Introduction

Rioja is one of the world’s great wine regions. Like all great wines, it changes with the times while retaining its traditional character. Today, the classic 19th century, heavily oaked style is in transition to a new style that expresses a sense of place. Winemakers are making wines that reveal the terroir of the region, village, estate, and, increasingly, the vineyard. In this report, we put special focus on this exciting change, the special vineyards and winemakers behind it, and the wines of character that result.

Tempranillo finds its highest expression in Rioja, especially in the cooler parts of the appellation. 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. In this report, we take a new look at this venerable wine region, updating our 2008 report, The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave. In that report we noted the transformation taking place in Rioja, especially the move towards what we called New Wave wines that were more vibrant and fruit forward with better integrated oak, giving overall greater drinking pleasure. In this, our new look at Rioja, we find this trend continuing along with other, continued improvements in viticulture and winemaking that have now extended beyond the boutique and super-premium producer. In addition, we find winemakers putting an emphasis on expressing the local terroir, be it the village or the vineyard.

To produce this report, we traveled to Rioja to meet with and taste the wines of all kinds of producers—small boutique, large commercial, those sourcing only from estate vineyards, those purchasing and blending fruit from diverse vineyards and regions, those growing vines in high altitude, calcareous clay soils, those growing vines in alluvial soils located in warmer areas, etc. We quickly became re-acquainted with the huge diversity of terroir, winemaking, and wines in Rioja. We were especially pleased to find a number of superb white wines, both oaked and unoaked, made from Viura, Malvasia, Garnacha Blanca and other
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grapes. We also discovered wines being made from some of the indigenous varieties that were thought to be lost after the phylloxera epidemic in the early 20th century.

In what follows, we look at the continued influence of 19th century events on today’s wines, the diversity of Rioja’s terroir and wine, the rediscovery of indigenous varieties, the growing importance of estate vineyards and single vineyard wines, the increasing number of female enologists, the happy marriage of Rioja wine and Spanish tapas, and the booming exports of Rioja, especially to the US where exports (by volume) increased 18.4 percent between 2012 and 2013 and an amazing 206 percent since the year 2000. These gains are due at least in part to the Consejo Regulador de Rioja’s very successful Vibrant Rioja campaign in the US. We also provide profiles of Rioja’s top producing wineries and reviews and ratings of more than 400 wines.

Acknowledgements. We thank the many individuals and organizations who helped with this report. First, we thank Ricardo Aguiriano, Marketing Director, and the Consejo Regulador and the Vibrant Rioja team at Padilla CRT for their help in organizing our Rioja trip and José Luis Lapuente Sánchez, Director General, and Domingo Rodrigo Martínez, Jefe de los Servicios Técnicos, of the Consejo Regulador for educating us about Rioja. Also, this report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the wineries, importers and distributors who generously provided samples. A special thanks goes to those wineries who went deep into their cellars to show us past vintages of their top wines: Lopez de Heredia, Altanza, Roda, and others. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the authors of the book The Finest Wines of Rioja and Northwest Spain (University of California Press, 2011) for their detailed discussion of the wineries of Rioja and to Ana Fabiano and her book The Wine Region of Rioja (Sterling Epicure, 2012) for the beautiful photography and authoritative text on Rioja’s unique terroir. Ana also provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report. In writing this report, we also found ourselves going back to John Radford’s excellent treatise The Wines of Rioja (Mitchell Beazley, 2004). John, who died too young in 2012, inspired us with his words and his kind advice on our earlier Rioja report, and we dedicate this report to him.

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler
A Brief Wine History of Rioja

The history of wine in Rioja begins in antiquity. In the 2nd century BC, the Romans established vineyards and wineries in Rioja. By the middle ages, Rioja had already developed a reputation for fine wine, due in part to pilgrims following the Camino de Santiago that runs through Rioja. The Moorish conquest and the ensuing battles of the Reconquista destroyed many of the vineyards, but the many monasteries of the region ensured their revival, especially those of the Benedictine monks of Cluny. The history of wine is physically evident today in the ancient stone lagars and the deep cellars carved out of rock at San Señorio de San Vicente beginning the 12th century.

France and Bordeaux have had considerable influence on Rioja. In the 18th century Manuel Quintano, the son of Rioja Alavesa winegrowers and later dean of the cathedral of Burgos, traveled to Bordeaux and returned to Rioja to introduce several changes in viticulture and winemaking, including oak aging, at what is now the Remelluri estate. However, these changes were not widely adopted by winegrowers at the time. The French influence took hold in the next century.

The first real modernization of Rioja winemaking didn’t occur until the early to mid-19th century when three events converged. First, Luciano de Murrieta (the Marques de Murrieta) and Camilo Hurtado de Amézaga (the Marques de Riscal) visited Bordeaux and returned home, bringing with them new winemaking ideas. Murrieta then introduced to Rioja the use of large vats to crush and ferment grapes instead of the traditional lagar, as well as reintroducing the use of oak for aging. Murrieta planted his first vines in 1825 and made his first Bordeaux-styled wine in 1852; Riscal made his first wine in 1856.

Second, in 1863 the railway reached Haro and would eventually connect Haro with the port of Bilbao, thereby facilitating wine exports and resulting in the establishment of several of Rioja’s most important wineries in the Barrio de la Estación in Haro. Third, in 1849 powdery mildew and then in the 1870s phylloxera devastated the vineyards of France, and French winemakers moved to Rioja to make wine, bringing their modern winemaking technology with them.

Thus began Rioja’s golden age. Many of Rioja’s most historic wineries were established in the late 19th century: Montecillo (1872), López de Heredia (1877), CVNE (1879), La Rioja Alta, Bodegas Franco Españolas, and Bodegas Riojanas (1890), and Paternina (1896). San Vicente de Sonsierra was then, as today, a source of some of the best grapes, and many of the town’s buildings and cellars were constructed about this time.

Another confluence of events—the arrival of phylloxera in Rioja and the revival of vineyards planted on American rootstock in France—led to the bust after the boom. Rioja’s vineyards were quickly replanted after phylloxera, with Tempranillo replacing other indigenous varieties, but 20th century wars—WW I, the Spanish Civil War, WW II—resulted in vineyards being replaced by wheat fields, partly the result of government edict.

From Past to Present

The 19th century French winemaking practices, especially extended oak aging, introduced to Rioja have continued to the present day, although time spent in oak is far less than it was in the past. CVNE aged its wines 10-12 years before bottling until the 1960s but has gradually reduced it to two years today. Only López de Heredia remains faithful to the winemaking traditions of the 19th century; between barrel and bottle, it keeps twenty different vintages in its cellars, still waiting release to the market.

Since the 1960s, many changes have occurred in both the vineyards and the wineries of Rioja. Not all have been positive. In some areas, growers ripped out old bush vines to
replant with more productive trellised vines and increased yields in the 1970s and 80s. Seeing the higher returns to selling wine versus grapes, under-capitalized growers with limited winemaking experience began making mediocre wines.

However, the positive changes of recent decades far exceed the negative, both in the vineyard and the winery. There has been an increased focus on the vineyard by growers like Guillermo Eguren, Isaac Muga and José Palacios who identified their best vines and carefully managed their vineyards to lower yields and improve fruit quality, giving their winemaking sons the best possible resource. Others like Abel Mendoza and Telmo Rodríguez have searched for and found old bush vines in special terroir. And, of course, the Roda winery has systematically researched and evaluated hundreds of Tempranillo clones.

Commercial wineries and wine cooperatives have introduced financial incentives for growers to deliver higher quality fruit, and they now more closely monitor and assist their vineyards under contract. A number of growers (e.g., Abel Mendoza, Bodegas Ostatu, Luis Cañas, José Palacios) have converted to winemaking, in the process increasing the number of estate vineyard wines. In the 1980s Marcos Eguren took the risky step of identifying especially low yielding vines with small berries specifically to produce extremely high quality fruit for the La Canoca single vineyard wine Señorio de San Vicente.

Winemaking has also seen improvements beginning with better fruit selection. Several wineries today exercise great care in the selection of fruit, either in the vineyard where Remírez de Ganuza does several passes through the vineyard at harvest time, or on modern vibrating sorting tables (e.g., Baigorri).

In the winery, we see more gentle pressing, cold maceration, longer and cooler fermentations, micro-fermentations by parcel and variety, new fermentation vessels like French barriques, Nomblot eggs, and stainless steel cones, better oak and more judicious use of it, and increased production of single vineyard and village wines.

Over the past two decades a number of vintners have decided to not follow DOCa rules on required oak aging and instead give wines the oak treatment that makes the best wine. As a result, they forgo the prestige of the “reserva” label, and their wines are marketed as generic Rioja. Marcos Eguren first did this with the 1994 San Vicente. Vintners have, also, gradually increased the percent of French oak and new oak used in maturation. The San Vicente, for example, was originally all American oak, but current vintages are 10% American and 90% French oak. Others like Valenciso have converted to 100% French oak.

While a number of wineries proudly present their single vineyard wines as if they are their own recent invention, the fact is that several of Rioja’s older wineries have from the beginning made wine only from their own vineyards. These include, most notably, López de Heredia, where the founder Rafael López de Heredia introduced single vineyard wines a century ago, but, also, Contino, Marques de Murrieta, and La Rioja Alta. Prominent newer additions to the single vineyard camp include Artadi, Remelluri, Cuzcarrita, and Pujanza. Other vintners are specializing in village wines, i.e., wines made from parcels located within a particular village. Thus, Miguel Angel de Gregorio makes wines from Briones at Finca Allende, and Telmo Rodríguez and Pablo Egurkiza make wines from Lanzago.

**Consejo Regulator**

While Rioja’s Consejo Regulator was established in 1926, the first in Spain, its antecedents are far earlier. As early as the 16th century winemakers were prohibited from using grapes from outside the region, and wine exported in bota (goatskin) bags were given a seal to guarantee the wine’s authenticity. Some regulations had deleterious effects, like the 18th century one that dictated that all Rioja wine must be the same price. This price control deterred quality-enhancing innovations, like Manuel Quintano’s introduction of oak aging.

As noted earlier, Rioja also became Spain’s first DOCa (Denominación de Origen Calificada) in 1991. The DOCa is awarded to regions with a consistent reputation for quality, and the only other region in Spain to have earned that status is Priorat.

**The Region**

Rioja lies directly south of Bilbao and Spain’s north Atlantic coast and runs in a northwest to southeast direction. The Sierra Cantabria mountain range runs along its northern border, protecting Rioja from harsh winds and Atlantic storms, while the Sierra de la Demanda mountains run along its southern border. The Demanda range is the source of seven tributaries that run perpendicular to and feed the Ebro from the southwest, while the Cantabrian mountains are the source of the Rio Ebro that runs southeast down the middle of Rioja. Looking down river from its source, Riojans refer to the northern side of the Ebro as its left bank and the southern side as its right bank.
The Rioja DOCa is unique in Spain in that it includes more than one political region, or Comunidad Autónoma. It includes parts of the regions of La Rioja, the Basque Country and Navarra. Just to make things confusing, the Rioja DOCa also has three sub-regions—Rioja Alavesa, Rioja Alta, and Rioja Baja. The Rioja Alavesa lies entirely within the Basque Country, and Rioja Alta lies entirely within the La Rioja Comunidad Autónoma. But Rioja Baja includes parts of both La Rioja and parts of the region of Navarra. As we discuss below, the three sub-regions have differences in terroir that have become increasingly important as winemakers source grapes for premium wines from specific vineyards, estates, or villages.

**Rioja Alavesa**

Located on the left bank of the Ebro in the Basque Country, the Rioja Alavesa is the smallest of Rioja’s three sub-regions with just 13 thousand hectares of vines, less than 22 percent of Rioja’s total. Rioja Alavesa is divided in two by a portion of the Rioja Alta that extends north beyond the Ebro. Its western end is anchored by Labastida, while its eastern end is anchored by Laguardia and Elciego. The left bank of the Ebro is unique terroir with calcareous clay soils, high altitudes, cool temperatures, high rainfall and humidity and older vines than other parts of Rioja. Both its vineyards and its wineries are small. While it has 45 percent of all wineries in Rioja, it produces just 24 percent of its wine. However, it is home to some of Rioja’s most prestigious wineries, including Artadi, Contino, CVNE, Luis Cañas, Marques de Riscal, Páganos, Pujanza, Remelluri, Remírez de Ganuza, Telmo Rodriguez, and Valenciso. Bodegas y Viñedos Labastida, arguably Rioja’s best cooperative winery, is also located here.

**Rioja Alta**

With 42 percent of total vineyards in the DOCas, Rioja Alta is the largest of the three Rioja sub-regions. Since it crosses the Río Ebro, there is a left bank and a right bank to the sub-region. The major wine town on the left bank is the historic fortress San Vicente de Sonsierra. There are several wine towns on the right bank from Haro in the west to Logroño in the east on the border with Rioja Baja. The left and right banks of Rioja Alta are quite distinct.

The left bank of Rioja Alta is bordered on both its east and west sides by the Rioja Alavesa, and it resembles the Rioja Alavesa in its terroir. From the heights of San Vicente de la Sonsierra one can overlook the Ebro below and literally see the difference in terroir between the left and right banks. While on the left bank the soils are yellow clay and limestone, on the right bank of the Ebro the soils are red from the iron in the terrous clay soil. The vineyards on the left bank are on sloping hillsides, while those on the right bank are flatter and lower in altitude. Some of Rioja’s most outstanding wineries are on Rioja Alta’s left bank, mostly located in the historic fortress San Vicente de Sonsierra. They include Abel Mendoza, Benjamin Romeo, and Sierra Cantabria/Señorio San Vicente among others.

**The Right Bank.** The right bank of Rioja Alta includes three transversal river valleys—Oja, Najerilla, and Iregua—that are tributaries to the Ebro. Vineyards are located either in close proximity to the Ebro or in one of the other river valleys. The snow capped mountains of the Sierra de la Demanda (also the site of Rioja’s best ski slopes) feed the Río Oja, which runs north across the plain to meet up with the Ebro north of Haro. The valley is the location of the highest altitude (up to 600 m) vineyards of the right bank that produce especially high quality fruit. Both Finca La Emparatz and Castillo de Cuzcurríta are located here. And, of course, Haro itself is home to many of Rioja’s most famous, historical wineries, including López de Heredia Viña Tondonia, Muga, CVNE, and La Rioja Alta, all located in Haro’s famous Barrio de la Estación.

The next valley, to the east of the Río Oja, is the Río Najerilla, which also runs north meeting up with the Ebro just north of Cenicero. We find several more important vineyards and wineries in this general vicinity, including Amézola de la Mora, Marqués de Cáceres, and Bodegas Riojanas. Finally, we find the Río Iregua, which constitutes the border with Rioja Baja, again running north and meeting up with the Ebro just south of Logroño, home to Marqués de Vargas, Marqués de Murrieta and other top tier wineries.
As Rioja stretches out southeast along the Ebro, its climate changes from Atlantic to more Mediterranean, the predominant climate of Rioja Baja. Given the higher heat and lower precipitation of Rioja Baja, irrigation is commonplace and access to water is important. Vineyards are thus mostly located near the Río Ebro and in the valleys formed by the three tributaries Leza, Cidacos, and Alhama that run northeast to the Ebro. Most vineyards are at low (350m) altitudes, and their relatively flat contour is conducive to mechanized viticulture. The best vineyards are on the higher altitude (700m) slopes of Mount Yerga, where the temperatures are lower, soils less fertile, and yields are reduced, too.

In recent decades, Rioja Baja has changed. The traditional Rioja wine was a blend across regions with Rioja Baja and its Mediterranean climate and predominantly fertile, alluvial clay soils contributing ripe fruited, high alcohol and low acidity wine, especially Garnacha, to the blend. But the warming climate has produced riper vintages in Rioja Alta and Alavesa and less need for blending with Rioja Baja wines. The trend towards producing premium wines with a sense of place has also affected the demand for blending wines. As a result, Rioja Baja has replanted its vineyards, replacing Garnacha with Tempranillo, also leading to vineyards that are younger than those elsewhere in Rioja, with a lower percentage of old vines. Still, as the graph shows, the Rioja Baja vineyard retains a high percentage of Garnacha.

Considering the large volume of wine produced in Rioja Baja, relatively few wineries stand out. The best-known traditional ones include Barón de Ley (which also makes El Coto), Burgo Viejo, Marqués de Griñón, Palacios Remondo and Val SACRO. Newer wineries that have made a name for themselves in recent years include Finca Egomei, Olivier Riviere, Otanion, and Viña Herminia. The best wineries source their fruit from the slopes of Mount Yerga, often from their own, estate vineyards. Rioja Baja is also home to Rioja’s largest cooperative, Viñedos de Aldanueva. In general, cooperatives are especially important in Rioja Baja with 44 percent of total vineyard plantings, compared to 30 percent in the rest of the Rioja D.O.Ca.

### Soils and Climate

#### Soils

The soils and climate vary significantly throughout Rioja. Soils tend to be calcareous clay, ferrous (iron) clay, or alluvial in nature. As shown in the map, the left bank of the upper Ebro is predominantly calcareous clay. This includes both Rioja Alavesa and that portion of Rioja Alta north of the river. The right bank of the Ebro is a mix of alluvial and ferrous clay soils with pockets of limestone.

While the map shows the dominant soil type in each area, soils in fact vary greatly within any given area. Famed Chilean soil scientist Pedro Parra recently analyzed the soils of Amézola’s vineyards on the right bank of Rioja Alta and found deep layers of limestone a meter below the surface, well within the reach of penetrating vine roots. Winemaker Alvaro Palacios also finds calcareous soils in his Mount Yerga vineyards in Rioja Baja. And Marques de Murrieta finds diverse soils, including limestone, in its Logroño vineyards that border Rioja Baja.

In addition to climate, altitudes vary greatly throughout Rioja. Vineyards can be found as high as 700 m in the Rioja Alavesa. As noted above, there are also high altitude vineyards in the upper right bank of Rioja Alta, but they are more like 350m nearer the river. Most vineyards in Rioja Baja are about the same altitude, i.e., 350 m, but those on the slopes of Mount Yerga can be 600-700m or more with considerably cooler temperatures.

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3 While it has 37% of total vineyard acreage in Rioja, Rioja Baja represents 47% of all acreage planted since 2000, and it has just 15% of Rioja’s old vines planted before 1975.
Climate and Climate Change

The climate varies across Rioja, sometimes within very short distances, and gives rise to its great biodiversity. Due to its proximity to the mountains and its relatively high altitude, Rioja Alavesa has what Riojans call an Atlantic climate with lower temperatures, higher rainfall, and cooler nights and higher humidity during the growing season as compared to the right bank of Rioja Alta. The Rioja Alavesa winery Pujanza reports 10°C diurnal temperature changes in summer. As noted earlier, Rioja Baja is warmer and drier. Rioja Alta is in between Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Baja in terms of climate. The northwestern portion of Rioja Alta near Haro is high altitude and cool, while the southeastern portion near Logroño borders Rioja Baja and is lower altitude and warmer. Hours of sunlight also vary between these areas with Haro receiving 1977, Logroño 2150 and Alfaro in Rioja Baja 2385 hours over the 190 day vegetative cycle.

The climate is changing in Rioja as it is elsewhere. The most noticeable change is dramatically different weather from one year to the next, resulting in significant vintage effects as we show in our discussion below. Growers report that the moderate rise in temperatures to date has, if anything, probably led to more consistent ripening and better fruit quality. Growers and winemakers are both responding to global warming. Vineyards are being planted at high altitudes, where ripening was previously a problem. And winemakers, like Jorge Muga, are changing grape blends, adding more high acid grapes like Graciano and reducing the proportion of low acid Tempranillo.

While there are temperature and rainfall differences between Rioja’s sub-regions, the differences between vintages can be even larger. Comparing average August temperatures in Rioja Baja (Adelnuvea del Ebro) with Rioja Alavesa (Labastida), the difference was 1.5°C in both 2012, a hot year, and 2013, a cool year. However, comparing August temperatures in 2012 with 2013, the difference was 2.4°C in both Rioja Baja and Rioja Alavesa.

The story on rainfall is a bit more nuanced, but in general the differences in rainfall between vintages are at least as large as the differences between sub-regions.

The difference in rainfall between regions has important consequences, especially with the advent of global warming. Most vineyards in Rioja Alavesa are dry farmed, while most in Rioja Baja are irrigated. However, in Rioja Alta and increasingly in Rioja Alavesa, drip irrigation is being installed in newly planted vineyards, both to protect young vines and as insurance against hot seasons that may be overly stressful to vines.

Vintages

As the data above on temperature and rainfall show, Rioja has seen dramatic variations in climate in recent years, which are reflected in the grapes and wines. Last year, 2013, was especially problematic with heavy spring rains and cool temperatures, including a late spring frost in Alavesa that delayed the growing season and resulted in uneven ripening. The year prior, 2012, was just the opposite with heat and drought, saved by late September rains. The harvest was earlier than usual, and some winemakers worried about acidity levels. Yields were down about 10 percent from the previous year.

In contrast to 2012 and 2013, both 2010 and 2011 were exceptionally good vintages. A dry winter gave way to a dry growing season in 2011, but otherwise the year was uneventful and resulted in excellent fruit quality but lower than normal yields. Older vines, irrigated vines, and vineyards with northern exposure did the best. The 2010 vintage was easily one of the best since 2001. Ample winter and spring rains were followed by a relatively cool, dry summer. Yields were normal, while quality was superb.

Consistent with the yo-yo climate of recent years, the 2009 vintage was hot, even hotter than 2003 by most accounts, resulting in unusually high alcohol levels. 2008 saw a dry winter followed by spring rains and mildew problems that led to poor flowering and fruit set and low yields. Both 2009 and 2008 were rated very good by the Consejo, but we’ve been impressed by our tastings of the 2008 reservas.

Other vintages since the year 2000 have been mixed. 2001, 2004, and 2005 were all rated as excellent vintages by the DOCa, and the Gran Reservas now on the market show that. The 2002 and 2003 years were problematic for different reasons—cold and wet in 2002 and unusually hot and dry in 2003. Both 2006 and 2007 produced average quality fruit that made good wines for early consumption.

A final note: The Consejo Regulador gives an overall rating to each vintage (see www.riojawine.com). This is not simply a subjective impression of experts. Wine samples are collected from producers and tasted blind by a rotating panel of over sixty winemakers and other professional tasters; they’re also given a chemical test so each vintage can be accurately described as to its alcohol, pH, acidity, SO2 and polyphenols.

The Grapes of Rioja

Tempranillo is the dominant grape of Rioja with 81 percent of all hectares planted. But it’s not the only grape. Garnacha still has a significant share of the vineyard, although it has declined from its peak. The white grape Viura has also been gaining popularity and dominates white varieties much as Tempranillo dominates the reds. In addition, there is renewed interest in the old, indigenous varieties, both red and white, that were lost in the last century. The Rioja vineyard is regaining its diversity.
One of the most radical acts by the Consejo Regulador occurred in March 2008 when it approved nine new grape varieties, something it had last done in 1925. They included six white varieties. However, to ensure that traditional varieties remain dominant, the Consejo prohibited that the three non-traditional varieties—Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Verdejo—have their name on the label or constitute more than 49 percent of any blend.

The major grape varieties of Rioja are discussed below. See Annex 1 for listings of the best wines from each variety that we tasted in Rioja. See the Tasting Notes and Ratings section for descriptions and evaluations of each individual wine.

**Tempranillo**

Tempranillo is one of the world’s great grapes, producing rich, well-balanced wines that age superbly. It is widely planted in Rioja and elsewhere in Spain and takes on different characteristics in different terroir. As Jorge Muga said, “There are as many Tempranillos as there are soils.” Tempranillo takes its name from “temprano”, the Spanish word meaning early, referring to its ripening ahead of other varieties. However, in the cooler growing areas of Rioja Tempranillo still may not be harvested until the middle of October and still gives wines of good acidity and structure. In warmer areas Tempranillo ripens faster and produces wines that are higher in alcohol, lower in acidity and riper in flavor. Tempranillo does not have especially thick skins, so other varieties are often blended with it to add color. More information on the Tempranillo grape can be found in our other publications on Spanish wines, especially Report #8 The Wines of Ribera del Duero.

Tempranillo makes excellent wines, both for immediate drinking and for extended aging. Tempranillo is the principal grape in the traditional Rioja blend and is often produced unblended as a Crianza, Reserva, or Gran Reserva. In addition, an increasing number of modern style wines are simply sold under the variety name Tempranillo. Tempranillo and Tempranillo based blends vary in style depending where they are grown and how the wines are made. These are discussed in detail later on in the section Wines and Wine Styles of Rioja.

**Garnacha**

Garnacha has a long history in Rioja, both as a blending grape with Tempranillo and as a single varietal. It was once widely grown throughout Rioja, especially in Rioja Baja, where it used to represent half of total plantings. However beginning in the early 1980s it was uprooted in favor of other varieties, especially Tempranillo. Thus, as of 2013, Garnacha is only 15% of the vineyard in Rioja Baja and 8% of the total in all Rioja. The 5072 ha of Garnacha planted today is 14 percent less than it was just seven years ago, in 2006.

Rioja Baja’s warmer Mediterranean climate is ideally suited for Garnacha. However, much of the Garnacha produced in the region has been of poor quality from high yielding vineyards in the fertile alluvial plain near the Ebro River. Higher quality Garnacha is grown on the slopes of Mount Yerga by growers like Álvaro Palacios, who refers to it as the “queen grape of Rioja Baja” and has announced plans to release next year a new, 100 percent Garnacha from a small 3 ha parcel called Valmira.

Garnacha is difficult to cultivate in most of the higher altitudes of Rioja as it flowers late and has difficulty maturing in cooler climates. However, the winemaking team at Finca La Emperatriz has succeeded in crafting a superb, old vines Garnacha from their high altitude, estate vineyard of very low yielding, 65 year-old vines in Rioja Alta. The resulting wine is both elegant and intensely flavored. Marcos Eguren of Bodegas Sierra Cantabria also has had success in producing an elegant and complex Garnacha with grapes sourced from his high altitude estate vineyard in San Vicente de la Sonsierra.

Garnacha is an expressive variety capable of a range of styles ranging from fragrant, fruity, light bodied to full bodied, intense, dark red wines. Style is influenced by climate, winemaking, and blending partners. In Rioja, Garnacha is regularly blended with Tempranillo, and its flavor spectrum includes cherry, strawberry, raspberry, currant, and pomegranate. Garnacha can be youthful and bold, especially if unoaked and aged in stainless steel.

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For more on the Garnacha grape and the wines it produces in Spain and elsewhere in the world, see our Report #39 The World of Grenache.
It can also have earthy textures, spicy undertones, and perfumed flavors. Old vine Garnacha is especially dense and complex. Grenache produces high concentrations of fruit tannin and, provided it has good acidity, makes an excellent food wine.

**Graciano**

Graciano (known as Morrastel in France) is a difficult grape to grow successfully, but its very low pH, deep purple color and spicy aromas make it a great blending grape, and many Rioja blends contain small amounts, usually less than 10 percent. It’s a delicate, very low yielding grape with thin but tough black skin that is susceptible to downy mildew. It needs to be fully ripe, with the skins just beginning to shrivel, before harvesting. Yields must also be kept low (3-4 tons/ha) to obtain adequate ripeness. As a result, Graciano does best in sunny, dry summers, and it does especially well in the warmer climate of Rioja Baja, which is where Bodegas Valdemar harvests it from their estate vineyard for the single varietal Graciano.

Terroir significantly affects Graciano. Gonzalo Ortiz of Bodegas Valdemar showed us Graciano from the 2012 vintage grown at low and high altitudes in Rioja Baja. The one grown at 600m was refined with high toned aromas and red fruit, while the one from 350m was ripe, fleshy, and revealed darker fruit. In addition to Ortiz, several winemakers are especially fond of Graciano and make single varietal wines from it, including Abel Mendoza, Jesús Madrazo de Contino, and Rafael Vivanco of Dinastía Vivanco. Juan Carlos Sancha made Rioja’s first single varietal Graciano at Viña Ijalba in 1995.

Graciano represents under 2 percent of all grape plantings in Rioja and is mostly used as a blending grape. While it typically comprises only a small percentage (2-5%) of red blends, its acidity, color, and freshness allow it to punch above its weight. Some of Rioja’s best winemakers include Jorge Muga’s top cuvée Arco, Tom Puyaubert’s top cuvée Exopto, and consulting winemaker Ventura Lasanta’s top cuvée Egomei Alma at Finca Egomei.

**Mazuelo and Maturana Tinta**

The other two red varieties that have been approved by the Consejo Regulador are Mazuelo (Carignan, Cariñena) and Maturana Tinta. Mazuelo buds and ripens late and needs heat to ripen adequately. Hence, it does especially well in Rioja Baja. Very productive by nature, yields need to be kept low to get good quality fruit, and it is susceptible to odium. Very little Mazuelo is produced as a single varietal in Rioja. Rather, it is part of the Rioja blend where it contributes acidity and tannins and stability of color as it ages. Mazuelo has been part of the Rioja blend for centuries.

Maturana Tinta, which is only grown in Rioja, is a recent addition to the list of approved varieties. It was part of the Rioja blend in pre-phylloxera times but was only recently rediscovered by the Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo Agraria (CIDA). Maturana Tinta buds late but ripens early and is especially sensitive to botrytis. It has excellent intensity of purple color, and its vegetal and spice notes are reminiscent of Loire Valley Cabernet Franc. Like Mazuelo, it is almost always used as a blending grape, although both Bodegas Valdemar and Dinastía Vivanco make a single varietal. One indicator of the promise this variety holds is revealed by Baron de Ley recently planting 31ha to Maturana at its vineyard in Ausejo in Rioja Baja.

**Viura and Other White Varieties**

While Rioja isn’t known for its white wines, they are becoming an increasingly important part of the region’s diverse offerings. The old, cosechero vineyards of Rioja were a hodge-podge of different varieties, including the white grape Viura, which is still sometimes part of the Rioja field blend. Today, Viura increasingly stands on its own, or is the base of a blend with other white varieties, especially the indigenous grape Malvasía and to a lesser extent, Garnacha Blanca, both of which are approved varieties in Rioja.

Viura (Macabeu in Catalonia) is a high acid grape that retains its freshness and intensity of fruit even in relatively warm areas of Rioja. In higher altitude zones it takes on a savory, mineral character that combines well with oak aging, especially with lightly toasted barrels. Many producers make both unoaked and oaked versions of Viura and Viura blends. The high acidity and non-oxidative nature of Viura makes it perfect to age as is evident in the 50 year old Tondónia Blanco that we tasted with María José López de Heredia. Indeed, young oaked Viura often needs a couple of years aging. For example, while the Emperatriz 2011 Viura Cepas Viejas shows distinct oak notes, the 2007 vintage of the same wine now tastes beautifully integrated and even more complex.

We found excellent examples of Viura and Viura-based blends in both Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa. Unoaked Viura makes a refreshing, light fruity wine made for early consumption. When made from old vines and fermented and aged in barrel, it takes on entirely different dimensions, becoming more complex and rich while retaining its freshness. All of the wines listed in the Annex of the best that we tasted are fermented and aged in barrel. Some of them come from very old vines; the Finca Allende Martires, for example, is from Viura planted in 1920.

Rioja’s efforts to resuscitate indigenous grapes from the past applies to white as well as red varieties. Some vintners, especially creative ones like Abel Mendoza,
have begun to search out these varieties in old field blend vineyards, as is evident in his excellent Turrontés (unrelated to the Torrontés of Galicia or Argentina). A number of producers also now make wines from a mutation of Tempranillo called Tempranillo Blanco that was only discovered in 1988. Another approved variety, Maturana Blanca, as well as Malvasía de Rioja and Garnacha Blanca are almost never seen as single varietal wines. Viña Ijalba is responsible for the arduous effort required to revive Maturana Blanca.

In addition to Spanish white grape varieties, the Consejo has also approved the use of three other varieties—Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Verdejo. Plantings of these three varieties are miniscule, representing less than one half of one percent of total plantings in Rioja.

### The Vineyard

Rioja is a land of small vineyards. The average size is 0.5 ha, and 82 percent of all vineyards are under 2 ha in size, partly the result of inheritance laws that break up estates. Just 52 vineyards out of a total of 119 thousand are larger than 15 ha. Many vineyards are also old, with 28 percent of Rioja’s total plantings 35 years old or older. The size and age of holdings explains viticultural practices as much as does the varied terroir of Rioja.

Some aspects of Rioja viticulture are highly regulated. The varieties that can be planted are restricted to five red and nine white varieties. In addition, planting density is controlled—it must be a minimum of 2850 and maximum of 4000 vines per hectare. Growers may plant new vines either using a massal selection process or purchasing specific clones from commercial nurseries. Research done by the winery Roda identified the best from over 500 clones of Tempranillo, and those are among the clones now commercially available. Many of the top growers, especially those with very successful vineyards, prefer to use massal selection to ensure a continued match between vine and terroir.

One of the most striking aspects of the traditional Rioja vineyard is its sanitary appearance. Many vineyards have nary a blade of grass growing amongst the sparsely planted bush vines. One explanation is that the soil (soils heavy in clay, especially) must be cultivated to allow rainfall to percolate deep into the soil. Another is that vines grown in a dry climate don’t require competition for scarce water. But Jorge Muga thinks the explanation is partly cultural: In Rioja a clean vineyard is a good one. Meanwhile, an increasing number of growers following organic and biodynamic practices often encourage inter-row legumes and other plant growth to enrich the soil. As Ana Fabiano notes in her book The Wine Region of Rioja, biodynamics can be viewed as a return to Rioja’s past. Many of the principles of biodynamics were in fact practiced by the Benedictine monks of Suso and Yuso centuries ago.

#### Training Vines

Fifty years ago all vines were planted en vaso, Spanish for gobelet or bush vines. Today about half the vineyards are bush vines, and most of the new plantings or replantings are espalier (Cordon Royat typically). The principal argument for espalier appears to be that it allows for mechanization. Mechanized viticulture is far less labor intensive and less costly than doing the same work by hand. In addition, workers are sometimes in short supply, especially at harvest time, while mechanized harvesting offers the benefit of picking at the optimal time.

Today almost all new vineyards are planted with drip irrigation, mostly to protect young vines and provide insurance against unusually hot dry summers like that of 2009. But in Rioja Baja irrigation is a necessity in most years due to its hot dry climate. The old method of irrigating by flooding the vineyard has all but disappeared.

Rioja’s dry summers and winds are propitious for organic farming, and many of the internationally recognized producers (e.g., La Rioja Alta, Hermanos Peciña, López de Heredia, Viña Ijalba) follow organic practices, although few wish to go through the bureaucratic procedure to obtain official certification. Several wineries are either already Demeter certified (Artadi) or are following biodynamic practices and/or in the process of certification, including Olivier Rivière, DSG (David Sampedro Gil), Telmo Rodríguez and Remelluri. As in many other wine regions of the world, many producers follow sustainable, or lutte raisonnée, viticultural practices.

#### Vineyard Management

With 119 thousand vineyard parcels averaging just 0.5 ha in size and fewer than 800 wineries, the Rioja tradition of wineries purchasing fruit or wine from independent growers is alive and well. Cooperatives, which account for 38 percent of vineyard plantings, still sell 70 percent of their production in bulk to pri-

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6 CIDA (Servicio de Investigación y Desarrollo Tecnológico Agroalimentario) has been doing controlled experiments to precisely assess the effects of vegetation on the vine and the grape. See “Cubiertas Vegetales en Viñedo” in Cuadernos de Campo, Mayo 2011.
vate wineries. Most wineries carefully monitor the vineyard management practices of the growers they purchase from. Some also employ agronomists who provide direct technical assistance to the growers to ensure quality fruit and, also, pay growers according to the quality of fruit they provide. Cooperatives have much the same challenge as other wineries, and progressive ones like Aldeanueva also help with hands on vineyard management and provide financial incentives for quality fruit.

Renowned wineries like Finca Allende, Sierra Cantabria, and Roda own and manage small, widely dispersed parcels of old vines of special terroir. The labor costs of manually cultivating these vines and their low yields translate into high costs that are inevitably reflected in the prices of the wines.

**Estate and Single Vineyards**

One of the most notable trends in Rioja today is estate and single vineyard wines. Most of the top wineries in Rioja today have estate vineyards, but many also purchase additional fruit from smaller growers under long-term contracts. The best cuvées, those at LAN, are often made from estate fruit, while entry-level wines like Finca Allende’s Finca Nueva are made from purchased fruit. While the purchase and blending of wines has been part of Rioja’s tradition, estate vineyards are, too. López de Heredia, for example, has made wine exclusively from its own vineyards since the early 20th century.

In recent years, an increasing number of wineries have begun making wines from single vineyard parcels with the objective of expressing the terroir of that parcel. Benjamin Romeo, Finca Allende, San Vicente, Valdemar, Amézola, Viñedos de Páganos, and Pujanza are just some of the many top producers who now make single vineyard wines that are often their very top cuvées. Large, commercial wineries like LAN and Viña Muriel are also now making single vineyard wines.

While this is commonplace practice in the rest of the world, curiously it has not been encouraged in Rioja, as wineries are not allowed to give single vineyard attributions on wine labels. A listing of top single vineyard wines is given in the annex to this report.

**Winemaking**

Continued improvements in the vineyards are mirrored in Rioja’s wineries. In recent years a new generation of enologists carefully harvest and sort fruit, fermenting separately by varietal and plot and taking care to not over-extract while still eliciting good color, concentration, and, above all else, preserving an authentic sense of terroir. They use modern—and not so modern—techniques in their pursuit of freshness, depth of color, intensity of flavor, and structure that permits aging with unobtrusive tannins that allow early consumption. However, what distinguishes these Riojan winemakers from their counterparts elsewhere is their deep respect for and use of traditional wine-making processes whenever possible. They increasingly prefer French oak to the sweet vanilla and balsamic flavors imparted by American oak. And many forgo the traditional crianza-reserva-gran reserva classification in order to gain the freedom to choose the oak treatment that best suits the wine.

**Women Winemakers of Rioja.** Just 30 years ago, in the 1980s, the Asociación de Enólogos de Rioja had 200 members, just 5 of whom were women. Today it has 308 members, and 106 are women. That may explain why we encountered so many women winemakers on our visits to wineries in Rioja. There’s not space enough to note all of them, many of whom are young and still in assistant winemaking posts. However, we can cite some of those who have broken the glass ceiling to arrive at positions of considerable responsibility.

Leading women winemakers and managers of Rioja include Elena Adell San Pedro of Campo Viejo, María José López de Heredia and her winemaker sister, Mercedes, of Viña Tondonia, Ana Martín Onzain of Castillo de Cuzcurrita, María Barúa of LAN, Maria Vargas Montoya of Marques de Murrieta, Maria Larrea of CVNE, Marta Appellaniz Gallego of Pujanza, Cristina Forner of Marqués de Cáceres, and María Martínez-Sierra of Montecillo.

Two winemakers with whom we had the pleasure to taste wines are Maria Barúa of LAN, who is responsible for producing LAN’s top wines and Maria Vargas Montoya who has contributed to the dramatic resurgence at Marques de Murrieta.

**Selecting Fruit**

The selection of fruit begins on the vine, with mid-summer’s green harvest to focus the wine’s energy on a few select bunches and ends on the sorting table. A few wineries like Abel Mendoza and Muga do several passes through old vine parcels, selecting the ripe grapes as they ripen. The treatment of the picked fruit varies with its special qualities. At Muga, for example, grapes for ordinary crianzas continue to be transported in large wagons, while those destined for the top cuvées (Prado Enea, Torre Muga, and Aro) are packed in small 20 kilo containers transported from field to winery in refrigerated trucks. The sorting process also differs with the quality of grapes, with double-sorting for the very top cuvées of wineries like Remírez de Ganuza, Artadi, Finca Allende and Sierra Cantabria, first by grape clusters and again by individual grapes after destalking. Wineries producing good quality crianzas at affordable prices cannot employ such costly selection and sorting.
However, even they often pick by hand as the bush vines throughout much of the region do not permit mechanized harvesting. Sorting aside, there are, of course, significant variations in the quality of the grapes themselves. Unlike the past, the more progressive cooperatives (like Aldenueva) and large commercial wineries pay growers according to quality, providing an incentive to grow better fruit.

**Fermentation**

Rioja's winemakers continue to employ a variety of techniques to produce wines that are fresh tasting, balanced and age-worthy. The top wineries use gravity wherever possible in the winemaking process to transfer grapes to destemmers and crushers and then to steel tanks or large tinas for fermentation, and later to barriques for aging. In addition, they employ more gentle methods of crushing and pressing grapes to avoid bitter tannins. For example, Artadi and some other wineries still crush grapes under foot in open fermenters for special cuvées.

The use of native yeasts in now commonplace as is fermenting fruit from different parcels and varieties separately. Some wineries have as many as 16 to 20 different small fermenters. Others are using open wooden vats and avoiding pump-overs. Most malo is done in late winter, but Jorge Muga does malo in the spring following the harvest (April-May). He believes that the warmer climate allows for a longer and softer process that contributes to color and flavor. It is also common practice in Rioja to use traditional labor intensive methods for racking. This involves transferring wines from one barrel to another by hand every six months or so, using a spigot and starting with the first full moon in January.

**Oak and Bottle Aging**

Rioja wineries are famous the world over for their enormous quantities of barrels and bottles of aging wine. It is not uncommon to find thousands of barrels and millions of bottles of wine resting in underground cellars.

Traditionally, the quality of Rioja wine has been marked by the designation crianza-reserva-gran reserva on its label. More than anything else, this traditional mark of quality reflects how much time wines were aged in oak and in bottle. Indeed, before the introduction of steel tanks, wines were fermented in large vats, or tinas, aged in oak for twelve, twenty-four, or thirty-six months, and then aged in bottles for additional months or years of aging until they were considered ready for release.

The Rioja DOCa regulations require the use of 225 liter barrels for aging wine. The regulations also limit the use of a barrel beyond ten years so that all crianzas have acceptable minimum oak contact. In Rioja winemakers commonly use new barrels for an initial six months and then transfer the wine to two-and three-year old barrels or older for further aging of reservas and gran reservas. Also several wineries such as La Rioja Alta, Muga and López de Heredia continue to make barrels to their own specifications.

Many types of oak—French, American, Russian, and East European—can be found in the Rioja winery today. While the 225 liter American oak barrel is still the most common, French barriques are more and more popular. American oak contributes to the classical flavor profile of Rioja wine. It is sweet and generous and offers notes of vanilla, cinnamon, balsamic and other spices that work beautifully with Tempranillo. It is also relatively forgiving of unripe fruit. When used effectively it helps to manage tannins and give complexity to wines, rather than impart assertive oak flavors.

An increasing number of top winemakers prefer French oak over American oak to impart complexity and finesse in their wines. Some like Roda use French oak exclusively, others use a combination of American, French, and Russian or Hungarian oak. The most traditional producers—López Heredia, La Rioja Alta, Muga—continue to make their own barrels and continue using a significant portion of American oak.

**Styles of Rioja: Classical and New Wave**

In our previous report on Rioja we noted a continuum of styles anchored by Classical on the one hand and New Wave on the other. Many wineries then and now produce both Classical and New Wave wines, although some clearly fall in one camp or the other. Classical wines usually continue to follow DOCa rules and are most often labeled as crianza, reserva, and gran reserva. New Wave or modern wines are more often simply labeled as generic Rioja reds. Later on, we profile the most important Rioja producers and discuss their wine styles.

Classical winemaking produced the elegant, silky smooth, light colored and oak-infused Gran Reservas we remember drinking in decades past. New Wave winemaking is better known for wines rich in concentrated dark fruit and complemented by the elegant tones of French oak. Classical Rioja wines are often ready to drink when released by the winery. New Wave Rioja wines are released young.
and tannic, requiring additional time in bottle to attain their potential. Unfortunately, customers today tend to drink them young and rarely experience the aged New Wave Rioja.

**Classical Rioja**

Wines in the Classical style made Rioja world famous. They were traditionally blends based on the Tempranillo grape, and still today most include small amounts of Garnacha, Graciano, Mazuelo or other varieties to enhance acidity, color and flavor. Monovarietal Tempranillo is a more recent invention, championed by María Martínez of Bodegas Montecillo and others.

Their heritage is the winemaking methods introduced by the French in the late 19th century, albeit with less oak aging and with the adoption of new technologies. The Classical style is popular, accounting for 55 percent of all Rioja wine sales in 2013 with the same market share in both the Spanish and export markets.

Classical Rioja was traditionally fermented in large oak tinas that producers like Jorge Muga, La Rioja Alta, and López de Heredia continue to use, but most classical producers have switched to large, temperature controlled stainless steel tanks. After malo, the wines are aged in a mix of oak 225 L oak barriques for one or more years, depending on their classification—crianza, reserva, or gran reserva.

At its best, Classic Rioja offers an enticing balance of black cherry and plum fruit wonderfully balanced with notes of vanilla, leather and tobacco leaf. At its worst, Classic Rioja is a clumsy, over-oaked wine with gamey and old barrel aromas, harsh tannins and little fruit. Our tastings for this report confirm that the Classic Rioja wines of today are of consistently higher quality than in the past, due to improved vineyard management and winemaking practices. However, there are still large differences in quality, and the consumer should not expect a $20 Gran Reserva to offer a true representation of the Classical style.

**New Wave Rioja**

The world was introduced to New Wave Rioja wines by several young, visionary producers like Abel Mendoza, Benjamin Romeo, Marcos Eguren, Telmo Rodriguez, and Miguel Angel de Gregorio. Of course, the negociant Jorge Ordoñez also played an important role in introducing the world to these wines. These producers pay special attention to the vineyards, sourcing fruit from low yielding, old bush vine vineyards they either own or fastidiously manage. They use a high percentage of new French oak and age for shorter times than Classical Rioja. The rich, phenolically ripe fruit easily absorbs the new oak without the overt wood flavors sometimes found in Classical Rioja. They forego the traditional DOCa classifications and instead sell their wines as generic Rioja. Unlike Classical Rioja, the wines are sold young and still in need of further bottle aging, which few consumers do these days.

New Wave Rioja is fruit forward in character, revealing pure fruit aromas and flavors (dark cherry, black raspberry, plum) not often found in Classical Rioja. The abundant use of new French oak can be noticeable in younger wines, but in general the wines are nicely balanced with round tannins. With time in bottle, New Wave Rioja evolves and develops some of the leather and tobacco flavor characteristics of aged Gran Reserva. The New Rioja wine style will seem familiar to young wine drinkers more familiar with premium wines from California, Tuscany, and elsewhere.

The success of the pioneer New Wave Rioja producers has inevitably led to imitation. The number of producers of this style have grown. Indeed, except for the most traditional of the Classical producers, most wineries produce at least one wine in this style. As with all wines, these new, New Wave wines vary in quality with some showing more oak than fruit.

**Rioja Wine and Tapas**

Rioja wines go with a variety of foods, especially tapas. While preparing this report we stayed in Logroño and at the end of the day often headed down to the famed Calle del Laurel for tapas with the local wines. The street scene on Calle del Laurel (a small neighborhood in downtown Logroño) is frenetic. Nowhere in Spain, even Barcelona's Ramblas, does one find so many people in the street and bars enjoying tapas. There are no less than 69 tapas bars and restaurants on Calle del Laurel with tempting servings of pinchos, croquetas and other enticing dishes. We went from one tapas bar to another, looking for the best each had to offer. To learn more see www.calledelaurel.com

**Tapas**

What are tapas? Tapas aren’t a particular type of food, rather they represent a style of eating that is very Spanish but adaptable to most cultures. In Spain they are generally served in small portions or raciones that can be consumed in one or two bites. Tapas are part of a Spanish life style that involves meeting up with friends in bars and taverns to enjoy life and while away time eating and
drinking, on foot or seated at a bar. Today, tapas are everywhere. Not all small dishes are necessarily authentic tapas, but the spread and diversity of tapas in different countries is a welcome development.

Washington DC Tapas bars are found in just about every major city in Spain and are now also the rage in many US cities and in Europe and Asia, particularly Hong Kong. In Washington DC, authentic tapas were introduced by the elegant Spanish restaurant Taberna del Alabardero over 25 years ago and were later popularized by the highly successful Jaleo tapas bar of famed Spanish chef, José Andrés. A recent addition to the Washington DC offerings is Boqueria, a restaurant named after the food market in Barcelona. Boqueria opened in New York in 2006 and now operates restaurants in Manhattan, Hong Kong and Washington DC. It offers a wide variety of tapas for lunch, Happy Hour and dinner.

We recently explored Boqueria’s extensive menu with a range of Rioja wines tasted for this report. The tapas included a rich variety of dishes like Jamón Serrano and Lomo Ibérico (Serrano ham, aged 18 months and dry cured, acorn-fed pork loin), Pan con Tomate (grilled bread rubbed with tomato, garlic and olive oil), Gambas al Ajillo (shrimp, garlic and guindilla peppers in olive oil), Croquetas Cremosas (creamy croquettes of mushroom and of Serrano ham with béchamel sauce), Carne a la Plancha (hanger steak with shishito peppers and mojo verde), Pintxos Morunos (seared Colorado lamb skewers, pickled shallots, salsa verde) and Cojonudo (fried quail eggs and chorizo on toast).

We paired the tapas with a wide variety of wines of different styles and different grape blends like the Basilio Izquierdo 2010 B de Basilio (a wooded Garnacha Blanca with Viura), Luis Alegre Rosado 2013, Palacios Remondo 2010 La Montesa Crianza, Remelluri 2010 Lindes de Remelluri, Luis Caña 2008 Reserva Selección de la Familia, Baron de Ley 2008 Reserva, Roda I 2007 Reserva, Le Altanza 2008 Reserva Artistas Chinos, and La Rioja Alta 1998 Gran Reserva 890.

Which wine for which tapas? It is hard to beat the versatility of a Spanish Rosado with tapas. The Luis Alegre Rosado 2013 (a blend of Tempranillo and Viura) provided just enough fresh fruit and crisp acidity to enjoy with our Jamón Serrano, Gambas al Ajillo, Pan con Tomate, and Cojonudo. For the Lomo Ibérico and the Txipirones, a dish with smoky aromas and sherry vinegar, we liked the medium-bodied, Garnacha-based Palacio Remondo 2010 La Montesa Crianza from Rioja Baja, the bolder Dastia Vivanco 2010 4 Varietales and the Luis Cañas 2008 Reserva. With their smoke and spice profiles, the Pintxos Morunos and Carne a la Plancha called for big wines, and there were many fine choices. We especially enjoyed the Roda I, the Le Altanza 2008 Reserva, and Baron de Ley 2008 Reserva. Boqueria also has an impressive list of more than 50 Rioja wines organized by style.

For the rare reader who hasn’t already had authentic Spanish tapas, we wholeheartedly recommend you try them at a local wine bar or restaurant. You can also cook them at home, which we do often, for parties or just a casual meal. Your eating pleasure can be enhanced by serving tapas with a variety of fine Rioja wines like those reviewed in the final section of this report. Buen Provecho!

The Market for Rioja Wine

Rioja wine sales are mostly red wines, both domestically and in terms of exports. White and rosé wine sales were 26.4 million liters in 2013, less than 10 percent of total sales of 277 million liters, a decline from the past. Twenty years ago white and rosé sales were 20 percent of total sales.

As shown in the graph, the mix of wines consumed domestically in Spain is quite different from that which is exported. Crianza is the most popular wine in Spain, accounting for almost half total Rioja wine sales. In contrast, generic wines, which are predominantly inexpensive entry level, are most popular in the US (38% of Rioja sales in the US) and other export markets. The US has a higher preference for reserva wines (33% of sales) than either Spain or other countries, while other export markets have a stronger preference for gran reserva wines.

Production and Exports

The total production and sales of Rioja wine have not changed greatly over the past 10-15 years. However, more Rioja wine is being exported today than was true in the past. In 2013 exports were 37 percent of total sales by volume, compared to 32 percent in 2008 and 28 percent.
in 2003. While part of the explanation for the increasing export share is due to Spain’s recent severe economic crisis, the trend is longstanding and is also partly the result of decreasing domestic consumption.

The US is an important part of Rioja’s wine exports. Furthermore, the growth in exports to the US has outpaced the overall growth in exports. As shown in the graph, in 2013 exports to the US were 10.3 percent of total Rioja wine exports, but that’s up from 8.7 percent in 2008 and 8.2 percent in 2003. In other words, the US market is a growing share of a growing amount of Rioja wine exports. As a result, the volume of Rioja wine exported to the US has increased by 93 percent since 2003.

Growing wine consumption in the US has made it the world’s single largest wine market. Per capita wine consumption has increased 24 percent over the past decade and total wine expenditures have increased 63 percent over the same time period. Tie together the facts that the US is the world’s largest wine market, is the world’s largest wine importer, that per capita wine consumption continues on a strongly positive trend, and that younger US wine consumers are especially open to trying new wines, particularly imports, and it’s difficult not to conclude that the US is a promising market for Rioja wine. Indeed, it’s more than a promise. Rioja exports to the US increased 18.4 percent (by volume) last year, and they’ve increased by 206 percent since the year 2000. What is surprising, given the severity of the 2008 financial crisis, is that Rioja exports to the US of premium reserva and gran reserva wines have grown even more, an amazing 240 percent since the year 2000.
Winery Profiles, Tasting Notes and Ratings: Rioja

Our wine reviews and ratings for this report include more than 400 premium wines from top producers in Rioja. The wines cover a wide spectrum of vintages from newly bottled 2013 whites to gran reservas from the 2001 and even older vintages. In addition to wine reviews, we present profiles on some of Rioja’s most notable wineries.

The wines were tasted during our visit to Rioja in May 2014 and at our offices in Washington, DC and McLean, VA and, in some cases, at the offices of importers. In Rioja we conducted tastings at the wineries and at the offices of the Consejo Regulador.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

- 95 and above  A wine of distinction
- 91-94  A wine of outstanding or superior quality
- 89-90  A wine of very good to excellent quality
- 87-88  A wine of good quality
- 85-86  A wine of fair or acceptable quality
- 84 and below  Not recommended

We commonly add a + to a point score to indicate our judgment that a wine is deemed to be of higher quality than its point score but is not at the next quality level. That said, we urge our readers to look at our comments that help explain our ratings and provide more useful information about a wine than a simple number.

Virtually all the wines reviewed here are sold in the US market, and information is provided on the importer, if known. Retail prices are also provided although they are likely to differ across retail markets and in restaurants. Prices are not provided for wines that are not imported to the US.

Because of the large volume of wines reviewed for this report, we unfortunately were unable to publish all reviews. Subscribers can read each and every review in the i-WineReview’s Tasting Notes and Ratings Archive. The Archive is located at www.i-winereview.com

Note: Wineries are listed alphabetically by the most commonly used name for the winery. Many Rioja wine names begin with “bodegas,” “bodegas y vinedos”, or “viña”. We usually list the formal winery name in the tasting notes but order it alphabetically by its more common name. Thus, “Bodegas Muga” will be found under “M” for Muga, instead of “B” for Bodegas.

Abel Mendoza This artisanal winery is the creation of grower/winemaker Abel Mendoza and winemaker Maite Fernández Mendoza. It produces high quality, original, modern wines from 18 ha of many small, old, high altitude vineyard parcels in the Sierra Cantabria villages of Abalos, Labastida and San Vicente. 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 wines are renown for their expression of terroir. Annual production is about 80 thousand bottles.

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.

Abel Mendoza 2013 Cinco Uvas Rioja ($50) 90+ The 2013 Cinco Uvas is a unique blend of five autochthonous grapes: Malvasia, Viura, Garnacha Blanca, Turrontés, Tempranillo Blanco. Fermented in oak for five months, it offers aromas of yellow flowers, citrus and spice. On the palate it displays floral influences with white fruit and light notes of ginger and honeysuckle and finishes with good acidity and on a mineral note.

Abel Mendoza 2011 Graciano Grano a Grano Rioja ($45) 90 The 2011 Graciano Grano a Grano is made from hand selected Graciano grapes which form part of a field blend in selected old vineyards. It offers fresh aromas of huckleberry, underbrush, and wild plum on the nose. On the palate is has nice density of red purple berry fruit with firm tannins and a fresh-tasting finish.

Abel Mendoza 2009 Jarrarte Crianza Rioja ($30) 89 The 2009 Jarrate has a nose of fresh red fruit with notes of leather, balsamic, and savory cooking spices. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in used French oak barrels, it is firm on the attack with a structured palate of integrated wood and fruit flavors, well balanced with good acidity, and a medium long finish.

Abel Mendoza 2011 Selección Personal Rioja ($70) 91 The 2010 Selección Personal displays an opaque ruby color and fragrant aromas of dark red fruit with herbal and light earth and tobacco notes. It has a lovely velvety mouth feel with purple plum fruit, good depth and nicely integrated oak. A complex youthful wine with ripe tannins and a long finish. It will get better with age.
Tempranillo Grano a Grano Rioja ($45) 89 The Tempra-
nillo is fresh tasting with dark red cherry and plum fruit flavors with hints of underbrush. It is soft on the attack with good acidity and firm round tannins. While not a complex wine, it is pleasant drinking and has a medium-long finish.

Abel Mendoza 2013 Viura Rioja ($45) 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. **Importer:** Jose Pastor Selections; www.josepastorselections.com.

Agricola Labastida 2012 El Primavera Rioja ($13) 88 El Primavera is a young, fresh Rioja Alavesa wine that sees about 5 months in oak. It’s fruit forward with juicy dark red fruit, medium weight, and firm brisk tannins. Delicious for what it is. **Agricola Labastida 2010 Exeo Cifras Garnacha Blanca Rioja ($30) 89** An interesting pure Garnacha Blanca that’s half matured in used French oak and half in concrete eggs. It reveals dried herbs, citrus and miner-
als along with a pleasing, light oxidized note. Made with Rioja Alavesa estate fruit. **Agricola Labastida 2008 Exeo Letras Tempranillo Rioja ($26) 89** Letras is a modern styled Tempranillo revealing fresh dark red fruit. It’s juicy in char-
acter with notes of vanilla and rich oak on the palate and finishes with ripe tannins and good persistence.

**Agricola Labastida 2008 Tierra Fidel Rioja ($45) 90** This 50/50 blend of Garnacha and Graciano reveals high toned cherry and huckleberry fruit with hints of smoky oak. It’s a nicely focused, precise wine with refreshing, bright acidity, reflecting the coolness of the vintage. Ready to drink now, although it also has the capacity to age further. **Agricola Labastida 2011 Tierra Tempranillo Crianza Rioja ($45) 89** This 2011 Crianza reveals a rich black cherry and licorice nose that are mirrored on the palate. It’s very fresh and easy drinking with firm tannins. **Importer:** Elite Wines Lorton, VA.

Bodegas Altanza 2013 Blanco Rioja 88+ The 2013 Blanco is a blend of 55% Viura and 45% Sauvignon Blanc. It is very fresh and fruit with perfumed aromas of grapefruit, minerals and spice. It is crisp on the palate with excellent acidity and good extract on the finish.

**Bodegas Altanza 2008 Lealtanza Reserva Club Rioja ($70) 91** The 2008 Lealtanza Reserva Club displays a lovely opaque red color and aromas of fresh dark cherry, toasted oak, and a hint of mint on the nose. On the palate it reveals bold dark red fruit, dark chocolate. rich, coconut-chocolate notes from the oak. Aged 18 months in French oak, it is nicely struc-
tured with a feminine texture and good tannin grip on the finish.

**Bodegas Altanza 2010 Reserva Selección Espe-
cial Rioja ($44) 91** The 2010 Reserva Selección Especial reveals aromas of dark red cherry with notes of cacao and wood spice. Fresh on the attack and concentrated on the palate showing good dark cherry, mocha, and a hint of underbrush, fine ripe tannins. Easy to drink and deli-
cious.

**Bodegas Altanza 2008 Lealtanza Reserva Selección de la Familia ($50) 91** The Reserva Selección de la Familia offers a bouquet of earth and spice box complemented by dark red cherry notes. This is a nicely concentrated wine, with a lot of well integrated oak, and still dry tannins. It’s silky smooth on the attack.

**Bodegas Altanza 2008 Gran Reserva Rioja ($50) 91+** The 2008 Gran Reserva displays an opaque ruby colors and aromas of mint and clove on the nose with notes of spice box, violets, dark red fruit. Aged 24 months in oak, it is big and soft on the attack and silky on the palate with lots of, dark red and black fruit, chocolate and toasted oak, and firm tannins with a rich long finish.

**Bodegas Altanza 2008 Reserva Artistas Españoles ($100) 94** The Flagship of the winery, this 2008 Reserva Spanish Artist Collection is crafted from a selec-
tion of the estate’s oldest vines and best fruit with exor-
dinary low yields of below 2 tons/ha. It offers aromas of black cherry, earth and mushroom, and is firmly structured with lots of oak on the palate and fine fruit overtones. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, it shows firm dry tannins at present but is still very young and will benefit from more time in the bottle.

**Altos de Rioja 2010 Crianza Rioja 89** Fresh dark cherry with a whiff of cigar box on the nose. The sense of fresh-
ness continues on the palate, which is nicely balanced, medium weight, and smooth in texture. Round tannins make it easy drinking. An all Tempranillo Crianza made from 20-40 year old vines and aged 12 months in French and American oak.

**Altos de Rioja 2007 Reserva Rioja 90** The Reserva is a big wine showing ripe, rich dark red plum fruit with mocha and sweet oak notes. It’s big and chewy with chalky tannins. 100% Tempranillo from 60-80 year old vines; matured 24 months in new oak, 80% French and 20% American oak.

**Altos de Rioja 2010 Altos R Pigeage Rioja 91** Made from 80 year old vines and aged in 85% French, 15% American oak, all new, for 15 months, this is the best wine from the Rioja Alto trio of winemakers—Roberto San Ildefonso of Finca Sobreno in Toro, Bienvenido Muñoz of Bodegas Muñoz in La Mancha, and flying winemaker Jean-Marc Sauboua, formerly of Chateau Haut-Brion in Bordeaux. This is a rich, internationally styled wine revealing ripe purple plum, dark cocoa, and wood spice. It’s big, lush and has chewy tannins.

**Altos de Rioja 2011 Tempranillo Rioja 89** Aged just 6 months in oak, this is a lively, youthful wine showing deep dark cherry with hints of wet earth and vanilla spice. There’s bright acidity, good freshness, and firm tannins. Fun and delicious to drink.

**Bodegas Amarín 2011 Barrel Fermented Blan
cos ($30) 90** The 2011 Rioja Blanca Fermentado en Barrica is a blend of 85% Viura and 15% Malvasia. Fermented and aged in oak for eight months, it is subtly fragrant with orchard fruit, flowers, ginger and oak. It is soft on the attack and well balanced with fresh and savory fruit flavors on the palate, good acidity, and a very nice finish.

**Bodegas Amarín is**
owned by Bodegas Luis Cañas. **Bodegas Amáran 2006 Tempranillo Reserva 60 ($64) 92** This wine is a beauty from its complex, perfumed bouquet to its gorgeous silky palate of abundant spicy, dark red cherries and other fruit. While it sees 18 months of new oak, it’s well integrated, and the tannins are firm but ripe. Made from 60+ year old vines **Bodegas Amáran 2008 Ángeles de Amáran Tempranillo y Graciano ($36) 90** This 85/15 blend of Tempranillo and Graciano is very aromatic, revealing ripe dark fruit, forest floor and leaf tobacco. While the palate is dark and a bit brooding, there’s a bright acid touch from the Graciano that gives the wine a fresh, vivacious kick. The oak is nicely integrated, and the tannins are firm. **Importer:** Kysela Pere et Fils www.kysela.com

**Amézola de la Mora** This is a family winery started in 1987 with 70 ha of vines in the outskirts of Torremontalvo in Rioja Alta. Amézola uses only estate grapes managed with great care by vineyard manager Richard de Benito Bacigalupe (here, showing us the calcareous subsoil) who recently received assistance from Chile’s top soil expert, Pedro Parra. They hand harvest and sort, destem and ferment in stainless steel. Bordeaux-trained Georges Pauli is winemaker. The Gran Reserva is the top traditionally styled wine, while the pure Tempranillo Iñigo Amézola is more modern and comes from the best vineyard, San Quiles. Their oak-fermented Viura is also excellent.

**Bodegas Amézola de la Mora 2010 Iñigo Amézola Rioja ($25) 89** The Viña Amezola is a fruit forward blend of 93% Tempranillo and 7% Graciano. It reveals notable minerality on the nose with light red fruit. Aged 6-8 months in new French oak, it’s well integrated, excellent balance, and freshness on the finish. **Bodegas Amézola de la Mora 2010 Viña Amézola Rioja ($25) 89** The Viña Amezola is a fruit forward blend of 93% Tempranillo and 7% Graciano. It reveals notable minerality on the nose with light red fruit. Aged 6-8 months in new French oak, it’s well integrated, excellent balance, and freshness on the finish. **Bodegas Amézola de la Mora 2004 Gran Reserva Rioja ($45) 92+** The Gran Reserva, a blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Mazuelo and 5% Graciano, spends 30 months in American and French oak. It displays a medium dark red color and a lovely perfume of black cherry, leather and toasted oak. It has fresh dark fruit flavors on the plate with a silky smooth and refined mouth feel, excellent depth of flavor, and a long finish. **Bodegas Amézola de la Mora 2010 Iñigo Amézola Rioja 91** Dark ruby purple. A modern, 100% Tempranillo aged in 100% new French oak, this is a powerful wine, very dense, soft on the attack and showing mostly primary fruit with additional notes ofviolets and chocolate. It has surprisingly suave tannins. **Importer:** Classical Wines Seattle, WA

**Artadi** Once a small, cooperative cellar in the Rioja Alavesa, Artadi is today one of Rioja’s highest quality producers, thanks to Juan Carlos López de Lacalle and his focus on the vineyard. Today, Artadi has 88 ha of organically and biodynamically cultivated estate vineyards and makes several single vineyard wines as well as the Pagos Viejos, which is a blend of three vineyards. The top single vineyard wine is the Viña El Pison from a 2.8 ha parcel in Laguardia planted in 1945. It is a seamless, elegant wine and received one of our most positive evaluations in this report. Other single vineyard wines evaluated in this report are the La Poza de Ballesteros and El Carretil. The winemaker is the Frenchman Jean-François Gadeau. Total production is 850 thousand bottles.

**Artadi 2011 El Carretil Rioja ($170) 93** The 2011 El Carretil is an extraordinary wine. Big shouldered and lush on the palate it reveals aromas of black and red fruit, licorice, a hint of tar, and smoky mesquite. It is silky, complex, and layered on the palate with a savory-sweet combination of flavors and a long finish. The grapes for this beauty are sourced from a small high altitude single vineyard. **Artadi 2011 La Poza de Ballesteros Rioja ($105) 92** The La Poza de Ballesteros is a little reticent out of the bottle, but eventually opens on the nose offering lovely cassis fruit and earth. Made from 100% Tempranillo from a small vineyard in the village of Elvilar in Rioja Alavesa, it offers a silky, deeply flavored, dense palate of ripe fruit, soft round tannins with great extract and length. **Artadi 2010 Pagos Viejos Rioja ($75) 93** The 2010 Pagos Viejos offers earthy, 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 Tempranillo Rioja ($18) 90** Artadi’s 2011 Tempranillo, a new entry level wine for this producer, displays a complex note of dark plum and earth. It is soft on the attack with pure fruit on the palate with good density and richness but rather one dimensional. Elegant, refined and easy drink with a nice lingering finish. **Artadi 2010 Viñas de Gain Rioja ($25) 91** The 2010 Viñas de Gain offers dark red fruit aromas with a hint of forest floor on the nose. On the palate it is rich and full in the mouth with dense and delicious red fruit flavors and a very long finish. **Artadi 2011 Viñas de Gain Rioja ($25) 90** The youthful 2011 Viñas de Gain is fresh, spicy and dark red fruit and somewhat lighter in body than the 2010 vintage. It nonetheless shows excellent concentration of flavor on the palate, fresh red and black fruit, and a hint of spice. Finishes fresh and delicious, with good depth and length. **Artadi 2011 El Pison Rioja ($300) 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 beautifully integrated and perfectly balanced with a lovely savory character. A beautiful wine. Importer: Folio Fine Wine Partners, Napa CA

Aticus 2009 Crianza Rioja ($19) 90 The 2009 Aticus Crianza has a fragrant, rich nose showing somewhat prune like, rich black cherry fruit, and wet earth. Aged 12 months in oak, it is big, ripe and full on the palate, quite rich and layered with dense dark fruit flavors and spice on the finish. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA

Bodegas Baigorri 2012 Cask Fermented White Wine Rioja ($40) 91 Yellow gold. Fresh and saline in character, this Baigorri Viura shows notes of lightly toasted almonds and honeyed stone fruit. It’s well balanced with good acidity and viscosity. Savory and delicious. A blend of barrel fermented Viura (95%) and Malvasia (5%). Bodegas Baigorri 2007 Baigorri de Garaje Rioja ($95) 92 Made in small lots, this “garage” wine is rich, dense and modern with a strong influence from 22 months in new French oak. It shows ripe dark red plum, tobacco spice, chocolate and coconut shavings, and herbs. The palate is smooth, fresh, and shows good depth, finishing with gritty tannins. We expected more flavor integration with several years in bottle. 100% Tempranillo. Bodegas Baigorri 2007 Crianza Rioja ($50) 90 The 2007 Crianza displays a minty herbal nose with nice freshness on the palate. It reveals a silky mouth feel with good integrated fruit and oak flavors, and good extract on the finish. Bodegas Baigorri 2010 Garnacha Rioja 90 The Garnacha follows in the modern Baigorri style with ripe, lush dark red fruit lavishly wrapped in heavily toasted oak. The result is rich flavor and a lush mouth feel with prominent coconut and chocolate notes that mask the Garnacha. Not a subtle wine but one that many will like. Bodegas Baigorri 2006 Reserva Rioja ($48) 90 The quintessential Rioja Reserva showing a lot of toasted oak and dark cherry fruit complemented by notes of saddle leather, baking spices, and tobacco leaf. But a bit weak on the mid-palate and firmly tannic and dry on the finish. Needs to be decanted and would benefit from additional aging. 100% Tempranillo aged 18 months in French oak. Importer: The Artisan Collection, New York, NY

Barón de Ley A group of investors created Barón de Ley in 1985 by purchasing the historic Imas estate in Mendavia on the left side of the Rio Ebro where Benedictine monks cultivated vines and made wine in the 16th century. The soils there are alluvial with clay soils below the rocky surface. The winery now has 320 ha of estate vineyards plus more under contract and produces 2 million bottles annually. Gonzalo Rodríguez is lead winemaker. The winery’s top wine is Finca Monasterio, a Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon blend aged in French oak. The Barón de Ley group also owns the popular El Coto de Rioja.

Barón de Ley 2008 Reserva ($24) 90+ This Reserva offers fragrant aromas of ripe earthy plum and black currant on the nose. It boasts big mouth filling flavors on the palate with good acidity and beautifully integrated fruit, herbs, black olive and toasted oak. The wine is nicely structured with good concentration and has a persistent finish. Baron de Ley 2010 Varietales Graciano ($20) 90 Dark ruby red, this Graciano reveals a bright cherry, plum and vanilla scented nose. On the palate it offers brisk acidity and well-oaked dark red fruit with ripe tannins. Sourced from the Los Almendros estate vineyard in Rioja Baja. Aged 15 months in American oak casks. Baron de Ley 2008 Reserva ($24) 90 Medium dark ruby. This is a nicely structured Tempranillo with good flavor concentration showing dark plum, tobacco, black olive and dried herbs. Delicious now. Made from 100% Tempranillo estate fruit in Mendavia and aged 12 months in new American oak. Importer: Frederick Wildman Selections, New York, NY

Basilio Izquierdo After retiring from 30 years as winemaker at CVNE, in 2007 Basilio Izquierdo Torres began this small, personal project, which produces under 10 thousand bottles yearly. His goal is to make traditional Riojan wines that are a blend of varieties and regions. While his winery is in Laguardia, he sources fruit from throughout Rioja, including from Tudelilla in Rioja Baja where he finds the Garnacha that he is so fond of and is prominent in his wines. He owns no vineyards but sources fruit from very old vines, blending fruit from different regions, the traditional practice of Rioja. He is a fastidious winemaker who exercises great care in the selection of fruit and the making of his wines.
Basilio Izquierdo 2010 B de Basilio Blanco ($55) 91

Light gold straw. This exotic blend of Garnacha Blanca and a little Viura comes from a single vineyard in Gallocanta in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. Yellow flowers and lightly toasted almonds show on the nose, while the flavors are densely concentrated, revealing dried herbs, tea leaves, orchard fruit, and toasted nuts. It has a dusty finish. Basilio Izquierdo 2008 B de Basilio Tinto Rioja ($55) 91

Former CVNE winemaker, Basilio Izquierdo, now produces wine under his own label. The 2008 B de Basilio (Tinto) is a blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha and Graciano. Aged 12 months in French oak, it displays a nose of black and red fruit, minerals, loam, and a hint of licorice. On the palate it has a soft texture, hints of red fruit, and round firm tannins on the finish. Basilio Izquierdo 2009 Acodo Rioja 90

The 2009 Acodo is a blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Garnacha, half aged in glass lined cement tanks, half in used French oak. It displays fresh dark cherry aromas with a hint of smoke on the nose. It has a gorgeous, refined palate of fresh cherry and plum with additional light hints of loam and tobacco. It is soft and silky with firm tannins and a long finish. Also Tasted: Basilio Izquierdo 2010 Acodo Blanco. Importer: Spanish Wine Exclusives

Benjamin Romeo

Formerly winemaker at Artadi, Benjamin 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. Benjamin’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.

Benjamin Romeo 2012 Predicador Rioja ($35) 90+

The 2012 Predicador blends 42% Garnacha Blanca, 33% Viura and 25% Malvasia sourced from one of Rioja’s highest vineyards. Barrel fermented and aged for eight months without battonage. It is perfumed and honeyed showing cured lemon and dried stone fruit. It is soft on the palate, very feminine and gentle with nice spice and complexity. Quite lovely. Benjamin Romeo 2012 Que Bonito Ca-careaba Rioja ($80) 89

One of Benjamin Romeo’s most interesting white blends, the 2012 Que Bonito Cacareaba, is made of 50% Garnacha Blanca, 35% Malvasia and 15% Viura. Fermented in 100% new French oak for eight months, it reveals a medium yellow straw color with puzzling aromas of metholathum and herbs on the nose. It is soft and lush on the palate with flavors of ripe melon, tropical fruit and toast, good acidity and a crisp finish. The metholathum on the nose is troubling and hopefully will wear off. 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 astrangent tannins, it needs a minimum of two-three years of further bottle aging.

Benjamin Romeo 2011 La Cueva del Contador Rioja ($90) 91

La Cueva del Contador is 100% Tempranillo. It is semi-opaque ruby red in color and offers aromas of black cherry, pepper and violets. It has a beautiful attack of concentrated black cherry fruit with notes of licorice, tar and minerals. It has firm and slightly chunky tannins and a long finish. Needs a couple of years in the bottle. 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 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 2012 Predicador Tinto Rioja ($30) 90+

The 2012 Predicador Tinto is composed of 96% Tempranillo, 3% Garnacha, and 1% Viura. Aged 16 months in one-year used barrels (100% French oak) it has a fresh bouquet with delicious red fruit and herbal notes. On the palate it is big and mouth filling with more spicy red plum fruit, fine firm tannins, and a persistent finish.

Benjamin Romeo 2008 Gran Reserva Carmen Rioja ($160) 92

The 2008 Gran Reserva Carmen is a new wine and a tribute to Benjamin’s mother. It is a delicious blend of 90% Tempranillo and small amounts of Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo. It exhibits an array of minerals and herbs with hints of ripe plum fruit with savory notes. It also has firm tannins, with good balance and integration and a persistent finish. Needs more time in the bottle like most of Benjamin’s other wines. Importer: European Cellars, Eric Solomon Selections, Charlotte, NC

Bodegas Beronia 2007 198 Barricas Reserva Rioja ($48) 92

This selection of 198 barrels (from a winery that produces 5 million bottles) is the most refined of the Beronia lineup, showing vivacious dark red fruit with complementary hints of tobacco leaf and leather. It’s silky smooth with fine tannins and excellent flavor depth. A superb wine. Bodegas Beronia 2006 Gran Reserva Rioja ($29) 90

The 2006 Gran Reserva shows fresh, ripe red plum, and dried dark cherry scents. It’s exceptionally smooth with fine tannins and a long, rich, dusty earthy finish. Bodegas Beronia 2008 Reserva Rioja ($19) 90

Sourced from Rioja Alta fruit, the 2008 Reserva reveals a sweet, earthy perfume and a silky, round mouth feel. It is ripe and densely flavored with notes of dark red fruit and integrated toasted oak, finishing with gripping, round tannins. Sees 18 months in French and American oak. Bodegas Beronia 2009 Reserva Rioja ($20) 89

The 2009 Reserva displays a semi opaque dark red color with spicy dark red fruit and hints of balsamic and black olive on nose. It is big and soft on the attack with lots of dark fruit integrated with oak, a lush mouth feel and a sweet oak finish. Well done. Importer: San Francisco Wine Exchange San Francisco, CA
Bodegas Breton 2009 Lorrión Reserva Rioja ($20) 89
Showing plum, dark berries, and herbal notes on the nose, this is a wine of good flavor density and complexity. The wine is mouth filling, and the texture is a bit rustic, but round tannins and upfront fruit make it easy to drink now, although we recommend decanting or letting it air for a couple of hours first. 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano aged 16+ months in American oak.  

Importer: Classical Wines Seattle, WA

Viña Bujanda 2009 Crianza Rioja ($15) 88
This wine is fresh with nice red berry fruit, but it doesn’t have the complexity and depth we would expect from a well-oaked Crianza. It’s a pleasant and flavorful wine that drinks easily. 100% Tempranillo aged 12 months in used French and American oak.  

Viña Bujanda 2008 Reserva Rioja ($20) 90+
The Reserva shows a perfume of toasted oak and dark red fruit that’s mirrored on a silky smooth palate along with notes of tobacco and smoke, finishing long and fresh. As with the Crianza, we find the Reserva to be lighter and fresher than expected, since it was aged for 20 months in oak. It’s 100% Tempranillo from 40 to 60 year old vines.  

Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Bodegas Burgo Viejo 2008 Reserva Rioja ($20) 88
This Rioja Baja wine is dark fruited with notes of black olive and tobacco. It’s medium weight with round tannins and drinks soft and easy, but it’s a wine that needs food to show well. 85% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 5% Carignan. Matured in 50/50 American and French oak for 18 months.  

Burgo Viejo 2006 Reserva Rioja ($20) 90
The 2006 Reserva is a traditionally styled Rioja with prominent notes of underbrush, earthy herbs, and dark red plum and cherry fruit. It’s linear and focused in the mouth with integrated, concentrated flavors and granular tannins. A blend of 85% Tempranillo, 15% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano, and 5% Mazuelo aged in 50/50 used American and new French oak for 18 months. Excellent value.  

Burgo Viejo 2010 Crianza Rioja ($13) 88
This is a good quality crianza and a superb value. It shows spice box, dark red fruit and a light saddle leather note that are well integrated on the palate. It’s soft on the attack, medium weight, and good length.  

Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA

CVA Calma 2010 Calma ($17) 91
Made from Tempranillo (90%) and Graciano (10%) grapes grown in around Hormilla, this is a very flavorful wine showing rich dark red plum fruit with nicely integrated toasted oak and hints of loam, underbrush and spice. It’s fresh and silky smooth with fine grained tannins and drinks well now, although it will improve with another year or two in bottle. The wine is fresh and silky smooth. Made from organically grown es-

tate grapes at 568 m and aged 16 months in 90% French oak.  

Importer: Ole Imports Manhasset, NY

Campillo 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja ($57) 91
This is a traditionally styled Gran Reserva from the Rioja Alavesa with prominent notes of forest floor, dark fruit, sweet oak, and still firm, dry tannins. The palate is soft and round. Don’t wait to drink. Campillo is a property of Bodegas Faustino.  

Importer: Palm Bay Imports Boca Raton, FL

Carlos Serres 2009 Crianza Rioja ($14) 89
A good example of a traditional crianza revealing notes of vanilla bean, herbs, and red fruit. It has a medium weight palate, good balance and length. A blend of Tempranillo and Garnacha.  

Carlos Serres 2005 Gran Reserva Rioja ($30) 90+
Quite light and delicate for a Gran Reserva but showing beautiful red cherry fruit both on the nose and a soft, silky palate. Shows excellent acidity, refined flavors, and well-integrated vanilla oak on a medium plus weight palate. A blend of Tempranillo and Graciano.  

Carlos Serres 2011 Old Vines Tempranillo Rioja ($12) 90
This is a very pleasant drinking wine showing flavorful dark cherry fruit. It’s concentrated on the palate with nicely integrated tannins and silky round tannins. Superb value in a high quality Rioja.  

Carlos Serres 2009 Onomastica Blanco Reserva Rioja ($45) 90
This is a very traditional, well-oaked Riojan Viura that offers attractive herbal tea, dried stone fruit, toasted almond and smoky oak aromas and flavors. It has good acidity and crispness with a mineral edge. It’s a wine for those who remember the slightly oxidized, but well made, white Riojas of the past.  

Carlos Serres 2004 Onomastica Reserva Rioja ($45) 91
An excellent example of Rioja Reserva showing complex, integrated notes of minerals, smoke, red and black fruit and warm spices. It’s a suave, refined wine that finishes with still very firm tannins. Delicious. A blend of Tempranillo, Mazuelo and Graciano.  

Carlos Serres 2007 Reserva Rioja ($23) 89
The 2007 Reserva is easy to drink with notes of dark red fruit, underbrush, herbs, and tobacco leaf on a medium weight, polished palate, finishing with silky tannins.  

Also tasted: Carlos Serres 2012 Tempranillo, Carlos Serres 2011 Viura.  

Importer: Testa Wines Oyster Bay, NY

Casa Primicia 2008 Casaprimicia Garnacha Rioja ($19) 88
This is a fruit forward, easy drinking Garnacha with a soft attack, nice dark red berry palate, and finishing with firm tannins.  

Casa Primicia 2005 Colradia Reserva Rioja ($73) 92
The Colradia Reserva is especially attractive with intriguing and complex notes of underbrush, leather, spicy toasted oak, and dark red fruit. It has a soft attack with concentrated, layered dark red fruit flavors and a full smooth palate feel.  

Casa Primicia 2007 Julian Madrid Reserva Rioja ($39) 90+
The Julian Madrid Reserva is modern in style with fresh dark red fruit and hints of sweet oak complemented by notes of spice box, mesquite, and earth. The palate is well integrated and finishes with good length.  

Importer: Vin Divino Chicago, IL
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. Importer: Vinos Libres Wine Merchant www.vinoslibres.com

Castillo Labastida 2010 Crianza Rioja ($16) 88+  This Crianza is a traditional, medium weight Rioja with notes of oak, herbs, and a nice red fruit accent. Aged 12 months in French and American oak.

Castillo Labastida 2004 Reserva Especial Manuel Quintana ($60) 91+  This is a flavorful, complete wine with good balance, vibrancy, and freshness, still youthful with firm tannins. It reveals notes of underbrush, tobacco, and earth on a savory palate. Delicious.  

Castillo Labastida 2006 Reserva Rioja ($26) 88  The Reserva is predominantly Tempranillo aged in French and American oak for 18 months. The wine shows spicy, herbal and dark cherry aromas that carry over flavorwise. It has moderate concentration, a chalky, somewhat dry mouth feel, and very good length. Drink now. Castillo Labastida is owned by the cooperative, Unión de Cosecheros de Labastida; the winemaker is Manuel Ruiz Pedreira.  

Compañía de Vinos del Atlántico (CVA) 2011 Gra2 Graciano Rioja ($19) 89  The Gra2 is a forward wine showing fresh red berry fruit that’s nicely balanced with good acidity and fine tannins. It’s a straightforward, easy drinking wine that should be served slightly chilled.

Compañía de Vinos del Atlántico (CVA) 2010 La Antigua Clásico Rioja 89  The 2010 La Antigua Clásico displays aromas of dark red fruit with notes of forest floor and Indian spices. Aged 24 months in 60/40 French and American oak, the wine is medium weight with rather exaggerated toasted oak notes, herbs and vanilla, firm but round tannins and a persistent finish. The wine is composed of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Graciano, 10% Garnacha from vines planted before 1955 growing in limestone and sandy soil.

Compañía de Vinos del Atlántico (CVA) 2006 La Antigua Clásico Reserva Rioja

Los Condes de Hervías  Over 100 years ago the Conde de Hervías planted pre-phylloxera parcels of Tempranillo and Graciano in sandy clay soils on the border of the Ebro River near Torremontalvo in Rioja Alta. Today these 80-140 year old vines provide the fruit for the exceptional Conde de Hervías wines made by the Conde’s descendant Iñigo Manso de Zúñiga Ugartechea, who trained at the University of Bordeaux. Mencos is his second line of wines sourced from younger vineyards.

Conde de Hervías 2008 Conde de Hervías Rioja ($74) 93  Spicy, rich, sweet dark cherry and plum nose. Attractive fresh dark red fruit balanced with good acidity and freshness on a silky smooth palate. Modern and international in style with beautifully toasted oak, round firm tannins, and a long finish. The flagship wine of the winery. 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano sourced from a vineyard planted in 1864 and fermented in stainless steel using indigenous yeasts and aged 16 months in French oak. Outstanding. 

Conde de Hervías 2011 Mencos Blanco Rioja ($15) 90  The Mencos Blanco reveals lovely floral notes with passion fruit and hints of rose petals. It’s bright and fresh on the palate with excellent acidity and an herbal green tea character. Long, lingering finish. 100% Viura sourced from biodynamically farmed 30+ year old vines.

Conde de Hervías 2012 Mencos Tinto Rioja ($16) 88  The Mencos Tinto shows attractive notes of sweet, ripe fresh dark red plum, licorice and cherry. It’s fresh and uncomplicated with a very dry finish. Sourced from 35 year old vines planted on chalky clay over gravel on the south side of the Ebro River in Torremontalvo. Good drinking pleasure for the price.

Conde de Hervías 2009 Torre del Conde de Hervías Rioja ($45) 92  Intense sweet toasted oak and ripe, perfumed dark plum fruit show on the nose. The wine is elegant on soft, velvety palate with good intensity of fruit flavor and a hint of sweet vanilla cream. Lovely, soft, velvety persistent finish. Made of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano sourced from pre-phylloxera parcels and aged 14 months in an 80/20 mix of French and American oak. Importer: De Maison Selections, Inc. Chapel Hill, NC
**Viñedos del Contino** Half owned by CVNE, Contino was established in the early 1970s with Basilio Izquierdo as winemaker for the first, 1974 vintage and continuing for the next 20 years. The winery has 63 ha of sandy calcareous vineyards bordering the Rio Ebro in Laserna in the Rioja Alavesa, but only a portion of the very best fruit is kept for Contino’s wines. Fifty of the 63 ha are planted to Tempranillo. Its location gives the vineyard the lowest elevation (400-420m) of Alava and even temperatures moderated by proximity to the river. It has varied soils, with rocky, alluvial soils near the river and sandy, limestone soils elsewhere. Each of the vineyard’s parcels is vinified separately. The 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. The Reserva is more traditionally styled, while the single vineyard Vina del Olivo is opulent and modern.

**Contino 2006 Graciano Rioja ($155) 92** Opaque, showing an impressively powerful perfume of licorice, smoked meat, and dark cassis. The wine reveals superb volume and concentration on a balanced and focused, dark fruit palate finishing with ripe, chalky tannins. Aged 13 months in French and Hungarian oak. **Contino 2007 Reserva Rioja 91+** The 2007 Reserva is fresh and savory with a refined, balanced palate. It offers fresh dark red fruit with an overlay of toasted oak and additional notes of spice box and smoke. It finishes on a refined note with superb liqueur like viscosity. **Contino 2007 Viña del Olivo Rioja ($150) 93** Opaque black purple. This single vineyard Rioja is made of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Garcião. It’s an opulent wine showing spicy dark chocolate, espresso, and cassis with hints of incense and violets. It’s suave on the attack and lush with rich layers of dark fruit. Fermented in oak and aged 17 months in French and American oak. **Importer:** Europvin USA (Christopher Cannan), europvin.com

**Bodegas Corral 2008 Altos de Corral Barrel Fermented Rioja ($30) 90+** The 2008 Altos de Corral displays a rich, earthy, spicy nose. It is lush and soft on the palate, and well toasted. Rich and densely flavored, the wine shows heavily toasted coconut on the palate with a sweet cola note on the finish with tannic grip. Very good. **Bodegas Corral 2008 Don Jacobo Crianza Rioja ($15) 88** This is a fresh, easy drinking crianza. It’s fruit forward with prominent black cherry notes that carry through to a pleasing, firmly tannic finish. **Bodegas Corral 2005 Don Jacobo Reserva ($23) 88+** The Reserva shows some of the same fresh cherry fruit notes as the crianza, but it’s fuller and sweeter on the palate, finishing with round tannins. The wine is generously oaked, and vanilla and coconut notes are prominent. Bodegas Corral 1996 Don Jacobo Gran Reserva ($40) 89 With its still lively red fruit, it’s difficult to believe this wine is an 18 year old wine. It offers a silky palate with flavors that reveal its long time in barrel. Very dry. **Importer:** Vintage Wines, Staten Island, NY

**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. Wines carrying the Cune brand come from vineyards in Sajazarra. CVNE has 240 ha of vineyards and purchases additional fruit from another 94 ha. 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 wines have very long lives. Thanks to Aurelio Cabastros, we tasted a 1973 Viña Real Gran Reserva that still retained its elegance. While it sees less time in oak (about 2 years), the superb 2005 Imperial Gran Reserva shows the weight and acidity to also live a long time.

**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. **CVNE 2013 Monopole Rioja ($15) 88+** This unoaked Viura is a lovely, easy drinking wine. It’s squeaky clean, floral in character and showing notes of white pear. It’s a lively wine with bright acidity and freshness. A great summer wine. **Also tasted:** CVNE 2010 Crianza. **Importers:** Grapes of Spain and Elite Wines Lorton, VA

**Bodegas Dinastia Vivanco** This is a modern winery launched in the early 1990s by Pedro Vivanco, a Rioja wine merchant and passionate collector of wine-related artifacts, which serve as the core collection for its Museum of Wine in Briones. Today his two sons, Santiago and Rafael, operate the winery, with Rafael as winemaker. They own 400 ha of vineyards in Briones and Haro and produce about 1 million bottles annually. While perhaps best known for the museum, the best of its kind in Spain and a popular tourist attraction, the wines are good quality and getting better. Vivanco now has a US importer (Opici), which it didn’t have during our visit to the winery a few years ago. The best wines are in the Colección Vivanco, including single varietal bottlings of Garnacha, Graciano, Mazuelo, the rare Maturana Tinta, and 4 Varietales, made from the 12 ha single vineyard Finca El Cantillo located at the winery.

**Dinastia Vivanco 2012 Blanco Rioja ($15) 90** A hand-picked blend of Viura (60%), Malvasia (20%), and Tempranillo Blanco (20%). This wine impresses with its minerality, focus and freshness. Excellent value, too! **Dinastia Vivanco 2009 Crianza Rioja ($15) 88** The 2009 Crianza
offers sweet red Tempranillo fruit on the nose with traces of cinnamon and herbs. Aged 16 months in new French and American oak, it is quite concentrated and flavorful on the attack albeit with pleasant and simple flavors. Dinastia Vivanco 2007 Reserva Rioja ($25) 90 A blend of Tempranillo and Graciano, the Reserva is aged 24 months in new French and American oak. It displays dark red fruit notes with fresh toasted oak on the nose with a trace of coconut. On the palate it is silky smooth with a lovely texture and prominent sweet oak overlaying dark red fruit. It has sweet firm ripe tannins and finishes long and flavorful. Dinastia Vivanco 2010 Parcelas de Garnacha Rioja ($60) 89 The 2010 Parcelas de Garnacha displays a lovely dark ruby hue and fragrant aromas of kirsch and cranberry. On the palate it reveals pure dark berry fruit flavors of moderate intensity with hints of earth. Aged for 18 months in French oak barriques, it has a subtle dose of toasted oak and dry gripping tannins on the finish. Dinastia Vivanco 2009 Parcelas de Maturana Tinta Rioja ($60) 91 The 2009 Parcelas de Maturana Tinta is one of the very few single varietals produced of this indigenous grape and it is a good one. Opaque ruby garnet in color, it offers a complex nose of dark plum, roasted meat and smoke. The attack is rich and sweet revealing a hint of balsamic, liqueur like richness and ripe meaty dark red fruit aromas. It shows good acidity and finishes with firm tannins. Dinastia Vivanco 2010 Parcelas de Mazuelo Rioja ($75) 89 The opaque ruby Mazuelo displays ripe dark plum aromas with hints of licorice and perfume. It is big and ripe-tasting on the attack with a supple mouth feel. It is richly flavored although not very nuanced and shows firm ripe tannins on the finish. Dinastia Vivanco 2010 4 Variedades Rioja ($40) 91+. There are four grape varieties in this blend: 70% Tempranillo, 15% Graciano, 10% Garnacha and 5% Mazuelo. It displays a semi-opaque ruby color and aromas of dark plum, spice, licorice, and smoke. It is flavorful and mouth filling and reveals vibrant dark fruit with good purity. It’s well integrated with good structure and a long finish. An outstanding wine. Importer: Opici Import Company Glenrock, NJ

DSG Vineyards 2010 Phinca Lali Rioja ($56) 93 Made by the young grower, David Sampedro Gil from the single, biodynamic Lali vineyard. Phinca Lali is an unusual blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Viura destemmed by hand and foot trodden and fermented in open 500L barrels. It is silky and elegant, revealing prominent garrigue and eucalyptus oil notes and a fine minerality, finishing long and pure with chalky tannins. Aged 14 months in French oak. DSG Vineyards 2010 Phincas Rioja ($35) 90 This interesting Tempranillo blend reveals layers of black raspberry, cherry, wood spice, and pepper all nicely integrated with the addition of earth notes. It has very good balance and structure with fine grained tannins and purity of flavor on a lingering finish. A blend of 70% Tempranillo, 15% Graciano, 10% Garnacha, 5% Viura from four separate parcels in Rioja Alavesa. Fermented and aged in oak, half new for 12+ months. DSG Vineyards 2010 Phincas Thousand Mills Rioja ($55) 92 The Phincas Thousand Mills has an intriguing nose of yellow flowers, orange peel, and a hint of toffee. It’s crisp and light with refreshing acidity and notes of ripe citrus, star fruit and toasted nuts, finishing precise and long. A blend of 80% Viura, 10% Garnacha Blanca, 10% Malvasia from the Lali and La Abejera Vineyards. Fermented in oak and aged on the lees for 11 months. DSG Vineyards 2009 Terca Blanca Rioja ($55) 90 The Terca Blanca shows a nutty, smoked oak nose and a liqueur like palate of toasted oak, dried herbs, and chalky minerals. Made of 90% Viura and 10% Malvasia, it’s fermented in open top 500 L barrels and aged 10 months in used French oak. A unique wine that won’t be to everyone’s taste. DSG Vineyards 2010 Vuelta de Terca Rioja ($55) 93 This is a beautiful and beautifully flavored wine, It has an exotic perfumed nose and rich, fresh liqueur like concentration of red and black fruit with notes of chocolate, blueberry and cassis. Burgundy like in its combination of elegance and power. A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano, 10% Garnacha from a single vineyard (La Revilla) destemmed above 500L barrels to avoid pumping. Aged 15 months in French oak, with blending at 9 months. A still very young wine that needs decanting. Importer: HP Selections New York, NY

Viña Eguia 2010 Tempranillo Rioja ($11) 87 The 2010 Tempranillo offers reticent aromas of red cherry with traces of vanilla. On the palate it is light and easy drinking with ripe tannins and a short finish. Viña Eguia 2009 Reserva Rioja ($15) 89 The 2009 Reserva is a step up in quality and complexity. It is medium dark ruby in color and offers aromas of dark cherry, toast and earth. Aged nearly 30 months it is soft on the palate with good volume and fills the mouth with ripe red fruit. While not complex, it offers fresh red fruit of good length and a long persistent finish. Made with selected grapes of Rioja Alavesa vineyards. Viña Eguia 2004 Gran Reserva Rioja ($25) 90 The Gran Reserva is dark ruby in color and offers aromas of red berry fruit, light toast, balsamic, and earth. Aged three years in French and American oak, it displays fine tannins, decent complexity of dark fruit with good freshness, and a soft mouth feel. Not yet available in the US. Importer: Quintessential Wines, Napa CA
El Coto de Rioja 2013 El Coto Blanco ($30) 89 Ripe pear with fresh stone fruit notes. It’s a light, fresh drinking wine with a more expressive nose. It reveals a noteworthy Mediterranean influence—warm and riper fruit. Aged 9 months in concrete tanks and barrels. 

El Coto de Rioja 2013 Rosado ($12) 88 A 50/50 blend of Tempranillo and Garnacha. The grapes are macerated on the skins for 48 hours. Starbright light pink color with red berry aromas, this is an easy drinking wine, very flavorful wine showing red berries with a hint of ripe watermelon and brisk acidity. 

El Coto de Rioja 2010 Crianza ($15) 88 This is an easy drinking wine showing earthy red fruit with soft tannins. It’s inexpensive, tasty and would make a great pizza wine. It fits the definition of Classical Rioja with fruit coming from throughout the Rioja appellation and aged 12 months in American oak. Best served at cellar temperature. 

Bodegas Exopto 2011 Exopto Blanco Rioja ($30) 91+ A 50/50 blend of Viura, 10% Grenache Blanc, 5% Malvasia, fermented in stainless steel and aged in used oak for one year. Needs a bit of oxidation to get volume and also a more expressive nose. It reveals a noteworthy Mediterranean influence—warm and riper fruit. Aged 9 months in concrete tanks and barrels. 


Bodegas Ercavio 2009 La Buena Vid Más Que Vinos Rioja ($20) 87 El Coto de Rioja 2010 Crianza Rioja ($15) 88 This is an easy drinking wine showing earthy red fruit with soft tannins. It’s inexpensive, tasty and would make a great pizza wine. It fits the definition of Classical Rioja with fruit coming from throughout the Rioja appellation and aged 12 months in American oak. Best served at cellar temperature. 

Bodegas Exopto 2011 Exopto Rioja ($65) 92 This wine, only made in the best years is 60% Garnacha, 30% Tempranillo from old vineyards, and 10% Garnacha. Aged 18 months in 50% new oak. Dark ruby plum color, dark cassis on the nose. Velvety texture, high acidity and freshness on the attack, very dense, fresh, dark red berry fruit. Quite astringent tannins on the finish. Needs time in bottle. Silky, elegant character. 

Bodegas Exopto 2012 Horizonte de Exopto Rioja ($30) 90 A 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 10% Graciano sourced from among 12-14 different plots with lower yields. Aged 12 months in barrel. All Left Bank fruit. Fresh, dark red fruit, hint of chocolate, light herbal note, decadent richness on the palate, fruit forward but with good depth of dark red fruit, softly textured, nicely structured with fine, ripe tannins and good length. Fruit driven. Delicious. 

Also tasted: Bodegas Exopto 2011 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco Rioja, Bodegas Exopto 2010 Exopto Bodegas Exopto Cellars 2011 Bozeto 

Faustino 2013 VII Blanco Rioja ($12) 88 A pleasant drinking wine with floral and rather sweet summer melon aromas. Fresh and crisp on the attack showing white peach, white flower, hint of nectarine with a touch of diesel. 

Faustino 2008 Faustino V Reserva ($21) 88 This is by far the best of the Faustino lineup. It’s smoky and earthy with a nice silky palate feel. There’s good acidity and balance but the primary fruit notes have pretty much evolved. Pleasant drinking now. 

Bodegas Exopto 2012 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco Rioja ($30) 91+ A blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Graciano. Vibrant, fresh, alive. 

Bodegas Exopto 2011 Exopto Rioja ($55) 92 This wine, only made in the best years is 60% Garnacha, 30% Tempranillo from old vineyards, and 10% Garnacha. Aged 18 months in 50% new oak. Dark ruby plum color, dark cassis on the nose. Velvety texture, high acidity and freshness on the attack, very dense, fresh, dark red berry fruit. Quite astringent tannins on the finish. Needs time in bottle. Silky, elegant character. 

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Also tasted: Bodegas Exopto 2011 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco Rioja, Bodegas Exopto 2010 Exopto Bodegas Exopto Cellars 2011 Bozeto 

Fernando Remirez de Ganuza started assembling his Rioja Alavesa vineyard in 1978 and today has 57 ha in Samaniego and other villages. His vines are up to 100 years old, and the harvest is done with same super-attention to detail that Fernando does with every aspect of winemaking. He’s one of the very few growers to make several passes through the vineyard, each time selecting only perfectly ripe bunches and then using only the top part of each bunch. Grapes go through a triple sorting process before gently pressing using a process he invented. Fermentation is also uniquely done in small, cone-shaped steel tanks. The result of all this meticulous care is elegant, rich wines with soft tannins and velvety palates. While we’ve visited Fernando in the past and tasted his full portfolio, we were not able to repeat the visit on this trip. Annual production is about 250 thousand bottles. 

Bodegas Exopto 2012 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco Rioja ($30) 90+ Dark ruby with ripe aromas of plum and dark cherry with a note of underbrush. It’s soft on the attack with good upfront fruit concentration, light oak spice, firm tannins and a long finish. A blend of Garnacha, Tempranillo and Graciano. Aged 9 months in concrete tanks and barrels. 

Bodegas Exopto 2010 Dominio del Viento Crianza Rioja ($30) 89 Medium dark ruby red. Herbal, earthy, dark red plum, with a wet earth note. Bright acidity and fresh red fruit on the attack, followed by darker, earthier notes on the palate. Good, clean flavor; medium intensity. Fresh in style. Nice red fruit notes on the palate. 

Bodegas Fernando Remirez de Ganuza 2006 Reserva Rioja ($50) 89 Fernando Remirez de Ganuza’s 2006 Reserva offers blackberry fruit, earth and toasted oak on the nose. Like many other wines from this estate, this reserve is dense and tightly knit requiring lots of time for aging. Although several years old the wine is still backward with rather firm dry tannins on the finish. Drink 2016- to 2025. 

Importers: Frederick Wildman and Sons New York, NY 


Bodegas Exopto 2011 Exopto Rioja ($55) 92 This wine, only made in the best years is 60% Garnacha, 30% Tempranillo from old vineyards, and 10% Garnacha. Aged 18 months in 50% new oak. Dark ruby plum color, dark cassis on the nose. Velvety texture, high acidity and freshness on the attack, very dense, fresh, dark red berry fruit. Quite astringent tannins on the finish. Needs time in bottle. Silky, elegant character. 

Bodegas Exopto 2012 Horizonte de Exopto Rioja ($30) 90 A 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 10% Graciano sourced from among 12-14 different plots with lower yields. Aged 12 months in barrel. All Left Bank fruit. Fresh, dark red fruit, hint of chocolate, light herbal note, decadent richness on the palate, fruit forward but with good depth of dark red fruit, softly textured, nicely structured with fine, ripe tannins and good length. Fruit driven. Delicious. 

Also tasted: Bodegas Exopto 2011 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco Rioja, Bodegas Exopto 2010 Exopto Bodegas Exopto Cellars 2011 Bozeto 

Fernando Remirez de Ganuza started assembling his Rioja Alavesa vineyard in 1978 and today has 57 ha in Samaniego and other villages. His vines are up to 100 years old, and the harvest is done with same super-attention to detail that Fernando does with every aspect of winemaking. He’s one of the very few growers to make several passes through the vineyard, each time selecting only perfectly ripe bunches and then using only the top part of each bunch. Grapes go through a triple sorting process before gently pressing using a process he invented. Fermentation is also uniquely done in small, cone-shaped steel tanks. The result of all this meticulous care is elegant, rich wines with soft tannins and velvety palates. While we’ve visited Fernando in the past and tasted his full portfolio, we were not able to repeat the visit on this trip. Annual production is about 250 thousand bottles. 

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Bodegas Exopto 2010 Dominio del Viento Crianza Rioja ($30) 89 Medium dark ruby red. Herbal, earthy, dark red plum, with a wet earth note. Bright acidity and fresh red fruit on the attack, followed by darker, earthier notes on the palate. Good, clean flavor; medium intensity. Fresh in style. Nice red fruit notes on the palate. 

Bodegas Exopto 2011 Exopto Rioja ($55) 92 This wine, only made in the best years is 60% Garnacha, 30% Tempranillo from old vineyards, and 10% Garnacha. Aged 18 months in 50% new oak. Dark ruby plum color, dark cassis on the nose. Velvety texture, high acidity and freshness on the attack, very dense, fresh, dark red berry fruit. Quite astringent tannins on the finish. Needs time in bottle. Silky, elegant character.
Finca Allende 2012 Martires Rioja ($160) 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 2007 Allende Rioja ($25) 91+** The 2007 Finca Allende is 100% Tempranillo. It exhibits a lovely dark ruby color and pure rich flavors of fresh black cherry, lightly toasted oak and wild herbs. Aged 14 months in new French oak, it boasts remarkably purity of flavor, good structure and freshness, fine tannins, and a long finish. **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 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. **Finca Allende 2007 Tinto Rioja 91** Pitched aromas are filled with ripe dark red/almost black fruits, with coffee and toasted oak notes. In the mouth, the wine has a creamy density that is quite mature and optimally balanced now. Drink now. **Finca Allende 2007 Viña Olvido Crianza Rioja 88+** A new project, the wines are on limestone terraces rather than more clay-rich soils for Allende label wines. This wine shows tart red currant aromas and crisp flavors that are very young. This wine needs time to unfold but will be better with age. **Bodegas Finca del Marquesado 2009 Crianza Rioja ($12) 89+** This is a fruit forward wine revealing spicy blackberry and blueberry aromas and flavors. It is soft and fruity on the palate with good density of flavor, round firm tannins and a long finish. Great value. **Finca Egomei 2009 Egomei Alma Rioja ($75) 92** This is a fruit forward wine revealing spicy blackberry and blueberry aromas and flavors. It is soft and fruity on the palate with good density of flavor, round firm tannins and a long finish. Great value. **Finca Egomei 2010 Egomei Rioja ($25) 89** The Egomei is similar to the Alma in its lavish sweet oak and pure, ripe dark red fruit, although it doesn’t have the Alma’s palate weight and lush mouth feel. Still, it’s a delicious, modern style Rioja wine that pleasant and easy to drink. Made from hand picked 20 Kg boxes and washed prior to sorting. Egomei produces about 100 thousand bottles annually of just two modern, premium wines under the names Egomei and Alma Egomei, both matured exclusively in Allier barriques. Idoya Jerautà is technical director/winemaker and Ventura Lasanta is consulting winemaker.
**Finca La Emperatriz.** This 101 ha estate (with 85 ha of estate vines), named after the 19th century French Empress who used to make wine at the estate, was recreated in the late 1990s by brothers Eduardo and Victor Hernández. Its principal vineyard is in Baños de Rioja, located southwest of Haro in an especially cool, high-altitude (570 m) area of Rioja Alta located near the Rio Oja. It has particularly unique soils of large, white stones, 40 cm deep, that provide good drainage and solar radiation with sandy loam subsoil. The vineyard is divided into plots, each of which is separately vini-

tied. The wines are excellent, revealing concentrated fruit flavors and lavish oakaging. Eduardo Hernández is the talented cellarmaster, aided by enologist Joana Calde-

ra.

Finca La Emperatriz 2010 Crianza Rioja ($20) 88+. The 2010 Crianza combines Tempranillo with small amounts of Garnacha and Viura. Sourced from young and old vines, it displays aromas of ripe cherry, black olive and meaty character on the nose. Aged in 80% American and 20% French oak, it reveals a good bit of oak on the nose with a savory and meaty character on the palate. It has good overall structure, freshness and acidity and chalky tannins on the finish.

Finca La Emperatriz 2010 Garnacha Cepas Viejas Rioja ($40) 93. The 2010 Garnacha Cepas Viejas is an extraordinary wine sourced from high density 65-year-old bush vines from a small vineyard parcel. Medium ruby in color, it offers pure and fragrant red berries on the nose with a hint of vanilla. Aged 11 months in 500 L French oak bar-

rels, it is soft and elegant on the attack with a silky mouth feel and intense red fruit flavor on the palate and through to the fruity finish. A beautiful Garnacha and among the finest produced in Rioja.

Finca La Emperatriz 2010 Parcels No. 1 Rioja ($60) 93. The Parcela No. 1 is made of 100% Tempranillo from a low-yielding 65 year old vineyard parcel (No 1). Opaque ruby in color, it exhibits bold and highly concentrated black and red berry fruit. Aged 18 months in fined grained new French oak, the palate is rich and dense with firm ripe tannins and a long finish. This wine shows great promise but is best kept in the bottle for the next several years to allow it to evolve.

Finca La Emperatriz 2008 Reserva Rioja ($35) 92. The 2008 Reserva is sourced from 60-year old head trained vines of 94% Tempranillo, 3% Garnacha, 2% Viura, and 1% Graciano. A big step up in richness and complexity to the Crianza, the Reserva is aged 23 months in a 60/40 mix of new American and French oak. It offers black cherry and rich toasted oak on the nose and a palate lush in meaty savory flavors. A beautiful wine and an exemplary Reserva.

Finca La Emperatriz 2009 Terruño Rioja ($30) 92. The 2009 Terruño is made of 100% Tempranillo offering ripe black cherry fruit, minerals and black olive. Aged 18 months in

Finca Nueva 2008 Crianza Rioja ($15) 88. Finca Nueva is a wine produced by Miguel Angel de Gregorio of Finca Allende. The wines are of excellent quality and modestly priced. The Finca Nueva Crianza offers aromas of black cherry, clove and herbs. It is soft on the attack and full in the mouth with flavors of ripe cherry and fruit. Aged 12 months in French oak, it displays excellent balance and acidity with purity of red fruit flavors, light notes of earth and herbs, refined tannins and a long savoury finish.

Finca Nueva 2007 Reserva Rioja ($20) 90. The dark ruby Reserva offers aromas of dark plum fruit with sharp herbal notes. It is soft on the attack, full in the mouth, and boasts nicely packed dark red fruit with a bright macerated cherry note. Aged 24 months in oak, it also reveals hints of tobacco and earth and good, rich extract on the finish.

Finca Nueva 2013 Rosado Rioja ($15) 90. The 2013 Rosado is a blend of 60% Tempranillo and 40% Garnacha. It displays a lovely pale copper pink color and offers very fresh and perfumy bright dried and fresh cherries on the nose. On the palate it reveals a crisp attack of tangy light red berry fruit with minerals and a hint of herbs. Delicious.

Finca Nueva 2013 Tempranillo Rioja ($16) 88. The Tempranillo displays a medium ruby red color and fragrant aromas of fresh red cherry and plum. It is fresh tasting and easy drinking on the palate with spicy plum flavors. Soft round tannins and a lovely finish.

Finca Valpiedra. After the breakup of the Martinez Bujanda group in 2007, the 200 ha Finca Valpiedra vineyard and winery (built in 1999) are today owned by the Martinez Bujanda winery. Valpiedra gets its name from the stones that cover the calcareous, sandy loam soils of the vineyard located near the Rio Ebro. Grapes are harvested by hand for Valpiedra’s two single vineyards, Tempranillo-dominated wines—Finca Valpiedra and Cantos de Valpiedra. The winemaker is Lauren Rosillo.

Finca Valpiedra 2010 Crianza Rioja ($20) 90. This 100% Tempranillo is aged 12 months in French and American oak. It offers light fruit, coconut and a hint of mint chocolate on the nose and a heavily oaked palate with dry
tannins and a firm finish. **Finca Valpiedra 2008 Reserva Rioja ($40) 91+** The 2008 Reserva offers dark red fruit and nicely toasted oak with a note of red licorice. It is big on the attack with concentrated ripe fruit—red cherry, plum and notes of underbrush. It is nicely layered with a silky mouth feel and firm ripe tannins on the finish. A blend of 92% Tempranillo, 6% Graciano, 2% Maturana Tinta aged 22 months in French barriques. **Importer:** Winebow Montvale, NJ

Bodegas Franco Españolas 2013 Royal White Rioja ($10) 89 This wine shows both good flavor and the fresh crisp acidity that gives it a refreshing balance. Cantaloupe, herbal tea, and a light resin note provide nice flavor interest. The price on this wine is shockingly low for the quality. 100% Viura. **Bodegas Franco Españolas 2005 Bordón Gran Reserva Rioja ($22) 88** Medium ruby. While quite light for a Gran Reserva, this one has a certain refined charm. It shows fresh red cherry fruit with nicely integrated toasted oak, finishing with round tannins. Quite tasty albeit not profound. A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 5% Mazuelo, 5% Graciano. **Other Wines Tasted:** Bodegas Franco Españolas 2010 Bábaro Rioja; Bodegas Franco Españolas 2008 Reserva Rioja; Bodegas Franco Españolas 2009 Bordón Crianza Rioja. **Importer:** Vision Wine & Spirits Secaucus, NJ

**Hazana 2011 Tradicional Rioja ($12) 90** The Hazana 2011 Tradicional Rioja is a custom cuvee made for importer, Eric Solomon. It is a beautiful wine and a great value offering a lush full forest floor densely perfumed dark fruited and graphite nose. It is medium bodied on the palate with an earthy very lush wine. Great Value. **Importer:** European Cellars. Eric Solomon, Charlotte, NC

**Heredad de Baroja 2010 Crianza Rioja ($19) 87+** The 2010 Crianza is medium ruby in color and displays a nice fresh fruit nose with spicy oak, tobacco and earth notes. The mid-palate lacks flavor and the wine finishes dry but with decent persistence. **Heredad de Baroja 2012 Cuveé Especiale Rioja ($13) 87** Fresh red plum and cherry define the nose and the wine reveals pretty red fruit on the palate with mineral and pomegranate notes. The tannins are firm and the finish is quite dry. **Heredad de Baroja 2009 Reserva Rioja ($33) 89** The Reserva is the strongest wine of this trio. It shows an earthy dark red fruit nose, and good flavor intensity on the attack with sweet dark red fruit, and a hint of vanilla extract on the finish. **Importer:** Gonzalez Byass www.gonzalezazale.com

**Bodegas Hnos. Pecína 2012 Señorío de P. Pecína Red Wine Rioja ($12) 88+** This wine displays an attractive nose of fresh red cherry with a light mint note. It has good balance on the palate with plenty of unadulterated red cherry and plum with just a note of underbrush. A pleasant and easy drinking wine. **Bodegas Hnos. Pecína 2007 Señorío de P. Pecína Crianza Rioja ($21) 89** Expressive bouquet of rich, toasted oak with a cola-tobacco edge. These are mirrored on a full, broad palate along with notes of wet earth and dark cherries, finishing with excellent length. Gentle tannins and ripe flavors make this wine ready to drink now. **Bodegas Hnos. Pecína 2005 Señorío de P. Pecína Reserva Rioja ($30) 88** The 2005 Reserva is nicely structured, showing a complex mélange of dark plum, toasted oak, and forest floor, finishing long with good extract. But it seems prematurely aged, lacking the vibrancy we had expected from our tastings of other Pecína wines. **Bodegas Hnos. Pecína 2001 Señorío de P. Pecína Gran Reserva Rioja ($50) 90** The 2001 Gran Reserva is silky smooth with suave tannins. It reveals an interesting mix of fresh and dried fruit, mocha, and underbrush, finishing clean and long. It lacks the flavor intensity for further aging; drink now. **Bodegas Hnos. Pecína 2000 Señorío de P. Pecína Vendimia Seleccionada Reserva Rioja ($36) 91** Clearly our favorite of the Pecína portfolio, the Vendimia Seleccionada is surprising fresh aromatically and complex in flavor. It has a velvet soft texture with good intensity, revealing notes of red plum, herbs, and old leather, finishing on a firm, earthy note. Excellent. **Importer:** Polaner Selections New York, NY

**Viña Herminia 2010 Crianza Rioja ($14) 88** The Crianza is a blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Garnacha. It offers dark red berry fruit with smoky and earthy notes on the nose. It has a medium weight palate with a soft round texture, good depth, of black and red fruit and integrated oak. Finishes with medium length. **Viña Herminia 2006 Reserva Rioja ($16) 89** The Reserva is earthy and dark fruited on the nose and has good depth of dark red cherry flavor on the palate showing fresh, hints of earth and spice. Finishes dry but with good extract, balance and length. Also tasted: Viña Herminia 2013 Tempranillo. **Importer:** Europvin www.europvin.com

**Juan Carlos Sancha 2012 Peña el Gato Garnacha Rioja ($9)** This is a youthful, reticent wine that shows both ripe red berries and notes of darker fruit. It’s full in the mouth with good acidity and a sense of place. Time will tell if it merits an even stronger evaluation. **Importer:** Twenty-One Imports Phoenix, AZ

**Julión Civite 2010 Unzu Crianza Rioja ($15) 90+** The personal project and creation of entrepreneur Julián Chivite López. This modern wine offers high-toned red fruit aromas and a sweet character, with baked cherry, toasty oak and caramel notes. A delicious highly drinkable wine and good value.
La Rioja Alta 2005 Viña Arana Reserva Rioja ($33) 89  A wine made in the traditional style, it offers brooding floral aromas with a bit of white pepper. Red berry flavors are clean on the palate with snappy acidity and black pepper, coffee and herbal notes. Very tight overall. Matured three years in used American oak. La Rioja Alta 2007 Viña Alberdi Reserva Rioja ($24) 90+ This is Rioja Alta’s excellent, entry level wine. It reveals high-pitched aromas of red fruits (red raspberry, red currant) with a mineral note. This very young wine has good structure and noble tannins. It’s aged two years in American oak, the first year in new barrels. La Rioja Alta 2005 Viña Ardanza Reserva Rioja ($37) 91+ This is one of Rioja’s most classic wines, a blend of fruit from diverse, high quality vineyards and aged three years in used American oak. It includes 20% Garnacha from Villalba. Garnet red, the wine reveals lovely complex mélange of earth, mushroom, and leather. It’s soft, mellow, and fills the mouth. Aged in used American oak for four years. La Rioja Alta 2001 Gran Reserva 904 Rioja ($60) 95 A mature red, this wine still shows primary, bold cherry and red berry aromas, along with cigar box, sandalwood, baked fruit and tomato skin notes. It has a juicy attack with a velvet mid-palate, wild cherry flavors, and beautifully shaped tannins. La Rioja Alta 1998 Gran Reserva 890 ($160) 92 Made only in exceptional vintages and given at least 6 years in oak and another 6 in bottle before release, this is La Rioja Alta’s top cuvée. It opens with a beautiful perfume of mushroom, leather and tobacco. It’s densely flavored with a very long finish. But the wine is still very young with prominent sweet oak notes not yet fully softened and integrated. Give this wine more time in bottle before trying again. A blend of 95% Tempranillo, 3% Graciano, 2% Mazuelo. Importer: Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset NY

La Rioja Alta Located in the Barrio de la Estación in Haro, this is one of Rioja’s most historic wineries, making delicious wines exemplary of the classical style. They use only American oak, crafting the barrels themselves. It has 425 ha of estate vineyards plus another 400 plus ha that are contracted. The Viña Ardanza includes 20 percent Garnacha, which in the future will come from a recently planted 70 ha vineyard in La Pedriza in Rioja Baja. The Gran Reserva 904 is matured four years in oak, while its top wine, the Gran Reserva 890, sees up to eight years oak aging. These are some of Rioja’s most traditionally made wines.

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 Ríncon, 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.

Bodegas LAN 2010 Crianza Rioja ($18) 88 The 2010 Crianza is a flavorful and easy drinking wine offering fresh and fruity cherry aromas and flavors. It is round in the mouth with a soft texture, good concentration and polished tannins on the finish. LAN sells more than 2 million bottles worldwide of this delicious wine. Bodegas LAN 2011 Bodegas LD-12 Rioja ($50) 89+ The LD-12 is made of 100% Tempranillo grape from 4 selected parcels in Rioja Alta. Aged 12 months in oak, 65% American and 35% French, followed by a year in bottle, it exhibits a semi-opaque color with fresh dark red fruit on the nose with hints of earth, tobacco leaf, coffee and light caramel. It also shows good integration of fruit and oak on the palate, round firm tannins and a lingering finish. Bodegas LAN 2007 Reserva Rioja ($20) 89 The 2007 Reserva exhibits dark earthy black cherry fruit with hints of loam and herbs. A blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazuelo and 5% Graciano it shows good acidity and flavor on the mid-palate with remarkably soft and polished tannins. Aged in American and French oak barrels for 12 months followed by 24 months in bottle. Bodegas LAN 2010 Edición Limitada Rioja ($50) 92 The outstanding 2010 Edición 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 Viña Lanciano Rioja ($25) 91 The 2007 Lanciano combines a selection of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Mazuelo from 30+ year old estate vines. Fruit forward yet aged 8 months in Russian oak barrels followed by 12 months in French oak, it reveals black and red fruit on a nose of toasted oak. On the palate it shows nice dark fruit, a chalky mouth feel and a note of loam. It has firm round tannins and richness on the 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
Tempranillo made for easy drinking. Dark cherry, plum and Madurado 6 Meses en Barrica Rioja ($15) 87 an altitude of 650m. It’s richly flavored and is persistent and concentrated Viejas Tempranillo is absolutely delicious from its bouquet 2008 Tempranillo Cepas Viejas Rioja ($44) 90 and nicely integrated toasted oak. Smooth and soft, it fin 91 and good balance. The Reserva is ripe and richly fruited. It shows licorice spice with hints of smoke and dark red cherry and plum and nicely integrated toasted oak. Smooth and soft, it fin 92 lishes long with sweet fruit and vanilla notes. Lar de Paula 2008 Tempranillo Cepas Viejas Rioja ($44) 90 The Cepas Viejas Tempranillo is absolutely delicious from its bouquet of spice, herbs and dark cherry to its velvet smooth attack and on to a spicy, earthy, and very fresh, complex pal- ate. It’s richly flavored and is persistent and concentrated on the finish. From 40+ year old Rioja Alavesa vines at an altitude of 650m. Lar de Paula 2012 Tempranillo Madurado 6 Meses en Barrica Rioja ($15) 87 A light, fresh Tempranillo made for easy drinking. Dark cherry, plum and light toastsy oak show on the nose and palate. Importer: Gonzalez Byass www.gonzalezbyass.com 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 6º Año 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 créme brulée. An absolutely astounding wine. Importer: Think Global Santa Barbara, CA.

Lubner. The original winemaker for Artadi, Florentino Martinez Monje founded Lubnerri in 1991 in the Rioja Alavesa town of Elciego where he resurrected the tradi- tional Rioja style of semi-carbonic maceration. He farms 35 ha of old vines mostly located between Elciego and Laguardia. He vinifies separately the grapes from each vineyard site and later blends them. The Lubnerri wines are of good quality and offer excellent value.

Lubner 2013 Monje Amestoy Orlegi Rioja ($15) 89 The 2013 Monje Amestoy Orlegi is all Tempranillo, made from 15-25 year-old vines and partially whole clusters fermented in the tradition of the light, fruit forward wines of the Rioja Alavesa. Fresh and fruit forward with a candied red cherry and strawberry nose, it reveals lots of whole berry fruit that is simple but quite delicious. A bit short on the finish with firm tannins. Lubner 2010 Monje Amestoy Seis Rioja ($18) 91. All Tempranillo grown near Elciego. Aged six months in French and American oak, it displays dark fruit aromas with a note of charred underbrush and herbs on nose. It is soft and velvety-like on the palate, quite attrac- tive with nice complexity of fruit flavors, integrated oak and earth notes. It finishes ripe and fresh with good extract, medium length and ripe but firm tannins. Lubner 2009 Monje Amestoy Biga Crianza Rioja ($23) 90+ This 100% Tempranillo is sourced from 40+ year-old vines and is aged 12 months in French and American oak. Its hue is dark in color and it offers aromas of smoky red fruit. On the pal- ate it is fruit forward with prominent black fruit flavors and hints of earth and tobacco. It also has elegant mouth feel, ripe tannins and good length on the finish. Importer: De Maison Selections, Inc Chapell Hill, NC.

Bodegas Loli Casado 2009 Palus Reserva Rioja. 91 The Po- lur Reserva is a very fine wine made of 100% Tempranillo sourced from 60-80 year-old vines. Aged 18 months in French oak, it boasts dense red fruit with good density and length and fine tannins on the finish.

Bodegas Luis Alegre Located in the heart of the Rioja Alavesa with 50 ha of estate vineyards. Its icon wine is the Gran Vino de Guarda Pontac from the 95 year old, 1.5 ha Pago Portiles, with grapes carefully hand picked, sorted and chilled prior to fermentation; it’s aged 20 months in new French oak. The oak fermented Viura, Finca La Reina, comes from an 85 year old, 650 m high estate vineyard located on the slopes of the Sierra Cantabria; it’s also aged in 100% new French oak. Marta Gallego is winemaker, and Alejandro Simo, one of Spain’s foremost oak experts, is consulting winemaker.
Bodegas Luis Alegre 2012 Finca La Reñena Blanco de Guada Rioja ($25) 92 The 2012 Finca La Reñena Blanco de Guada is a superb, barrel fermented Viura-based wine with 10% Malvasía. Sourced from an 85-year old vineyard, it offers a yellow straw color and a lovely honeyed nose of ripe mango and toasted nuts. Aged six to seven months in new French oak, it reveals a smooth texture and layers of butterscotch, flint and tropical fruit on the palate. Rich in oak and high in acidity, the wine has a special tangy tropical character. Drink now and enjoy over the next 3 to five years. Bodegas Luis Alegre 2013 Unoaked Viura Malvasia Rioja ($15) 89 This Viura Malvasia blend is produced from 65 year-old-vines. It exhibits an intense perfume, notes of dried and fresh stone fruit, and a nice yellow flower note. Intensely flavored with excellent density and extract, it is a pleasant wine for early drinking.

Bodegas Luis Alegre 2010 Pontac Rioja ($70) 91 The 2010 Pontac is made of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano sourced from 100-year-old vines. Packed with fruit and aged 14-16 months in new French oak, it reveals dark cherries on the nose with traces of spicy, dark chocolate and violets. It has a lovely palate with a velvet mouth feel and excellent acidity which keeps it fresh and vibrant. A superb wine. Bodegas Luis Alegre 2009 Pontac de Portiles Rioja ($100) 94 The magnificent Pontac de Portiles is sourced from a tiny 100-year-old vineyard and is composed of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Garnacha. Aged in large format and highly selective Burgundy barrels, it is rich, creamy and flavorful with prominent red berry fruit and smooth dark milk chocolate on the palate with suave tannins. Bodegas Luis Alegre 2013 Rosado Flores Rioja ($12) 88 This is a Provence style rose made from Tempranillo and Viura, the traditional way of making rosado in the Basque area. Medium pink salmon in color, the Rosado Flores displays aromas of rose petals, orange zest, and cherry skins on nose. It has high acidity and a tangy palate of light red cherry and raspberry notes. A crisp and lively wine. Bodegas Luis Alegre 2009 Parcela No. 5 Rioja ($40) 91 This is a wine sourced from a single vineyard located in the National Park of Lagunas de Laguardia. It displays a semi-opaque color and dark red and purple fruit with a trace of flint and roast meat. Aged 14 months in new French oak, it is soft on the attack with excellent depth of dark red fruit, firm chalky tannins and a long persistent finish. Drinkable now and over the next 5 years. Bodegas Luis Alegre 2010 Reserva Rioja ($24) 90 This wine is a blend of different estate vineyard average 50 years in age. It offers spicmy rich dark plum and earthy mushrooms with a sour dark cherry note. There’s excellent depth of fruit, well integrated oak (18 months of 50/50 French and American), and a long finish. Impomter: Vinos Libres Wine Merchant www.vinoslibres.com

Luis Cañas The Cañas family of Villabuena in Rioja Alavesa has been bottling wine under the Luis Cañas label since 1970, although the family has been involved with wine for over 200 years. It has 90 ha of organically farmed (but not certified) estate vineyards and another 200 ha under contract, all divided into 815 plots that are vinifed separately. Juan Luis Cañas has been in charge of the winery since 1989. He has expanded the range of wines from the very high quality traditional wines to single varietals and the very modern, lavishly oaked Hiru 3 Racimos made of low yielding, very old (60+ years) vines located in hillside and terraced plots. Total production is about 1.6 million bottles. Luis Cañas also owns Bodegas Amarén in the Rioja Alavesa.

Luis Cañas 2013 Blanco Fermentado en Barrica Rioja ($10) 90 Vanilla, honeyed oak and floral aromas. Superbly balanced palate with excellent clarity and a firm mineral component showing grapefruit citrus and toasty oak. An 85/15 blend of old vine (50 years) Viura and Malvasia fermented and aged in new oak (75% French, 25% American) for 4 months with lees stirring. A precise, crystal clean wine that improves the longer it’s open. Luis Cañas 2010 Crianza Rioja ($27) 90+ The Crianza boasts aromas of black cherry, oak and earth on the nose. A blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Garnacha, it has a medium-weight palate with moderate density of fruit flavors, firm tannins and a pleasant finish. Well done.

Luis Cañas 2005 Hiru 3 Racimos Rioja ($150) 94 The Hiru 3 Racimos is a youthful wine, dense with flavors of primary fruit and French oak. Rich dark violet-infused chocolate, cherry, dark loam and spicly cracked pepper fragrances are picked up on a super-concentrated, richly layered palate. Super rich and extra long on the finish, too. Made of very low yielding, 60+ year old Tempranillo vines and aged 18 months in new French oak. Luis Cañas 2010 Crianza Rioja ($27) 90+ The Crianza boasts aromas of black cherry, oak and earth on the nose. A blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Garnacha, it has a medium-weight palate with moderate density of fruit flavors, firm tannins and a pleasant finish. Well done. Luis Cañas 2008 Reserva Rioja ($27) 92+ This Reserva is tasting beautifully right now with a lovely bouquet of earth, toasted oak, and red plum. It’s full and fleshy in the mouth, revealing a rich, flavorful melange of smoky tobacco and dark fruit on a finely structured frame. A blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano.

Luis Cañas 2008 Reserva Selección de la Familia ($40) 93 This 85/15 blend of Tempranillo and Graciano is pure, elegant and velvet smooth. Fresh dark red fruit shows on the nose, followed by cherry, plum and other flavors with a liqueur like intensity. Firmly structured with chalky tannins. Aged 12 months in French oak followed by another 12 months in American oak. Impomter: Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA
Marqués de Cáceres This winery is the brainchild of Enrique Forner who moved to Cenicero from France in the 1960s, bringing with him the talent of the esteemed enologist Emile Peynaud and, later, Michel Rolland. He thus introduced Rioja to clean, fruit forward wines, using more new oak for a shorter time than was the tradition at the time, and spearheaded the modernization of Rioja wine in the 1970s. Today the winery contracts the fruit of 2300 ha of vines; it owns no vineyards of its own. Annual production is about 10 million bottles, one of the largest in Rioja. In 1994 Marqués de Cáceres introduced one of Rioja’s first New Wave wines, Gaudium. Cristina Forner has managed Marqués de Cáceres since 2007.

Marqués de Cáceres 2010 Crianza Rioja ($13) 88+. The 2010 Crianza offers aromas of dried red cherry with hints of mushroom on the nose. On the palate it is medium weight, mouth filling and flavorful with somewhat dry tannins and a firm finish. Marqués de Cáceres 2008 Reserva Rioja ($25) 88+. The traditionally-styled Reserva has a dark fruited nose, hints of charred barrel, and a silky palate, dry with underbrush and rich dark fruit and extract. It has good complexity of flavor, with rich fruit and dry tannins. Marqués de Cáceres 2008 Gaudium Gran Vino Reserva Rioja ($57) 93 The Gaudium is Marques de Cáceres’ top-of-the-line cuvee. It is rich with black berry and black currant fruit and notes of leather and spice box. It is nicely concentrated on the plate with a very ripe, almost unctuous, mouth feel with lots of rich ripe dark berry fruit and a silky texture. Aged 16-20 months in new French oak and 24 months in bottle, it is a big complex wine with firm tannins, lots of oak, and a persistent finish. It is ready to drink but will gain some elegance in the coming years.

Marqués de Cáceres 2005 Gran Reserva Rioja ($30) 91 The 2005 Gran Reserva is a delicious wine from an excellent vintage. It reveals red berry fruit with toasted oak and spice on the nose and hints of loam, licorice and minerals. It is soft and velvet-like on the palate with firm tannins on the finish. Marqués de Cáceres 2011 MC Rioja ($55) 90+. The 2011MC is a lovely modern-style wine made from a selection of grapes grown in vineyards of limited production. It reveals nice perfume, violets, and dark red fruit on the nose along with vanilla oak, coconut and chocolate on the attack. Aged 15 months in new French oak, it is richly flavored, not subtle but attractive and modern with good length on the finish. Should be very popular. Importer: Vineyard Brands, Inc.

Bodegas Marqués de Carrió 2009 Antaño Reserva Rioja ($14) 87 Nice fresh, slightly earth aroma. Balanced palate showing integrated flavors, slight musty character and very dry fruit. 87 M 87 not good at all. A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, 5% Mazuelo, and 5% Graciano aged in American oak for 24 months. The winery is located in Briones in the Rioja Alta, and the grapes are sourced from the Rioja Alta. Marqués de Carrion 2009 Pata Negra Reserva ($10) 88+. We tasted both the 2010 Pata Negra Crianza and the 2009 Reserva. The Reserva is a big step up from the Crianza with good fruit, a firm structure, and a nice soft palate feel. Most importantly, there’s good concentration, length and freshness. Well done! Also tasted: Marqués de Carrion 2010 Pata Negra Crianza

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 Maria 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., Capella- nia) 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.

Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Capellanía 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 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.

Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Dalmau Reserva Rioja ($115) 93 The 2009 Dalmau is a blend of 74% Tempranillo, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 11% Graciano sourced from the Canajas parcel, located within the Ygay Vineyard. Aged 20 months in new 225 L Fr oak, it is powerfully perfumed with pure dark red fruit and oak spice. It is rich and beautifully concentrated on the palate with a velvet texture and flavors that suggest classical Rioja in an outstanding new guise. Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Reserva Rioja ($26) 91+. The 2009 Reserva is a beautiful blend of 90% Tempranillo, and small amounts of Mazueu Garnacha and Graciano. It is medium dark red in color and offers fresh dark red spicy fruit with dark red plum and cherry flavors and a hint of earth. It has a wonderful texture with considerable density on the palate. Darker and richer than the 2008 Reserva, but not as refined and elegant. Needs time in the bottle to realize its full potential. Fruit sourced from the 300 ha Ygay Estate vineyard. Also Tasted: Marqués de Murrieta 2008 Capellanía White Reserve, Marqués de Murrieta 2008 Reserva, Marqués de Murrieta 2004 Dalmau Reserve. Importer: Maisons Marques & Domaines USA Oakland, CA
Marqués de Riscal
This historic winery is today a mass producer, making 4.5 million bottles annually. It has 220 ha of estate vines plus 985 ha under contract. The lead winemaker is Francisco Hurtado de Améezaga. The wines range in style from the very traditional Reserva to the more modern Baron de Chirel. Marqués de Riscal is a must stop on a Rioja wine tour, both to visit the cellars and to see the super-modern hotel designed by Frank Gehry.

Marqués de Riscal 2009 Reserva Rioja ($20) 88 The 2009 Reserva displays a medium ruby color with a garnet rim. It offers fragrant cherry fruit and honeyed oak on the nose while it is surprisingly light on the attack. Although it is easy drinking for a Reserva it is rather lightly flavored on the mid-palate and the finish. Bodegas Marqués de Riscal 2005 Gran Reserva Rioja ($45) 90 The 2005 Gran Reserva is a blend of Tempranillo, Graciano and Mazuelo from old vines of estate vineyards and purchased fruit. Aged for 30+ months in oak and three years in the bottle, it reveals ripe blackberry and cassis flavors on the nose. On the palate it shows good integration of ripe dark fruit with heavy oak notes of a traditional wine. On the back end it has hard dry mouthpukering tannins that are not like be resolved with more time in the bottle. Marqués de Riscal 2006 Baron de Chirel ($110) 91 The 2006 Baron de Chirel is a blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. It displays light and youthful black cherry fruit on the nose with notes of coconut and toasted oak. It is rather chalky on the palate with dense flavors and good length on the finish. Also tasted: Bodegas Marqués de Riscal 2009 Proximo, Bodegas Marqués de Riscal 2008 Reserva. Importer: Southern Wine and Spirits www.southerwine.com

Valderenzos Valserrano 2008 Gran Reserva Premium White Rioja ($35) 91 This wine is intense aromatically with a honeyed nose of yellow flowers and toasted vanilla oak. Soft on the palate, showing rich flavors of toasted oak and tropical fruit finishing bright and clean. An estate-bottled blend of Viura and Malvasía matured 28 months in Allier French oak. Valserrano is a family-owned and managed winery with 65 ha of estate vineyards in Villabuena in the Rioja Alavesa. The wine is crafted at Bodegas de la Marquesa. Importer: Classic Wine Imports, Norwood, MA

Bodegas Martinez Corta 2011 Cepas Antiguas Rioja ($15) 90 40 yr old vines in Rioja Alta. med dark ruby. fresh dark cherry with a carbonic note on the nose. frothy and light on the attack, very fresh dark cherry.....lots of whole cluster fruit? smooth, easy drinking. fresh. not complex. quite dry on the finish but with decent red fruit extract. M Fresh, soft texture. flavors are complex -- earthy, old vine character comes through All Tempranillo. Importer: Classical Wines Seattle, WA

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 (see photo). 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.

Bodegas Muga 2013 Blanco Rioja ($15) 91 This one our favorite white Riojas. It 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. It is served at La Fontana on Calle Laurel in Logroño. Bodegas Muga 2013 Blanco Fermentado en Barrica Rioja ($17) 91 This lovely white wine from Bodegas Muga consists of 90% Viura and 10% Malvasía. It is fermented in 500 liter French barrels and spends three-five months on the lees. It is fresh, and lively with rich tropical fruit flavors, hints of light oak, good acidity and a firm crisp finish. Bodegas Muga 2013 Rosado Rioja ($15) 90 The 2013 Rosado is a blend of 60% Garnacha Tinta, 10% Tempranillo and 30% Viura. Pale pink in color it offers a perfumy nose of red berries and is very light and fresh on the palate with brisk acidity, minerals and a fresh crisp finish from the Viura. Excellent job. Bodegas Muga 2010 Reserva Rioja ($40) 90+ The 2010 Reserva reveals a blend of 70% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha and the balance Granciano and Mazuelo. It offers ripe dark fruit aromas and flavors on the nose with excellent balance, acidity and richness on the palate. Aged for 24 months in barrel and a year in bottle, it is rich in dark cherry fruit flavor, earth and barrel notes and has fine round tannins on the finish. Bodegas Muga 2009 Selección Especial Rioja ($35) 92 The Selección Especial is a blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Garnacha and 10% Mazuelo and Graciano. It is a beautiful wine rich in dark red berry fruit flavors with baking spices prominent on the nose. Aged in French and American oak for 28 months, it reveals an elegant mouth feel, intensity of fruit flavor, and ripe tannins. The finish is bright and persistent. 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 meat 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 Muga 2010 Aro Rioja ($175) 96**

Muga’s Arco is a rich and complex wine with an inky, meaty nose and a full, soft and deeply flavored palate. A special blend of 70% Tempranillo and 30% Graciano sourced from low yielding vines (the same vineyards used for Torres Muga, Prado Enea and the Reserva) it reveals notes of dark plum, chocolate, minerals, and wood spice. Aged in large format oak barrels for 16 months, it offers big round tannins and an amazingly long, unctuous finish. Still young and in need of bottle aging for a couple of years, it is a superb wine that should provide drinking pleasure for well over a decade. Only 4,000 bottles of this wine produced. **Importer:** Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham MA

**Bodegas Muriel 2008 Viña Muriel Reserva Rioja ($30) 90+**

The 2008 Reserva is a special selection of vineyards and grapes from 40 year old vines on average in Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Alta. Dark red in color, it displays aromas of dark red fruit and toasted oak. Aged 24 months in French and American oak it is mouth filling with red berry fruit, toasted oak nuances, and firm, ripe tannins. **Importer:** Quintessential Wines, Inc. Napa, CA

**Bodegas Olarra 2011 Añares Crianza Rioja ($14) 88**

This Crianza is made of 85% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo and 5% Garnacha. Aged in oak for 15 months, it exhibits fresh and lively cherry fruit on the nose and good depth of flavor on the palate with traces of herbal/earthy complexity. The wine is well balanced with gentle tannins and a firm finish. Modern in style and a pleasure to drink. **Bodegas Olarra 2009 Añares Reserva Rioja ($18) 89**

The Añares Reserva spends 18 months in oak and is more complex than the Crianza. It has a nose of red fruit and forest floor with a trace of balsamic. It is big and lush in the mouth with nicely controlled tannins, good weight and a bit more dark earth character. Great value. **Bodegas Olarra 2011 Cerro Añón Crianza Rioja ($16) 89**

This Crianza is made from a selection of the best quality grapes. A blend of 80% Tempranillo and Garnacha, Mazuelo and Graciano. Aged 16 months in the best American oak barrels, it offers dark red fruit, with a light earthy mushroom note. It is full in the mouth with good depth of flavor, and is nicely structured with firm tannins. **Bodegas Olarra 2009 Cerro Añón Reserva Rioja ($20) 91**

The Reserva boasts fresh dark red cherry fruit and a soft lush silky palate. Aged 20 months in oak, it exhibits good density of flavor, lots of fresh fruit, and is rich on the finish with fine firm tannins. **Bodegas Olarra 2008 Cerro Añón Gran Reserva Rioja ($29) 91**

The Gran Reserva is a big mouth filling wine made from a vineyard selection of the estate’s finest fruit. Aged 24 months in oak, it is opaque ruby red with ripe plum fruit toasted oak and, spice box nose. It is full, rich, and savoy on the palate with some earth notes but also good fruit concentration and very long on the finish. **Bodegas Olarra 2008 Erudito Reserva Rioja ($40) 90+**

The Erudito Reserva offers a core of sweet dark red fruit with savory notes of toasted oak, earth and tobacco. Aged 18 months in 100% French oak, it is soft on the attack and highly concentrated on the palate with good structure and firm tannins on the finish. **Bodegas Olarra 2008 Summa Reserva Rioja ($40) 91**

The Summa Reserva is made of grapes from a 12 hectare vineyard of 40+ year old low-yielding vines. It is aged 18 months in new oak 50/50 American and French. The wine reveals bold flavors with good freshness and earthy, savory nuances including smoke and roasted meat. It is full in the mouth, silky and expressive with firm tannins and a persistent finish. **Bodegas Ondarrre: Ondarre 2009 Reserva Rioja ($18) 90+**

The Reserva displays fresh dark red cherry fruit with hints of toast and earth. Aged sixteen months in American and French oak, it has a silky texture with good structure, red fruit flavor on the palate, a hint of roasted meat, and ripe tannins on the finish. **Ondarre 2008 Mayor de Ondarre Reserva Rioja ($40) 91**

The Mayor de Ondarre Reserva is the flagship wine of Bodegas Ondarre. A blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha and Mazuelo from a vineyard selection, it exhibits a dark ruby color and a complex, earthy and redfruited nose. Very flavorful, it has more elegance than power with a highly refined plum mouth feel and finish. **Also tasted:** Bodegas Olarra 2009 Ototal Reserva. **Importer:** Classic Wines Denver, CO

**Olivier Riviere** After studying enology in Montagne St-Emilion and spending six years making wine and learning biodynamic methods in Bordeaux and Burgundy, Frenchman Olivier Riviere moved to Rioja in 2004 to help introduce biodynamic viticulture at Telmo Rodriguez. Two years later he left to start his own winery producing his first vintage in 2006. Today, he’s one of Rioja’s most exciting young winemakers. Today he makes 50 thousand bottles a year of wine in Rioja Baja, exporting almost all of it. Ganko is an old vine Grenache based blend from Cardenas in Rioja Alta; His Jequitiba, an old vine Viura blend is one of Rioja’s best. **Olivier Riviere 2010 Ganko El Cabezota Rioja ($30) 89**

This is a soft, flavorful wine with a fresh, fruity-floral nose.
of rose petals and macerated cherries that are mirrored on the palate along with a bit of pepper spice. It has nice acidity and freshness, not unlike a good Beaujolais.

**Olivier Rivière 2010 Jequitiba Rioja** ($25) **91** Medium yellow straw, this old-vine Viura blend reveals yellow flowers, ripe pear and a tropical note on the nose. It fills the mouth with clean fruit flavors of citrus and ripe melon and a hint of orange zest. A beautifully integrated wine. Made from Rioja Alavesa fruit in Labastida. A blend of 80% Viura, 10% Garnacha Blanca, and 10% Malvasia aged about 10 months in oak foudres. **Importer:** Louis/Dressner Selections New York, NY

**Bodegas Otañon 2008 Reserva Rioja** ($35) **90** The Otañon Reserva is a modern-styled wine with fresh aromas and flavors, a vibrant palate and a firmly tannic finish. Notes of dark red plum and cherry, loam, and underbrush show, along with a light saline note. Made from average 50 year old vines and aged 16 months in French oak. Hubert de Bouard de laforest of Château Angélus worked with the family to improve traditional winemaking, reflected in this Reserva. **Importer:** De Maison Selections, Inc Chapel Hill, NC

**Bodegas Otañón 2010 Vetiver Blanco Rioja** ($13) **90** Interesting fennel, tea leaf, summer melon aromas on the nose that are mirrored flavorwise with the addition of a light stone fruit note. Crisp, fresh and long on the finish. 100% Viura.

**Bodegas Otañón 2012 Claret Rosado Rioja** ($12) **88** Pale golden pink. This easy drinking, crisp and fresh rosado reveals rose petals, tangerine skin, and light red berry notes with just a touch of sweetness. Perfect as an apertif wine. A blend of Viura and Tempranillo from the Siete Caminos vineyard. **Bodegas Otañón 2010 Crianza Rioja** ($14) **90+** The Crianza shows good concentration of earthy dark cherry that’s nicely integrated with the oak. A sweet extract of dark cherry shows on the finish. Excellent value. Tempranillo and Garnacha from the La Montesa and Siete Caminos vineyards. **Bodegas Otañón 2004 Reserva Rioja** ($25) **91** The 2004 Reserva shows the ripe, lush fruit of Rioja Baja. It has ripe plum, richly toasted oak and earth notes with a soft, round texture, good flavor density, and a spicy, long finish. Excellent, and a great value. Made of Tempranillo and Graciano from the La Montesa and La Pasada vineyards. **Bodegas Otañón 2010 Ecológico Rioja** ($13) **88+** A perfumed, Tempranillo wine showing violets, roses, and fresh dark cherry aromas. There’s nice freshness of dark red fruit flavors with some earthy complexity and soft tannins. Very easy drinking.

**Bodegas Otañón 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja** ($40) **91** The Gran Reserva is younger than its age. With a sweet dark red fruit and spice perfume, it reveal a big, softly textured palate with good overall freshness and balance. Soft, creamy milk chocolate, vanilla spice, and ripe red plum combine to offer excellent drinking pleasure. A blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano from the La Pasada Vineyard. **Importer:** Gabriel Wilson Selections Sausalito, CA

**Palacios Remondo 2010 La Montesa Rioja** ($20) **91** The 2010 La Montesa is a stylish fruit forward blend of 75% Garnacha, 25% Tempranillo and 5% Mazeuelo with a darker fruit profile compared to La Vendimia. It offers aromas of cherry and plum infused with oak, vanilla and herbs. Aged in oak barriques for 12 months, it has a velvet texture, round tannins and a pleasant easy-drinking finish. A delicious modern wine. **Palacios Remondo 2011 La Montesa Rioja** ($20) **90+** 2011 was another excellent vintage for Rioja Baja, and La Montesa shows it. The wine is vibrant with the same silky mouth feel as the 2010. Dark red fruit, vanilla oak, and underbrush notes are integrated on a seamless palate. **Palacios Remondo 2012 La Vendimia Rioja** ($16) **89** La Vendimia is a young, fresh, exuberant wine showing dark red cherry with a note of red raspberry. It’s easy drinking with a fresh, fruit attack. A blend of 50% Garnacha Pais and 50% Tempranillo.

**Palacios Remondo 2009 Plátz Valtomelllos Rioja** ($45) **91** Among Rioja’s finest Viuras, the 2009 vintage is floral with ripe pear and herbal tea notes on the nose. It’s a fresh, crisp and lively wine that reveals flavors of pear, savory herbs, and a hint of stone fruit, finishing with impressive persistence. **Palacios Remondo 2010 Propiedad Rioja** ($45) **92** A 100% Garnacha from estate vineyards, the 2010 Propiedad is elegant yet lush and flavorful. Spicy dark red fruit and smoky mesquite aromas give way to a silky smooth attack, assertive flavors of dark red plum, cherry and spice box, refined tannins, and a very long, pure finish. **Importer:** Folio Fine Wine Partners Napa, CA
Bodegas Patrocinio 2010 Lágrimas de María Crianza Rioja ($15) 89 This is one of several every day wines by Bodegas Patrocinio, a cooperative in Rioja Alta. Like this one, the wines are generally well-made and good value. The 2010 Lágrimas de María Crianza has a red fruited nose and is, light to medium weigh. Aged 12 months in American oak, it offers dark cherry and vanilla on the palate with firm tannins and a fresh crisp finish.

Bodegas Patrocinio 2010 Lágrimas de María Madurado 4 Meses Rioja ($12) 89+ The 2010 Lágrimas de María Madurado 4 Meses offers dark red fruit with toasted oak and traces of herbs on the nose. 100% Tempranillo it offers nice complexity of fruit and earth notes on the palate, firm tannins and a solid finish.

Bodegas Patrocinio 2008 Lágrimas de María Reserva Rioja ($20) 90 The 2008 Lágrimas de María Reserva is the best wine in the series. It offers dark cherry and toasted oak on the nose followed by a silky attack with complex and spicy fruit on the palate. It shows excellent balance and freshness with a hint of sweetness on the finish. Also tasted: Bodegas Patrocinio 2012 Lágrimas de María Viura, Bodegas Patrocinio 2012 Lágrimas de María Tempranillo. Importer: Ascent Wines, Lutz FL

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 Vallombera, 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 Valdepeña 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. Cisma is made from ungrafted Tempranillo from the tiny (0.7 ha), old La Valacabada vineyard planted in 1925. Another wine, Añadas Frias, is only made in cold vintages and in very small volumes. Carlos recently bought the very high altitude (720 m) San Román Tempranillo vineyard between Laguardia and Leza. The top Pujanza wines are particularly perfumed and elegant, especially in a cool vintage like 2011.

Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2011 Hado Rioja ($21) 89 Made from estate vineyards in Laguardia, the Hado is a very attractive, entry level wine showing a perfumed bouquet of dark red cherry and toasted wood spice. It’s soft on entry and suave on the palate. A very approachable, enjoyable wine. Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2011 Pujanza Norte Rioja ($5) 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 Frios 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 head-trained 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 y Viñedos Pujanza 2011 Finca Valdepeña Rioja ($35) 91+ Showing cedar box and fresh dark red fruit on the nose, this wine is elegant with a sense of place. The palate shows complexity, depth and persistence. It’s a blend of 7 different vineyard parcels fermented separately and blended after 14 months in oak.

Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2009 Pujanza Rioja ($30) 92 This is a fresh and flavorful wine sourced from the high altitude (630m), 17.5 ha Valdepeña vineyard of 40+ year-old vines. It offers aromas of dark fruit and earth with notes of minerality. Aged 16 months in French oak, 1/3 new, it is very refined on the palate with flavors of black cherry and cassis and a toasted oak note. It is also silky smooth and quite refined with firm round tannins and a long and persistent finish. Beginning with the 2011 vintage, this bottling takes on the name of the vineyard. Also tasted: Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2010 Hado, Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza 2010 Pujanza Norte Rioja Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton VA

Ramon Bilbao 2010 Crianza Rioja ($13) 88 The 2010 Ramon Bilbao Crianza displays light, fresh red cherry and plum and light oak aromas that are mirrored on the palate. Fruit driven in character the wine also reveals traces of earth, firm round tannins and a persistent finish.

Ramon Bilbao 2008 Reserva Rioja ($20) 89+ The 2008 Reserva is a blend of 90% Tempranillo with small amounts of Graciano and Mazuelo. It exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of dark plum fruit and hints of smoke and earth. Aged for 20 months in American oak, it is ripe, spicy and concentrated on the palate with a core of earthy red fruit flavors, round firm tannins and a light dry finish. A blend of 90% Tempranillo, 10% Mazuelo and Graciano.

Ramon Bilbao 2005 Gran Reserva Rioja ($30) 90+ The 2005 Gran Reserva exhibits a lovely dark ruby color and aromas of dark cherry and plum. Still quite youthful, it exhibits spicy dark berry fruit on the palate with toast oak, a soft texture and good concentration of flavor. Aged for 30+ months in American oak, it is medium bodied, with firm round tannins and a persistent finish. A blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Graciano, and 5% Garnacha.

Ramon Bilbao 2010 Limited Edition Rioja ($17) 88 This 100% Tempranillo is aged in French and American oak for 15 months. It reveals rather toasty plum aromas with traces of earth. Medium–weight with moderate flavor intensity the wine also has firm tannins and good length on the finish Importer: Deutsch Family Wine and Spirits White Plains, NY
Viña Real 2009 Reserva Rioja ($25) 89  The Reserva has a spicy quality with fleshy red fruit, exotic wood spices, and earthy nuances. It shows good flavor concentration and dry tannins on the finish. Viña Real 2009 Crianza Rioja ($20) 89  The Crianza reveals impressive freshness with copious red fruit in an easy drinking style. It finishes with notes of wood spice and firm tannins.  Viña Real 1973 Gran Reserva Rioja 93  We have importer, Aurelio Castaño, to thank for bringing this wine out of his cellar for us to taste. Mahogany in color, this 40 year old wine has evolved beautifully. It shows nutty, sherry-like nuances with hints of earth and mushroom on an elegant, medium weight palate, of sweet vanilla and balsamic on the finish.  

**Remelluri 2010 Lindes de Remelluri Viñedos de Labastida Rioja ($32) 91**  The 2010 Lindes de Remelluri is a blend of fruit from 40-year-old Tempranillo, Garnacha and Graciano vines grown on the calcareous clay soils of Labastida. Incredibly soft on the palate and full in the mouth with earthy dark plum fruit. Aged 10 months in new oak, it reveals ripe tannins with good acidity and a fresh tasting finish. **Remelluri 2010 Lindes de Remelluri Viñedos de San Vicente Rioja ($32) 91**  This bottling is a blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha and Graciano produced from 40-year-old vines and aged 10 months in French oak. It offers aromas of blackberry violets and wet earth. It is very soft on the attack with dark fruit and a savory and meaty palate. It is full in the mouth with a velvet texture and ripe tannins on the finish. **Remelluri 2009 Reserva Rioja ($38) 92**  The 2009 Remelluri Reserva displays floral and mineral-accented aromas with hints of smoke. A blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano, Viura and Malvasia, it is aged 17 months in oak barrels, and is lithe and precise, offering sweet black cherry, chocolate and loam in the glass with excellent clarity, sweet, gentle tannins and a long finish. **Remelluri 2005 Granja Remelluri Gran Reserva Rioja ($80)**  An exotically perfumed bouquet displays scents of red fruit compote, candied rose, vanilla, incense and smoky minerals. Sweet, penetrating raspberry and cherry-vanilla flavors show superb depth and energy, picking up smoke and spice nuances with air. From 650 m high Labastida vineyards, fermented in stainless steel and 50 hl wood vats and aged 27 months in used American and French oak.  Importer: De Maison Selections, Inc Chapel Hill, NC  

**Rioja Vega 2011 Crianza Edición Limitada Rioja ($28) 90**  This is a delicious fruit-forward wine made of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano. Aged 14 months in barrel, it offers lovely red plum flavors with good freshness and volume, soft round tannins a firm and persistent finish. **Rioja Vega 2009 Tempranillo ($11) 87**  While inexpensive, this is a wine that should have been drunk young. It’s herbal and earthy with some red berry notes, finishing dry. **Bodegas Riojanas 2010 Puerta Vieja Crianza Rioja ($18) 88**  This is the equivalent of a village wine, made from the Bodegas Riojanas vineyards in Cenicero. It shows fresh red fruit along with light notes of toasted oak and tobacco leaf on a medium weight palate, very easy drinking, but still reveals Rioja character. A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo, and 5% Graciano. Good quality for the price.  

**Bodegas Riojanas 2008 Monte Real Reserva Rioja ($35) 89+**  This 100% Tempranillo Reserva is a serious wine with dark fruit on a savory palate and firm, ripe tannins. Still young and not very expressive, it may merit an even more positive evaluation with more time in bottle. Sourced from the 200 ha of vineyards with stony, alluvial soils and 35 year old bush vines located near Cenicero. **Bodegas Riojanas 2008 Viña Albina Reserva Rioja ($30) 88**  Linear and focused and showing the high toned fruit and acidity of a cool vintage, the 2008 Viña Albina Reserva is still very young, showing primary fruit aromas and flavors of dark cherry and purple plum on a medium weight palate. It needs a couple of years of bottle age to show its best. A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo, and 5% Graciano. Canchales is a fresh, red fruited wine with a simple demeanor and dry tannins. A perfect pizza wine that does better with a little chill. **Bodegas Riojanas 2001 Monte Real Gran Reserva Rioja ($55) 91**  The Monte Real 2001 Gran Reserva displays lovely primary red fruit aromas with hints of tobacco, herbs and leather. It is quite fresh on the palate with good acidity and firm tannins that will help this age very well. The Gran Reserva is a selection of barrels of the Monte Real Reserva. It still shows a youthful medium dark red color and flavors of fresh and dried red cherry, dried herbs and loam earth. It’s velvety smooth with good balance and integration and is drinking well right now. Made from 95% hand harvested fruit. **Bodegas Riojanas 2001 Viña Albina Gran Reserva Rioja ($50) 91**  The 2001 Gran Reserva is drinking well now with notes of dark red fruit, herbs and earth. It’s round and elegant on the palate with good depth, acidity, and balance. Sourced from different villages and soils of San Vicente de Sonsierra. Spends its first year post-fermentation in new oak. **Bodegas Riojanas 2011 Canchales Vino Joven, Constellation Brands US Inc. Canandaigua, NY**  

**Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri**  Jaime Rodriguez Salis established this estate and its, high altitude, cool Atlantic-influenced 108 ha of vineyards located along the slopes of the Sierra de Tolono mountains in Labastida in 1967. These are the same vineyards where the priest Manuel Quintano made Rioja wine in the 18th century. There are terraces with pre-phylloxera vineyards dating to 1876. The clay and stone vineyards are south facing and among the highest altitudes (650m) in the region. After making some of Spain’s most authentically wines throughout other regions of Spain, Jaime’s son Telmo Rodriguez returned to Remelluri in 2010 to take the winemaking helm and put the focus on terroir. Winemaking is done in large oak tinas with manual punchdowns. While the wine style is modern, it echoes the past, especially in the Gran Reserva, which develops a classic Rioja profile with age. Telmo's newest project is Lindes de Remelluri, which purchases fruit from local growers in San Vicente and Labastida to make village-specific wines. Telmo says the San Vicente village wine is more rustic, while the Labastida is more delicate.
Bodegas Roda 2011 Sela Rioja ($35) 89  Sela is Roda’s entry-level wine and consists of 95% Tempranillo, 3% Graciano and 2% Garnacha. Aged for one year in oak, it is a young wine displaying a ripe red plum nose, a soft attack and full bodied freshness for easy drinking. Aged 12 months in used oak. Bodegas Roda 2008 Roda Reserva Rioja ($56) 92  The 2008 Roda Reserva is a blend of 90% Tempranillo, 6% Graciano and 4% Garnacha. It displays a medium dark color and aromas of toasted oak, earth and red berries. On the palate it offers an elegant silky texture and nicely integrated dark red cherry and plum flavors with hints of earth and tobacco leaf. A delicious wine. Bodegas Roda 2007 Roda I Rioja ($88) 92  The Roda I is 100% Tempranillo sourced from 30 to 100 year old vines. It is a highly expressive wine revealing rich toasted oak and dark red berry fruit on the nose. Fermented in large format barrels with native yeast and aged 16 months in French oak barriques, it is soft, lush and velvety-like on the palate with ripe dark fruit flavors, fine firm tannins and a long finish. 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.  

Viña Salceda 2009 Reserva Rioja ($20) 92  Expressive red fruit aromas have a fresh, cool climate character on the palate. Flavors are balanced and beautiful, before soft, ripe tannins. Viña Salceda 2009 Puente de Salceda Producción Limitada Rioja 90  Structured black cherry, blackberry, floral and mineral aromas evolve into earthy toned flavors on the palate, with burly but well-shaped and dusty tannins. Viña Salceda 2010 Crianza Rioja 89  Hyper-fresh red cherry aromas precede lip smacking juicy flavors on the palate with vibrant acidity. Viña Salceda 2009 Conde de la Salceda Reserva Rioja 91+  Aromas are packed and floral with a mineral/herbal edge. Velvety flavors on the palate are shaped, with finesse, and tannins are noble and firm.

Bodegas San Pedro Apostol 2013 Campellares Tinto Rioja ($12) 88  This wine produced by a cooperative in Rioja Alta provides good value for an everyday drinking wine. It is a young and fruity Tempranillo with rich cherry and dark plum flavors and decent depth. Tank fermented, it is a fresh and delicious wine to be enjoyed now and offers a lot of drinking pleasure for the money. 

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. Beginning with the 1994 vintage, the wine was sold as generic Rioja, dropping the “reserva” label to permit winemaker Marcos Eguren to match oak aging to the requirements of the wine rather than the requirements of the Consejo Regulador. The wine is all Tempranillo, aged 20 months in 90% new French oak. We’ve tasted several Señorio de San Vicente vintages over the years, including the 2010 that we recently tasted with Marco at their winery in San Vicente de la Sonsierra.

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.

Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2013 Rosado Rioja ($15) 90
The 2013 Rosado is a blend of 20% Tempranillo, 50% Garnacha and 30% Viura from grapes sourced from old estate vineyards in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. It has a lovely light salmon color and a fresh delicate nose of red berry fruit and minerals. It is refreshing with excellent acidity, good length and crisp finish. Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2010 Reserva Unica Rioja ($25) 92 Dark and dense, this wine is 97% Tempranillo with 3% Graciano. Aged 24 months in barrel, 60% French barriques and 40% American oak, it show great purity of black cherry fruit on the nose and bold complex flavors on the palate. It is beautifully balanced: rich and dense, with perfectly evolved tannins and a long finish. Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2011 Garnacha Rioja 91 This Garnacha varietal wine is one of the very few produced in Rioja that are sourced from high altitude vineyards ($30m). It is a red-fruited wine revealing purity of red fruit flavor, and has a crisp mouth feel with high acidity and freshness. Aged 14 months in barriques of which 15% are new French oak, the wine has firm round tannins and a long finish. A delicious wine. Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2011 Colección Privada Rioja ($37) 92 The 2011 Colección Privada is made of 100% estate grown Tempranillo grapes. It reveals gorgeous dark red fruit, chocolate and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it boasts lovely fruit, a velvety texture with impressive balance and structure. Aged 50% in New French oak and 50% in American oak, the wine reveals grippy tannins at this young stage of development but can be expected to evolve and soften. 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. Bodegas Sierra Cantabria 2012 Organza Rioja ($30) 91 The Organza reveals notes of fennel, Manzanilla sherry, flowers, and the flesh of apricot. It has a gorgeous, full, mellow expression and good flavor integration with just a note of coconut oak on the finish. 50% Viura, 30% Malvasia, 20% Garnacha Blanca from San Vicente field blends. The varieties are picked together, given a cold maceration, and fermented in barrel and then aged 9 months on its lees in barrel. Importer: Fine Estates from Spain Dedham, MA

Bodegas Solar Viejo 2012 Vaza Tempranillo Rioja 87+
This young Tempranillo is very fruity and fresh, providing pure red berries on an easy drinking palate. Could be served lightly chilled to accompany a hot summer day’s lunch. Bodegas Solar Viejo 2010 Vaza Crianza Rioja 88
The Vaza Crianza is fresh and fruit forward with attractive dark red fruit notes. While modestly concentrated, it is very pleasant drinking, with dry firm tannins on the finish. Bodegas Solar Viejo 2011 Vaza

Compañía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez  Son of the family that owns Remeluri, 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 with the same model—seeking 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 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 (made in a renovated, old winery in Ollauri) 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.

Telmo Rodríguez 2013 LZ Rioja ($18) 89
The LZ is a pleasant drinking wine with a carbonic nose and dark fruit flavors on the palate. Fermented and aged in concrete, with partial whole clusters, it is fresh tasting and smooth on the palate, and finishes with firm round tannins. An honest and
tasty wine. **Telmo Rodríguez 2010 Lanzaga Rioja ($36) 93**
The 2010 Lanzaga is sourced from high altitude vineyards in the town of Lagciego. It is bright and fresh with a perfumed nose showing toasted oak, dark fruit aromas and a hint of earth. On the palate, it offers lovely up front black fruit, a chewy texture and a long finish with round tannins.

**Telmo Rodríguez 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.

**Telmo Rodríguez 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. **Importer:** Vintus Pleas-antville, NY

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**Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Finca Alto Cantabria Rioja ($15) 91**
This barrel fermented, 100% Vi- ura is a beautifully made wine exhibiting rich aromas and flavors in an exceptionally well balanced wine. It has just the right amount of toasted oak (3 months in new French barrels) married to vivacious fruit with an exhilarating, bright acidity. Wonderful winemaking and a spectacular value. **Bodegas Valdemar 2010 Conde de Valdemar Cri-
anza Rioja 90+**
The 2010 Crianza is a blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazueleo and 5% Graciano. Aged 18 months in barriques, it is very fragrant and fruit forward revealing dark red fruit and toasted oak. On the palate it is full-bod-ied and displays ripe flavors of black cherry, leather and earth. The wine is also nicely balanced with firm round tannins on a long finish. **Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Garnacha Rioja ($17) 89+**
The 2012 Conde de Valdemar Garnacha offers an aromatic nose of sweet red berry fruit with notes of raspberry. It is vibrant on the palate with good intensity of flavor and balance. We are told that Bodegas Valdemar was the first winery in Rioja to market a single varietal Garnacha. **Bodegas Valdemar 2007 Conde de Valdemar Reserva Rioja ($22) 90**
The 2007 Conde de Valdemar Reserva is a blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazueleo and 5% Graciano. If boasts dark red fruit, smoke and leather with spice notes. It is rich on the palate combining red and black fruit, earth and nicely integrated toasted oak. It is well balanced with firm round tannins and a solid finish. **Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Tempranillo Rioja ($17) 88** The 2012 Conde de Valdemar Tempranillo is a fresh and fruit forward wine, opaque ruby in color with aromas of ripe plum and choco-late. Aged 12 months in French oak, it has good acidity a fair degree of elegance on the palate, and firm round tannins on the finish. **Also tasted:** Bodegas Valdemar 2008 Conde de Valdemar Old Vines Garnacha Rioja

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**Bodegas Tobía 2010 Selección Reserva Rioja 89**
A blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano and 5% Garnacha, the Selección Reserva offers fresh dark red fruit on the nose with underlying toasted oak. Aged 20 months in French and American oak, it is smooth on the attack with a full flavored palate of dark red fruit, toasted oak and a touch of underbrush. The tannins still have grip and the oak remains prominent on the finish.

**Torre de Oña 2008 Reserva Rioja ($25) 90**
This winery located in Laguardia is owned by La Rioja Alta. The grapes for this lovely wine are sourced from estate vineyards surrounding the winery and consist of a blend of Tempranillo and Mazueleo. It shows alluring red rerry, blueberry and cranberry aromas on the nose. On the palate it reveals ripe red fruit flavors with spice with added charm from 10% Mazueleo in the blend.

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**Valdemar** Over the past three decades Jesús Martínez Bujanda has developed 193 ha of estate vineyards, the largest ones (La Esperilla, Gargantilla) located in Rioja Baja, although the winery is in Oyón in Rioja Alavesa. Another 47 ha of vineyards are under contract and managed by Valdemar agronomists. Jesús also intro-
duced Rioja’s first barrel fermented white as well as the first saignée style Rioja Rosado. The winery continues to innovate, recently introducing single varietal Matu-
ranca Tinto and barrel-fermented Tempranillo Blanco from Rioja Alavesa vineyards located near the winery. Wines are sold under three labels—Valdemar, Condul de Valdemar, and Inspiración where the focus is on single varietals. The wines are without fail interesting and creative but sometimes lack the finesse of Rioja’s very best.

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**Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Finca Alto Cantabria Rioja ($15) 91**
This barrel fermented, 100% Vi- ura is a beautifully made wine exhibiting rich aromas and flavors in an exceptionally well balanced wine. It has just the right amount of toasted oak (3 months in new French barrels) married to vivacious fruit with an exhilarating, bright acidity. Wonderful winemaking and a spectacular value. **Bodegas Valdemar 2010 Conde de Valdemar Cri-
anza Rioja 90+**
The 2010 Crianza is a blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazueleo and 5% Graciano. Aged 18 months in barriques, it is very fragrant and fruit forward revealing dark red fruit and toasted oak. On the palate it is full-bod-ied and displays ripe flavors of black cherry, leather and earth. The wine is also nicely balanced with firm round tannins on a long finish. **Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Garnacha Rioja ($17) 89+**
The 2012 Conde de Valdemar Garnacha offers an aromatic nose of sweet red berry fruit with notes of raspberry. It is vibrant on the palate with good intensity of flavor and balance. We are told that Bodegas Valdemar was the first winery in Rioja to market a single varietal Garnacha. **Bodegas Valdemar 2007 Conde de Valdemar Reserva Rioja ($22) 90**
The 2007 Conde de Valdemar Reserva is a blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazueleo and 5% Graciano. If boasts dark red fruit, smoke and leather with spice notes. It is rich on the palate combining red and black fruit, earth and nicely integrated toasted oak. It is well balanced with firm round tannins and a solid finish. **Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Tempranillo Rioja ($17) 88** The 2012 Conde de Valdemar Tempranillo is a fresh and fruit forward wine, opaque ruby in color with aromas of ripe plum and choco-
late. Aged 12 months in French oak, it has good acidity a fair degree of elegance on the palate, and firm round tannins on the finish. **Also tasted:** Bodegas Valdemar 2008 Conde de Valdemar Old Vines Garnacha Rioja

**Bodegas Valdemar 2010 Inspiración Las Canteras Rioja ($20) 88+** This 80/20 blend of Tempranillo and Graciano is opaque ruby red and densely flavored with a nice dark earth component. Since 2010 was warm, the acidity of the Graciano isn’t as prominent as usual. Las Canteras is a 400m vineyard planted in 1986. **Bodegas Valdemar 2008 Inspiración Maturana Rioja ($65) 90+** The 2008 Inspi-
Viñedos de Pagános This Rioja Alavesa winery, located in the village of Pagános 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. The vineyards are cool climate and managed for very low yields. and the La Nieta fruit is destemmed by hand and sorted berry by berry prior to cold maceration. The El Puntido cuvée is fermented in stainless steel, while La Nieta is fermented in small, 10 hl new French oak casks. 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.

Viñedos de Pagános 2010 El Puntido Rioja ($53) 93+ The Puntido is sourced from a small low-yielding vineyard in Laguardia situated at 600 m, about the highest altitude for growing Tempranillo. The 2010 El Puntido is a highly refined, 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 Pagános 2006 El Puntido Gran Reserva Rioja ($53) 92** The 2006
El Puntido Gran Reserva is riper and more evolved than the 2010 El Puntido. Opaque ruby in color it offers aromas of dark fruit, roasted meat, toast and herbs. Aged 28 months in new French oak, it has a lovely velvet-like mouth feel with rich black fruit flavors, hints of coffee and toast, very firm tannins and a long finish. *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.  

*Importer: Fine Estates from Spain Dedham, MA*

**Bodegas Vinícola Real 2011 Cueva del Monge Blanco Rioja ($38) 91** The 2010 Cueva Monge Blanco is a blend of 70% Viura, 20% Malvasia, and 10% Garnacha Blanca and Moscatel aged for 10 months in 50/50 French and American oak. It is a ripe and fragrant with a floral and mineral nose and a hint of ginger and a creamy smooth palate of sweet fruit. It is pure, dense, and focused on the finish.  

**Bodegas Vinícola Real 2006 200 Monges Reserva Rioja ($70) 93** This is a field blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano, and 5% Garnacha fermented in French oak vats and aged a minimum of 18 months in oak barrels. It’s a big, broad, full wine with a ripe, lush character. It reveals concentrated ripe dark fruit with notes of violets and loam. Finishes with superb length.  

**Bodegas Vinícola Real 2005 200 Monges Selección Especial Rioja ($120) 94+** This is 100% Tempranillo selected from the winery’s best vineyard. It’s dense and opaque revealing rich black raspberry, nicely integrated toasted oak, and a floral violet note. It’s super-refined and elegantly focused finishing with suave tannins. Aged 18 months in new French oak.  

**Bodegas Vinícola Real 2009 Cueva del Monge Tinto Rioja ($33) 90** Earthy and ripe, this is a fruit forward wine revealing a fruit salad of fresh huckleberry, plum and cherry. It’s soft on the attack and mouth filling with quite dry tannins on a rich, long finish.  

**Bodegas Vinícola Real 2010 Viña Los Valles Crianza Rioja ($19) 90** This 70/30 blend of Tempranillo and Graciano is fermented in new American oak and then spends 15 months in a mix of French and American oak. It’s spicy and fresh with a hint of forest floor and inky dark red fruit. Soft on the attack, the palate is deliciously layered with a nice toasted oak note. Made with organic grapes.  

**Also Tasted:** Bodegas Vinícola Real 2010 Cueva del Monge Blanco, Bodegas Vinícola Real 2008 Cueva del Monge Tinto, Bodegas Vinícola Real 2011 Viña Los Valles.  

*Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton VA*
## Annex 1: Top Wines of Rioja

### Varietal Wines

The following tables list the top wines we tasted made from each variety for single varietals and wines where that varietal is the most important component of a red blend.

#### Garnacha

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<td>Baigorri 2010 Garnacha</td>
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<td>Cifras 2010 Exeo</td>
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<td>Dinastia Vivanco 2010 Parcelas de Garnacha</td>
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<td>Exopto 2011 Bozeto*</td>
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<td>La Emperatriz 2010 Garnacha Cepas Viejas</td>
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<td>Palacios Remondo 2011 La Montesa</td>
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<td>Sierra Cantabria 2011 Garnacha</td>
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<td>Bodegas Valdemar 2012 Conde de Valdemar Garnacha</td>
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*50% Garnacha, 50% Tempranillo

#### Graciano

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<td>Baron de Ley 2010 Variedades Graciano</td>
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<td>Contino 2006 Graciano</td>
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*Blends containing a minimum of 25% Graciano

#### Viura

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<td>Amezola 2010 Iñigo Fermentado en Barrica</td>
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<td>Baigorri 2012 Cask Fermented White Wine</td>
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<td>Benjamin Romeo 2011 Que Bonito</td>
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<td>DSG 2011 Phinca Thousand Milis</td>
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<td>Emperatriz 2011 Viura Cepas Viejas</td>
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<td>Exopto 2011 Horizonte de Exopto Blanco</td>
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<td>Finca Allende 2011 Blanco</td>
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<td>Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia 1964 6º Año Blanco</td>
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<td>Luis Alegre 2012 Finca La Reñena Blanco de Guarda</td>
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<td>Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Capellania Reserva</td>
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<td>Muga 2013 Blanco Fermentado en Barrica</td>
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<td>Olivier Riviere 2010 Jequitiba</td>
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<td>Palacios Remondo 2009 Plácet Valtomeloso</td>
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<td>Patrocinio 2008 Lágrimas de María Reserva</td>
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<td>Pujanza 2010 Añadas Fria</td>
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<td>Sierra Cantabria 2012 Organza</td>
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<td>Valdemar 2012 Finca Alto Valenciso 2011 Valenciso Blanco</td>
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<td>Valserrano 2008 Gran Reserva Premium White Wine</td>
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<td>Vinícola Real 2011 Cueva del Monge Blanco</td>
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### Single Vineyard Wines

A single vineyard wine is made from grapes sourced from a small vineyard or an identifiable parcel within a large vineyard. Wine labels often do not identify sources of grapes, including whether or not they come from a single vineyard. The following are the top single vineyard wines we’ve tasted.

#### Reds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artadi 2011 El Carretil</td>
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<td>Artadi 2011 La Poza de Ballesteros</td>
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<td>Artadi 2011 Viña El Pison</td>
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<td>Benjamin Romeo 2011 Viña de Andrés Romeo</td>
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<td>Castillo de Cuzcurrita 2008 Cerrado del Castillo</td>
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<td>Contino 2007 Viña del Olivo</td>
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<td>Dinastia Vivanco 2010 4 Variedades</td>
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<td>DSG 2010 Phinca Lali</td>
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<td>La Emperatriz 2011 Garnachas Cepas Viejas</td>
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<td>La Emperatriz 2010 Parcela No. 1</td>
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<td>Finca Allende 2006 Calvario</td>
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<td>LAN 2007 Cúmen Reserva</td>
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<td>LAN 2010 Edicion Limitada</td>
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<td>Luis Alegre 2009 Pontac de Portiles</td>
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<td>Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Dalmau Reserva</td>
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<td>Marqués de Murrieta 2005 Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial</td>
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<td>Pujanza 2009 Cisma</td>
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<td>Pujanza 2010 Norte</td>
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<td>Pujanza 2010 Finca Valdopoleo</td>
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<td>Roda 2010 Cirsion</td>
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<td>Señorio de San Vicente 2010 San Vicente</td>
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<td>Sierra Cantabria 2010 El Bosque</td>
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<td>Telmo Rodríguez 2011 Las Beatas</td>
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<td>Vívedos de Páganos 2011 La Nieta</td>
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<td>Vinícola Real 2005 200 Monges Selección Especial</td>
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#### Whites

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<td>Finca Allende 2012 Martires</td>
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<td>Marqués de Murrieta 2009 Capellania Reserva</td>
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<td>Pujanza 2010 Añadas Fria</td>
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### Annex 2: Top Wines of Rioja
Previous Wine Reports

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<th>Issue</th>
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<td>Red Table Wines of Portugal</td>
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<td>The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality</td>
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