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RAVENTÓS i BLANC

The international Wine Review

Report #49: The Best of Spain

Julio 2015

The International Wine Review reconoce la calidad excepcional de los espumosos de Raventós i Blanc en un informe sobre las principales regiones vitivinícolas de España. Según el informe: "La vinificación en Raventós es tan meticulosa como la viticultura. Raventós es un extraordinario productor de cava y nos encanta catar sus cavas anualmente."

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A Tenth Anniversary Special Report

The International Wine Review celebrates its tenth year of publication in 2015. To celebrate, we revisit many of the regions we've reported on over the past decade. Our focus in this series of special reports and articles is our favorite producers and their wines.

Introduction

Spain is one of the most exciting wine regions in the world. It has 60 distinct growing areas or DOs and a wide variety of indigenous grapes, 300 at last count. (See the appellation map in the Annex.) An ancient wine-producing country, it also has many old vineyards and is rich in winemaking tradition. Yet, Spain is also a modern wine producer and one of the largest, just behind Italy and France. It offers a remarkable diversity of wines and is an exciting wine region to explore and get to know.

Over the past decade, the International Wine Review has produced many in-depth reports on the major wine regions of Spain. These focused on the wines of Rioja, Navarra, Ribera del Duero, Priorat, Catalonia and the major Garnacha producing regions such as Campo de Borja,

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Calatayud, Vinos de Madrid and others. We also have written extensively on Cava in our reports on Catalonia and sparkling wine around the world and on Sherry.

In this report we provide an introduction to several of the principal wine regions of Spain, present many of our top-rated Spanish producers based on our tastings over the years, and provide tastings notes of many of our favorite wines. In addition, we include one new wine-growing region, Sierra de Gredos, which we believe merits attention from serious oenophiles.

By necessity we have had to limit the number of regions, producers and wines included in this report, so we encourage readers interested in learning more about the wines of the diverse regions of Spain to consult the respective Spanish wine reports listed below and available online at www.i-winereview.com. A special 10th Anniversary Report on Sherry will also be released later this year.

Mont Marcal Manuel Sancho founded his Finca Manileu estate and its 40 ha of estate vineyards in 1974 in the heart of the Penedès region near Vilafranca del Penedès. The vineyards are located on a 220m high chalky knoll overlooking the hamlet of Sant Marçal. The winery is located in a former convent of the Carmelitas Descalzas. 11 Today Manuel's daughter Blanca manages this distinguished estate and its winemaking. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines

Mont Marcal 2011 Cava Brut Reserva Cava/ Penedes ($15) 91 Rich, somewhat steely, creamy in the mouth, lively mousse, flavorful with a very long and pleasant finish. Traditional blend, fresh and bright acidity, pastry. Extraordinary value. Mont Marçal NV Aureum Gran Reserva Brut Nature Cava ($51) 91 The oak aged Aureum reveals richness and complexity starting with a floral and brioche nose. It offers a beautifully delineated palate with notes of orchard fruit, lightly toasted nuts, and herbs, finishing on a long, chalky note. A blend of Xarello 50%, Chardonnay 30%, and Pinot Noir 20%.

Raventos i Blanc The house of Josep Raventós i Blanc was established in 1986 in Sant Sadurni d' Anoia by Josep-Maria Raventós, a breakaway member of the Codorníu family, with the objective of making Cavas of exceptional quality. Today, Josep's grandson Pepe (shown here with his father Manuel) continues the pursuit on the estate's 120 ha of low-yielding vines planted in sedimentary calcareous soils. The Raventos vineyards are sustainably farmed and yields are kept low by aggressive green harvests. Winemaking at Raventos is as meticulous as the viticulture. Raventos is an extraordinary Cava producer and we enjoy tasting their cavas annually. ***Importers:*** Michael Skurnik Wines and Elite Wines

Raventos i Blanc 2011 de la Finca Penedes ($40) 94 de la finca is a blend of 50% Xarel-lo, 40% Macabeu, and 10% Parellada sourced from vineyard plots of old calcareous soils. It has a very special complex nose, autolytic in character with hints of minerality. It reveals toasty rich mouth feel, lush and full and elegant with grilled nuts and roasted grain. It has a long finish with lingering toastiness and elegance. **Raventos i Blanc 2012 de Nit Penedes ($30) 93** This rosé Cava displays a pael pink/salmon color with light and delicate cherry and watermelon flavors. A blend of 40% Macabeu, 30% Xarel-lo, 25% Parella and 5% Monastrell, it is beautifully focused and elegant on the palate, perfectly balanced and savory on the finish. **Raventos i Blanc 2012 L' Hereu Penedes ($22) 92** This Cava is very rich and concentrated on the nose revealing hints of citrus and stone. It is fresh and elegant on the palate with lovely texture and bright flavors of lemon and apple and pronounced minerality. Blended with 40% Macabeu, 35% Xarel-lo, and 25% Parellada.

De la Finca 2011
94 puntos

De Nit 2012
93 puntos

Hereu 2012
92 puntos

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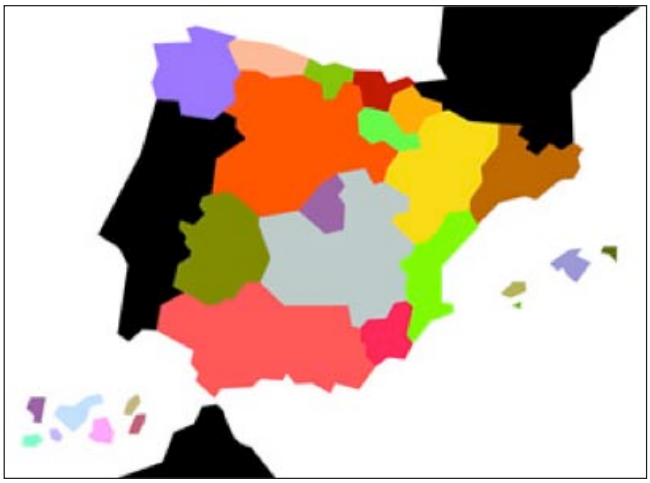

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Our Favorite Spanish Producers

Rioja	Ribera del Duero	Priorat
Abdel Mendoza Artadi Benjamin Romeo Castillo de Cuzcurrita Contino Cvne Finca Allende Finca a Emperatriz Lan Lopez de Heredia Marques de Murrieta Muga Pujanza Roda Señorio de San Vicente Sierra Cantabria Telmo Rodriquez Vinedos de Páganos	Aalto Alion Bodegas Alejandro Fernandes Tinto Pesquera Arrocal Astrales Callejo Condado de Haza Dominio de Atauta Dominio Pingus Hacienda Monasterio Mauro Vega Sicilia	Alvaro Palacios Clos i Terrasses Clos Figueras Clos Mogador Ferrer Bobet Mas d' En Compte Mas Martinet Celler Pasanau Terroir al Limit Vall Llach
Campo de Borja	**Toro**	**Catalonia**
Bodegas Alto Moncayo	Elias Mora Maurodos Roman Pintia	Acustic Celler Can Rafols dels Caus Espectacle Joseph Grau/ Dosterras Torres Vinyes Domenech
Calatayud	**Sierra de Gredos**	**Cava**
Bodegas Breca Las Rocas The Show	Bernabeleva Jimenez-Landi Zerberos	Albet I Noya Gramona Hertat Mestres Huguet Mont Marcal Naverán Raventos i Blanc Recaredo

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Rioja and the Ebro River Valley

Some of Spain's best wines are made in the valley created by the Ebro River, which runs eastward from its source in Cantabria to its mouth on the Mediterranean in Catalonia. Foremost among these wine regions is the Rioja Denominación de Origen (DO). The Ebro runs through Rioja, including the important wine centers of Haro and Logroño.

It's no accident that when phylloxera hit Bordeaux in the late 19th century, French winemakers chose Rioja as a location to make wines for the French market. They introduced the heavily oaked style of wine that was predominant through most of the 20th century. However, as we noted in our 2008 Report # 13 *The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave*, the beginning of the 21st century saw a transformation in Rioja towards what we called New Wave wines that were more vibrant and fruit forward with better integrated oak.

In our most recent Report #43 The Wines of Rioja—A New Look, we found this trend continuing along with continued improvements in viticulture and winemaking that have now extended beyond the boutique and super-premium producer. We also found producers making wines that reveal the terroir of the region, village, estate, and, increasingly, the vineyard.

Our favorite producers of Rioja range from the very traditional (e.g., Lopez de Heredia) to the very modern (e.g., Roda, Benjamin Romeo), the pioneers (e.g., Abel Mendoza), the large commercial producer (e.g., Lan), and the small boutique producer (e.g., Señorio de San Vicente). They are mostly located in the cooler growing areas in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa. They all put the focus on quality and on making wines that express a sense of place. Tasting notes on selected wines of our favorite producers follow.

Abel Mendoza This artisanal winery is the creation of grower/winemaker Abel Mendoza and winemaker Maite Fernández Mendoza. It is one of our favorites because it produces high quality, original, modern wines. The winery is especially known for its white wines, and Abel has been one of Rioja's innovators in the production of rare varieties like Turrontés and Tempranillo Blanco. The grapes are sourced from from 18 ha of many small, old, high altitude vineyard parcels in the Sierra Cantabria. ***Importer:*** Jose Pastor Selections

Abel Mendoza 2013 Viura Rioja (92) This Viura is one of the finest of this variety tasted for this report. Sourced from hand selected grapes from old vineyards, it displays a yellow straw color and aromas of beautiful white melon, white peach, with a touch of honeysuckle. It is rich and flavorful on the palate showing minerals, a note of ginger spice and excellent. Concentration of fruit. Creamy notes and balancing acidity add to the excitement of this wine.
Abel Mendoza 2010 "T"Turrontés Rioja (91) The 2010 "T" Turrontés is made from an indigenous white grape of Rioja which has nothing to do with the better known Torrontés of Argentina. Yellow straw in color, and oak-fermented, it offers aromas of gingerbread, tea and minerals. It has a lovely creamy palate with subtle integrated flavors of savory tropical fruit. This is a welcome experiment with new white varieties in Rioja.

Artadi is one of Rioja's highest quality producers, thanks to Juan Carlos López de Lacalle and his focus on the vineyard. It has 88 ha of organically and biodynamically cultivated estate vineyards and makes several single vineyard wines. The top single vineyard wine is the Viña El Pison from a 2.8 ha parcel in Laguardia planted in 1945. It is a superb wine that received one of our most positive evaluations. ***Importer:*** Folio Fine Wines

Artadi 2010 Pagos Viejos Rioja (93) The 2010 Pagos Viejos offers earthly, pure dark red fruit with excellent concentration, and firm ripe tannins, The wine is round and full in the mouth, fruit forward with good length and has an easy drinking finish. **Artadi 2011 El Pison Rioja (96)** The 2011 El Pison is Artadi's super premium single vineyard wine. A stand out in every respect, it combines elegance and power with tremendous red-fruit flavors and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it is silky smooth, with spectacular mouth feel and is beautifully integrated and perfectly balanced with a lovely savory character. A beautiful wine.

Benjamín Romeo Formerly winemaker at Artadi, Benjamín Romeo began making wine at the family estate in San Vicente del la Sonsierra in 1995. He has purchased other parcels to add to the family vineyards, totaling 80 different plots today, of which he owns 20 ha and rents another 10 ha, all in San Vicente, Labastida and Abalos. The vineyards are mostly head pruned old vines. Benjamín's objective is to make great wines, and he manually harvests and destems, ferments in open oak vats, and matures in lightly toasted French oak. His wines are modern in style and superb. ***Importer:*** European Cellars

Benjamin Romeo 2011 La Viña de Andres Rioja ($170) 93 This extraordinary 100% Tempranillo is sourced from 45 year-old head trained vines of the 2.5 ha La Liende Vineyard planted by Benjamin Romeo's father near San Vicente. Aged 18 months in new French oak, It is semi opaque ruby in color and has a nose of pure and ripe blackberry fruit, earth, and tar. It is softly textured and silky on the palate while highly concentrated and dense with 15 alc. firm round tannins and a persistent finish. **Benjamin Romeo 2011 Contador Rioja ($300) 94** The 2011 Contador is a massive wine yet displays considerable elegance. A blend of 94% Tempranillo, 3% Graciano and 2% Mazuelo it is sourced from 75+ year old vines and is aged for 18 months in new French oak. Blackberry jam, violets, cracked pepper aromas jump from the glass. On the palate it is soft and bold flavored on entry with fruit, tobacco and earthy flavor, and quite lush and creamy with 15.5 alc. Almost impenetrable at this young stage of development with astringent tannins, it needs a minimum of two-three years of further bottle aging.

Castillo de Cuzcurrita This is a winery located in the high altitude, Alta Alta area of Rioja Alta. It owns and manages 25 ha of vines, including the 7.5 ha El Cerrado vineyard that is the source of the winery's iconic estate wine, Cerrado del Castillo. The vines are dry-farmed, trained en vaso, and some are very old, over 100 years old. Ana Martín is winemaker. The Cerrado del Castillo is among our favorites because it is an especially elegant and focused wine with great aging potential. Importer: Vinos Libres Wine Merchant

Castillo de Cuzcurrita 2007 Señorio de Cuzcurrita Reserva Rioja ($60) 91 The Señorio de Cuzcurrita shows fresh red fruit accompanied by savory herbs and loam. It's youthful and finely structured but also softly textured with good acidity and should age. Give it one-two years in bottle. **Castillo de Cuzcurrita 2008 Cerrado del Castillo Rioja ($30) 93** More structured than the 2007 Reserva, the Cerrado del Castillo reveals spicy dark red fruit with earth and considerable cedar accents. It's linear and focused on the palate without being austere. Superb, serious silky mouth feel. Firm tannins should soften with time.

Viñedos del Contino Half owned by CVNE, Contino was established in the early 1970s. The winery has 63 ha of sandy calcareous vineyards bordering the Río Ebro in Laserna in the Rioja Alavesa, but only a portion of the very best fruit is kept for Contino's wines. Contino's talented winemaker is Jesús de Madrazo, son of one of Contino's founders. We tasted Contino's wines with him on an earlier visit. Contino makes only a few wines, and they span the stylistic spectrum from traditional to modern.

Contino 2012 Blanco Rioja (89) The 2012 blanco, a relatively new cuvee for Contino is a blend of 85% Viura, 10% Garnacha Blanca and 5% Malvasia Riojana fermneted in stainless steel and 500 liter barriques. Aged in barrel for 6 months with battonage, it offers aromas of flowers, yellow fruit and yeast and a creamy palate. A tasty wine, but still a work in progress. **Contino 2008 Reserva Rioja (91)** The 2008 Reserva is a blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano and 5% combined of Mazuelo and Garnacha, It offers pretty aromas of plum and earth. Fermented and aged in used American and French oak, it reveals excellent balance, and good acidity on the mid-palate and the finish. It is a meaty wine, drinking well now and can be enjoyed through 2020.

CVNE (Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España) CVNE was established in 1879, and today it's still managed by descendants of the founders. While the winery's flagship wines—Imperial and Viña Real—were traditionally blends of fruit from different regions, today Imperial is all Rioja Alta fruit, while Viña Real is all Alavesa, mostly from the Laserna area. It's a large winery, producing 5 million bottles on average. The wines are traditional in style, although CVNE has steadily reduced oak aging over the years. The flagship Imperial Gran Reserva has a very long life. Thanks to importer Aurelio Cabastreros we tasted a 1973 Viña Real Gran Reserva that still retained its elegance. ***Importers:*** Grapes of Spain and Elite Wines Lorton, VA

CVNE 2005 Imperial Gran Reserva Rioja ($69) 94 Semi-opaque. The 2005 Gran Reserva is highly perfumed and deliciously and richly flavored with copious amounts of ripe dark red fruit, cured meat, and smoky, toasted oak. Traditionally styled, it is elegant and superbly balanced and will continue to improve in bottle. **CVNE 2008 Imperial Reserva Rioja ($46) 91+** The 2008 Reserva is supple and full with densely packed fruit complemented by sweet underbrush and hints of grilled meat and cured tobacco. It shows excellent balance and vibrancy along with a solid tannic backbone.

Finca Allende Owner and winemaker Miguél Angel de Gregorio is making some of Rioja's most stylish, high quality wines at this Briones winery. He created the winery in 1995. His goal is to make village wines expressive of their terroir, and he sources fruit from 56 ha of numerous small parcels. The single vineyard wine Calvario is made from a family vineyard planted in 1945. The oak aged Martires is a 100 percent Viura sourced from vines planted in 1920. It is the best Viura we've ever tasted from Rioja. It should be no mystery to readers why we have selected Finca Allende as one of our favorite producers in Rioja. ***Importer:*** Fine Wines of Spain

Finca Allende 2006 Calvario Rioja ($150) 94 The superb 2006 Calvario features 90% Tempranillo, 8% Garnacha and 2% Graciano. Semi opaque ruby in color, it offers a lovely fresh black cherry nose with an herbal edge and has good density of plum and dark cherry flavors with a light liqueur note. Aged 24 months in 1/3 new French oak, it reveals a velvet feel and a very long finish of dark fruit. The Calvario is sourced from a two hectare vineyard parcel planted in 1945. **Finca Allende 2012 Martires Rioja 95** The 2012 Martires consists of 100% Viura sourced from head pruned vines of the Maritres Vineyard in Briones. Fermented in new French oak for less than month, it offers spicy toasted oak and rich flavors of melon, peach, vanilla and toast. On the palate it boasts a rich texture, excellent depth with layers of ripe fruit flavors. A very balanced, fresh and lovely wine, that should have great appeal to discerning white wine drinkers. **Finca Allende 2005 Arus Rioja ($250) 96** The 2005 Arus is a blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Graciano. Having tasted this vintage in our previous report, it was a treat to re-visit it with Miguel Angel de Gregorio on our recent visit to the winery. In our estimation, it is Finca Allende's finest wine. Perfectly blended and aged 24 months in French oak, it reveals great intensity of black cherry fruit, licorice and earth with all the earthy complexity that can come from 65-year old bush vines. The passing of time has not diminished the intensity of the flavor, the richness, or the elegance we reported on years ago. A truly magnificent wine.

Bodegas LAN Located in Fuenmayor in Rioja Alta, LAN is a large winery that has seen many ownership changes over the years and is currently owned by the Sogrape group of Portugal. Its best vineyard is the 72 ha, 40 year old Viña Lanciano on the Ebro River that provides the grapes for the top end LAN wines like LAN Edición Limitada. A select parcel, the Pago El Rincón, within Viña Lanciano is the fruit source for the winery's icon wine Culmen Reserva. While LAN is large, producing 4 million bottles annually, its top wines made from estate grapes are effectively a boutique winery within a winery. The LAN Edición Limitada and Culmen Reserva are rich, modern wines matured in new French oak. The more traditionally styled wines—Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva—are of consistently good quality and reasonably priced. ***Importer:*** Monsieur Touton

Bodegas LAN 2010 Edicion Limitada Rioja ($50) 92 The outstanding 2010 Edicion Limitada consists of 83% Tempranillo, 11% Graciano and 6% Mazuelo. Aged five months in new French oak followed by five months in new Russian oak, the wine displays fragrant ripe dark cherry aromas with rich oak notes and black licorice on the nose. On the palate it reveals rich flavors of concentrated dark cherry, violets and chocolate. While the wine's tannins are firm at this stage of development, they are nicely polished and accompany a persistent finish. **Bodegas LAN 2007 Culmen Reserva Rioja ($70) 94** The magnificent Culmen Reserva is sourced from 40-60 years old vines from the "Pago El Rincon" located within the estate's Viña Lanciano. A blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Graciano it is fermented in small stainless steel tanks to obtain maximum color extraction and retain freshness. Aged 22 months in French oak it is richly aromatic showing black cherry fruit with spice, violets and loam notes. It is soft on the attack and reveals excellent concentration of fruit, baking spice and firm tannins on the finish.

López de Heredia Viña Tondonia This winery is Rioja's most traditional, keeping true to the winemaking precepts of its founder Rafael López de Heredia y Landeta who planted the original vineyards in 1913 and established the practices and traditions that continue today—extended aging in oak vats and blending across vintages (up to the maximum of 15%). The winery keeps twenty different vintages in its cellars, waiting release to the market, which is usually ten or more years after the vintage. The wines—especially the Blanco and Rosado—are oxidative in style from the extended aging, but they are also complex and very special. Today, the sisters María José and Mercedes are the face of the winery. At our tasting, María José opened a 1954 Tinto 6° Año and a 1964 Blanco 6° Año; both wines remained fresh and vibrant despite their age. López de Heredia cultivates 170 ha and produces about 500 thousand bottles annually. ***Importer:*** Think Global

Lopez de Heredia 2006 El Cubillo Crianza Rioja ($26) 90 Ruby garnet. A beautiful Crianza that's richly flavored with all the notes of toasted oak, saddle leather, earth, and dark fruit one would expect of a traditionally crafted Rioja. **Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia 1964 Blanco 6° Ano Rioja 94** Golden straw. This 50 year old blend of Viura (70-80%) and Malvasia is still fresh and vibrant with good acidity and complex aromas and flavors of toasted almonds, hazelnut, and crème brulée. An absolutely astounding wine.

Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia 1994 Blanco Gran Reserva Rioja ($90) 95 After 10 years in American oak vats, this wine has developed an incredible earthy mushroom and herbal complexity. It offers excellent concentration and acidity that has helped preserve this wine for 20 years. The finish goes on and on with notes of undergrowth, tea, and almonds. This is a blend of 90% Viura and 10% Malvasia that was fermented in large, old oak vats and ambient yeasts.

Marqués de Murrieta Founded in 1852, this is one of Rioja's most classic wineries. In recent years, it has been renovated by Vicente Dalmau. Vicente and winemaker María Vargas have rebuilt the reputation of the winery, which now consistently produces some of Rioja's very best wines. Only estate grapes from the 300 ha Finca Ygay are used, and wines (e.g., Capellania) are made from the grapes of special, small parcels. The wines are more modern and expressive of fruit and French oak than they used to be, but they retain authentic Rioja character. ***Importer:*** Maisons Marques & Domaines USA

Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Capellania White Reserva Rioja ($28) 92 This 100% Viura is from a special parcel of 80-year-old vines in the highest part (up to 520 m) of the estate's vineyard within Ygay Fermented in stainless steel and aged 20 months in in new lightly toasted French oak barriques, it is beautifully focused with notes of yellow fruit and hints of caramel, orange citrus vanilla and coconut. Very pure and beautifully balanced with superb weight and refinement. Appears bolder in flavor than the 2008 vintage. **Marqués de Murrieta 2005 Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial Rioja ($89) 95** The Gran Reserva is an exceptional wine in every respect. It shows high toned fruit and an ultra-refined, seamless, suave mouth feel. Aged 30 months in oak, about 10 months in new barriques and then racked to used ones. A blend of 89% Tempranillo (aged in American oak) and 11% Mazuelo (French oak) from the 80 year old, 485 m high, La Plana vineyard. Made only in special years--the last ones being 2000 and 2004.

Bodegas Muga Isaac and Aurora Muga founded this winery in Haro in 1932 [the winery moved to the Barrio de la Estación only in 1964]. Today, their grandson Jorge Muga makes some of the finest wines in Rioja, both Classic and New Wave in style. Grapes are sourced from their own 200 ha of vineyards plus long-time contracted parcels. Some of the parcels are at high altitudes on the slopes of the Sierra Cantabria. While both modern (e.g., Torre Muga) and traditional (e.g., Prado Enea Gran Reserva) wines are made, the winemaking is traditional, with fermentation in non-temperature controlled oak vats and aging in American and French oak barrels made in house. Annual production is about 1.4 million bottles. ***Importer:*** Fine Wines of Spain

Bodegas Muga 2013 Blanco Rioja ($15) 91 This is one our favorite white Riojas. It's very fresh, showing white citrus flowers and minerals on the nose with a beautifully balanced, flavorful palate showing notes of citrus and minerals once again. But it's the overall fresh, crisp character, the density of flavor, and the superb balance that we find so appealing. **Bodegas Muga 2005 Gran Reserva Prado Enea Rioja ($55) 94** Muga's magnificent 2005 Gran Reserva Prado Enea is a blend of 65% Tempranillo, 20% Garnacha and 15% Mazuelo/Graciano. It displays a semi-opaque ruby color with notes of dark fruit, balsamic, leather and brown spices. Aged for 36 months in oak, it has a lovely velvet texture and is mouth filling with superb dark fruit flavors and a tobacco note. The tannins are soft and round and the finish shows good length and elegance.

Bodegas Muga 2010 Torre Muga Rioja ($80) 94 The 2010 Torre Muga is a blend of 75% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo and 10% Graciano. Opaque ruby in color, it offers aromas of spicy black pepper, roast meet and black fruit. It is big and dense on the palate revealing dark fruit with red highlights, dark chocolate and tobacco notes and big tannic grip. This is a very young wine that needs time in the bottle to integrate its magnificent components.

Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza Located just outside Laguardia in the Rioja Alavesa. Carlos San Pedro founded the winery at age 25 and now has 42 ha of estate vineyards. Carlos' brother Javier runs the nearby Vallobera, and Carlos has recently created a winery called Dios Ares to make and market popularly priced wines. Pujanza and Pujanza Norte are the winery's top wines, while the Hado line is its entry level line. The first Pujanza vintage was 1998 and is mostly from the Valdepoleo vineyard. Pujanza Norte comes from the 680m high, 2.7 ha El Norte vineyard. The high altitude of these vineyards contribute to the high acidity found in the Pujanza wines. The top Pujanza wines are particularly perfumed and elegant, especially in a cool vintage like 2011. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2011 Pujanza Norte Rioja (95) 93 At 720m, the 2.7 ha Norte is one of Rioja's highest vineyards with very shallow, sandy soils, which gives this modern wine its richness and elegance. The wine shows rich fresh notes of violets, dark cherry, even chocolate. It has a velvet mouth feel, fine tannins, and an ultra-persistent, refined finish. The vineyard is especially low-yielding at 3500 kg/ha. **Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2010 Añadas Frías Rioja 93** This is perhaps the single best Viura we've tasted from Rioja. It comes from a 30 year old vineyard of highly calcareous soils and is made only in very cold vintages that give the high acidity the winemaker is looking for. It offers a floral perfume of gardenia, vanilla, and fennel and a superbly focused, mineral-like, and concentrated palate that explodes with flavor in the mouth, finishing very long with richly concentrated extract. It's fermented in oak barrels (no malo) and aged 6 months in the same barrels with lees stirring. **Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2009 Cisma Rioja ($200) 94** The 2009 Cisma is produced from 100% Tempranillo sourced from 100-year old headtrained vines from the 0.8 ha La Vlacabada vineyard. The wine offers a nose of black raspberry, chocolate, violets and a hint of tar. Aged 24 months in French oak barriques, it displays power and elegance on the palate with intense fruit, spice notes, toast, and firm round tannins on the finish.

Bodegas Remirez de Ganuza 2013 Erre Punto Blanco Rioja ($30) 91 The 2013 Erre Punto Blanco is an attractive blend of 70% Viura and 30% Malvaxia Riojana. Sourced from 50-year old vines, it is rich and spicy on the palate offering hints of toast, herbs and stones. Aged seven months in new French oak, it is nicely balanced with good extract, high acidity and freshness. A lovely wine. ***Importer:*** Fine Wines of Spain

Roda Founded in 1987 by Mario Rotllan and Carmen Danurella and located in Haro adjacent to the Ebro River in the Barrio de la Estación, Roda has 150 ha of old vine vineyards, 70 ha its own vineyards and 80 ha under contract, all old, bush vines. The vineyards have diverse soils and cover a wide range of altitudes up to 650m and are organized into 17 different parcels that are separately vinified and later blended into a redder fruit blend (called Roda) and a darker fruit blend (called Roda I). Roda practices sustainable viticulture and is one of Rioja's most research-oriented wineries. Agustín Santolaya is the winemaker. ***Importer:*** Valkyrie Selections

Bodegas Roda 2005 Roda I Rioja ($60) 93 The 2005 Road I is the product of an exceptional vintage in Rioja. It is typically dark fruited with a touch of forest floor and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it offers lush and layered dark fruit, a silky mouth feel with beautifully integrated oak, and refined tannins. **Bodegas Roda 2010 Cirsion Rioja ($200) 94** Cirsion is Roda's top-of-the-line luxury cuvée of 100% Tempranillo. Produced only in the best years, it is a selection of the very best vineyard block of the estate. This Cirsion is opaque ruby/black in color and offers aromas of black cherry, violets, licorice, pepper and mesquite shrubs. On the palate it is silky smooth, dense and concentrated, finishing long with firm ripe polished tannins.

Señorio de San Vicente This single vineyard wine from the 18ha La Canoca vineyard in San Vicente de la Sonsierra is a star in the Eguren family firmament and marks the transition of Eguren wines from traditional to modern in style. It was replanted in 1985 with a selection of especially low yielding vines from other Eguren family vineyards. The vines have especially small berries and velvet-feeling leaves, hence, the name Tempranillo Peludo. The first vintage of Señorio San Vicente was 1991. We've tasted several Señorio de San Vicente vintages over the years, including the 2010 that we recently tasted with Marco at their winery.

Señorio de San Vicente 2010 San Vicente Rioja ($50) 93 The 2010 San Vicente is sourced from the south-facing 18-hectare Señorio San Vicente Vineyard planted with Tempranillo in 1985 from a selección massal. The wine reveals extraordinary purity with richness of savory herbs and toasted oak on the nose. The wine is all Tempranillo, aged 20 months in 90% new French oak. On the palate it is perfectly balanced, rich in dark fruit flavors, with firm tannins and a long finish. ***Importer:*** Fine Estates from Spain Dedham, MA

Viñedos Sierra Cantabria This family winery located in San Vicente de la Sonsierra is owned and managed by the Eguren family—father Guillermo and sons Marcos and Miguel Angel. It is the central pillar of the Eguren family of wineries that include Viñedos de Páganos and Señorio de San Vicente. While Marcos makes the wines today, much of the credit for the excellent wines lies with Guillermo who assembled and nurtured the winery's outstanding, old vineyards. A wide variety of wines are made under the Viñedos Sierra Cantabria moniker, but the stars are the single vineyard wines El Bosque and Amancio and the white blend Organza. Total production is 800 thousand bottles. ***Importer:*** Fine Estates from Spain

Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2011 Finca El Bosque Rioja ($150) 93 The youthful 2011 El Bosque is black fruited, earthy and muscular in character. Sourced from the single vineyard Finca El Bosque in San Vicente de la Sonsierra, it reveals dark fruit with hints of spice and balsamic on the nose. On the palate it has a sweet soft attack followed by a lush texture and intensity of flavor on the palate and firm tannins on the finish. Aged 18 months in new French and central European oak, it will require a minimum of three years of cellaring before is will be ready to drink and will likely last a decade or more **Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2010 Amancio Rioja ($150) 94** The spectacular 2010 Amancio is sourced from the Eguren vineyards in the La Veguilla area in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. The grapes for the wine are a selection of only 8 to 10% of the total production of these low-yielding vineyards (23 hls/Ha). 100% Tempranillo, the Amancio exhibits aromas of blackberries, roasted meat, clove, and pepper. Aged 24 months in new French barriques, it offers rich and savory flavors on the palate with hints of perfectly integrated sweet oak. Only bottled in early 2013, this wine will require 2-3 years of aging at a minimum before it can show all of its magnificent components.

Compañia de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez Telmo Rodríguez studied winemaking in Bordeaux, worked at Cos d'Estournel and other French wineries and then began making his own wines throughout Spain. Always working with the same model—he seeks out exceptional, old vineyards and following organic, and increasingly biodynamic practices to produce "wines with soul." He works closely with another Bordeaux-trained winemaker, Pablo Egurkiza, who we met during our last visit to Rioja. Pablo showed us their vineyards and winery located in Lanciego in Alava at the foot of the Sierra de Cantabria. Las Beatas, an old, dry-farmed, biodynamically cultivated vineyard located on high terraces in Labastida, reveals their winemaking philosophy. Telmo and Pablo have rebuilt the terrace walls preserved its mix of varietals, harvesting and vinifying them together, to produce the truly unique Las Beatas wine beginning with the 2011 vintage. They also make the unoaked LZ and the Altos de Lanzaga from bush vines located near the winery in Lanciego. ***Importer:*** Vintus

Telmo Rodriguez 2011 Las Beatas Rioja 97 The 2011 Las Beatas is the first wine produced from a field blend of old vines of a tiny (1.9 ha) high altitude vineyard (500m+) in Labastica. It is a very special wine, unlike any others we've taste in Rioja. Dark ruby in color it offers aromas of sweet black cherry and garrigue, with a distinct floral note. On the palate it reveals pure dark cherry fruit flavors, chalky tannins, and a long finish of kirsch-ripe black cherry. Only 500 bottles produced of this gem. **Telmo Rodriguez 2010 Altos de Lanzaga Rioja ($125) 94** The 2010 Altos de Lanzaga offers savory aromas of dark fruit, roast meat, and forest floor. It has a lush smoky palate and is refined and focused showing sweet dark fruit, dense and ripe, with perfect balance and superb length.

Viñedos de Páganos This Rioja Alavesa winery, located in the village of Páganos near Laguardia, is another of the jewels in the Eguren family crown. Like the other Eguren wineries, it is an independent entity, established (in 1998) to produce just two, all Tempranillo wines from their high altitude, Atlantic-influenced vineyards planted in 1975. El Puntido is 25 ha of trellised vines at 600 m altitude, while La Nieta is a small, 1.7 ha, trellised vineyard parcel of especially poor, shallow soils. Both wines are matured in new French oak. The wines reflect the altitude and climate in which they are grown, showing bright acidity, minerals, and highly concentrated fruit. They require extensive bottle aging to fully reveal their promise. ***Importer:*** Fine Estates from Spain

Viñedos de Páganos 2010 El Puntido Rioja ($36) 93+ The Puntido is sourced from a small low-yielding cool climate vineyard in Laguardia situated at 600 m, about the highest altitude for growing Tempranillo. The 2010 El Puntido is a highly refined and elegant wine revealing pure dark fruit aromas and flavors, and minerals. Aged 16 months in French oak, it is very focused and polished with expressive black raspberry fruit, firm fine tannins, and a persistent finish. A masterpiece of wine making. **Viñedos de Páganos 2011 La Nieta Rioja ($125) 94** The La Nieta is a gorgeous wine sourced from a very special 1.75 ha low productivity single vineyard, la Nieta Opaque in color, the wine reveals minerals and violets on the nose and is very ripe and delicious on the palate with rich red fruit and licorice, Aged 18 months in new French oak barrels, it is perfectly balanced with a soft and elegant texture. and firm round tannins. It is enjoyable now but will best in a few years after the fruit and oak are better integrated.

DO's of the Ebro River Valley

The mighty Ebro continues its course, flowing southeast of Rioja through the autonomous community of Aragon and the capital city of Zaragoza. Here we find four significant wine regions and two of our favorite Spanish producers, Bodegas Alto Moncayo in the Campo de Borja DO and Bodegas Breca in the Calatayud DO.

Campo de Borja

The Campo de Borja DO is especially recognized for its old vine Garnacha. The variety is uniquely adapted to the area's extreme growing conditions and Campo de Borja's diverse micro climates. Its vineyards are situated at 350-700 meters, and many are planted with traditional low yielding, gobelet vines. Some vineyards in the DO date back to the 12th century, and most Garnacha vines are between 30 and 50 years old. Campo de Borja wines, depending upon where they are grown, can be warm, powerful and aromatically complex and fleshy or be very fine, subtle and elegant.

Bodegas Alto Moncayo 2011 Veraton Campo de Borja ($28) 91 This 100% Old Vine Garnacha displays an opaque ruby color and aromas of dark cherry, toast and earth. It is densely flavored, showing lots of toasted vanilla, oak and dark red fruit with lovely extract. A delicious wine with firm tannins and ripeness on the finish. **Bodegas Alto Moncayo 2011 Alto Moncayo Campo de Borja ($45) 93** The 2011 Alto Moncayo is also a 100% old vine Garnacha and offers aromas of kirsch and chocolate with a hint of vanilla on the nose. On the palate it is rich and intensely flavored with sweet and ripe tasting cherry and vanilla. It is fairly well balanced dispite a high alcohol level (16%). A real crowd pleaser. **Bodegas Alto Moncayo 2011 Aquilon Campo de Borja ($155) 93** The Aquilon is the top of the line Alto Moncayo. Produced from 100% old vines Garnacha, it offers abundant dark cherry kirsch and rich toasted oak on the nose. It is soft on entry and lush on the palate with good balance, although high in alcohol (16.5 alc.) Mouth filling and layered, the Aquilon is a big, complex and flavorful wine with sweet earthy notes on the finish. ***Importer:*** Fine Estates from Spain

Calatayud

With its hot summers and cold winters, Calatayud is also a prime growing area for Garnacha. Its rugged terrains

have generally poor and rocky soils. The vineyards in the region are often old [50+ years] and at high altitudes from 550 to 1,040 meters with good exposure. Garnacha represents 54% of total red wine plantings followed by Tempranillo and Syrah. Most wines are produced in stainless steel to preserve fruit and minerality. Calatayud Superior is made from low yielding, old vines, 85% Garnacha and 15% other varieties. The wines are fruit rich with intense black cherries, mocha, spice, high licorice, black pepper and hints of earth.

Bodegas Breca 2012 Garnacha de Fuego Tierra de Aragon ($9) 90 This is a delicious 100% Garnacha offered at an amazing price. It has a medium dark red color and displays aromas of red berries, pomegranates and plum with a hint of earth, minerals and toast. It is medium weight with a soft texture, firm tannins and a medium long finish. A superb value. Sourced from a 650 acre vineyard of old vine Grenache of Bodegas Breca, founded by importer Jorge Ordonez. **Bodegas Breca 2010 Breca Calatayud ($16) 91** The 2010 Bodegas Breca is also 100% old vines Garnacha planted between 1925 and 1945. It reveals purity of dark red fruit aromas and flavors of black raspberry, plum and earth. Also sourced from the Bodegas Breca's vineyards, the grape yields are well under 1 ton per acre and are from rugged steep hillsides. It is fairly tannic at this stage of development but is delicious and drinkable now. It is richer and more complex than the Garnacha de Fuego and well worth the slightly higher price. Great value. ***Importer:*** Fine Estates from Spain

Las Rocas de San Alejandro 2009 Garnacha Viñas Viejas Catalayud ($20) 90 Dark ruby. Very ripe and pure red fruit on the nose with honeyed oak. Soft and velvet on the palate with dark red cherry and raspberry fruit, with notes of loam. Shows good depth, excellent structure and a good long finish with firm tannins. A delicious wine with high alcohol (15%). Great value. ***Importer:*** E & J Gallo

The Show 2010 Garnacha Calatayud ($13) 91 The 2010 Show Garnacha is a bold and delicious wine made from 40+ year old Garnacha vineyards in Calatayud. International in style, it offers spicy blackberry aromas with hints of chocolate, earth, spice and oak on the nose. It is big, soft and lush on the palate with layers of dark fruit, a soft texture and a long finish. ***Importer:*** Trinchero Family Estates

Ribera del Duero and the Duero River Valley

Like its Ebro counterpart to the east, the Duero River defines important wine regions to the west. The Duero starts not far from the Ebro and flows west through the Castilla-Leôn Autonomous Community before entering Portugal where it changes name to the Douro and enters the Atlantic at Oporto. The most famous wine region in the Duero River Valley is the Ribera del Duero DO, which is bisected by the Duero River.

The Ribera del Duero is hilly country with vineyards scattered among fields of grain and orchards. The river has contributed to the great diversity of soils in the region, offering an almost perfect soil structure for vine growing with loose, easily worked soils. Ribera del Duero has several advantages as a wine region. It has a relatively high altitude; its vineyards on average are planted at heights from 2,500 to 2,650 feet above sea level, which creates cooler growing conditions. It has a continental climate with hot summer days, cold nights and moderately low rainfall, and the ummers are usually hot and dry.

Abadia Retuerta 2009 Seleccion Especial Sardon de Duero ($37) 92 Abadia Retuerta is located in Sardon de Duero just outside of the Ribera del Duero DO. The Seleccion Especial displays a beautiful opaque purple color and aromas of ripe dark fruit, black olive and a hint of violets. It is elegant and refined on the palate with concentrated flavors and mineral notes, firm round tannins and a persistent finish.

Bodegas y Viñedos Aalto Aalto is an exciting wine project launched in 1999 between the talented Mariano Garcia who made wine at Vega Sicilia for 30 years and businessman Javier Zaccagnini. The wines are sourced from low-yielding old vineyards (45 to 100 years) in Valladolid and Burgos. Wine is made at a state of the art underground gravity-fed winery. ***Importer:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Aalto 2012 Ribera del Duero ($40) 90 Aalto is a stylish and fruit forward wine offering a combination of flavors: plum, black cherry, baking spice, tobacco, toasted oak and bitter chocolate. Rich and complex with outstanding extract, it spends 20 months in 85% French oak, half new and half used and 15% American oak. Its bold flavors and fruitiness makes it a perfect wine for grilled lamb.

Bodegas Alejandro Fernández/Tinto Pesquera Founded in 1972 by Alejandro Fernandez, Tinto Pesquera was among the very first wines of Ribera del Duero to attract enthusiastic praise from international wine critics. Its combination of bold fruit flavors, earth notes and overall elegance have made it an iconic wine in Ribera del Duero. We have been admirers of Tinto Pesquera and other wines of Alejandro Fernandez for many years. 2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the first export of Tinto Pesquera which is now sold in 70 countries. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines of Spain

Bodegas Alejandro Fernandez Tinto Pesquera Crianza ($60) 92+ This 100% Tempranillo exhibits ripe aromas of dark plum and earth. It is densely flavored with rich blackberry fruit and toasted oak. Aged 18 months in oak, American (90%) and French (10%) it exhibits forest floor, earthy feral notes on the mid palate with firm round tannins on the finish. **Bodegas Alejandro Fernández Tinto Pesquera 2003 Pesquera Janus Gran Reserva Ribera del Duero ($200) 94** The 2003 Janus Gran Reserva is one of Tinto Pesquera's greatest wines. Although it is 15 years of age, it retains much of its plum fruit flavors and reveals remarkable acidity and balance. It is soft and elegant on the palate and show great class although it's development has peaked.

Bodegas y Viñedos Alion Alion is produced by Vega Sicilia under the direction of winemaker Xavier Ausas. Launched with the 1991 vintage, this 100 percent Tempranillo is an elegant and complex wine made in a modern style. ***Importer:*** Elite Wines

Alion 2009 Ribera del Duero ($110) 92 The 2009 Alion is dense, opaque and and earthy. Dark red in color it offers aromas of black cherry and plum. It is beautifully balanced and powerful with a silky texture and nicely integrated oak and fruit. Still youthful and tannic, this wine will improve with age and provide a lot of drinking pleasure.

Bodegas Arrocal This small family estate is located in the province of Burgos. The winery produced its first bottlings in 2001. The wines are made by Isaac Fernandez, a talented winemaker responsible for the wines of several other wineries in the region. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Bodegas Arrocal 2013 Ribera del Duero ($) 90+** Plum and dark berries, soft on the attack, rich and concentrated on the palate with hints of black pepper. Lingering finish. Fruit forward, toasted oak. Sappy, earthy. **Bodegas Arrocal 2010 Bodegas Arrocal Ribera del Duero ($) 91 Excellent aromas, fragrant blackberry fruit, light and dry on the midpalate without a lot of flavor. Rather disappointing for lack of concentrated flavors. Tannins are very dry also. Medium weight, red currant. Needs time. Disjointed. Feminine.

Bodegas Arrocal 2010 Seleccion Ribera del Duero ($) 92 Hints of eucalyptus or resin on the nose with more toasted oak aromas and flavors. Rich and densely flavored, perhaps a bit more complex than the regular Arrocal. Firm tannins long finish. Layered with purple flowers. Toasty oak, dark plum

Bodegas Los Astrales Owned by the Romera de la Cruz family- a family of three generation of wine growers, Bodegas Los Astrales began operation at the end of 2000. Astrales owns 15 hectares located in Ribera del Duero. No chemicals are used in the vineyard beyond sulphur and that only if absolutely necessary. Eduardo Garcia serves as Technical Director. Eduardo is the enologist at Mauro, Maurodos (family estates) and partner at Leda and the Paixar. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Astrales 2011 Ribera del Duero ($70) 92 The 2011 Astrales is crafted from pure Tempranillo and exhibits an opaque ruby color and spicy black cherry with notes of toasted oak on the nose. It is beautifully balanced and delicious with round tannins and a pleasant finish. **Astrales 2011 Christina Ribera del Duero ($90) 95** The 2011 Christina is sourced from a 90-year old single vineyard. Denser and more concentrated than the regular Australes, and fermented and aged in new oak, it offers a silky texture, rich density of dark fruit flavors with toasted oak notes and minerals, and a long finish. Only 350 cases produced.

Bodegas Callejo The Callejo family has been growing grapes for 4 generations, all the while maintaining traditional practices. The family owns 60 Has (150 acres) in Sotillo de la Ribera, the very heart of Ribera del Duero. The estate is planted with some of the best vines in the region, ranging in age from 25 to 65 years. The vines are also among the highest planted in the region, at almost 2800 feet, and are organically and dry-farmed (don't receive any artificial irrigation). No pesticides or fertilizers are used on the estate. Jose Felix serves as winemaker. Felix Callejo and Grand Callejo are among its finest wines and ones which we regularly enjoy tasting. ***Importer:*** Artisan Collection

Bodegas Callejo 2011 Felix Callejo Ribera del Duero 92 The Felix Callejo is an elegant wine showing concentrated dark mulberry fruit flavors with a hint of baking spices and graphite. It shows good balance, soft round tannins and lingering acidity on the finish. **Bodegas Callejo 2009 Gran Callejo 93** The Gran Callejo is even more elegant on the palate. It exhibits silky elegance and refinement and is nicely focused with red and black fruit flavors, smoke and spice. It shows firm round tannins and a long finish.

Bodegas Condado de Haza is a 225-hectare estate located on southern facing hillsides between the towns of La Hora and Roa. It is owned and operated by Alejandro Fernandez of Pesquera. The wines of this property are dark in color, highly concentrated and generally need cellar time to evolve before drinking. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines of Spain

Bodegas Condado de Haza 2010 Condado de Haza Ribera del Duero ($25) 89 The Condado de Haza is 100% Tem-

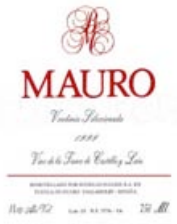
pranillo and offers pure black fruit aromas and flavors with a hints of earth and feral notes. It has good intensity of flavor on the palate with firm round tannins and a persistent finish. **Bodegas Condado de Haza 2003 Alenza Gran Reserva Ribera del Duero ($100) 92** The 2003 Alenza Gran Reserva displays aromas of ripe plum/black cherry and earth. Aged 30 months in oak, it is soft and elegant on the palate with ripe dark cherry fruit, round tannins and modest grip on the finish. It is aging gracefully.

Bodegas Dominio de Atauta 2004 Atauta Ribera del Duero ($41) 90 The 2004 Dominio de Atauta is sourced from ungrafted pre-phylloxera bush vines. It is dark ruby purple in color with aromas of black cherry fruit, leather, (touch of the "rubber boot.") and smoke. On the palate it displays more red and blackberry fruit, wood spice and ripe tannins on the finish. This is a wine that needs time to show all of its complexity. ***Importer:*** A Rare Wine Co. Selection

Hacienda Monestario 2010 Crianza Ribera del Duero ($48) 92+ The 2010 Crianza is a blend of 75% Tempranillo and 25% of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Malbec. It is an earthy yet elegant wine offering flavors of dark plum and toast on the palate. Aged 18 months in French oak, it is beautifully balanced with light tannic grip and long on the palate. Drink 2015-2025. ***Importer:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Dominio de Pingus Dominio de Pingus is one of the most famous estates in Ribera del Duero. Owned by Peter Sisseck, an oenologist originally from Denmark, it was started in 1995 and currently produces three main wines, the most noteworthy (and expensive) of which is the flagship, Pingus. The estate has been biodynamically farmed since 2000 and the Pingus vines, 100% Tempranillo, are 70+ years old and densely planted with yields below one ton per acre. We were initially introduced to these fabulous wines on our first trip to Ribera del Duero back in 2007 and have tasted some of them more recently. ***Importer:*** Rare Wine Company

Pingus 2006 Pingus ($750-$900) Very dark purple with notes of dark fruits and wood; it has a slightly reductive nose at this stage requiring time and oxygen. The wine has a wonderful soft plush attack, but has a slightly tannic, oaky finish. This wine has all the raw ingredients, but needs more maturation time. (Our first Pingus tasted while still in barrel) **Pingus Flor de Pingus 2012 Ribera del Duero ($100) 93** Blackberry, violets and toast on the nose. Soft and elegant on the palate with excellent acidity. Firm round tannins and long finish. Silky soft, nicely textured. Grapite, black currant, **Pingus PSI 2012 Ribera del Duero ($) 91+** Pleasant and more red-fruited, perhaps than most Ribera del Duero wines. Also less ripeness and more balance and higher acidity. A more modern wine, perhaps. Black berry fruit flavors, however, with good balance and finish.



Bodegas Mauro This outstanding winery is located in Tudela de Duero just outside of the Ribera del Duero DO, Bodegas Mauro is distinguished by its high quality red wines and small production. Mauro's estate consists of 45 hectares of densely planted Tempranillo and Syrah. It is owned and operated by the talented Mariano Garcia, who served as winemaker at Vega Sicilia for 30 years ***Importer:*** Elite Wines

Mauro 2011 Vino de La Tierra Castilla y León ($) 93 Opaque ruby. Earthy and minerally. Loamy, cassis violets. Concentrated, unctuous, fresh, not overly ripe. Intensity of flavor. Beauitifully balanced. **Mauro 2010 Terreus Vino de La Tierra Castilla y León ($) 94** Paraje de Cueva Baja. Longer aging and special parcel. 2-3 years in barrel. Richer and more intensely flavored, dense oak, big and beautiful with great intensity of flavor, perfectly balanced. Soft and firm tannins, violets. Would benefit from time in bottle. **Mauro 2009 Vendimia Seleccionada Vino del la Tierra Castilla y León ($) 95** Opaque ruby. Elegant and refine mouth feel. Silky, toasted oak, rich and refined. Rich and densely flavored with coffee, espresso, truffles.

Bodegas Vega Sicilia This winery is one of the most esteemed in Ribera del Duero, if not in all of Spain. Founded in 1864, it vineyards which today total 250 acres were originally planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties and Tempreanillo, which are still being used today. Vega Sicilia produces two main labels: Unico, its signature Gran Reserva, released 10 to 15 years after bottling, and Vlabuena, both blends of Tempranillo and Bordeaux varietals. The winery has had many notable winemakers over the years including Mariano Garcia (1966-1996) who went on to produce Mauro and other outstanding Spanish wines. The IWR has conducted many tastings of Vega Sicilia over the years including a vertical tasting held in 2007. ***Importers:*** Michael Skurnik Wines and Elite Wines

Bodegas Vega Sicilia 2001 Valbuena Ribera del Duero ($140) 92 The entry level wine from Vega is called Valbuena 5, named after the town of Valbuena and 5 because it is aged for 5 years in oak. In 2001, Unico was not produced and the wine normally used to produce Unico went into making Valbuena in that year. The 2001 Valbuena went through a complicated period of ageing: five months in large 20,000 liter oak foundres; 16 months in new oak barrels (60% American, 40% French); five months in old barrels; then finally back into the large oak foundres for marrying. Once bottled the wine was kept at the bodega for a further two years before release. Typically 80% Tempranillo and 20% Merlot and Malbec. The 2001 Valbuena is dark ruby with a touch of brick on the rim. It has a sweet oaky nose, ripe cherry fruit with a note of citrus like acidity, ripe tannins, and a lovely finish. **Bodegas Vega Sicilia 1994 Unico Ribera del Duero ($295) 99** The recently released 1994 Unico (these wines are not released in order of vintage) is dark ruby with a pink rim and has a rich and inensely aromatic and perfumy nose of ripe black currants

and oak spice. On the palate it reveals great depth and complexity with more sweet and lush ripe balck and red fruit flavors, notes of licorice and smoke, as well as lovely round tannins and a lingering finish ***Importer:*** Christopher Cannan, Europvin, Bordeaux www.eropvin.com

Toro

After Ribera del Duero, the Duero River continues its journey passing through, first, Rueda and then the Toro DO, which extends westward close to the border with Portugal. Toro is most famous for its old vine Tinta de Toro, the local name for Tempranillo. These gnarled bush vines produce wines of deep color and concentrated flavors.

Bodegas Pintia 2008 Toro ($80) 91 The 2008 Pintia exhibits an opaque ruby color and earthy spicy aromas. It is elegant and refined on the palate with rich dark black cherry fruit flavors and hints of earth, vanilla and toast. 100% Tinta de Toro, it is big shouldered, dense and spicy with lots of tannic grip. Aged in new oak, 70% French and 30% American. Drink 2017-2027 ***Importer:*** Elite Wines

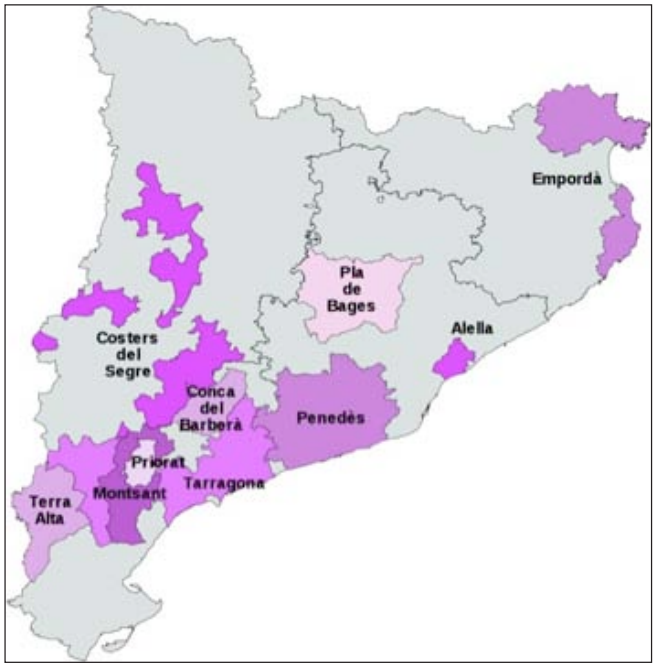
Bodegas y Vinedos Marundos This winery is a joint endeavor between former winemaker of Vega Sicilia, Mariano Garicia and son, Educardo Garcia Montana. It consists of 80 hectares of vineyards of low-yielding bush vines (some un-grafted) of Tinta de Toro (Tempranillo) and Garnacha ranging in age up to 70 year old with an average age of 35 years. The winery produces two wines, San Roman and Prima. San Roman, one of our favorites from Toro, is an amazingly good wine, rich in flavor, beautifully structured and elegant. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Bodegas y Vinedos Marundos San Roman 2011 Toro ($45) 93 The 2011 San Roman displays an opaque ruby color and is soft on the attack with very attractive Tempranillo (Tinta de Toro) fruit and sweet oak flavors, suggesting hints of caramel and ripe red plum. Aged two years in French oak, it is nicely balanced and approachable, it has good acidity and balance, firm tannins. and a refined finish.

Bodegas Elias Mora This Bodega, founded in 2000 is situated in the famous village of San Roman de Hornija in the Toro D.O. It is managed by Victoria Benavides who follows sustainable winemaking practices. The winery owns 8 Ha. (17.6 acres) of vineyards planted at 2,600 feet above sea level. The soil comprises clay and limestone The winery is named after Elias Mora, the man who owned some of the winery's core vineyards. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Bodegas Elias Mora 2009 2VPremium Toro ($140) 93 The 2V Premium is a magnificent wine produced from the oldest vines of the Senda del Lobo vineyard. It offers spicy, savory, black raspberry and cassis aromas on the nose. On the palate it is silky and pure revealing lots of toasted coconut oak with huge extract and big tannins on the finish. A delicious, mouth filling wine. **Bodegas Elias Mora 2010 Gran Elias Mora Toro ($90) 92** This is a rich and densely flavored wine sourced from the 70-year old Senda del Lobo vineyard. Fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged in oak, it offers fragrant aromas of red and black berry fruit with toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it is soft and elegant revealing dark berry, perfect balance and a lingering finish. ***Importer:*** Grapes of Spain

Priorat and Catalonia



Catalonia is a region distinct from the rest of Spain in terms of history, language and culture. A large and diverse region for wine production owing to differences in geography, climate and soils, Catalonia consists of 12 wine-producing appellations. One of the most important of these appellations is Priorat, one of Spain's most spectacular wine successes of the past quarter century. We told this story in detail in Report #28 *The Wines of Priorat.*

Thirty years ago, Priorat was impoverished. Its wines were sold in bulk and unappreciated by the wine trade. Today it is home to 93 wineries and 616 growers who together produce some of the world's most special wines from low yielding, old vine Garnacha and Cariñena (also called Samso in Catalan and Carignan in English) planted in the unique, infertile licorella (schist) soils of the region. The story behind Priorat's rebirth and meteoric rise to fame is fascinating.

As is often the case, it took the foresight of a few exceptional individuals to realize Priorat's rebirth. Rene Barbier is the region's first and foremost pioneer. He and his fellow pioneers Alvaro Palacios, Daphne Glorian, José Luis Pérez and a few others, saw the potential of Priorat in its unique terroir and its rich treasure of scraggly old Garnacha and Cariñena bush vines. It is these vines that produced the wines immediately recognized by the world's foremost writers and reviewers as being truly exceptional in character and quality.

Alvaro Palacios One of Spain's best known producers, Álvaro Palacios crafts some of the finest wines in Priorat. His top wines are produced from old vineyards. His Les Terrasses, Finca Dofí, and L'Ermita have achieved cult status. Even the affordably priced and more accessible Camins del Priorat is characterized by Palacios' style of powerful but restrained elegance. Palacios left Spain to study enology in Bordeaux, where he worked with Chateau Petrus winemaker Jean Claude Berrquet. When he returned to Spain, he landed in Priorat, not Rioja. Palacios is now considered to be one of the new generation of Spanish winemakers. ***Importer:*** The Rare Wine Company

Alvaro Palacios 2012 Dofi Priorat ($85) 94 A beautiful blend of Garnacha and Cabernet Sauvignon with superb purity of dark red fruit flavors and a hint of toast. Rich and flavorful on the palate with an elegant mouth feel, a velvet silky texture and perfect balance. Tannins are firm but round. Will ben¬efit from a year or more of aging but enjoyable now. **Alvaro Palacios 2010 L' Ermita Priorat ($795) 96** L'Ermita is one of the most important wines produced in Spain today. It is sourced from a steep northeast-facing Garnacha vineyard reputedly planted between 1900 and 1940. The wine is virtually 100% Garancha and reveals great purity and elegance. It is soft and perfectly balanced with a dark ruby robe and aromas of pure ripe red berry fruit. Its purity, power and elegance define it as a very special wine. Only a few barrels produced annually.

Clos I Terrasses Clos I Terrasses is owned and operated by Daphne Glorian who purchased her vineyard in Gratallops in the late 1980s at the urging of friends, Rene Barbier and Álvaro Palacios. Her steep Escalas vineyard of licorella soil contains old and new vines of Garnacha and other varieties. In addition to Clos Eramus, Daphne produces Laurel (Daphne in Greek Mythology) from selections of high quality younger grapes and from declassified Clos Erasmus barrels. Her wines are among the finest produced in Priorat. ***Importer:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Clos I Terrases 2012 Clos Erasmus Priorat (Gratallops) ($175) 96 Clos Erasmus is one the finest wines produced in Priorat. It is sourced from four small biodynamically farmed vineyards in Gratallops. The 2012 is a blend of 80% Garnacha and 20% Syrah. Still in the prime of youth, and in need of time to mature, it displays a dark red color and spicy and floral aromas of black cherry, plum and toast. It is highly concentrated on the palate with a lovely texture and very young firm fine-grained tannins. A great wine in the early stages of development. Drink over the next two decades. **Clos I Terrases 2012 Laurel Priorat (Gratallops) ($50) 93** The 2012 Laurel is a charming blend of 75% Garnacha, 20% Syrah and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. It is dark ruby in color and offers very fragrant aromas of red berry fruit. It is refined and fresh on the palate with a velvet texture, excellent bal¬ance and a persistent finish. The grapes for Laurel are from the younger vines of the estate

(average 15 years) and of declassified wine from barrels of Clos Erasmus.

Clos Figueras Christopher Cannan purchased this estate in 1997 on the advice of René Barbier of Clos Mogador. The vineyards cover 10 hectares which consists of 20 year old Garnacha and Cariñena vines and the remainder, about 50% Grenache, 20% Syrah, some Cabernet Sauvignon and Mourvèdre that were planted in 1998 and are used for the production of Font de la Figuera. The location is just to the north of Gratallops on terraced slopes of pure schist, the soil responsible for the finest wines of Priorat. Both the Font de la Figuera Blanco and Clos Figueras are magnificent wines. Christopher and Charlotte Cannan, Rene and Isabelle Barbier and Fernando and Marta Zamora also produce the amazingly good Espectacle, a 100% Garnacha from a 2-hectare 100-year old vineyard in the D.O. Montsant. ***Importers:*** Michael Skurnik Wines, Elite Wines

Clos Figueras 2009 Priorat ($85) 93 The 2011 Clos Figueras is an elegant and refined blend of old vine Garnacha and Cariñena with small amounts of other varieties. It is soft on the attack with a hint of sweet fruit, minerals and slate. It is nicely evolved with red and black fruit flavors, soft round tannins and a long finish. **Clos Figueras 2012 Serras del Priorat Priorat ($25) 91** The Serra is a youthful wine offering pleasant aromas and flavors of blackberry with hints of smoke and earth. A blend of Gar¬nacha, Syrah and Cariñena, it is high in acidity and has lively fruit flavors on the palate. A lovely entry level wine.

Clos Mogador

Located in Gratallops, in the heart of the Priorat hills, Clos Mogador is one of Priorat's best known wineries. Established by René Barbier in the late 1980s, it sources its grapes from a 20-hectare vineyard of schistous slate and quartz soil. The wines of Clos Magador are among the very finest of Priorat. In addition to its flagship wine, Clos Mogador, it crafts a lovely Garnacha Blanca white blend called Nelin, a powerful single vineyard blend, Las Manyetes, and the youthful full-flavored Solertia. ***Importer:*** Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY , Elite Wines, Lorton, VA

Clos Mogador 2011 Nelin Blanco Priorat ($50) 93+ The Clos Mogador Nelin Blanco is a highly expressive blend of Garnacha Blanca, Macabeo and a touch of Viognier. It displays persistent mineral notes with tropical fruit and toasted oak. It is rich and phenolic with excellent ripeness and even an oxidative note, perhaps. It is very round, lush ad elegant and clearly from Priorat terroir. **Clos Mogador 2011 Priorat ($110) 95** Rene Barbier's 2011 Clos Mogador displays ripe and complex aromas of slate, minerals, dark cherry and plum with notes of garrigue. A blend of Garna¬cha, Cariñena, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, it is very fine and elegant on the palate with superb texture and a strong sense of place. It also shows good acidity and per¬sistence on the finish and should drink well for a decade or more.

Ferrer Bobet Ferrer Bobet is a new joint venture between Sergi Ferrer-Salat, owner of a large Catalan pharmaceutical company and Raul Bobet, famed oenologist at Bodega Torres. The partners own 20 hectares of newly planted steep hillside vineyards and a modern gravity-fed winery in Porrera. The winery currently purchases high quality fruit from selected growers and produces two outstanding wines. This is one of the leading new wineries of Priorat. ***Importer:*** Vintus

Ferrer Bobet 2008 Priorat ($45) 93 The 2008 Ferrer Bobet is a blend of two-thirds Cariñena and one-third Garnacha. It is a young but very elegant wine with lots of complexity and richness. It offers ripe black and red fruit aromas that are mirrored on the palate with underlying notes of slate and minerals. It is beautifully structured but still quite young and rather tight. The potential is there but the wine needs time to come together. **Ferrer Bobet 2008 Seleccio Especial Priorat ($100) 95** The top of the line Seleccio Especial is sourced from 110 year old vines from a single vineyard. Made of 100% Cariñena, it is soft, lush and full bodied with ripe blueberry, black cherry and blackberry fruit. Aged for 15 months in new French oak barrels, it is nicely balanced with notes of minerals and soft round tannins. This gorgeous wine is perfectly balanced and sustains it rich fruit, minerals and light oak character through to the finish. A wine that will age well through the next decade.

Mas d' En Compte This estate is owned by the Santenis family one of the oldest growers in Priorat. Until 1995 their production was sold to the local coop after which they established their own winery, Mas d' En Compte. The estate is currently managed by Joan Sangenis who also makes the wine. Their vineyards contain many small parcels of 100+ year old vines of Garnacha and Cariñena. The 2006 Planots, a blend of Garnacha and Cariñena from 100+ year old low yielding grapes is amazing. ***Importer:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections Charlotte, NC

Mas D'En Compte 2008 Black Slate Porrera Priorat ($23) 90 The grapes for this bottling are sourced from Porrera, the easternmost village of the region. The growing area is high altitude with cool temperatures and canyon-like topography. The wine reveals light raspberry aromas and flavors with prominent minerality. It is nicely structured with a round mouth feel, ripe tannins and a long finish. **Mas D'En Compte 2006 Planots Priorat ($110) 94** The 2006 Planots is a blend of 50% Garnacha and 50% Cariñena. It offers flavorful red berries and minerals, and a velvet texture. Aged for 16 months in new French oak, it exhibits perfect balance and purity of flavor. It is sourced from a single vineyard of 105 years old vines. A truly magnificent wine. balanced.

Mas Martinet is a family winery established in 1986 by Josep Lluis Pérez, a prominent leader in Priorat's wine industry. Located in Gratallops, Mas Martinet owns 60 hectares of organically worked vineyards of which 15 are currently planted in 5 different estates, each the source of a different wine. Since 2000, Sara Pérez, daughter of Josep Lluis Pérez and a trained enologist, has been responsible for winery operations. The wines of Mas Martinet are among the finest produced in Priorat. ***Importer:*** Weygandt- Metzler

Mas Martinet 2008 Camí Pesseroles Priorat ($93) 93+ The 2008 Cami Pesseroles is a magnificent blend of 90 year-old vines of 60% Garnacha and 40% Cariñena from a two hectare low yielding hillside vineyard. Medium dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of dark cherryfruit and minerals on the nose. These are followed on the palate by densely concentrated red and black ripe spicy fruit with a soft texture and a long finish. **Mas Martinet 2008 Clos Martinet Priorat ($72) 93** The Clos Martinet is this estate's flagship wine. It is normally a blend of 80% Garnacha 15% Cariñena and a small amount of Syrah. Dark ruby in color, it is elegant and spicy on the attack and offers dark red berry fruit aromas with slate, black pepper and earth notes. Aged for 22 months in 300 liter barrels, the wine exhibits firm round tannins and a powerful finish. Still young, the wine will benefit from further aging in the bottle over the next few years and will provide drinking pleasure for well over a decade. The grapes for this wine are sourced from the 6.5 hectare Finca Martinent.

Celler Pasanau Celler Pasanau is a small family winery founded in 1995 by Juan Pasanau in the village of La Morera de Montsant. The family previously sold most of its grapes to the local cooperative. It has 12 + hecatares of vineyards of different soil types located in the foothills of the Sierra de Montsant. The wines are well made and of excellent quality. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines

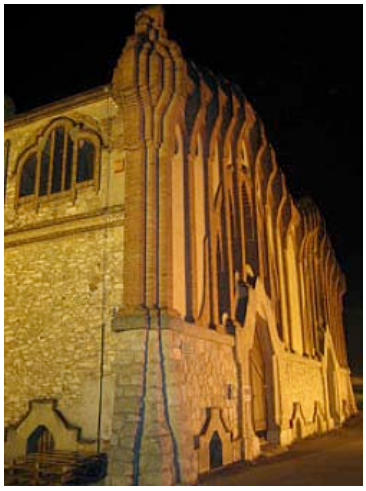
Pasanau 2008 Ceps Nous Priorat ($28) 90+ The medium ruby Ceps Nous is a lovely wine produced from young vines. A blend of 70% Garnacha Tinta, 20% Mazuelo, 4% Syrah, and 6% of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, it offers ripe red and black fruit, slate and minerals and reductive nuances on the nose. This is followed by a ripe and richly flavored palate with more dark fruit flavors, chocolate, balsamic notes and minerals. Aged for up to 12 months in used barrels, it has a silky texture and perfect balance with ripe tannins and a long finish. **Pasanau 2006 Finca La Planeta ($48) 90** Finca la Planet is a blend of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon and 12 % Garnacha. Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of black fruit, smoked meat, herbs, and earth. Aged for 14 months in French barriques and other barrels, it is full-bodied and well-rounded on the palate, and has powerful flavors of blackberry, smoke, petrol, cardamom and figs through to the finish.

Terroir al Límit Founded in 2001 in Torroja, this boutique winery is owned and operated by the former chef, Dominik Huber. The wines are produced from very old vines of Garnacha and Cariñena sourced from the winery's 10-hectares. Winemaking is non-interventionist with the goal to allow the fruit and the wine to express the terroir. Stylistically the wines are quintessential Priorat combining power and elegance with a strong sense of place—the Torroja Vi de Vila. This winery is one of the top producers in Priorat. I***mporter:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Terroir al Limit 2011 Dits del Terra (Torroja) Priorat ($85) 93 The 2011 Dits del Terra is 100% Carignan with a perfumed nose and flamboyant red raspberry, earth and red cassis aromas. Aged for 24 months in an 1800 L foudre, it boasts a velvet texture, rich and pure mouth filling flavors and firm tannins on the finish. **Terroir al Limit 2011 Les Manyes Priorat (Torroja) ($300) 96** The Les Maynes is a magnificent 100% Garnacha sourced from a 55-year old single vineyard situated at 850 me¬ters in the cool sub-zone of Scala Dei. Made in open top fermenters, it displays earthy dark red aromas with hints of cherry fruit and rose petals. It has a velvet texture and is densely concentrated with layers of fruit and minerals and has a firm finish.

Vall Llach These are the wines of the Catalan singer and songwriter Lluís Llach who has been producing wines in Priorat since 1998. Luis owns 33 hectares of old estates or "trossos" in Porrera and Torroja and newly planted vineyards (6 to 12 years of age) of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. The wines are big in structure and rich in flavor combining traditional grapes of the Priorat with Bordeaux varietals. The Indus and the Porrera are our favorites. ***Importer:*** Folio Fine Wine Partners

Other DOs of Catalonia



Catalonia's unique character within Spain extends even to its winery architecture, influenced by the great Catalan architect Gaudi. During the 20th century, after the tumult of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, the Catalan wine industry became one of the leaders of the innovation behind the Spanish wine revolution, embracing modern winemaking techniques and increasing the plantings of international grape varieties. Many producers, especially the smaller artisanal ones have a strong passion and commitment to local tradition and culture. They make their wines from local varieties and follow well-established winemaking regimes. Today the Catalan

wine industry consists of very large commercial wineries, especially in Cava, family wineries, and many small artisanal wineries scattered throughout the region that are making new wave wines. We documented the tremendous progress in Catalonia in our recent Report # 42 *The Wines of Catalonia.*

Acústic One of the young talents of this rugged terrain is winemaker Albert Jane, owner of Acústic Celler which produced its first wines in 2003. Son of Benjamin Jane Ventura, founder of the famed Jané Ventura winery of Penedès. Albert worked in the family winery until he was 33 years old and fell in love with the rugged landscape, varied terroirs and ancient vineyards of Montsant. He produces four wines from local varieties, all made with great care and commitment to quality. ***Importer:*** Steve Miles Selections

Acustic Celler 2011 Brao Montsant ($35) 93 The 2011 Brao is an elegant blend of 70% Cariñena and Garnacha sourced from 60+ year-old vines. It is very ripe and lush with pure vibrant fruit aromas and flavors. It is soft and round on the palate with good density and firm tannins on the finish. Acustic Celler 2010 Vinyes Vellas Nobles Montsant ($25) 91+ The Vinyes Vellas Nobles is a blend of old vines Garnacha and Cariñena. It is a delicious wine with a medium ruby color and a lovely nose of aromatic dark red berry fruit and spice. It is nicely concentrated, high toned and focused on the palate with soft round tannins and a long finish. A lively and flamboyant wine.

Can Rafols dels Caus 2008 Xarello Pairal Penedès ($50) 92 The Xarello Pairal is a delicious wine of 100% Xarello. Medium-yellow in color, it offers aromas of dried yellow fruit, honey with a hint of olive. Aged in new Chestnut barrels it is big and full in the mouth with good acidity and considerable depth, breath and complexity. The vines of the estate are 55 years old and are farmed biodynamically. **Can Rafols dels Caus 2010 La Calma Penedès ($55) 92+** La Calma is a 100% Chenin Blanc, a rather rare variety for Catalonia. Medium yellow straw in color, it exhibits gorgeous perfume, minerals and a hint of flint and smoke. Is has superb balance with excellent acidity and freshness, despite spending almost three years in bottle before release. A superb wine. ***Importer:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Josep Grau Viticultor (Celler Dosterras) Josep Grau, the owner of Celler Dosterras, is among Catalonia's top winemakers. An enologist with training in France's Rhone Valley, he began producing wine in the 1990s from 40 to 100+ yearold vineyard parcels situated in the village areas of Marça, Capçanes and Falset in Priorat prior to the creation of the D.O. Montsant. His vineyards situated at 350 and 550 meters above sea level now total close to 14 hectares also contain licorella or slate typical of Priorat soils. He follows sustainable vineyard management practice to preserve the biodiversity of the area. His passion is Garnacha and his finest wine is called Dosterras, a100% old vines Garnacha sourced from 100+ year old vines. It is a wine of power, elegance and purity. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines

Dosterras 2011 Vespres Montsant ($26) 90 The 2011 Vespres is ruby red and a blend of 80% old vines Garnacha and 20% Mazuelo. Sourced from a one hectare parcel of 90-110 year old vines, it offers aromas of black cherry, plum, spice and lots of sweet oak. It is ripe and mouth filling with good intensity of fruit and oak flavors. The tannins are firm, and the oak is rather dominant throughout. Needs time to settle down and should improve with age. **Dosterras 2011 Montsant ($58) 92** Medium ruby purple. 100% Garnatxa sourced from the 3 acre plot Les Taules with vines 100+ years of age. Aromas of dark cherries. fruit forward and elegant on the palate, it is medium-weight with good intensity of pure black cherry fruit and hints of earth and smoke. Aged for 16 months in French oak of different sizes, it shows good acidity, excellent balance, firm tannins and a long finish.

Espectacle 2009 Espectacle del Montsant ($100) 94 The 2009 Espectacle del Montsant is a fruit rich wine offering black cherry and herbs on the nose and the palate. It has impressive intensity of flavor, a velvet mouth feel and perfect balance. You couldn't ask for more from this wine sourced from a two-hectare parcel of 100-year old Garnatxa owned by Christopher and Charlotte Cannan, Rene and Isabelle Barbier and Fernando and Marta Zamora. ***Importer:*** Michael Skurnik Wines and Elite Wines.

Torres Founded in 1870 by Jaime and Miguel Torres in Vilafranca, Torres is one of Spain's largest and most prestigious family-owned wineries with 800 ha of vineyards and annual sales of 17 million bottles. Torres makes several single vineyard wines, including Cabernet Sauvignon from the 29 ha Mas la Plana vineyard with 50 year old vines. The Torres Grans Muralles, a Garnacha-based blend, is even more spectacular. Torres wines are always clean, fresh and good value. We've tasted over a dozen vintages dating back to 1975. Over time they've become more opulent and flavorful while retaining a silky elegance. ***Importer:*** Ste Michelle Wine Estates

Torres 2009 Grans Muralles Conca de Barbera ($100) 95 The 2009 Grans Muralles is an elegant and beautifully focused blend of Garnacha, Cariñena, and Monstrell, with the indigenous grapes, Samso and Garro. It boasts lovely aromas of pure ripe plum with toasted oak and herbs. It shows good density of flavor, yet is refined with excellent acidity, soft round tannins and a long finish. It will also age elegantly over the next 10 years A magnificent wine, perhaps the best of the many fine wines produced by this house. **Torres 2009 Mas La Plana Penedès ($70) 93** The 2009 Mas La Plana is a young and exuberant Cabernet Sauvignon offering dark red cassis aromas and inky succulent dark fruit flavors. It is ripe and rich in the mouth with a lush texture, good delineation, and a firm structure. This young wine will win many hearts as it has over the years.

Venus la Universal and Dido Venus La Universal These wines were created in 1999 in Montsant and are the personal project of wife and husband Sara Perez from Mas Martinet and Rene Barbier Jr. from Clos Mogador. The grapes for the Dido wines come from about four hectares of vineyards in the Falset area. The vineyards consist of decomposed granite and have poor organic matter. The grapes for Venus come from clay-calcerous soils, which contribute to a slow, elegant, and complex ripening process. These are beautifully crafted wines by this very special winemaking team. ***Importer:*** Michael Skurnik Wines and Elite Wines

Venus la Universal 2009 Venus Montsant ($35) 92 The 2009 Venus is an attractive blend of 60% old vines Carignan, 20% old vines Garnacha and 20% Syrah. Still youthful and tight on the attack, it offers delicious and concentrated flavors of black cherry fruit on the palate. Aged in 500 L foudre for 20 months, it reveals an elegant texture, round tannins, and persistent dark red fruit flavors on the finish. **Venus la Universal Dido 2011 Montsant ($35) 93** The 2011 Dido is a blend of 65% Garnacha, 20% syrah and amall amounts of Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Sourced from grapes grown on granitic soil, it a beautifully focused wine offering fresh aromas and flavors of red berry fruit, minerals and toasted oak. Aged for 18 months in concrete and foudres.

Vinyes Domènech Established in 2002, the 17-hectare organically-farmed estate is in the high-altitude Capçanes district, where strong winds are the result of a Mediterranean vacuum breeze generated by a triangle-shaped area surrounded by mountains, making this area cooler and dryer. At 550 m elevation, vineyards have a marked contrast between day/night temperatures, helping grapes ripen at a slower pace and develop high acidity. Founder Juan Ignacio Domènech utilizes organic wine growing and renewable energies. Solar power provides 80% of winery energy and 100% of water used is reclaimed rainwater. The Teixar, made of 100% Garnacha Peluda and the Furvus, a blend of Garnacha and Merlot are both outstanding wines. ***Importer:*** Ole Imports

Vinyes Domènech 2010 Teixar Montsant ($65) 94 Dark ruby and perfumy. this magnificent wine of 100% Garnatxa Peluda offers ripe black cherry fruit, graphite and hints of oak on the nose. It has a lovely elegant palate of dark ripe berry fruit, a silky mouth feel and rich flavors on the palate. Aged for 14 months in 300-liter French oak barrels, it is beautifully balanced with purity and refinement, this Garnatxa shows the potential of the grape in the right hands. Sourced from a 17-hectare organically farmed high altitude estate in the Capcanes district, windy with low yielding head pruned vines. **Vinyes Domènech 2009 Furvus Montsant ($40) 93** The 2009 Furvus is a superb blend of 70% Garnatxa and 30% Merlot. It displays a dark ruby color and aromas of black cherry fruit, slate and minerals. Aged for 12 months in used French and American oak, it is ripe and mouth filling, with medium weight and a velvet texture. It reveals spicy dark berry fruit flavors and notes of chocolate and pepper on the palate, firm tannins, and a long finish. A delicious wine.

Cava

Cava is the world's most popular Champagne-style sparkling wine. While Cava has had tremendous commercial success, its image is predominantly one of an inexpensive sparkling wine that offers tremendous value but doesn't compete with Champagne in terms of quality. As our tastings have shown over the years, Cava in fact makes some very high quality wines. They can't be directly compared with Champagne since they use different grapes and have different terroir, but Cavas are delicious on their own, and they offer excellent value at all quality levels. And the top cuvées from the best producers such as those included here offer as much enjoyment as excellent Champagne.

Gramona Located in Sant Sadurni d'Anoia in the center of the Penedès region, Gramona is one of the few remaining family owned estates making quality cava in Penedès with a focus on Xarello and Macabeo. Gramona sources its grapes from 150 hectares of estate and neighboring vineyards. Today's chef de caves is 5th generation winemaker Jaume Gramona Gramona Cavas are refreshing, refined wines with fine bubbles and the autolytic character that one associates with vintage Champagne. Gramona is a distinguished cava house and one of our favorites year after year. I***mporter:*** European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections

Gramona 2004 Celler Batlle Gran Reserva Brut Cava ($105) 94 The Celler Batlle is refined and precise with delicate, fine bubbles and a lingering, ethereal perfume. Nine years on the lees contribute to its complexity, with light autolytic notes and hints of apricot and orchard fruit. But its the freshness and focus combined with graceful elegance that defines one of Spain's very best cavas. 70% Xarello, 30% Macabeo 7g **Gramona 2006 III Lustros Gran Reserva Brut Nature Cava ($53) 92+** The single vineyard (La Plana) III Lustros reveals an incisive floral perfume and a full, intensely flavorful yet focused with a steely edge and overall finesse. Aged at least 7 years on the lees, this was Spain's first brut nature Cava, first released in 1961. But its richness belies its lack of dosage. 70% Xarello, 30% Macabeo 2 g/l RS.

Huguet 2008 Cava Gran Reserva Brut Nature ($30) 92 Golden color. Perfumed aromas with a lovely creamy mouth feel are offered on the nose and the attack. Focused and crisp with a fine texture on the palate, and notes of fennel, and lingering salinity. A blend of 60% Parellada, 20% Macabeo, and 20% Pinot Noir. Aged on the lees for 30+ months. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines

Mont Marcal Manuel Sancho founded his Finca Manileu estate and its 40 ha of estate vineyards in 1974 in the heart of the Penedès region near Vilafranca del Penedès. The vineyards are located on a 220m high chalky knoll overlooking the hamlet of Sant Marçal. The winery is located in a former convent of the Carmelitas Descalzas. 11 Today Manuel's daughter Blanca manages this distinguished estate and its winemaking. ***Importer:*** Classical Wines

Mont Marcal 2011 Cava Brut Reserva Cava/ Penedes ($15) 91 Rich, somewhat steely, creamy in the mouth, lively mousse, flavorful with a very long and pleasant finish. Traditional blend, fresh and bright acidity. pastry. Extraordinary value. Mont Marçal NV Aureum Gran Reserva Brut Nature Cava ($51) 91 The oak aged Aureum reveals richness and complexity starting with a floral and brioche nose. It offers a beautifully delineated palate with notes of orchard fruit, lightly toasted nuts, and herbs, finishing on a long, chalky note. A blend of Xarello 50%, Chardonnay 30%, and Pinot Noir 20%.

Raventos i Blanc The house of Josep Raventós i Blanc was established in 1986 in Sant Sadurni d' Anoia by Josep-Maria Raventós, a breakaway member of the Codorníu family, with the objective of making Cavas of exceptional quality. Today, Josep's grandson Pepe (shown here with his father Manuel) continues the pursuit on the estate's 120 ha of low-yielding vines planted in sedimentary calcareous soils. The Raventos vineyards are sustainably farmed and yields are kept low by aggressive green harvests. Winemaking at Raventos is as meticulous as the viticulture. Raventos is an extraordinary Cava producer and we enjoy tasting their cavas annually. ***Importers:*** Michael Skurnik Wines and Elite Wines

Raventos i Blanc 2011 de la Finca Penedes ($40) 94 de la finca is a blend of 50% Xarel-lo, 40% Macabeu, and 10% Parellada sourced from vineyard plots of old calcareous soils. It has a very special complex nose, autolytic in character with hints of minerality. It reveals toasty rich mouth feel, lush and full and elegant with grilled nuts and roasted grain. It has a long finish with lingering toastiness and elegance. **Raventos i Blanc 2012 de Nit Penedes ($30) 93** This rosé Cava displays a pael pink/salmon color with light and delicate cherry and watermelon flavors. A blend of 40% Macabeu, 30% Xarel-lo, 25% Parella and 5% Monastrell, it is beautifully focused and elegant on the palate, perfectly balanced and savory on the finish. **Raventos i Blanc 2012 L' Hereu Penedes ($22) 92** This Cava is very rich and concentrated on the nose revealing hints of citrus and stone. It is fresh and elegant on the palate with lovely texture and bright flavors of lemon and apple and pronounced minerality. Blended with 40% Macabeu, 35% Xarel-lo, and 25% Parellada..

Recaredo About 80 years ago, Cavas Recaredo was founded by Josep Mata Capellades. It is one of Spain's most unique and special Cava with Xarello fermented in oak barrels.. While preserving the traditions of the past and caring for the estate's 50 ha of vineyards, Recaredo continues to innovate. Since 1999 Recaredo has engaged in research jointly with the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid to select yeasts that come from the Recaredo vineyards. An outstanding producer.

Recaredo 2008 Brut Nature Gran Reserva Cava ($39) 93 This is a brilliant Cava—fresh and leesy with lively lemon zest, minerals and toasted notes. It reveals outstanding purity, brightness and balance with subdued fruit notes on a refined, harmonious palate. A blend of Xarello (46%), Macabeu (40%), and Parellada (14%) aged 59 months on the lees.

Sierra de Gredos

Of course, Spain has many notable wine regions outside the few covered in this 10th Anniversary Special Report. One of the more interesting ones is the Sierra de Gredos, an area that covers parts of the DOs of Vinos de Madrid, Méntrida, and Avila (Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla y León and overlaps three different Autonomous Communities.

Telmo Rodriguez is the pioneer in this area, having established his vineyard in Cebreros in Castilla y León in 1998. He was joined by Daniel Ramos of Finca Zerberos in 2005. About the same time, in 2004, Daniel Gómez Jiménez-Landi established his winery in Méntrida, and in 2007 the Bulnes created Bernabeleva in Vinos de Madrid. This group of young winemakers subsequently created the Garnachas de Gredos association.

Bernabeleva is among the finest producers in the area, located on the eastern edge of the Sierra de Gredos mountains. It was established by Juan Diez Bulnes and Santiago Matallana Bulnes in 2006 on an 80+ year-old vineyard purchased in 1923 by their great grandfather, a Madrid doctor named Vicente Alvarez-Villamil. Their vineyards are biodynamic and located in San Martin de Valdeiglesias on the far western edge of the Vinos de Madrid DO. ***Importer:*** Rare Wine Company

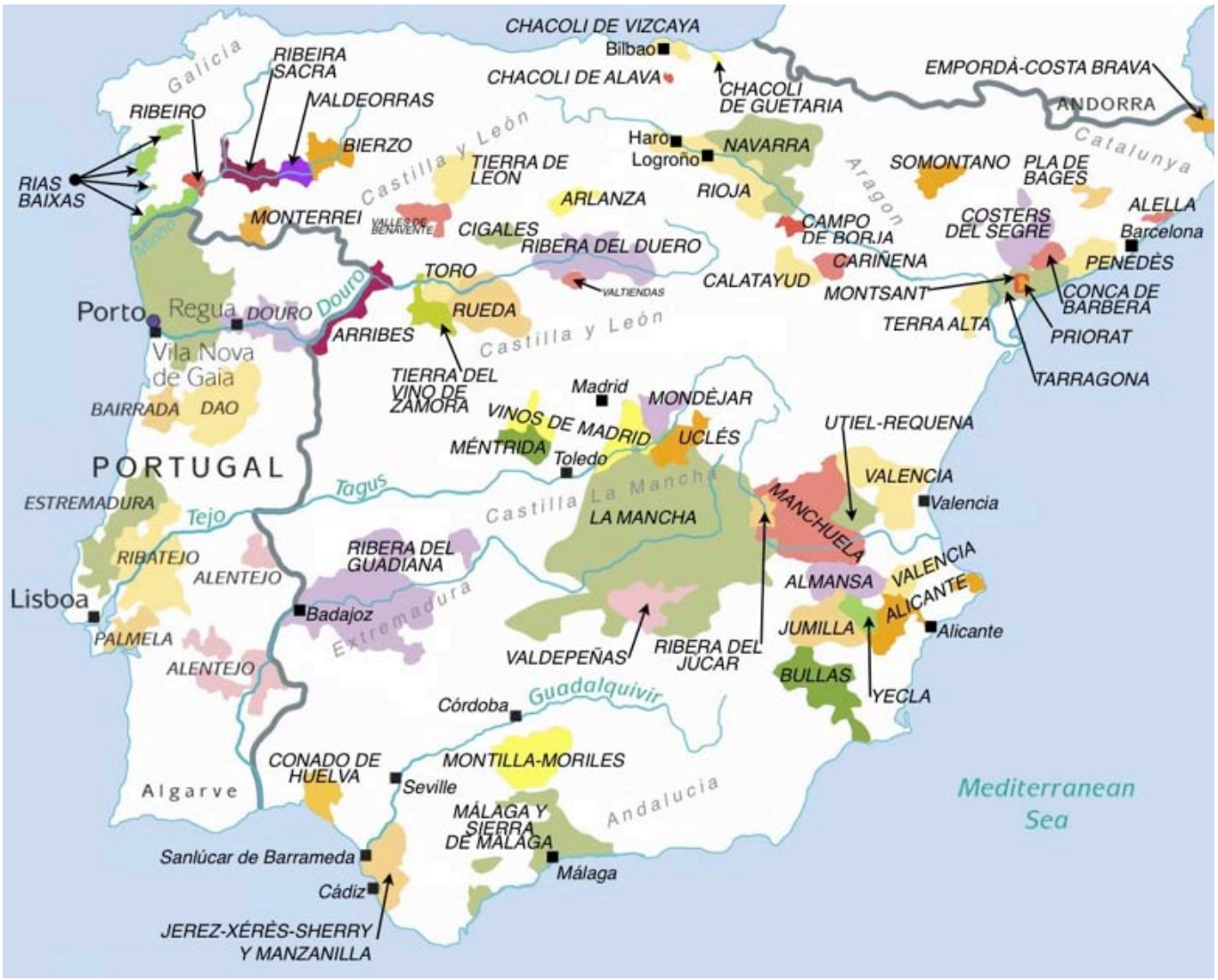
Bodega Bernabeleva Navaherreros 2012 Garnacha Vinos de Madrid ($25) 90 The 2012 Garnacha has an explosive bouquet of crushed cherry and pomegranate. It has great mouth feel with amazing purity and freshness and lingering flavor. A gorgeous wine with soft round tannins and a firm finish. **Bodega Bernabeleva 2013 Camino de Navaherreros Vinos de Madrid ($45) 92** The Camino de Navaherreros is a bigger and denser wine yet fresh and flavorful. Black cherry, plum, a touch of vanilla, and earth define the flavor profile of this wine. It is still elegant and silky on the palate with wonderful acidity and concentrated fruit flavors and scents of thyme.

Jiménez-Landi is the benchmark producer in Méntrida and a member of Garnachas de Gredos, located southwest of Madrid. Garnacha is its principal grape (80% of plantings). The climate of the region is hot and dry, and there are many self-rooted, old bush vines growing on sandy, grantic soils. Importer: Eric Solomon Selections

Jimenez-Landi 2011 Pielago Méntrida ($38) 91 The 2011 Pielago is 100% Garnacha fermented with whole clusters and aged in 500 L barrels for 12 months. It exhibits freshness with distinctive raspberry aromas and flavors and mineral notes. It is beautifully focused with excellent acidity and rather hard firm tannins that need time in the bottle to soften. Organically grown old Garnacha grapes from the Jimenez-Landi 27-hectare vineyard at 600 meters. An excellent effort. **Jimenez-Landi 2011 Ataulfos Méntrida ($48) 95** The 2011 Ataulfos is another 100% Garnacha but is a very special wine. It is sourced from a 1.5 hectare parcel of 80 year-old vines grown on sandy granite soil. It boasts very delicate and pure raspberry fruit with hints of herbs 30 and minerals. It is very Pinot-Noir like in character with excellent balance and acidity. A classy wine.

Finca Zerberos 2010 Del Tiemblo Garnacha Los Chorrancos Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León ($45) 90+ Zerberos wines are crafted by the talented winemaker, Daniel Ramos, whose winery is located in the small town of Avila, located 80 km southwest of Madrid. Thee grapes are sourced from 80 year old, high altitude Garnacha vineyards planted in granitic sand and schist soils in the Gredos mountain range. The Del Tiemblo displays bright red strawberry aromas with a touch of vanilla oak. It is soft and delicate on the palate, lightly flavored of kirsch, strawberry and vanilla. Although light in color, the wine has a surprising amount of extract. The finish is consistent with the wine--long, fresh, light red fruited. ***Importer:*** David Bowler

Annex: Wine Map of Spain



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