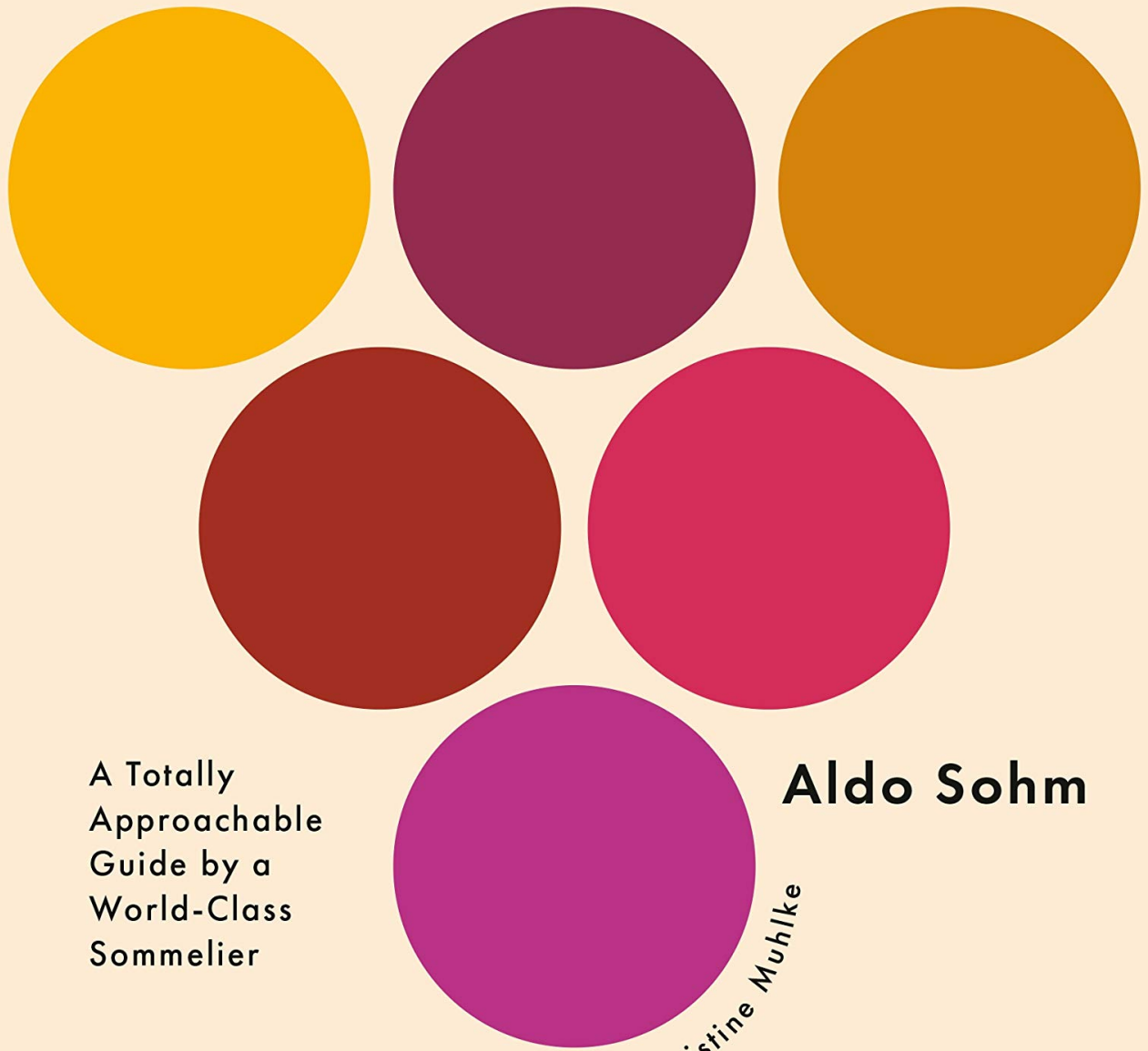


Wine



A Totally
Approachable
Guide by a
World-Class
Sommelier

Aldo Sohm

with Christine Muhlke

Simple

Spain

→ Exciting young winemakers are rediscovering old and nearly extinct grape varieties, as well as revitalizing old-vine and abandoned vineyards—even entire regions.

Spain is the largest wine-producing country per acre. Most of that wine is used for distilling into brandy, though, so it comes behind France and Italy.

Its diverse geography—ranging from the warm days and cool nights around Madrid to the wet and cooler Atlantic region of Galicia; from the white clay and limestone

soil of Andalusia to the untamed, vertiginous volcanic slopes of the Canary Islands—results in a diversity of grapes and flavors. That means there's so much delightful wine to discover. Best of all for us drinkers, it's incredibly undervalued.

There are some very traditional areas, like Rioja, Penedès, Jerez, and Ribera del Duero. But what interests me most is the massive change that's taking place both here and in Portugal. "New" winemakers are delivering super-interesting wines at super-attractive prices. My staff makes fun of me for constantly bringing up the latest new-to-me wine/grape/region from the Iberian peninsula, but I can't help it: Spain is endlessly fascinating.

● Andalucía

→ **WHITE**
Palomino fino,
Pedro Ximénez

The new Spain on full display, with lots of bright whites.

The incredibly limestone-rich soil around Cádiz—which is an unusual and striking white color—is perfect for the white grape palomino Fino, which is used for making Sherry. The grape's hearty, unique character is further shaped by the alternating hot, dry *levante* and humid Atlantic *Poniente* winds, which moderate the heat and keep the sugar and acidity in balance. The nutty, spice-bouquet aroma of the Fino- and Manzanilla-style Sherries is ideal with a plate of local Iberico ham and olives. Those who prefer deeply complex wines should try an Oloroso-style Sherry, which ages for many years.

A change has been in motion in recent years, with winemakers experimenting with nonoxidative whites (like sherry) and looking back to the 1800s to replant varieties that had almost disappeared, resulting in dry, citrusy

whites with angular precision—what we call “nervosity”—that is comparable to a Burgundy chardonnay. At the wine bar, we love to pour Atlántida Blanco from Alberto Orte, a terrific bargain made from a white varietal that was brought back from near extinction. The white grape *vijeriega* thrives on the limestone-rich soils in certain regions, producing a wine of Burgundy-like quality.

● Catalunya

→ **RED**
Tempranillo, granatxa
(granacha/grenache),
carinyena (carignan)

WHITE
Macabeo (*viura*),
xarel·lo,
parellada,
chardonnay

From large-scale Cava production to uniquely distinct reds, this diverse, dynamic area is one to watch.

Situated close to Barcelona in the northeast, Catalunya is most known for its sparkling Cava, which it pumps out in epic quantities. (So large that some producers are opting out of the DO or DOC Cava and simply labeling it as “sparkling wine.”) Cavas are based on the whites listed above, but chardonnay and, slowly, pinot noir are also making their way into the appellation.

Wines from the steep slopes of the Priorat area are known for being powerful and high-alcohol, especially when made from granatxa. The area is now dialing it back to make more elegant, *terroir*-driven wines. One sip of a wine from *Terroir al Limit* and you'll understand how the area is repositioning itself. Penedès is also producing the rare white *sumoll blanc* grape. The remaining production is just twelve acres. The winery Heretat MontRubi, an excellent representative of the new Spain, might only release nine hundred bottles made from this varietal each year.

BRILLIANT SPARKLING WINE

→ Penedès, which is near Barcelona, is one of the country's major sparkling wine centers. One singular producer I want to point out is Pepe Raventós from **Raventós i Blanc**, who, in a bold move, stepped out of the recognizable Cava DO and created his own much higher-quality requirements. Taste his wines: affordable brilliance.

Hey —
these versatile
crowd-pleasers
are all under
\$25!

THE BEST / CHEAPEST PARTY WINES

TO MAGICALLY HAVE ON HAND

If you a) get invited to lots of dinners and parties, b) are very organized, and c) have a little wine-friendly extra space, you should always have a few extra bottles lying around. It will save you the headache of trying to find a decent wine shop when you're already late.

Whites

Grüner Veltliner

- Lois, Weingut Fred Loimer
- Am Berg, Bernhard Ott
- Gobelsburger, Schloss Gobelsburg

Chablis

- Petit Chablis, William Fèvre
- Chablis Vieilles Vignes, Domaine Louis Michel & Fils
- Chablis, Drouhin-Vaudon

Loire

- Menetou-Salon Morogues, Domaine Pellé
- Orthogneiss, Domaine de l'Écu
- Pouilly-Fumé Domaine, Jonathan Didier Pabiot (not cheap, but superb)

Sauvignon blanc from Northern Italy

- Marco Felluga, Collio
- Ronco del Cero, Venica & Venica
- Winkl Sauvignon Blanc, Cantina Terlano

Reds

- Raisins Gaulois, Marcel Lapierre
- Éclat de Granite, Domaine Sérol
- Viña Almate, Alfredo Maestro
- Nebbiolo Perbacco, Vietti
- Béla-Joska Blaufränkisch, Wachter-Wiesler

Sparkling

- ▶ De Nit Extra Brut Rosé, Raventós i Blanc
- ▶ Brut Nature Méthode Traditionnelle, Domaine François Chidaïne
- ▶ Blanc de Blancs, Gruet
- ▶ Timido Brut Rosé, Scarpetta

