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TASTING HIGHLIGHTS

7 Stellar Spanish Values Up to 92 Points

Tour Spain with these new reviews of Cava, Rías Baixas, white Rioja and more, all priced \$30 or less



With a history stretching back centuries, Raventós i Blanc is one of Spain's leading sparkling wine producers. (Blai Carda Torne)



By Larry Rubin

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

In recent years, increased interest in Spain's indigenous grapes and *terroirs* has challenged winemakers to think locally in order to highlight the unique identity of the country's wines. This week's selection highlights the impressive results, featuring whites and sparklers from northern Spain, all made predominantly from local grape varieties.

Galicia is Spain's most northwesterly region, sitting atop Portugal's northern border, and enjoys sweeping oceanic exposure. Rías Baixas is arguably its best-known appellation, loved for producing fresh and crisp Albariños with lively fruit notes and sea salt accents.

The Ribeiro and Bierzo appellations are farther inland. Ribeiro is a Galician river valley that produces white wine almost exclusively, especially from the Treixadura grape. Traveling west into the Castile and León region, Bierzo has an extremely diverse landscape that can be roughly divided into two subzones: a mountainous area in the north, and a flat plain in the south. While they're most celebrated for local expressions of the red grape Mencía, producers here have also begun using the Godello variety to make quality white wines with a touch of elegant weight.

Moving farther south, the Rueda region is a valley spread across the banks of the Duero river. Over the years, it has made a name for itself as a source for lightly creamy and spicy whites made from the Verdejo grape.

Spain is also widely known for its sparkling wine, much of which is labeled as Cava, a category currently seeing [significant growth in the U.S. market](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/cava-bubbles-up) [\[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/cava-bubbles-up\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/cava-bubbles-up). But Cavas are not Spain's only sparklers, and there are other noteworthy versions made throughout the country today. This week's two top-scorers are outstanding vintage bubbliies made using the [traditional method](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/m%C3%A9thode%20traditionnelle) [\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/m%C3%A9thode traditionnelle\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/m%C3%A9thode%20traditionnelle), both illustrating the high quality and attractive prices Spain's wines can offer.



BODEGAS MUGA

Brut Cava Conde de Haro Reserva 2018

Score: 92 | \$30

WS review: Fragrant with grilled Macadamia nut and briny saline notes, this firm sparkler is finely knit and mouthwatering, with a delicate bead and a lovely range of ripe Honeycrisp apple, poached apricot, pickled ginger and milled white pepper notes. Ends with a clean-cut, citrusy finish. Viura and Malvasia. Drink now through 2027. 2,500 cases made, 400 cases imported.—*Alison Napjus*



JOSEP MARIA RAVENTÓS I BLANC

Brut Blanc de Blancs Vino Espumoso 2020

Score: 91 | \$23

WS review: A firm backbone of Meyer lemon peel acidity frames this vivid sparkler, enmeshed with rich notes of lightly charred toast and smoked almond, backed by flavors of ripe white cherry and peach fruit. Hints of thyme and anise play on the finish. Xarel-lo, Macabeo, Parellada and Malvasia de Sitges. Drink now through 2025. 17,000 cases made, 9,000 cases imported.—*A.N.*

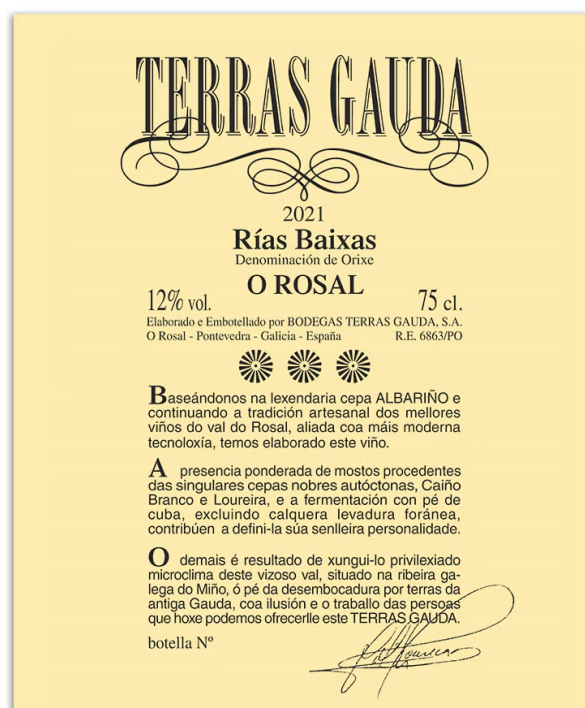


DOMINIO DE TARES

Godello Bierzo La Sonrisa de Tares 2021

Score: 90 | \$20

WS review: Lightly creamy and well-meshed, this elegant white offers fragrant white blossom and spice accents, with flavors of Asian pear and melon fruit, stone and blood orange pith. Clean and juicy on the minerally finish. Drink now. 3,000 cases made, 600 cases imported.—A.N.

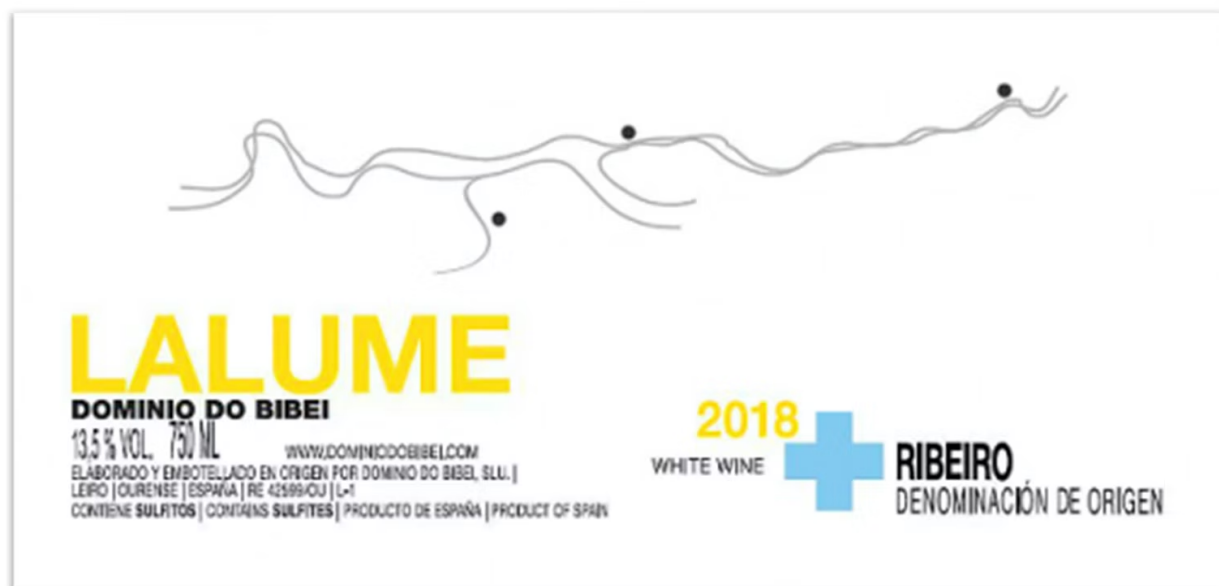


BODEGAS TERRAS GAUDA

Rias Baixas O Rosal 2021

Score: 90 | \$28

WS review: Delicate notes of fresh herb and wet stone accent the apricot and Meyer lemon fruit flavors in this lithe, light-bodied white, which is zesty on the palate, with a spine of racy acidity. Lightly creamy on the salty finish. Albariño, Caiño and Loureiro. Drink now. 2,688 cases imported.—A.N.



DOMINIO DO BIBEI

Ribeiro Lalume 2018

Score: 89 | \$27

WS review: This distinctive, golden-hued version is broad and creamy on the palate, with soft, orange peel acidity and a light tang of salinity providing balance for the subtle notes of baked yellow peach, fresh hay, honeycomb and toasted almond. Treixadura and Albariño. Drink now. 2,500 cases made, 56 cases imported.—A.N.



BODEGAS IZADI

Rioja White Selección 2021

Score: 89 | \$22

WS review: A sleek, light- to medium-bodied white that marries tangy acidity with a creamy range of green apple and pear flavors, showing notes of wet stone and delicate accents of fresh thyme and lemon pith. Ends with a salty finish. Viura, Malvasia, Garnacha Blanca, Tempranillo Blanco, Maturana Blanca and Turruntés. Drink now. 4,000 cases made, 600 cases imported.—A.N.



BODEGAS NAIA

Rueda Las Brisas 2021

Score: 88 | \$11

WS review: Fragrant with wafts of star anise and lilac, this light- to -medium-bodied white shows good drive and racy acidity, with flavors of star fruit, juicy pear, Meyer lemon peel and slate. Ends with a zesty finish. Verdejo, Viura and Sauvignon Blanc. Drink now. 15,000 cases made, 3,500 cases imported.—A.N.

[Get more scores and tasting notes for recently rated Spanish values.](#)

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