

# For the Ferrers of Freixenet

IT'S A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

story and photos by Roger Morris



Pedro Ferrer.

It is a good time for Pedro Ferrer, the genial, mild-mannered head of Catalonia-based Freixenet.

Now the world's ninth-largest wine producer, it was 100 years ago that family-owned Freixenet produced its first bottle in Sant Sadurní de Noya near Barcelona—a sparkling one, of course, in a time when the generic term “Cava” had not yet been selected. Today, Freixenet is also the world's largest producer of sparkling wines.

As Ferrer chats with me at the family estate of Casa Sala, he fondly recalls working in Sonoma County for several years in the 1980's, building and launching Gloria Ferrer, the wine estate named for his mother.

Since the first 30 cases of Freixenet were sold in Massachusetts in 1972, the United States has been a primary market for the Ferrer portfolio of wines. On its centennial year, it is introducing several new products: Freixenet “Mia,” a line of five millennial-targeted wines; “Casa Sala,” a handmade, vintage Cava; Freixenet “Excelencia,” a kosher brut; “La Freixeneda,” an ultra-premium red wine; and a marketing campaign to insert its signature Cordon Negro bubbly into the cocktail conversation.

“We sell about a million cases in the

U.S. each year, about 100,000 of which are Gloria Ferrer,” says Eva Bertran, Vice President of Marketing for Freixenet USA, headquartered in Sonoma. “We started as importers, and today we have distribution partners in all states.”

Sales leaders here are its two primary Cava lines—Freixenet, which has a strong retail presence, and Segura Viudas, which is big on-premise, especially with its “Aria” brand. The Heredad Collection showcases Freixenet's Spanish premium wines from Priorat, Montsant, Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Rias Baixas. Additionally, the firm owns the René Barbier and Tapeña lines of Spanish wines. The kosher Cava was launched in Spain three years ago and is just arriving in the U.S. “It's the one that all our distributors wanted,” Bertran says, “and we have been literally waiting for the containers to arrive.”

The other two product launches are much smaller, prestige labels. “Casa Sala,” a Cava made in the style sparkling wines were 100 years ago, will have only 300 bottles allotted to the U.S. and will be introduced this fall, most likely in New York. “La Freixeneda,” a high-end Garnacha-Cabernet Sauvignon blend, is named after the family's 13th Century farm estate. For the Ferrers and Freixenet, 2014 is promising to be a vintage year. ■■



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## Meet Mia

Among the new launches, Freixenet Mia is the largest and holds the most business promise. “We asked Spain for a Moscato—the hottest varietal—and we also asked for a pink,” Bertran says. The Mia line is the answer. Each wine has its own label description—Moscato sparkling (fruity and sweet), Moscato sparkling Rosé (delicate and sweet), white (aromatic and fruity), red (fruity and full-bodied) and Rosé (delicate and floral).

Mia, with prawns.

