought them out through different platforms like Instagram. A hand in hand that sweetened the bitter crumbs of the national market (most producers favour exporting), and that translated into instant available income, while restaurants and intermediaries remained inactive. They had no qualms in expressing not missing the "chain and its agents", and that "it was all part of an illusion". "The chain", is an expression that compacts several actors that nestle in the restaurateur business, dedicated to wine sales, purchases and promotion. Counted amongst these are distributors of all sizes and reaches, vineyards with direct sales, sommeliers, restaurant managers and/or owners. Several distinct facts are recognisable in this chain, like the way large-sized distributors and vineyards with sales-forces openly provide payment deferrals. A formal and unflappable bicycle, that ends up with smaller sales-forces that make way with wines from small producers, that have to accept deferred payments. We must see that they're not the same size, nor have the same needs, or even motivation if we are ever to understand comprehensively all of this.

We can also choose to consider now the murky waters of incentives restaurants receive from distributors, like travel expenses, furniture or advertising. Although the stated goal of incentives is to gain ground and highlight presence (also called "gaining loyalty"), this doesn't necessarily determine exclusivity of the wine list, as this decision is in the hands of those who manage a restaurant. Let us say that it is valid that they determine exclusivity and this remains an alternative when there is no real knowledge of wines and prefer to concentrate on the eating part of the business. But this is at the risk of having a fairly poor wine list that

approaches the idea of "retail taste".

Although the whole cadre of small producers are probably the most interesting today in Chilean wines, they can't compete with the gifts or the sales-force of large-sized distributors and vineyards, and I dare say that they may even appear unattractive. They have no name recognition, their wines are not easy, there is differing quality in the small production that is hard to understand at first.

In the case of natural or low intervention wines, these are an acquired taste that won't complicate a daring sommelier or wine fanatic, but must be explained to a conservative and binary audience that still chooses mainly between a highly roasted red or bland white, good or bad, or the same-old or alternative wine. There is a chasm between the status quo and a diverse wine-making country, and what really extends and can be learnt from the latter condition. "Diversity" always sounds attractive, but I fear it's become the pretext of what we believe to be.

On the other hand, by openly debating about the chain on social networks, that old saying comes to mind, used whenever we must deal with arbitrariness: "don't blame the sheep, blame the shepherd". The same old justification. A jibber-jabber that explains nothing. Anonymous foes that never confess (as this text does), but victims clearly identified that do (as this text does as well). It makes sense to do so, as there are legal avenues that allow us to heal the bumps on our heads (that also make us waste valuable time). Greg Lukianoff used to say that many of us do not make a difference between emotional and physical discomfort. That may be true; wine and the world around it cultivate fragility and the art of feeling offended. That perilous bravery when we consider ourselves righteous but begin whimpering when we enter reasoned debate. We must not blame the shepherd, but go out into the world and defend our own ideas, whether anyone else agrees or not.

As we said, this is a winemaking country that boasts about its diversity, its large territory and sweeping vistas. As such, it doesn't leave much room for this ideal to move around. Restaurants are the best avenue to pursue but with the "made in Chile" chain a miserly offer of realities is anchored to an illusion of visibility and consumption. We'll always find knots and unsolvable contradictions. For example, producers readily accept that restaurants aren't the best market for sales and that a good number of them are lousy payers, but the need to "be there" is untouched. Then again, there are always others that can explain it better.

Mauricio Veloso – Escándalo Wines

It hurts me that so many restaurants have fallen along the way, what with the social crisis and the pandemic, because a good part of life and work in the city is lost. Amidst this panorama new possibilities have arisen, like digital marketing, where the Chilean wine market is going through a purple patch and, in my case, enabled me to quadruple my sales. I can see there that those that buy through social networks feel comfortable, as they cannot imagine themselves tasting wine, sitting at the best table in Providencia or Vitacura. He or she is a consumer without preconceptions, without stimuli, without previous information. This is not the chain we used to know, it's not the influencers, these are common people that want to try out new things, and I can see that through platforms like Instagram we have the same chances, we can achieve the same amount of decibels because, frankly, the salesforce cannot saturate it, cannot monopolise it, because the platform itself doesn't allow that. On the other hand, my wine doesn't cost 20 or 30 thousand pesos, it costs much less than that and now they can access the real cost. It's inconceivable that the chain could be gaining more than the wine producer and paying us months after the purchase, because in the end they were profiting with my effort; with a harvest that takes a month once a year and has to be capitalised upon the other eleven. That's the reason we small producers had been concentrating our efforts overseas and not the internal market.

We must understand the following: I don't eat every 60 or 90 days, I do so at intervals similar to everyone else (that is, daily), but the chain doesn't care about that. Personally, I don't have a problem with anyone, but it does bother me to see how some small producers were lifted up while others were squashed. That hurts, and then you ask yourself: how does that contribute to Chilean wine diversity? That's when Patricio Tapia came into the scene and started paving the way for many of us.

Finally, I think it's disgraceful that they should charge you for getting you into a wine list, by paying cash or even giving away a few boxes as fee of entry. I go through some messages now and I can see they (the chain) are asking for help. There are no grudges, but when they send these, I can't help but think if they have really sunk the thought that all these situations took a toll on them as well as on us. You can't help but think about the twists and turns of life.

Javiera Ortúzar – Javiera Ortúzar Wines

We're now obtaining immediate profits, we get to the end consumer who transfers money instantly and, in contrast with the chain, doesn't defer payment. I'm still collecting invoices from last year. That's why I've assailed this new advantage with social networks and established a logistics chain with Supra Wine, that deliver my wines anywhere in Santiago within 3 hours. The public likes that everything is delivered quickly to them, and Transbank makes paying easier. There are mutual benefits for producer and consumer. The chain bloated prices too much, and the person that doesn't know my wines won't risk spending 18 or 20 thousand pesos in a restaurant. This is a new consumer that is getting to know my work, which was difficult to translate into a campaign before the pandemic. What has been noteworthy is the age range, as it's pretty wide.

Nonetheless, Instagram has been a huge door for all of them, opened just by sharing. Furthermore, it's a space they arrive to without too many clues about what it is, without much information, just carrying the will to try different wines, feeling free to get in contact with the enologist. Something like that happened to me once, when they asked me to provide a virtual wine tasting session after a purchase. That is important, because we're getting closer to an audience that, in the middle of a forced situation, is also getting to know themselves: they're making bread at home, trying new recipes, sharing, looking at other wines, pairing intuitively. And they dare to do all. I'm an optimist and I think there can be a turn of things, so I've been careful and purposefully followed my own wines and received feedback, and that's been a big change. Finally, everything's a profit: we don't pay for lobbying, our margins are bigger and the most important thing of all, is that we learn new ways of communicating.

Laurence del Real – L'Entremetteuse

In my case, which is that I'm not very involved with the internal market, with little effort I've sold more. That's ok, but we'll have to see how much this impulse lasts. Today it's about novelty, and there's a lot of material to discover amongst the small producers, but we must remember that the Chilean consumer is volatile: one day it can be wines, another it will be another kind of alcohol, so it could be that doesn't linger, but we must learn to cultivate it, even though it may be a novelty effect.

The chain is useful to me, during these pandemic months, normality shifted a bit, if not a lot. I sustain and try to seek a good relationship with chefs and sommeliers, which during these last few months and because of everything that's happened are undergoing reinvention. They've handed me good publicity and have a good synergy with my wines, which is good, as one of my goals has always been to have my wine go along Haute Cuisine. Restaurants are good ambassadors for discovering - with service and pairing - unsulphited wines, which can be difficult to understand right away. All of the above enables me to develop a direct sale to the end consumer that got hooked on that concept.

Alejandro Meriq – Jantoki

When I started working at Jantoki, we strived to establish a direct relationship between the restaurant's proposal and our small wine producers, but I came to realise that some sommeliers weren't looking for that. They wanted producers with a recognisable image and name, that didn't distinguish themselves too much from the large vineyard wines. And that happened within the small niche that distributors left for us. We couldn't compete with giving furniture away, or equipment, travel expenses or even holidays. It's sordid that that only happens in Chile. I got fed up with that and came to think that the donkey enters the barn due to his stubbornness and not his beauty. My formula was to break with the chain. I refused to talk anymore with intermediaries and even then, it was difficult as the chain knows every trick and that which they don't understand - as small vineyard wines - they find it easy to invalidate. They, the small producers, were already working on changing things but not on a national level, which made it important to build up a confidence that didn't exist. In that sense, Patricio Tapia's voice as a journalist was important, he began to contextualise and bring notoriety to the small vineyards's wines. They started to hear and that's how we got in.

I will never pay to get into a restaurant's wine list, simply because it's obscene and a few took too much advantage of that situation. As a good exception of a restaurant in the chain I can cite Peumayén, which never pays later than a fortnight after purchase. They're true gentlemen and have an exemplary management. Nothing bad to add to that.

We have to take into account that from now on, the pending verb in the 21st Century is collaborating. There is no other choice. The chain and all its

actors must understand that gastronomy is culture, that wine is culture and that they're not the sole owners of one or the other.

José Miguel Sotomayor - Wildmakers

It's interesting to consciously look back and see that we small producers and sommeliers arrived when the chain was already established, and that the on trade and the large vineyards pushed a salesforce that pummelled through everything, and at the summit were restaurants. The overarching paradigm is that the chain fulfils an excellent job, it promotes, but alters the profit margins of some wines and at the same time narrows the consumer's vision. Let's take a look: for years new labels and brands came into play, but the same vineyards kept dominating the charts. And although this has changed in some way, it doesn't necessarily put wines on our tables, it must be associated to a drinking and wine culture, because putting diversity on the scale and that restaurants's clients get to know the alternatives is a long term task, one which is just starting.

In some ways, being small and lacking the marketing power of large distributors and vineyards, we were in but not safe. This pushed our Wildmakers brand, and other associated producers, to focus on the overseas market. In that sense, I think it's very unfortunate to say that "now the work is getting done", as you can now find commented on social networks, because it is simply ridiculous to make wine without the intention of selling it. Some will do it fine and others will not, but everyone was doing their job. You have to be careful and polish those kinds of observations. What we've done during these pandemic months through social networks is quite simply connecting directly with a potential consumer, levelling the field and establishing a new way of connecting, much shorter, with just a few agents, where we don't need to feed a chain that recommends us, and therefore cancels the need to overprice our product. The end consumer wins in the end, he or she secures the purchase and makes no sacrifice. Even so, I think we small producers must understand something: we must never rest on sales, we have to be responsible and see what happens with your wine. We have to Follow it. Yes, you fulfilled your duty by making it and selling it, but the consumer always has the last word. And he may have more than one.

Juan José Ledesma – Terroir Sonoro

My case is unusual, because I used to sell very little to the internal market, I didn't have a sales channel until Alan Grudsky's model was introduced, and made a big difference in his trade as sommelier, establishing respectful links with small producers, generating interest, bringing value and supporting restaurants.

During these pandemic months I've sold pretty much the same in the internal market as overseas. Half my production has been sold in Chile, when normally it's about 20%. This way I've compensated what we failed to export. But, we don't know how long this will last. It's a very new occurrence in order to make projections. Right now, it's only growth. Due to some things I've exposed in social networks, I've read that "we haven't done" or that "the work is just beginning to be done". That we haven't done our job? Sorry, but the work that hasn't been done is the nourishment of Chilean wine diversity. Mark my words, this has gone from being a simple map on a wall indicating winemaking regions to something quite much more complex than that, as in one region there are completely different styles and realities. The chain and its promoters haven't got the slightest clue about that. They still feel comfortable with their limited offer. Those who judged us and charged us for entry into their wine lists would understand it even less.

Therefore, we have to assume that this is a long-term task. It takes just a glance to our recent past in communicating Chilean wine and remember that Patricio Tapia was the only one that dared for years to preach in the desert, when nobody else did it, and when the distributors's salesforce put the same wines in the menus. The reality is that for a small producer it's not profitable to travel to Santiago, pay for lunches and give away bottles to restaurants in order to see what may happen. In London you can spend a single day with a single bottle going to several restaurants, promoting yourself and then exporting. It's there that you realise that reviews of other than the usual wines have helped, it's something new, it generates conversations, but it's not much more than that. So, we must keep on pushing, keep on using the democratic channels like our social networks, but associate that to good logistics and to someone that believes in your wine. That helps empower your business and that's something that didn't happen before.

Martín Villalobos – Viña Villalobos

Ten years ago very few of us small producers gained any kind of visibility and our only goal was to make wines. What helped then was to appear in Descorchados, by Patricio Tapia, who was the first one to promote small vineyards. I think most of us will share my words and appreciation. Before that I used to go to restaurants a lot, first as a client and then as a producer, so the logical thing for me was to deal directly with the owner. Thanks to a contact of Patricio Tapia, our first client in England emerged. That's how our interest in exporting and selling manifested itself, in order to make our job sustainable.

Truly, I have nothing against large distributors, because in the end they try to rescue some of the small ones and in one way or another they've done their job. They realised that we had something to say and that is commendable. If you ask me what is lacking in the chain, I'd say it's the search and the incentive for the consumer to learn about the diversity of our wines. It's hard, because in almost every sense the Chilean consumer is pretty conservative. If you shift their paradigm they feel uncomfortable, although it's something that the pandemic has started to change. They dared to go after other wines outside their radar. That's how we came to see another obstacle that's always been there: no one has come out to pronounce something about the diversity of the Chilean winemaking culture. This is not an island, and the Chilean consumer must be made conscious that wine is part of his or her culture. They have to realise that making wine is not an fact isolated from the rest of the world. I think that collaboration in the future will come hand in hand with respect. If it's reciprocal, each and everyone will chip in with their best effort. Respect is the best starting point and incentive. And the calling to us, small producers, is to not look out from our trenches, but from above.

Juan Alejandro Jofré – Vinos J.A. JOFRÉ.

In my case, I've been able to work in different scenarios of commercialisation. At first, I sold my wines through the large distributors in Chile, which gave me the opportunity to be amongst a group of brands and get into more restaurants and specialised stores. After three years I found it was not getting the results I wanted, and decided to sell directly to those who were really interested in adding value to their wine list, talking about wines made by a particular producer, that is born in a

specific place, and varieties that are not usually offered by traditional brands.

What finally happened this year, is that the 'Chain's' rags were laid bare, and made it obvious that it converted a lot of wines into unobtainable objects, scarcely visible, making it more difficult to sustain small projects. In terms of value, it ended up being unfair to the producer, who was the least benefited in terms of price and payment conditions.

In regards to that last aspect, I think that the producers themselves and those that promote their growth have been guilty of it, due to the perceived need to be on certain wine lists under the excuse of "brand building", or just to gain space. In that way we ended conceding and making all kinds of mistakes, that are not fair to all the work and effort behind every bottle produced by us. With all that entails.

One of the positive things this 2020, is the relationship being built between producers and end consumers, who is grateful and values a direct delivery without intermediaries, that end up making wine more expensive, and hurting the viability of small projects, in which territory and the people behind them have become crucial.

Alan Grudsky – Grudsky Wine Dealer

Retail's starting point is to destroy you and one of the ways they do so is by making long term deferred payments. We must consider that there aren't any negotiations at a levelled field. The State, for example, has taught technical procedures to a few small producers, but not how to sell; they still don't know how to set a price. If we can make a mea culpa, we have to recognise that the work done has been precarious. That's why we have to make our own path, and there are several important milestones in the restaurant business that has enabled us to enter with small producers. Because, we must make it clear, not all proceed in the same way, but most of them do. An example of respectful payment practice is Peumayén. Now, restaurants must begin to assume that their dining halls are the showcase of a country with a diverse winemaking trade and culture, because that's where communicators, tourists, journalists and end consumers will sit. An example is Alistair Cooper, an English Master of Wine, who during a trip tasted wines in a restaurant and published that it was one of the best restaurants to taste wine in Santiago, as it had a diverse wine list. That helps. And it wasn't a wine bar or one of the usual

restaurants we talk about.

It hurts to see what's happening, and I do understand that mistrust and grudges appear at this point in time. Some of my sales haven't been paid for still, but at the same time I cannot fail to recognise the value of the gastronomic industry, because they had to open themselves slowly to receiving different kind of wines and with good results. The formula is to support the restaurant, to help it promote small producers, to look at pairing options, to be honest and through workshops tell them where those wines have real possibilities.

Nothing of this has been or will be short term, but you have to support those that take a risk. That's the same reason we have to change the old system. Vegetable suppliers are paid cash, but not wine suppliers. The idea is to change from the bottom up, because in the battle waged by large distributors, free rein was given to restaurants to make all kind of bicycles, and that ended affecting the smaller workforces. A payment system that brags of being fair must be collaborative, taking into consideration that wines from small vineyards contribute diversity, but that they also need payment within a timescale that enables them to survive and keep on working. It has to be a value chain, because if we keep propping up those that tumble, nothing of this will make any sense. The logical thing would be that sommeliers are part of this reformulation, that they don't participate in bad practices and at the same time have better relations with their contractors. Making a virtuous circle out of a vicious one. It can't be that some restaurants keep on living out of their distributors's pockets and they follow their commercial orders. It really is strange, can't make head or tail of it, and we can see that it only happens in Chile. It's not exemplary and certainly nothing to be proud of. And communicators and journalists should already be able to differentiate these values in wine lists. It doesn't take a big spectacular show or fill ourselves up with Pipeños, this is something really much more simple: when you visit a restaurant it's to experiment something different and better than what you can eat and drink at home, but what you usually encounter are the same options you find at the supermarket. In that I find no value whatsoever.

To be continued.

From Chicha Champaña to Pétillant Naturel

The history of undefined wines, just like you

By Álvaro Tello

It has the brief delightfulness all names with double CH possess. But not even with all that pronounced bubblyness do we have recent news of it. If memory does not fail me, I've never heard a wine naturalist, a patrimonialist or even the long-gone rescuers, utter a word or write a line about grape Chicha. That's peculiar, as this is a candidate in the Chilean drinking vernacular for a glorious rescue and serious revelling in lowbrow pride. It may be that its name still echoes of sweetness and misery, although wine literature and history do record praises through the years. That's the case of José Santos Tornero, a riojano editor residing in Chile in 1873, who writes about a Chicha whose merit is to bind the life of those that drink with their thirst unencumbered to those that drink huddling in the middle of life's daily ruin. Everybody seemed to like this half-fermented drink that, as master Carlos Boker would say, participates in our golden Chilean mediocrity; to seem a little bit of everything and not being anything in particular. It comes to us as a grape juice still in its way to becoming wine; indefinite and intermediate, but that is drunk with impatient gusto.

Maybe that's why Chicha does not slander us, but it does shame us.

Let us go back to Santos Tornero, bookseller, editor, second owner of the Valparaíso daily *El Mercurio* and under whose guidance one of the first Chilean publishing companies was formed. Amid his multiple endeavours, Tornero attempts a hybrid of encyclopaedia and chronicle without too much success. This is the case of 1873's *Tratado de la Fabricación de Vinos* (Treatise on Wine Making), filled to the brim with technical details obtained from European libraries, interspersed with vignettes of Chilean winemaking. One of these alludes directly to a sparkling Chicha, that according to the editor is known as Chicha Champaña, obtained by bottling the must when it still hasn't concluded the alcoholic fermentation. Although he gives away few details, he adds that this Chicha reaches prices similar to prestigious wines of the times, like the Ochagavía and Tocornal. After reading this, one cannot but be interested in finding out what kind of Chicha could achieve that kind of prestige.

La Chicha Baya, by Julio Figueroa, has turned since its publication in the *Anales Agronómicos* in 1913 into a fountain that keeps on giving. Inside can be found one of the first descriptions of the grape Chicha or, at least, the most detailed of its time, articulated in the midst of a winemaking environment thick with French and Chilean technocrats who more than once posited its proscription, 'because it isn't wine', 'it's unhealthy' and its popularity was disquieting: during the 19th century it was the most sold alcoholic beverage, after wine.

Figueroa didn't seem to care at all about it and dared to proclaim several things, such as: "the Chicha Champaña, Sparkling and Sparkly Chicha denominations, are all synonyms and are due only to the escape of carbonic acid gas that is imprisoned in the bottle", advising that "a Chicha that's good for turning into Champagne must contain a good quantity of sugar, acidic alcohol and tannin" as well as filtering it, he indicates. He advises that in order to avoid letting the gas escape a special cork tied with hemp or wire must be used. Its lack of popularity - in contrast with regular Chicha - is posited as a disadvantage. "It's one of the most agreeable beverages, one whose fabrication should be made more popular in our country", he writes. Thus, Figueroa confirms to us that it's a bottled variety, with different characteristics and apparently not very popular.

That "restless builder", Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, proposes further reference hunting. In Pablo Alvarado Góngora's history grade thesis (U. de Chile, 2007) we can find Vicuña Mackenna's recollections from his time in North America, highlighting his ability to grasp very subtle details, an apparent omni vision that contrasts with petty and unremarkable observations. We can agree that Vicuña Mackenna tends to withhold information, taking for granted that we all know as much as he does. Some of that can be seen in *Terra Ignota, o, Viaje del país de la crisis al mundo de las maravillas* (1930), where he brags about knowing Manuel Infante, a winemaker he praises with the following lines: "The lesser champagnes are sold [in North America] at 7 pesos, that is to say, at the same price as the delicious sparkling Chicha that our clever friend Manuel Infante, the Roederer of Aconcagua, makes in Los Andes...". That same exact paragraph is present in *Los Chilenos en San Francisco de California*, by Roberto Hernández, also from 1930. It's an exaggerated comparison. Any attempt to equate him to a renowned Champagne producer such as Louis Roederer would be. But he dares to do so, turning the mention into a suggestion. It is also brief, inconclusive, easy to ignore, but it's not arbitrary.

As a milestone celebrating the first centennial of the United States's independence, the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition is held. Several important things happen there, like the unfolding of the telephone's patent and the debut of two food alternatives: Ketchup and Popcorn. And, as was peculiar to the 19th century's international expositions, there were always wines being shown and in competition. In the Sparkling Wines and Champagne category, many examples could be found, from Germany, Austria, Spain, United States, France, Portugal and Chile. Each showcase's inventory was published four years later, in the Reports on the Philadelphia International Exhibition (1880). The mere mention of our country may not seem strange if we didn't consider that Champagne Valdivieso, the first house dedicated to the fabrication of sparkling wines in Chile is born in 1879, that is, three years after the exhibition. The question arises about who showcased sparkling wines when in Chile, at least officially, none were being made.

According to this report, "Chile sent from three houses five vintages of a natural champagne called Chicha, which is not only very agreeable and delicate, but also very cheap". Further down the report we find the three

houses. In effect, they were three producers from the central region in Chile. The first one is N. Meneses, from Santa Rosa de Los Andes, whose Chicha is described as: "a fine natural champagne, called Chicha, made without sugar; splendid condition..."; the Campora brothers, from Santiago, with: "A natural champagne-like wine, called Chicha, of good quality"; and lastly, Manuel Infante (the so called "Roederer of Aconcagua"), who sent: "A number of samples of "Chicha", a fine, natural, sparkling vintages, in first-rate condition: cheap, for such a palatable wine".



Without exerting too much effort, we can see that the champagne-like Chicha emerges as something that collides with itself: in part it's Chicha, but not how we commonly understand it or know of, because it qualitatively refers to a European reference, such as Champagne. It's not a conceptual error, it's mainly giving substance to a product that by appearance manages to infiltrate itself into the ranks of other foreign sparkling wines, as they are the only comparison and reference point. Proof of this, the Philadelphia Centennial Commission, equates the Chicha varieties to a sparkling wine or a Champagne. We must consider this if only to polish our observations.

What captures our attention from now on is to get closer to this 'wine with bubbles' nature, clearly not part of an abstract category, as all authors cited above mention a genuine product that proved ready to be differentiated.

In 1947 an article called *La Chicha*, national drink appears, included in the *Uva y Vinos de Chile*, by Víctor León, who once again underlines the difference.

"Others, taking their specialization a step further, strive to regularly deliver for sales, bottled Chicha Champaña under the high pressure of carbonic acid. The Santa Nicolasa Chicha was popular for a while, from a quinta (farm) in Apoquindo."

This way, we can see that Chicha Champaña has a long bibliographic trail, at least from 1873 until 1947. Only the foam making process is still to be revealed, although Julio Figueroa had hinted at it when mentioning filtration.

Let us go back for a last time to Santos Tornero and include a full quote from his treatise:

"If you want to obtain foamy Chicha, that is, Chicha Champaña, you could follow the same process used for sparkling wines, which consists in bottling when the brew has not yet concluded its fermentation".

Tornero remits himself to the usual practice of agricultural treatises in the 19th century by detailing common practice and not hypotheticals. Thus, the most important of details: Chicha Champaña is bottled when the brew is halfway through fermentation. That both him and Figueroa mention this is important as it enables us to further explore something we already suspected and points to a similarity with an ancient process for foam making: that of first or single fermentation, known in the south of France as the rural method, used by the oldest registered sparkling wines.

The Blanquette de Limoux is a controlled denomination of origin (CDN) from 1531, and is consecrated as the first registered sparkling wine in the history of France, as registered by the Benedictine monks of the Saint Hillaire Abbey, in the department of Aude, a full hundred years before Champagne. As a way of setting legal precedent, the agricultural engineer Lucien Semichon was the first to deliver this information, and is included later in the Parliamentary Documents of the National Assembly of France, in march of 1955. These are wines singled out by their elaboration methods, known throughout the southeast and west of France as the Méthode Rurale or rural method, also used in other denominations outside Blanquette de Limoux, such as Gaillac, Cerdon, Bugey and Clairette de Die. The rural method consists in taking the grape juice to fermentation, as done with any other wine. The difference lies in that all the while several stripping is done at a low temperature. Fermentation then tends to be inhibited and, still being unfinished, the brew is bottled. This bottled wine

still contains residual sugars, therefore alcoholic fermentation is renewed, liberating carbon dioxide along the way.

Of course, as the picky readers amongst you will jump at the opportunity to point out, the idea of "single fermentation wines" can be misinterpreted, as more than one could occur, the alcoholic and then the malolactic. It's as probable as improbable that a second fermentation happens inside a bottle, but for practical as well as a way of distancing themselves from the traditional method of Champagne (with a second fermentation), this idea is used as reference, which in the end explains itself.

It must be mentioned that included in this méthode rurale are some variations that act as synonyms, or better said, are proposals with historical and territorial differences, although they still are the rural method.

Let us see. Clairette de Die DNC is the first denomination that in 1941 chooses to declare the use of the rural method, but with its regional variant, that is the Méthode Dioise. The difference lies in the use of a cold disgorging, but without adding tirage liquor (such as wine or other alcohol mixed with sugar) as they use the same wine. The Gaillac DNC, finds its own peculiarity and historical differentiation, with sparkling wines that date back to the mid 16th century as can be read in semi truncated quotes by the poet Auge Gaillard (Le Vignoble de Gaillac, Riol, 1913). In order to strengthen its territorial identity, the Méthode Gaillaçoise is made evident, and is classified as a variant of the Méthode Rurale. Readers must be aware though that in describing these different methods, each writer has introduced variations as a way of distilling these differences. Sometimes with overblown enthusiasm.

Curiously, no text about the Méthode Ancestrale (or ancestral method) can be found before 1995, a method that identifies all first fermentation wines, as are all we have previously listed and also the Pétillant Naturel, or Pét-Nat, quite in vogue these days. We must highlight this last wine, as several authors cling to an idée célèbre: that it is the original name for the first and single bottled fermentation method, the discovery being attributed to the monk at Hautvillers, Dom Pérignon (1630-1715). It seems easy to evoke Pérignon's story or accommodate it in order to justify the method, but under semantic testing it emerges as incomprehensible, as something that is recently discovered cannot be born with instant ancestry.

Still, let us trust the transcendence of this story.

The British wine author Oz Clarke doesn't mention an ancestral method in his *New Encyclopaedia of French Wines* (1990), though he does mention the rural method. The same happens with *Itinéraires à travers les vins de France: de la Romanée-Conti au Piccolo d'Argenteuil* (1980), by the food and wine author Henry Clos-Jouve, who states that Blanquette de Limoux, Clairette de Die, amidst other wines, form their foam in a single fermentation, known as the rural method. In the *Association Viticole Champenoise* bulletin from 1969, the *méthode rurale* is referred to in a similar context. There are no other bibliographic references that reveal to us how old this 'ancestral method' is. This is due to the fact that it's a recent invention.

In the early 1990's, the *méthode champenoise* was no longer characteristic of Champagne or other French winemaking regions. It had become globalised and as such a conscious effort is made to substitute it. To overcome its use and abuse, on August the 3rd of 1994 a Community Regulation (EU) was issued, proscribing the use of the *méthode champenoise* and replacing it with the *méthode traditionnelle* (or traditional method, for all those wines with a second bottled fermentation when sugar and yeast is added), and for those that choose a single fermentation, they add to the *Méthode Rurale* a new formalism: *Méthode Ancestrale*. By simply adding 'ancestral' they aimed not to replace or denominate something different, but to consolidate a single reference.

This helps us understand that the productive nature of each sparkling wine can vary due to territorial differences, but in practical terms the same method is used to make them. A rural method is quite similar to the ancestral or to the one suggested for Chicha Champaña or Pétillant Naturel.

Limoux is still the best territorial, historical and production reference associated to a method. By looking at the solid memorial defence by the French, we must ask ourselves if the Chicha Champaña was a dead-ended endeavour or if it continued to be produced without keeping tabs on it. One answer to that could be found in the Bío Bío region, where the natural wines producer Gustavo Martínez, was able to discover a trace that we ignored. This is the story in his own words:

"When pondering what else I could do, I went out to look for vineyards, but closer to the coast, between Florida and Tomé. While visiting one of such characteristics, I casually ran into a family [he withholds their name]; I saw their barn and inside they had a pile of bottles. I talked to the woman in charge and she told me that they've been producing for several generations a kind of 'champagne' using Moscatel grapes; not the red ones, because the usually didn't mature enough or better said, not like they do now. She commented that they made a lot of this sparkling wine. The following year I went back with a bander, talked to her son, showed him the machine and changed the way of securing them. Right away they told me what they did: when the harvest came, they squashed the grapes in the open and all the juice that flowed they stripped continuously until it came out clean. With the coming colder months after harvest, fermentation slowed to a stop and then they bottled it. The region's conditions (Florida) kept the barn cold, which helped consolidate the process. Therefore, they didn't need to artificially bring down the temperature. When I worked with Louis-Antoine Luyt, I started to take notice of what he talked about with those wines like Pét-Nat: "this is Pét-Nat", he told me, but at that time I didn't associate it with anything in particular, because in that region any wine with traces of carbonic are called Chichón, Chicha, Chacolí or even Pipeño. A carbonic wine can receive many names and the considerations about what kind of wine it is, are myriad. What I am clear about and I began to understand then with this particular case, is that it consisted in a sparkling wine that spanned several generations, made with a specific technique and then at some point in Tomé's history was quite popular. I began to jot down the earliest oral records of the region, which told me about the "champañeros and champañeras" of Tomé. I realized that the elaboration process took roots in the place but that was at that moment beginning to be lost. Of course, we were talking about the wine I had casually discovered.

I followed this family's advise and in 2016 I made my first samples of Kilako. The Moscatel is grounded and followed by separating the juice from the skin, then stripping and cleaning continuously; when the cold weather comes in June and July the wine is stilled; I measure its density in order to obtain a dry wine. Bottling is usually done in August and September and later, with the heat of spring and early summer, fermentation is began anew. After following this procedure, every technical aspect made sense; the foam making, the control of residual sugar, how it is referent...

everything has its place.”

Gustavo Martínez mentions that it’s difficult to precisely indicate when this tradition began, or how it appears in Tomé and its surroundings. It could have been introduced by French technocrats or maybe it’s part of a spontaneous development. Nobody really knows. What’s important is to corroborate, more so than understand, the exquisite methodical match of the Chicha Champaña, the sparkling wines of Tomé and Florida and the French examples.

The mythologizing aspects of these cases are not obstacles. They’re merely interpretations at different levels, and we can observe it also in the latest fashionable wine made using the rural or ancestral method: the Pét-Nat.

English and north American specialised papers reveal that the propagation of Pét-Nat began in the winemaking regions of Vouvray and Loire in France. We’re talking about a wine differentiated under the rural or ancestral method. To this we can add the writings by Jules Dressner, from his Louis Dressner Collections, a society of newyorker winetraders that since 1990 include in their portfolio a small group of Pét-Nat producers from the Loire (Schiessl, 2020). The 1990’s are taken as a reference in order to assure that the denomination emerges in the decade and regions mentioned, coinciding with the explosive emergence of natural wines, from which we cannot ignore a close relation. However, the Syndicat de défense viticole de Bugey, way back in 1970 already used the Pétillant Naturel denomination under the Méthode Rurale as a way to recognise some wines from Bugey - Cerdon. This can also be found in the Centre National de la Cooperation Agricole bulletin from 1970.

Without mayor inconveniences, the Chicha Champaña could be added to the historical cadre of single fermentation wines, marking the beginning of the rural or ancestral method in Chile. It’s a legitimate candidate to rise as the first Chilean sparkling wine, considering the recognition it has received, the historical records available and the process it follows. It could be that the main block in the way to accept these proposals can be found in the depths of the Chilean emotional strata, where our decision-making process is defeated by the slim layer that separates pride from shame. In such strata we need milestones and historical plaques, something or someone that assures us when time to decide comes. We can surely wait, as always,

but Chicha Champaña has already bolted from the starting line: it crossed more than 140 years ago the gate that separates our Creole shame from French pride.

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Living with less

by *Fernando Contreras*

There’s a fact beyond proof: we can live with less. Maybe someone didn’t know or, by looking forward in hope, was able to forget when they lived with less. But who cares about that when outside our homes drops of saliva invisible to our eyes, threaten the lives of whoever dares to step out. No one could escape and we all live with less anyway.

Still, we don’t know if that is good or bad. Does living with less make us better? Is it worth it to live like this? Before lockdown, any afternoon looked like the background against which was waged the first war won by a generation restless in finding what death was all about. That was the tone. Let us not flee now towards nuances and let us answer if it is worth it to live.

Forced to it, photogenic kitchens were required to satiate us without taking all balance. Eating like the poor was to go back to legumes, pasta, potatoes and vegetables. Less raw fish, less gourmet products in glass jars. Those outings where we paid the same we now pay for a two week veg and fruits purchase, are faded in our memories, like a honeymoon ended long ago.

Daily cooking your own food, with all the time that entails and the augmented awareness of what a well sharpened (or not) knife means, an oven that burns or a pot that resists cleaning, persuades you that you can live without spending on restaurants or cafes. Not even more frequent delivery cushions the impact of that.

Transitory lockdown living can be done, and if push comes to shove, a contemplative life can also be followed to the last consequences.

2020's moralism seems to be grateful for this brusque, violent kind of austerity, imposed simultaneously all around the world. It must be magnificent to suddenly broaden our conversation subjects beyond what jokes can be told and what tv series are the right ones. It sounds like a new way of living, but we know it's not: people who demand poverty vows from us, chastity, silence, that offer us a better life consistent in shutting ourselves in convents have existed for pretty much always. Every religion possesses moralising abstinence, penitence, sadistic pleasure they want to turn into law.

They have dictated what is and what is not first necessity. They know where the kingdom of need ends, enclosing a life that is saintly and good, and where the kingdom of freedom begins. To cross that threshold perverts us: a free life is pushed by desire, and desire is dangerous. They will tell you that taking a helicopter to a second household, evading terrestrial checkpoints, is as sinful as a plate of food made with the lustful intention of satisfying something more than the will to eat, than replenishing calories spent or extending survival. If you are to direct everybody else's life the first thing to do is to prohibit pleasure.

Even monks (because that's what they are: twitter ascetics, moralists waiting for 5G to extend their missions' reach) leave a day a week for bread and wine.

What will become of the **Fuente Alemana**¹ ?

In the world we yearn for, the sánduche is the most popular and accessible expression of going out of your home in search of pleasure: bread that's not from your local bread maker, a rhythm of preparation and a flavour that doesn't click with lockdown, that can't be found in your kitchen. A life without pleasure is a long process of oxidisation without meaning and nobody deserves that. Not even our sober morality vigilantes.

¹ *Traditional and casual restaurant in Santiago downtown.*