

# SPANISH WINE COUNTRY




A grape-growing center since ancient Roman times, Spain is a gorgeous spot for a wine-and-food-fueled trip, with futuristic new hotels, avant-garde restaurants and medieval monasteries transformed into world-class wineries.

Here's why you need to go now.

BY SALMA ABDELNOUR & RAY ISLE  
FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS BY CON POULOS

15 REASONS TO VISIT RIGHT NOW



Barcelona's new Roca Bar, near the Penedès region, excels at tapas like piquillo peppers and anchovies on toast (recipe, p. 163).

Opposite: The wine shop at Rioja's R. López de Heredia winery was designed by Zaha Hadid.

*Platter by dbO Home.*



Hotel Viura's tilted cubes stand out next to a 17th-century church. Bottom, Francis Paniego and Luisa Barrachina of Tondeluna.

# RIOJA

For many people, Rioja conjures an image of old Spain—a sepia-tinted, dust-and-old-leather traditionalism. But Rioja these days has transcended that; it's a source for some of the world's top reds, many from wineries designed by architectural luminaries such as Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry. Located in north-central Spain, Rioja is bordered to the north and south by mountains, in essence making it a corridor where weather is defined by the push-pull of cool Atlantic and warm Mediterranean influences. That interplay gives Rioja's reds both grace and power. Of the three subregions—Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Baja—the best wines come from Alavesa and Alta, which is also one of the best areas to visit. The atmospheric Barrio de la Estación in Haro, in Rioja Alta, is home to some of Rioja's most historic wineries. And the old-town section of Logroño, also in Alta, is one of the best places in Spain for a late-night tapas crawl.

**1** **STAY HERE**  
**HOTEL VIURA**  
 Next door to a 17th-century church, this design-forward hotel is one of the most striking new structures in Rioja: a stack of glass-fronted cubes set at rakish angles. Last year, the hotel added a wine shop and *vinoteca*, where winemakers from the region lead monthly tastings. *Doubles from \$150; hotelviura.com.*

**2** **EAT HERE**  
**TONDELUNA**  
 Chef Francis Paniego earned Rioja's first Michelin star at his molecular-leaning El Portal de Echaurren. In 2011, he and his wife, Luisa Barrachina (right), opened this minimalist tapas bar in Logroño. Guests sit at communal blond-wood tables to sample his takes on northern Spanish classics. *tondeluna.com.*



FOOD STYLIST: VIVIAN LUI; MARKET EDITOR: SUZIE MYERS; PHOTOGRAPH, OPENING PAGE: COURTESY OF R. LÓPEZ DE HEREDIA; BY PEPE FRANCO; PHOTOGRAPHS, THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF HOTEL VIURA (HOTEL), JUSTO RODRIGUEZ (TONDELUNA)

# WINERIES

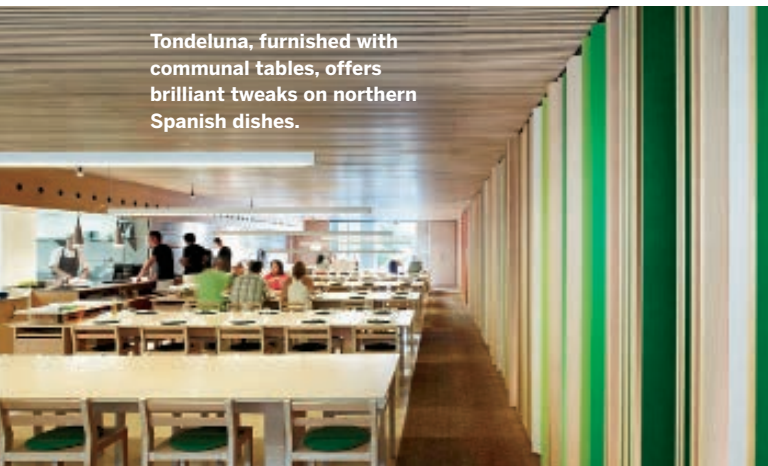
## CUNE

This 134-year-old winery is one of Rioja's biggest and most famous, combining the old-school and the avant-garde in both its wines and architecture. It incorporates three wineries: one, built in Rioja Alta in 1879, produces the famed Imperial; a second, in Rioja Alavesa, launched in 1973; and the latest, which opened in Alavesa in 2004, is the new home of CUNE's elegant Viña Real wines. The Viña Real building is worth visiting for the architecture alone: It looks as though a giant wooden barrel landed right on the Cerro de la Mesa hillside. *cune.com*.

## RODA

Launched in 1987, Roda is a newcomer by Rioja standards. Built over 19th-century cellars, it's demure-looking and recalls an old-fashioned farmhouse. Inside, though, it's a high-tech facility producing polished reds made with grapes from 17 different vineyards. Guests can tour nearly every part of the winery, including a circa-1890 portion built by the Duke of Moctezuma. *roda.es*.

Tondeluna, furnished with communal tables, offers brilliant tweaks on northern Spanish dishes.



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF TONDELUNA

## 5 R. LÓPEZ DE HEREDIA

The most visually arresting element of this 136-year-old Rioja Alta winery is its latest addition: a metallic decanter-shaped structure built by futuristic architect Zaha Hadid to house the wine shop and tasting room. But virtually everything else about R. López de Heredia is historic, and defiantly so. Its main winery headquarters is a clutch of 19th-century buildings with cobwebby cellars, and its winemakers age their classic, much-coveted wines for years, the whites taking on a dark-gold hue and a nutty aroma, and the reds acquiring complex aromas and layers of flavor. *lopezdeheredia.com*.

Striped plate  
by Raynaud  
from TableArt.



## COD WITH POTATOES & SALSA VERDE

ACTIVE: 25 MIN; TOTAL: 50 MIN

4 SERVINGS

Hake or cod cheeks in salsa verde are one of the most adored dishes in Basque country. The version here, adapted from chef Francis Paniego of Rioja's Tondeluna, calls for cod fillet instead. Try it with a rosé from Rioja: the floral 2000 R. López de Heredia Viña Tondonia (2000, intriguingly, is the current vintage) or the lively 2012 Rosado from CUNE.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for frying
- ¾ pound small golden new potatoes, thinly sliced
- ½ large onion, thinly sliced

Sea salt

- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1½ pounds cod fillet, cut into 2-inch pieces
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup finely chopped parsley

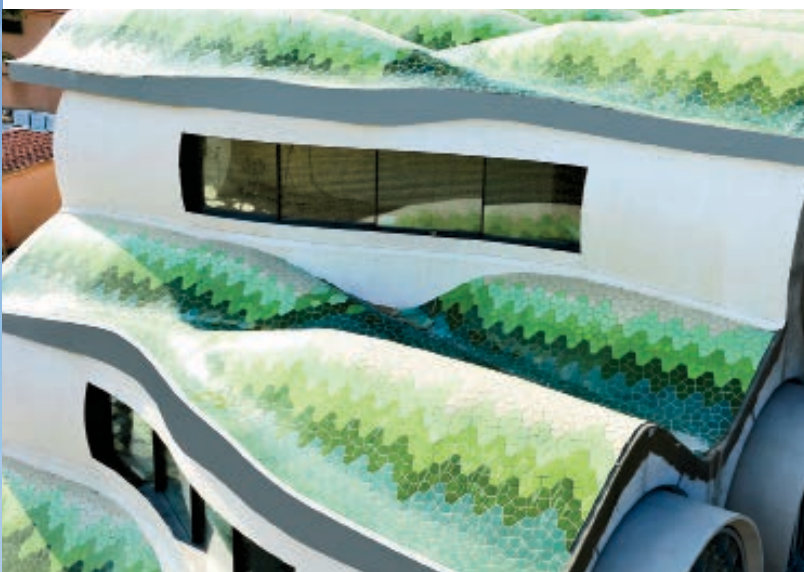
1. In a large skillet, warm ¼ inch of oil over moderate heat. Add the potatoes, onion and a generous pinch of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 20 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the potatoes and onion to 4 bowls; keep warm.
2. Strain the oil through a fine sieve into a heatproof bowl, then return it to the skillet. Add the garlic and cook over moderately low heat until golden, 5 minutes. Discard the garlic. Add the cod to the skillet and cook, turning once, until just white throughout, 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, add the cod to the potatoes.
3. Pour off all but ¼ cup of the oil from the skillet and let cool slightly. Stir in the ¼ cup of oil and the water and bring to a simmer over moderate heat. Stir in the parsley and season with salt. Spoon the salsa verde over the fish and potatoes and serve.

# PENEDÈS

Spain's Penedès region spreads inland from the Mediterranean coast less than an hour south of Barcelona, its rolling vineyards eventually bumping up against the Catalan Pre-Coastal Range and the saw-toothed peak of Montserrat. While Penedès produces a wide variety of wines, it is primarily known for cava, Spain's signature sparkling wine. Whether from a producer as vast as Freixenet, which produces 140 million bottles each year (and has over seven miles of underground tunnels in which to store them), or from a boutique producer one one-hundredth that size, cava always offers distinctive lemon-lime flavors with a subtle earthy note—and a price that's less than half that of comparable Champagnes.



Hotel MasTinell looks like a stack of cava bottles.



The Ferrer family, which owns Freixenet, has been making wine for 150 years.

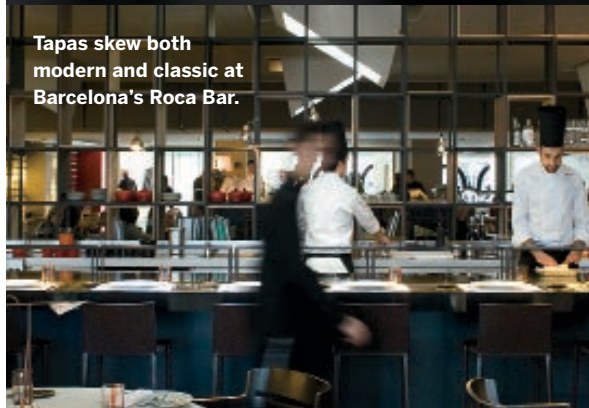
## 6 STAY HERE HOTEL MASTINELL

From above, the undulating blue and green tiles on the roof of this new winery hotel evoke a Gaudí sculpture; from the side, stacked wine bottles. Inside, guests can try seasonal Catalan cuisine from esteemed chef Jaume Balada of Mallorca's Plat d'Or. Another attraction: proximity to the artsy coastal town of Sitges. *Doubles from \$340; hotel [mastinell.com](http://mastinell.com).*

## 7 EAT HERE ROCA BAR AT HOTEL OMM

One of the not-to-miss new restaurants in Barcelona, about 45 minutes from Penedès, Roca Bar is run by the Roca brothers (Joan, Jordi and Josep) of the famed El Celler de Can Roca in Girona. Chef Felip Llufrú serves imaginative dishes—like artichokes with bergamot, and Spanish squash soup with pepitas—alongside classic tapas. *hotelomm.es.*

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF HOTEL MASTINELL (HOTEL IMAGES), COURTESY OF FREIXENET (WINE CELLAR)



Tapas skew both modern and classic at Barcelona's Roca Bar.

## PIQUILLO PEPPER & WHITE ANCHOVY TOASTS

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🕒 TOTAL: 10 MIN • MAKES 12 TOASTS

Cava and tapas are a classic match. Pair these easy, traditional toasts from Roca Bar in Barcelona with a glass of ripe, fruit-forward sparkling rosé, like the 2011 Raventós i Blanc de Nit or the NV Freixenet Cordon Rosado Brut.

Six ½-inch-thick slices cut from a round loaf of country bread

Extra-virgin olive oil, for brushing

¼ cup black-olive tapenade or spread

12 piquillo peppers (from a 9.8-ounce jar)—

drained, halved lengthwise and patted dry

12 white anchovies (*boquerones*)

1. Preheat the broiler. Brush the bread slices on both sides with olive oil and arrange on a large rimmed baking sheet. Broil 8 inches from the heat, turning once, until golden but still chewy in the center, about 2 minutes.
2. Top the slices of toast with the tapenade, piquillo peppers and anchovies. Cut the toasts in half crosswise and serve.

## WINERIES

### 8 FREIXENET

Known for its black-bottled Cordon Negro brut, Freixenet is Spain's biggest cava producer. (It also owns the equally acclaimed cava house Segura Viudas and the California sparkling wine label Gloria Ferrer.) Its top wines, like the 2008 Brut Reserva, are some of the best cavas in Spain. Visitors who book in advance can take an intensive hour-and-a-half-long tour through the winery's 93-year-old cellars that ends, naturally, with samples of Freixenet in the tasting room. [freixenet.es](http://freixenet.es).

### 9 RAVENTÓS I BLANC

The Raventós family has been growing grapes since the 15th century; they founded the famed Codorníu winery in the 1800s, credited with making Spain's first cava. Flash forward to 1982, when the family sold that winery but continued making cava under the label Raventós i Blanc. Last year, the 21st-generation winemaker Pepe Raventós decided to stop calling his wines cava. Instead, he's trying to create a separate, more specific Denominación de Origen (DO)—a designation that imposes strict controls on wines from a specific area—named after the local Anoia River. Meanwhile, he's continuing to make refined sparkling wines that are surprisingly affordable, at under \$25. Visitors who book in advance can visit the gorgeous Raventós i Blanc estate, full of oak trees overlooking the Garraf Massif mountains. [raventos.com](http://raventos.com).

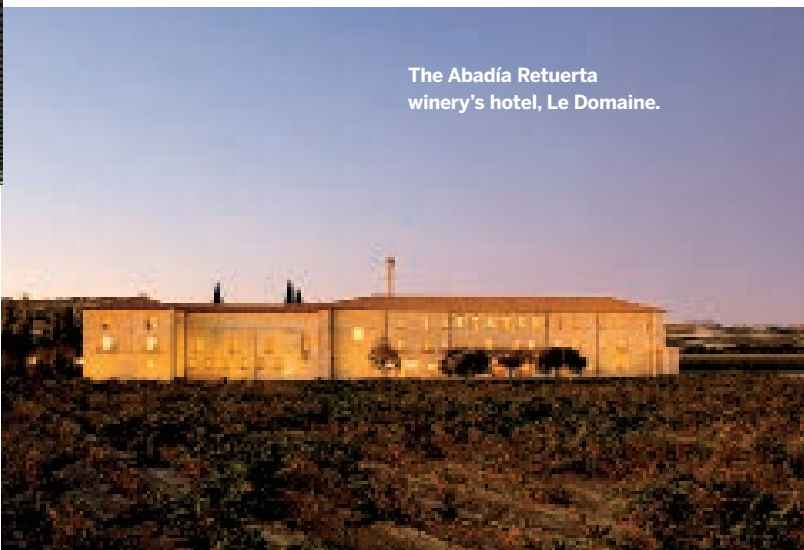
### 10 JUVÉ Y CAMPS

From the vineyards at Juvé y Camps, it's easy to spot Santa María de Montserrat, the mountaintop Benedictine abbey often reputed to be the site of the Holy Grail. But the winery's grounds are a spectacular sight in their own right: The 1,250-acre property sits on green hills planted with olive groves and vineyards that have been growing cava varietals since 1796. The Juvé y Camps family founded the winery in 1921, and they still make all their wines—including their famed Reserva de la Familia cava and newer Brut Rosé—in a fairly traditional style, using estate-grown grapes. By the end of this year, they expect to have organic certification. The winery complex, redone in 1991, blends in with the area's red-roofed buildings and is open to guests who book in advance; the tours give a fascinating overview of winemaking history in this part of Spain. [juveycamps.com](http://juveycamps.com).

# RIBERA DEL DUERO



Though it's in sunny Spain, Ribera del Duero is one of Europe's highest altitude wine regions, meaning that even in the height of summer, the nights are chilly. That translates to red wines with vivid acidity and powerful flavors—more muscular than the wines of Rioja, but no less balanced. And the region's austere beauty—the white-walled castle above Peñafiel, the dark medieval cellars, the rows of vines spread across the dry landscape—makes it a hauntingly memorable place to visit.



The Abadía Retuerta winery's hotel, Le Domaine.

**11** **STAY HERE**  
**HOTEL AF PESQUERA**  
Winemaker Alejandro Fernández owns the Tinto Pesquera winery, whose intense, dark-fruited reds helped bring Ribera international acclaim in

the 1980s. He transformed an early-1900s flour factory into this mod new hotel full of industrial references, like wood-beamed ceilings and stainless steel railings. *Doubles from \$190, [hotelpesquera.com](http://hotelpesquera.com).*

## WINERIES

**12-13** **ABADÍA RETUERTA & REFECTORIO AT LE DOMAINE**  
Built in 1996 on the site of a medieval monastery where monks once planted grapevines, Abadía Retuerta has grown into one of the Ribera region's most prestigious wineries, producing a number of single-vineyard wines from its own estate. Among its best bottlings are the Pago Negralada and Pago Valdebellón cuvées, both aged for two years; also look for the lower-priced Selección Especial. The winery has expanded over the past year with its new Refectorio at Le Domaine restaurant, in Abadía's plush Le Domaine hotel. Superstar chef Andoni Luis Aduriz, who runs the astonishing Mugaritz, oversees the menu, working with Refectorio's head chef Pablo Montero to create spectacular dishes like guinea fowl with lobster oil. Guests sit in a former monks' commissary with a 1670 fresco of The Last Supper. [abadia-retuerta.com](http://abadia-retuerta.com).

**14** **PAGO DE LOS CAPELLANES**  
Known for its impressively complex but very fairly priced Crianza bottling (under \$30), as well as its super-expensive top wine, El Picón, this 17-year-old winery is a study in geometry. Its main building is rectangular, with concrete arches and a trapezoidal wing that echoes the shape of the Cuesta Manvirgo mountain nearby. Everything is surrounded by 800-year-old walnut trees, a key reason the owners built on this site. [pagodeloscapellanes.com](http://pagodeloscapellanes.com).

**15** **PROTOS**  
When Protos launched in 1927, it was one of the first wineries in Ribera (its name means "first"). Since then, the winery has been making the austere style of Tempranillo that is the region's signature. But the building that star architect Richard Rogers built five years ago is anything but austere. Rogers designed its massive roof, made of long terra-cotta pieces, to attract visitors looking down from the Peñafiel Castle on the hill. [bodegasprotos.com](http://bodegasprotos.com).

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF BODEGAS PROTOS (PATIO), COURTESY OF THE REFECTORIO AT LE DOMAINE (VINEYARD & BUILDING)

## IBERIAN HAM & ARTICHOKE RICE

ACTIVE: 1 HR; TOTAL: 1 HR 45 MIN

6 SERVINGS

This paella-like dish from chef Pablo Montero of Refectorio at Le Domaine in Ribera del Duero is full of intensely flavorful ingredients, like Ibérico ham. (You can substitute serrano ham, which is less expensive.) The hearty recipe is a great match for bold red wine, like the berry-rich 2009 Pago de los Capellanes Tinto Reserva or the more affordable 2010 Finca Torremilanos Los Cantos.

- 1 lemon, halved
- 3 large artichokes
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons hazelnuts
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 6 ounces very thinly sliced dry-cured ham, such as *jamón Ibérico* or serrano, 4 ounces finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes—halved, seeded and finely chopped
- 4 cups chicken stock or low-sodium broth
- 2 cups Bomba or Calasparra rice (see Note)
- ½ cup lightly packed parsley
- ½ small garlic clove

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. Squeeze some of the juice from the lemon halves into a large bowl of water. Working with 1 artichoke at a time, snap off the dark green outer leaves. Holding the artichoke on its side, using a serrated knife, cut off all but ¾ inch of the remaining leaves. Peel and trim the bottom and stem of the artichoke. Halve the artichoke and scoop out the furry choke with a spoon. Cut the artichoke hearts in half again, rub with the lemon and add to the bowl of lemon water. Repeat with the remaining artichokes. Drain the artichokes and pat dry.

2. In a large ovenproof skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Add the artichokes and a generous pinch of salt. Cook over moderate heat, tossing occasionally, until just starting to brown, about 4 minutes. Add ½ cup of water,

cover and steam the artichokes until just tender, about 12 minutes. Transfer the artichokes to a plate and wipe out the skillet.

3. Spread the hazelnuts in a pie plate and toast for about 7 minutes, until fragrant. Let cool slightly, transfer the nuts to a kitchen towel and rub off the skins.

4. In the large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil until shimmering. Add the onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until just softened, 5 minutes. Add the chopped ham and tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes break down and the mixture thickens, 15 minutes. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan, bring the chicken stock to a simmer; keep hot.

5. Add the rice to the skillet and stir to coat with the tomato mixture. Stir in the hot stock,

spread the rice in an even layer and bring to a boil. Nestle the artichokes in the rice. Cover and bake for about 20 minutes, until most of the stock is absorbed. Uncover the skillet and bake for about 10 minutes longer, until the stock is completely absorbed and the rice is tender but moist. Remove the skillet from the oven, cover and let stand for 10 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, in a blender, combine the parsley, hazelnuts and garlic and pulse until finely chopped. Add the remaining 6 tablespoons of oil and puree until nearly smooth. Season the parsley sauce with salt. Serve the rice straight from the skillet, drizzled with the parsley sauce and topped with the sliced ham.

**NOTE** Bomba and Calasparra rice are available at specialty food stores or tienda.com.

*recipes continue on p. 166*



*Bowl (holding parsley sauce) by Simon Pearce.*





## SQUASH SOUP WITH PEPITAS TWO WAYS

**ACTIVE: 40 MIN; TOTAL: 1 HR 15 MIN**  
**6 SERVINGS**

At the Roca brothers' Roca Bar in Barcelona, chef Felip Llufríu serves this wonderfully silky squash soup with two pumpkin seed garnishes. He toasts some seeds with sugar and salt, so they're lightly candied; then he roasts and purees the rest with olive oil. Try the soup with cava; its touch of sweetness is delicious with squash. Pour the 2008 Reserva de la Familia from Juvé y Camps, or the appley NV Castillo Perelada Brut Reserva.

**¾ cup raw pumpkin seeds (pepitas)**  
**6 tablespoons plus ½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 teaspoons sugar**

**Kosher salt**

**1 large onion, halved and thinly sliced**  
**One 3¼-pound kabocha squash—peeled, seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces**

**1 bay leaf**  
**⅔ cup dry white wine**  
**4 cups vegetable stock**  
**2 cups water**

**Pumpkin seed oil, for drizzling**

1. Preheat the oven to 375°. Spread ½ cup of the pumpkin seeds in a pie plate. In another pie plate, toss the remaining ¼ cup of pumpkin seeds with the ½ teaspoon of olive oil, the sugar and a pinch of salt. Bake the pumpkin seeds for 12 minutes, stirring once, until lightly browned and crisp; let cool completely.
2. Transfer the plain roasted pumpkin seeds to a mini food processor. Add ¼ cup of the olive oil and pulse until the seeds are ground to a paste. Season with salt.
3. In a saucepan, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil until shimmering. Add the onion and a generous pinch of salt and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until softened and just starting to brown, 8 minutes. Add the squash and bay leaf and cook, stirring,

until the squash just begins to soften, 5 minutes. Add the wine and cook until almost evaporated, 4 minutes. Add the stock and water and bring to a boil. Simmer over moderately low heat, stirring, until the squash is very tender, 20 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.

**4.** Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender. Return it to the saucepan, rewarm and season with salt. Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with a spoonful of the pumpkin seed paste, the sugared pumpkin seeds and a drizzle of pumpkin seed oil.

**MAKE AHEAD** The soup can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Reheat gently before serving.

## ROASTED ROMAINE WITH PINE NUT VINAIGRETTE

**TOTAL: 30 MIN • 4 SERVINGS**

At Refectorio at Le Domaine, chef Pablo Montero creates a savory dressing with toasted pine nuts, sun-dried tomatoes, black olives and olive oil. Try it with the 2012 Le Domaine Sauvignon Blanc from Abadía Retuerta or the 2012 Verdejo from Protos.

**2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**  
**3 oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and minced**  
**1 tablespoon minced kalamata or other black olives**

**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing**

**2 large romaine hearts**

**⅓ cup pine nuts**

**Kosher salt**

**Shaved Pico Melero or Manchego cheese, for serving**

**Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon, for sprinkling**

1. Preheat the oven to 425°. In a medium bowl, whisk the vinegar with the sun-dried tomatoes, olives and the ¼ cup of olive oil.
2. Brush the romaine hearts all over with olive oil and arrange on a rimmed baking sheet. Spread the pine nuts in a pie plate. Roast the romaine and pine nuts for about 13 minutes, tossing the nuts occasionally, until the lettuce is browned in spots and the nuts are golden.
3. In a mortar, finely crush the pine nuts. Stir into the vinaigrette and season with kosher salt. Transfer the romaine to a work surface. Cut the hearts in half lengthwise, transfer to a platter and spoon the vinaigrette on top. Scatter shaved cheese over the romaine and sprinkle with sea salt. Serve right away. ●

**RIESLING R/O**