



2013

## Tempranillo

*Below The Surface* (23)

Rioja, Spain

50 cases



Mark and I often look for classic wine producing areas for our labels...more or less...well, sometimes...mostly...so much good stuff out there...it's hard being a kitten. We look for areas that have a smell and taste that even upon the faintest whiff endear the imbibers with recognition of something (or somewhere) that they have embraced before. Rioja, for this reason, was a given. When Diego Santana of Valenciso responded with enthusiasm to our request for a selection of wine, we were overjoyed.

Valenciso is based around the town of Ollauri in the Rioja Alta area of northwestern Rioja. The geography is vivid with both the Ebro River and the Sierra de Cantabria mountain range hanging over their north shoulder. The soils here are clay calcareous with a continental climate. The vines are 35 years old, farmed sustainably with a mixture of organic and biodynamic practices. The grapes are hand harvested. Fermentation takes place in cement with whole berry fruit and aging is in a mix of French and Russian oak for 12 months, with mostly older oak. After its time in wood the wine is placed back in concrete for 36 months before bottling. All told, this works out to be awesome lunch wine.

Lunch may be the most refined eating-time of the day. In many cultures it is THE meal of the day. A time where eating is beneficial to both survival and to the soul. The sometimes vast space between breakfast and lunch (recent wine trips have proven this) can lay waste to a human; rendering them more futile than when they first hurdled the initial repast. Lunch is essential...and therefore so is lunch wine. The afternoon light is the perfect foil for the midday bonk and when this marvelous time of day is complete with a fine spread and a refreshing bottle of wine, nothing is more perfect. Our 2013 Kitten Swish Rioja, when served with a delicate chill, will ignite the fuel of lunch within you and propel you towards the twilight in valiant form.

Our very first Rioja label is called *Below The Surface*. There are so many things that happen in this world that are hidden from us, and it's amazing how much these hidden events shape our lives. Anything from the secret plans of your parents to lure you into taking French lessons when you were eight (you still think it was your idea), to the surprise 40th birthday party your boyfriend threw for you. It is below the surface where so much sub rosa activity takes place. It's the same in the wine world. The vast root system of the vine acts as one of these below the surface details that is so vital to how the finished wine will be shaped. This is why we hear so much about soil types and root stocks. Much of what takes place underground with relation to wine quality and soil types is not understood, but we do know it matters. It matters in that Rioja tastes very different than Ribera del Douro and much of this has to do with soil types, drainage structures and microorganisms. So much of life is a mystery and in this case, a delicious mystery.

There are things  
That you see  
And there are  
Things that you don't

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