

WINE News

*The great wines of Spain,
from refreshing rosado
to classic old Rioja.*



JULY 6, 2015 FEATURES

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On the Spanish Front

By Joe Manekin

The Spanish wine industry and Spain's food and wine scene continue to be the most dynamic and exciting in Europe. On the food front, simply consult a list of the world's 50 best restaurants online. If you notice a pattern of Basque, Catalan and Spanish restaurants crowding this list, you're not alone! Yes, there is world-class cuisine in Spain, but plenty of great, informal neighborhood spots as well—just ask our own David Driscoll, who earlier in the year enjoyed several days of R&R in Barcelona.

This leads me to the following observation: You all travel to Spain. A lot. Every month my inbox fills up with customers who are planning a trip to Spain. I have a few possible explanations. The dollar relative to the euro is nearly the strongest it has ever been, and Spain is already a great place to stretch your dollar. Spain is culturally rich, with beautifully preserved villages, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and

historic landmarks. Finally, there is the atmosphere and the energy of Spain. For all of its great traditions and patchwork of cultural legacies, Spain is buzzing with youthful energy. You see it on the streets, in the local restaurants and in the wineries. And when I meet with the next generation of Spanish winemakers these days, more often than not they're younger than me—and I'm a relatively young guy!

In this issue of our K&L newsletter we continue to explore the best of both traditional/old-school and modern-day Spain. Fittingly, we have one "old school" K&L correspondent (yours truly), as well as three relative newbies to the company. We are all excited to tell you about our latest and greatest from *España*. As usual, we will lead on this page with some tried and true values you will want to consider for your cellar. Keep reading, however. It's on pages 2-4 where things get really interesting....



1999 Bodegas Puelles Gran Reserva Rioja (\$19.99) This is the '99 York Creek of Spain for us! Fully mature, supple, earthy and delicious. And while plentiful, what we have is it, so load up before it's gone for good!



2013 Luna Beberide Mencía Bierzo (\$13.99) A delicious and textbook example of the sturdy, yet fresh, style of wines from this western outpost of Castilla y León. 91 points *W&S*, 90 points *AG*.



2005 La Rioja Alta Viña Ardanza Reserva Rioja (\$29.99) One of our most popular and frequently purchased red wines, this is a benchmark for traditional Rioja. 94 points *RP*.



2009 Bodegas Olarra "Añares" Reserva Rioja (\$14.99) Great value Rioja from the excellent 2009 vintage. It's delicious and should age nicely as well. 90 points *ST*.

Beyond 2005 in Rioja

By Diana Turk

If you're a Rioja fan, you've likely heard praise for the 2005 vintage.

As in Bordeaux, no specifics proved unusual. Rather, all conditions were nearly perfect. The wines do not disappoint, and almost everything tasted has shown gorgeous fruit, to say the very least. Though 2005 shot to superstar status, that doesn't mean subsequent vintages fall far behind. Each of the following five years created wines that show distinct personality and reveal just how closely linked the weather is to your glass. While crowds may be clamoring for 2005, sophistication and value can be found in all vintages. Time for a vertical tasting.

With many exceptional bottles from this heralded vintage, **2005 Heras Cordon Reserva Rioja (\$19.99)** is an easy entry, rated 92 points by Robert Parker's Wine Advocate and coming in at under \$20. Classic style, long finish, and a depth of fruit that stands up to food but warrants sipping on its own.

While 2006 can't escape comparisons to the previous two stellar vintages, a hot summer followed by hail pushed winemakers to be selective, and the resulting wines are juicy and complex. As expected from a Mediterranean vintage, the wines are soft, maturing earlier than 2005. Showing coconut, cherry, and leather, the **2006 Miguel Merino Reserva Rioja (\$29.99)** is a showcase for Rioja Alta, which usually displays more Atlantic influence. Succulent, dark fruit initially stands out, but brooding, herbal notes evolve.

2007's cooler Atlantic vintage and slower ripening resulted in earthy, lower alcohol wines. Black fruit is there, but is leaner than in plush vintages. Good acid structure defines 2007, and the **2007 Vina Santurnia Reserva Rioja (\$17.99)** demonstrates the effect beautifully. This herbal, funky wine clocks in at a subtle 13.5% ABV, and is not overly toasty.

A cool, damp year, 2008 Tempranillo proves more linear than other vintages, with less fruit and higher acid. The **2008 Bodegas Olarra "Cerro Añon" Reserva Rioja (\$17.99)** shows dark cherry fruit with a fresh quality. Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar described that sharpness as "tangy edge," characteristic of the entire vintage.

Casky but bright, the crowd favorite **2009 Señorío de P. Peciña Crianza Rioja (\$19.99)** is complex and balanced. While the grapes were sourced from two neighboring villages with strong Atlantic influences (read: cold), 2009 was warmer and the harvest was sunny—similar to 2005, hint, hint—making this wine's velvety elegance a testament to the resulting softer fruit. This surpasses typical Crianza.

Lively with cherry notes, **2010 Bodegas Puelles Crianza Rioja (\$12.99)** is a structured but easy-drinking Tempranillo with a hint of oak. Classic Rioja (not surprising, since warm, dry 2010 was an excellent vintage, closer to tannic 2004), this will improve with age.

Albariño: The Ultimate Summer Wine

By Randy Hagerman

In the northwest corner of Spain sits the region of Galicia, where the Denominación de Origen (DO) Rías Baixas has been recognized since 1986. Rías Baixas is home to many different grape varieties, both red and white, but none more important than Albariño. A small, green, thick-skinned variety, Albariño accounts for more than 90% of grapes grown in the region. Likewise, although Albariño now grows in many different parts of the world (Portugal, Australia and California, to name a few), the truest expression of this varietal is believed to originate in Rías Baixas. Here, the granitic soils, temperate climate moderated by the Atlantic Ocean, and ample sunshine combine to create wines with unique varietal character and plenty of complexity. Rías Baixas is currently comprised of five different sub-zones, as follows: Val do Salnés, O Rosal, Condado do Tea, Soutomaior, and Ribera de Ulla. While there are subtle differences in terroir within these regions, Rías Baixas tends to produce Albariño wines that are crisp, dry, mineral-driven and aromatic in nature. Possessing a unique saline quality, these wines will make you believe that you can almost smell and taste the ocean. Thus, Albariño is the ultimate pairing partner for fresh fish, shellfish, and seafood paella. Regardless of whether you're sitting out on a sun-drenched patio or headed to the beach, a bottle of Albariño is the quintessential warm weather wine!

2013 Lagar de Costa "Doelas" Albariño Rias Baixas (\$19.99) On the lighter side, this 2013 is crisp and refreshing. The nose reveals bright citrus notes, green apple, and a touch of sea salt. On the palate, this wine is light and crisp with citrus notes that carry you along to the peppery, acidic finish.

2013 Carballal "Sete Cepas" Albariño Rias Baixas (\$14.99) Grapefruit and white peach aromas entice you to sip this one. Once you do, the palate reveals lime and other citrus notes, with bright acidity. Lingering minerality on the finish makes this a stellar value.

2013 Do Ferreiro Albariño Rias Baixas (\$24.99) Do Ferreiro Albariño is comprised of fruit from eight different plots on the five hectare vineyard in Salnes. Aromas of wet sea shells and citrus notes intermingle on the nose. The real standout component is the bright, saline finish that seems to go on forever.

2013 Morgadio Albariño Rias Baixas (\$18.99) A complex nose of flint, ripe pear, and herbal notes. The palate has more weight and texture, consisting of tangerine and baked apples. The saline, mineral-driven finish will leave you thinking of the ocean.



You Say Rosé, I Say Rosado

By Heather Vander Wall

What makes a truly great rosé? Rosés are often considered fun, delightful, but not particularly serious wines. While I certainly don't like to downplay the fun in rosé, I think it's worth looking into what makes this wine great and the variety of styles it can display. As a case study, I review four very different Spanish rosados below. Each of the following wines shows an incredible sense of the varietal characteristics as well as the terroir from which it springs.

2014 Ostatu Rosado Rioja (\$13.99) This wine begins with fresh strawberry and cherry aromas that carry through on the palate and play off zippy acidity to create a pleasantly refreshing, yet round impression. What really sets this wine apart, however, is its individuality that's discernible from the first sniff, where a spicy undercurrent tinges the fresh fruit to the long finish, and black pepper and red dust notes integrate subtly into the lasting strawberry fruit. This is a perfect example of a fun, fresh rosado that also has a serious side.

2014 Xavier Clua "El Sola d'en Pol" Rosado Terra Alta (\$10.99) Try to imagine the depth and richness of a Priorat confined to a rosé. Xavier Clua manages



to capture the dark-fruited, rich essence of Syrah and Garnatxa in this expression of rosado. Perfumed on the nose, the body is surprisingly weighty for a rosado, with a sense of black fruits and crushed violets. There is a strong mineral vein running through the wine as well, which contributes to the rich Priorat-like character.

2014 Armas de Guerra Mencía Rosado Bierzo (\$11.99) Possibly one of my favorite surprises in the pink wine category this year! The floral, dark-fruited nose is punctuated with hints of savory herbs such as thyme and sage. Refreshing watermelon and creamy strawberry play on the palate, with great acidity and depth of minerality.

2014 Txomin Etaniz Rosé Getariako Txakolina (\$19.99) Finally, the most surprising and expressive of all: a Txakolina rosé! If you know the briny, savory and racy notes of Txakoli wines, you can imagine the added pizzazz the strawberry and cherry undertones of rosado bring to the mix. An incredibly complex example of rosé, best drunk with food to experience the full gamut of its expressive character.



Pedro Martinez Alesanco

By Joe Manekin

The Rioja valley is framed between two mountain ranges: the Sierra Cantabrias to the north and the Sierra de la Demanda to the south. It is this second range that has the higher peaks, and heading towards these peaks is where you will find the town of Badarán. This picturesque village is not beautiful in the same romantic, medieval style of other Rioja Alta villages such as Briones. Rather, it's a bit more simple and rustic. Many of the structures are tinted red from the heavy iron content in the local clay soil. In Badarán, we located some of our favorite value wines—not only from Rioja, but from anywhere else, for that matter—at Pedro Martinez Alesanco. If you enjoy overachieving, sub-\$10 bottles, then I strongly suggest getting up to speed on this producer.

2014 Pedro Martinez Alesanco Blanco Rioja (\$9.99) Martínez Alesanco's Blanco is made entirely from the Viura grape, grown in iron-rich clay soils. Given the coolness of the harvest, combined with Badarán's unique colder climate, this is a zippy and bone-dry white that makes for a perfect *aperitivo* or foil to fresh oysters, sushi, anchoas, jamon, you name it. A crisp, lively, ever-so-drinkable white.

2014 Pedro Martinez Alesanco Rosado Rioja (\$9.99) Martínez Alesanco's rosado is made from direct press (i.e., minimal skin contact) Garnacha and white Viura grapes in a typical *clarete* style for which the Cardenas river valley is justly famous (the vineyards

that Muga sources for their popular rosé are located not too far away). Bright red berries, juicy blood orange and ripe citrus fruit combine to produce this mouthwatering, delicious rosé. You simply must try this one. I suspect you will have found a new favorite in rosé wine.

2013 Pedro Martinez Alesanco Tempranillo Rioja (\$9.99) This is made from Tempranillo grown in iron-rich clay soils. In fact, this red-tinged, iron-laden clay marks the wines as noticeably as it does the homes and structures of this off-the-beaten-path, soulful Rioja village. Given the coolness of the harvest, combined with Badarán's unique colder climate, this young Rioja shows bright, focused mixed berry fruits with great cut and purity. Fermented with indigenous yeasts, tank-aged, and always treated very gently (just a light filtration here), this is a *joven* style red that speaks to its unique terroir.





Our Boat is Coming *No, Really, It Is!*

By Joe Manekin

This whole West Coast port slowdown has truly tested our patience. While I promise not to bore you with the details, let's just say that even though the contract dispute was resolved back in February, it has still resulted in countless delays, re-routed containers, and congestion at the ports. One of our Spanish orders was impacted, but fear not—at the time of this newsletter, it will either be here on time or just two weeks later. Here are some of the wines we are very much looking forward to having in stock:

2014 Zudugarai “Amats” Getariako Txakolina (\$12.99) Amats is both the brand name of the Txakoli, as well as one of Zudugarai's vineyards. It's a beautiful vineyard with a sandy substrate and naturally growing green cover between the rows, with the Cantabrian Sea in full view to the north. Produced from Hondarribi Zuri grapes, this is classic Txakoli: zippy, crisp, tart green apple flavors are enlivened by a lovely sparkle from the CO₂ retained in tank during fermentation. Try this refreshing, vibrant, low-alcohol white wine with a wide range of foods, from obvious choices such as seafood (grilled sardines or cured anchovies would be a few of my favorites) to more substantial fare. Of course, I would not argue with this wine being served as an *aperitive* as well.

2014 Zudugarai “Amats” Rosé Getariako Txakolina (\$12.99) Produced from Hondarribi Beltza grapes, this rosé shows a lovely balance between fresh red berries, hints of watermelon, and a very subtle, pleasant bitterness and fizzy quality. It's delicious with cured cheeses (something slightly smoky like Idiazabal works really well), charcuterie, anchovies or your favorite cured ham.

2013 Bodegas Puelles Blanco Rioja (\$9.99) This white wine consists primarily of Viura, but also has some Garnacha Blanca, Malvasia and Chenin Blanc in the blend. Bright, clean apple and citrus flavors combine with terrific minerality.

2008 Miguel Merino “Vitola” Reserva Rioja (\$19.99) This is our latest arrival from Miguel Merino, who we like to call “the hardest working man in Rioja.” Having begun his humble “retirement project” in the early 1990s by restoring an older bodega just down the hill from the historic town of Briones, Miguel either owns or rents to own a total of approximately eight hectares of vines, all of which are located in Briones. Not only is this village-specific Rioja, but it happens to come from one of the most sought-after villages in all of Rioja Alta, where many top bodegas have some of their most prized, older vineyards. For Vitola, Miguel uses fruit from vines (primarily Tempranillo with a bit of Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo) averaging 40 years of age. He is going for a modern-classic style of wine, structured and ageworthy but drinkable upon release.

1982 Bodegas Olarra Añares Rioja (\$99.99) This beautiful wine from Bodegas Olarra is made by Ezequiel “El Brujo” García, legendary former winemaker of Cune and one of the all-time greats of 20th century winemaking. My growing experience with bottlings of Bodegas Olarra from the “El Brujo” years is that they are among the best mature Riojas I have ever tasted. According to Ezequiel, the Añares bottling consisted primarily of Rioja Alta Tempranillo, which is no surprise given the lovely, spicy, mineral firmness and tension on display here. It's all the more striking given that 1982 is known as a ripe vintage. García indicated to me that they would always go for a more “feminine” style of Rioja with Añares, whereas Cerro Añon is more robust and “masculine.” Just like its sister Cerro Añon bottling, notions of masculinity or femininity aside, this is great wine and a natural accompaniment to ribeye and lamb chops. Enjoy with any of your friends who love mature wines. This wine delivers.

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