

EL VÍNCULO | 2012 CRIANZA

D.O. La Mancha

• **WINEMAKER'S NOTES** • The Fernández family has been passionate about winemaking for over four decades, during which they have created four iconic wineries that comprise patriarch Alejandro Fernández's wine legacy: *Tinto Pesquera*, *Condado de Haza*, *Dehesa La Granja* and *El Vínculo*. The stunning wines produced at Alejandro's fourth winery, El Vínculo, are the result of a *compromiso fijo en la tierra de los gigantes*, meaning a "fixed commitment" with local growers in the region of Spain known as "the land of the giants." With a great dedication to quality control, Alejandro has made sure the wines he produces at El Vínculo, from the estate's founding in 1999, are unique gems of D.O. La Mancha, where quantity often overshadows quality. Made from a thicker-skinned variety of Tempranillo indigenous to the La Mancha region, the 2012 Crianza has savory spice and smoke accents, with notes of plum and violet in the nose. Containing rich flavors of roasted coffee, dark chocolate, tobacco and nutmeg, this wine is refined and seamless. *100% Tempranillo (Cencibel)*

• **VINTAGE** • 2012 began with a cold and dry winter and, while some snow fell in the highlands of La Mancha during January, February and March were much drier than in previous years. The deluge that hit central Spain in April also affected Castilla y La Mancha, and the old-vine Tempranillo purchased by the Fernández family was released from the hydric stress it had sustained from the year before. May and June contained ideal temperatures for the proper development of the vines, the prelude to a typically hot and dry *verano manchego*, or sultry La Mancha summer. The tail end of August was slightly cooler than normal, providing an excellent phenolic maturation of the grapes prior to harvest.

• **VINEYARDS** • While on vacation to visit La Mancha's emblematic windmills that inspired Cervantes to write *Don Quixote*, Alejandro was surprised to discover 100-year-old, head-pruned Tempranillo (aka Cencibel) vines amidst a sea of white Airén grapes. Convinced he must undertake one last *bodega* in the historic village of Campo de Criptana in La Mancha, El Vínculo was born. By signing long-term leases with the town's three best grape growers, and carefully controlling both the yield (50% of fruit is dropped each year) and harvest time (his grapes are harvested two weeks on average after the rest), Alejandro ensured that the Tempranillo grapes he had discovered in La Mancha could result in wines that achieve his standards of excellence.

• **FERMENTATION AND AGING** • Lying in the warmest region of the four Fernández estates, the grapes at El Vínculo are the first to be harvested. Each of the leased vineyard blocks are manually harvested towards the beginning of September and are vinified separately. Alcoholic fermentation takes place between 6-10 days at an average temperature of 20-25°C. The Crianza is aged for 18 months in fine grain, 225- and 300-liter neutral American oak barrels with a light-to-medium toast. Barrels are raked four times during the first twelve months of aging and an additional 2-3 times before bottling. With the Fernández family dedicated to natural winemaking, all wines produced by Alejandro Fernández are neither filtered nor fined before bottling. Upon completion of barrel aging, the El Vínculo Crianza is then aged for a minimum of six months in bottle before it is released to the market.

Wine analysis: 5.0 g/l (0.50%) total acidity; 14.5% alcohol by volume

• **HISTORY** • The 1970's brought the realization of a lifetime dream for a young and determined Alejandro Fernández. Propelled by his conviction that wines of superb quality could once again be made in the place of his birth, he went against the movement of the time, when cereal and beetroot dominated the Ribera hillsides, and planted Tempranillo vineyards in his hometown of Pesquera. In 1982, this iconic winemaking pioneer, who came to be recognized as the "Master of Tempranillo," was the keystone in forming the now-famous D.O. Ribera del Duero, a designation that Alejandro helped to create with only a few other winemaking pioneers.