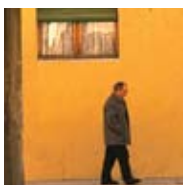


Ribera del Duero:
The Promised Land for Young and Old
Madrid Fusión Chose Change
The Global Plate:
Spanish Wines in Harlem
El Taburete: Daniel Olivella of B44
Postmark: Empordà-Costa Brava



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We join Chris Fleming on a visit to Ribera del Duero, curious to find out why this region has never ceased to catch critics' attention since it first stood out in the 1980s. Back from Madrid Fusión, Bruce Schoenfeld shares with us some key remarks about Spain's thrilling wine scene. Helio San Miguel's postcard tempts us to jump on a plane and discover first hand the allure of wine and food in the Costa Brava. Back in the United States, Lee Campbell guides us through the heritage of the foods of Harlem and exposes our senses to new pairings of local dishes with Spanish wines. In San Francisco, Jordan Mackay sits at the bar of B44 to discover a chef's passion for wine that dates back to childhood.



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RIBERA DEL DUERO

THE PROMISED LAND FOR YOUNG AND OLD



By Chris Fleming

In the mid-1980s, Robert Parker called the 1982 Pesquera “Spain’s Chateau Petrus,” setting off Ribera del Duero’s first explosion of recognition from Spanish winemakers and wine critics across the globe. The meteoric rise of the Ribera D.O. has been astonishing: from less than ten properties and a few cooperatives that produced a half-million bottles when the D.O. was established in 1982, there are now over two hundred properties producing 39 million bottles per year. Ribera del Duero has continued to generate intense interest by investors and wine property owners, and numerous new wineries have been built. In addition to high-end wines such as the crianza, reserva and gran reserva wines, established and new bodegas are producing many incredible value wines now available in the U.S. Made in a joven, young style, they provide the perfect opportunity to become acquainted with Ribera del Duero. Joven wines helped sales of Ribera D.O. wines climb considerably in 2005. If the current rapid growth of wines from Spain can be compared to a spectacular fireworks display, the region that continues to make the most beautiful bang is Ribera del Duero.

Located about a two-hour drive northwest of Madrid, Ribera is notably flat, characterized by dry earth, whose dominant colors are ochre brown, milk chocolate and saddle-leather tan. Aside from a rare cypress tree, there’s precious little green here and, driving by, you can smell the intense cooked syrup aromas of the *azucarera*, huge factories that process sugar beets. Occasional cereal crops are visible as you make your way north in a slow, gradual climb in altitude. At 700-1,000 meters elevation, most of Ribera’s vineyards are at the northern apex of a high plateau in Spain known as the *meseta* or ‘tabletop,’ where it meets the Duero River. For comparison, Rioja’s more rugged topography has gorgeous mountain vistas, yet most of

its vineyards lie between 400-600 meters elevation. Ribera is as long as Rioja, yet it contains only a third of its acreage. In Ribera, most wines are produced from the Tinto Fino grape, also known as Tinta del País, the local names for Tempranillo.

Ribera’s “golden triangle” is the famous stretch between Peñafiel to Quintanilla de Onésimo formed by the historic wine towns of Pesquera, Peñafiel and Valbuena. This area includes the wineries and vineyards of Vega Sicilia, Pesquera, Emilio Moro, Arzúaga, Alión, Hermanos Cuadrado-Finca Villacreces, Hacienda Monasterio, Emina and Matarromera. This area’s soils, mostly limestone and sand with little clay, yield aromatic, complex wines with bold fruit, minerals, sculpted acidity and sweet, round tannins. These are Ribera del Duero wines with the most finesse.

The honors given to the Pesquera wines of Alejandro Fernández in the 1980s prompted the first major reaction in the wine world to the Ribera region. Almost overnight, many wineries were built. Pesquera is a traditional-style wine: strong and brooding when young, with a tannic structure and acidity that ages wonderfully. A proud, forthright man, Alejandro gambled on the potential of his ability and Ribera’s vineyards when he bought Pesquera in 1972. Most old vineyards in the region were then being grubbed up to plant sugar beets. Today, Alejandro is an icon who makes distinctive wines of character and his life is the story of Spanish winemaking in the new millennium: a resounding success. From the basic Pesquera Tinto and Reserva to the Millennium and Gran Reserva Janus, these are serious, hearty Riberas.

Ribera’s oldest winery, Bodegas Vega Sicilia, released its first red wines in 1915, and the property and its wines have since become legendary in Spain, benchmarks for excellence. Unique among Ribera wines, Reserva Especial, Único and Valbuena 5°



exhibit sophisticated elegance and harmony on the palate that is the bodega's signature. Aged in large American oak vats and barrels, Vega Sicilia wines are made in a traditional style that stresses balance and acidity, allowing them to age for decades. Until 1998, Mariano García was chief winemaker there, helping to shape the great vintages that Vega Sicilia lovers have enjoyed for nearly thirty years. Founded in 1992, Vega Sicilia's sister winery, Bodegas Alión, makes wines that are modern-styled with dense, structured fruit and ripe tannins. Produced in a new, cutting-edge winery, Alión wines sell at a mid-tier price. Aged for about 24 months in French barrique, they're designed for earlier drinking but can improve with aging.

Hacienda Monasterio, produced by Bodegas Monasterio, is a bold, spicy, balanced blend of Tinto Fino, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Merlot and Petite Verdot, judiciously aged in oak. This wine has earned winemaker Peter Sisseck high praise. Monasterio's modern-style wines include a Crianza and Reserva with concentrated fruit, serious structure and ripe tannins that are made utilizing a blend similar to Vega Sicilia, but aged in French oak barrique for 18 months rather than large American oak casks for several years. They are remarkably high quality at a good price. Bodegas Monasterio gave the Bordeaux-trained Sisseck a feel for the best farming and winemaking methods to utilize with Ribera's Tinta del País.

In Ribera's Burgos province, the towns of Roa de Duero, La Horra, Anguix and Quintanamanvirgo define an area that typically produces brawny, modern-style Riberas aged in barrel. Recently, many excellent joven-style value wines have emerged. Joven wines exhibit fresh, clean aromas and crisp fruit on the palate due to brief aging either in wood or stainless steel tank, and they're perfect for casual tapas or bistro food. In this area, very reddish soils have lots of limestone, sand and large stones, especially near La Horra. Loads of volume, extract and distinctive personality characterize these wines, known for rough tannins. Wineries with vineyards in this area are Bodegas Aalto, Dominio de Pingus, Condado de Haza, Astrales, Alonso del Yerro, Hermanos Sastre-Viña Sastre and Anguix. West of Roa, Pedrosa de Duero has soils with slightly more clay, which yield wines with depth. Hermanos Pérez Pascuas and Pago de los Capellanes are here. Torremorón, Viña y Tía De Lozar, Pérez Pascuas Viña Pedrosa, Pago de los Capellanes Tinto Joven and Monte Negro Tinto Joven, Barrica, and Crianza are all modern-styled wines with bold fruit and a great price/value quality.

In the mid-1990s, there was once again a surge of praise and recognition for Ribera wines, inspired by the tremendous acclaim accorded by Robert Parker and other critics to Peter Sisseck's Pingus wine, which instantly became a cult wine, the most expensive from Spain. Pingus and Flor de Pingus represent modern-styled Riberas, aged in French oak, with tremendous depth, complex aromas, plush fruit on the palate and a long finish. While Pingus is a super cuvée, Flor provides a considerable value, especially the 2002 vintage, when Sisseck didn't produce Pingus and used all the fruit for the Flor de Pingus. Since 2000, the vineyards for Pingus near La Horra have been biodynamically farmed, making for truer vineyard expression and better wines.

Javier Zaccagnini is owner of Bodegas Aalto, Ribera's

ultimate boutique winery. From 1992-1998, Zaccagnini headed Ribera del Duero's Consejo Regulador, the governing body of the denomination, and he was successful in promoting the Ribera del Duero D.O. during its second explosion. When Mariano García left Vega Sicilia in 1998, the two men decided to collaborate on a new winery - Bodegas Aalto. Since their first vintage in 1999, the mid-tier Aalto and high-end Aalto P.S. (Pagos Seleccionados) have received rave reviews from American and Spanish wine critics. A modern-style Ribera aged in French oak, Aalto has brambly, dark berry aromas with cassis, leather and licorice notes, and expansive, deep fruit with ripe, sweet tannins on the palate. With more depth and complexity, the 2001 Aalto P.S. received 98 points from Robert Parker, among his highest ratings for a Ribera del Duero wine.

Another notable project in the area is Alejandro Fernández's Condado de Haza, which makes modern-styled wines. Since 1994, this bodega has made a basic Tinto, designed for early drinking, as well as the Alenza, which is meant for aging. Eduardo García and Telmo Rodríguez are young winemakers on the rise in this region. Los Astrales is a property and mid-tier wine with Eduardo as Technical Director. The high-end Matallana wine and Valderiz and Gazur, both value wines, are produced by Telmo Rodríguez and partner Pablo Eguzkiza, working directly with growers of vineyards that have been biodynamically farmed since 1998.

Due to the extreme quality of their vineyard sites, the potential of two previously underdeveloped areas is drawing a new generation of talented winemakers whose modern-styled wines are challenging Ribera's best at every price point. In north-central Ribera, four towns near Los Gumieles and Quintana del Pidio have soils with significant clay. Their wines have bold, spicy, Ribera fruit with depth and remarkably ripe, silky tannins. The properties here are Bodegas Conde, Uvaguilera, Prado Rey, Casajús and Arrocal. With similar soils, the second area is near the town of Atauta at Ribera's southeastern edge in Soria province. Domino de Atauta's wines, Conde Neo and Uvaguilera Palomero, have distinctively earthy aromas, dense black fruit, and a deeply mineral, roasted character on the palate.

During a visit to the region in 2004, lots of construction was apparent. Dominio de Pingus, Bodegas Alión, Bodegas Mauro and Bodegas Aalto had either just built new wineries or were in the process of construction. The physical expansion of many established bodegas and newly funded properties directly reflects the increasing global demand for Ribera's wines. Ribera del Duero's impressive growth in the 1980s and 1990s, and reputation for exceptional, super cuvée wines from Bodegas Aalto, Vega Sicilia, Dominio de Pingus and Pesquera, have helped the region gain global prominence. Its wines are now grouped with the best of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Barolo and Napa. As a result, Ribera del Duero is the first region to seriously challenge Rioja as the premier wine region in Spain. Today, Ribera's top winemakers produce affordable high-quality wines, and its value wines compete with those from Rioja, France, Italy and California, making Ribera wines a revelation for U.S. wine buyers and consumers. Perhaps these developments will soon spark a third explosion of recognition for the maturing region.



About the author:

Chris Fleming is a freelance wine writer and consultant. He has written about wine for The Robb Report. Previously, he was wine writer and consultant for PJ Wine, a NYC retailer known for their selection of hundreds of Spanish wines. He lives with his wife in Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York.

Photos: Opposite page, top: Ribera del Duero vista © Carlos Navajas, SpainGourmetour/ICEX; bottom left: Ribera del Duero building at sunset © Carlos Navajas, SpainGourmetour/ICEX. This page top: Ribera del Duero castle shrouded in mist, © Juan José Moral, SpainGourmetour/ICEX, bottom grapes © Tom E. Smith.





madrid fusión

A Look at Spain's Wine Scene

By Bruce Schoenfeld

Last year was easy. Trot out the country's 100 most prestigious wines. Wow the assembled journalists and wine professionals with their quality and depth. Try to act humble as you accept the congratulations.

The organizers of this year's tasting at Madrid Fusión, held over three days in mid-January at the Feria de Madrid conference center near Barajas airport, could have done the same thing. A new year means new versions of the wines – and the rarified handful that aren't made in each vintage would have shown different characteristics with 12 more months in the bottle. Some of the notable omissions of 2005 could have been included, at the expense of wines that didn't perform as well as expected last time. It would have been like a new Spanish soccer season, with the latest incarnations of the traditional powers set to do battle. Instead of Real Madrid and Barcelona, we'd have Vega Sicilia Unico, Pingus and L'Ermita all over again.

Instead, the organizers chose a more challenging format. They created a series of tastings, beginning with inexpensive young wines and then moving through various geographic regions and grape varieties, both famous and obscure. It was a daring decision. By doing so, they left themselves open to misunderstanding, lack of enthusiasm, and disappointment. Primed for one renowned wine after another, we tasters found ourselves sampling Monastrells, dulces from Alicante, \$9 wines from various pockets of the peninsula, and

Vinos de la Tierra from León and Toledo and somewhere near Valencia. A flight of Riojas never looked so good.

Yet while last year's event was unforgettable, this year's might well have been more instructive. By sampling such a range, we were able to get a sense of the sweep of the entire Spanish wine scene. Moved beyond our comfort zones, we discovered producers we'd never heard of, from appellations we'd never thought to visit. Some wines were impressive, others curious. Few were dull. Unlike last year, we didn't argue so much about relative merit, pitting one \$200 wine against another to determine which was the more sublime. Instead, we compared styles, winemaking techniques, pricing strategies. We consulted maps and inquired about enologists. Along the way, several truths emerged:

- **Vintages matter.** It's tempting in this era of evolved vineyard practices and technologically advanced winemaking to forget that weather still affects winemaking more than any other factor.

Many of the entries in this year's lineup came from grapes grown in 2003, a vintage that featured week after week of temperatures exceeding 100 degrees. The high sugar levels that resulted from such sustained heat mandated early harvests, though too often the grapes weren't physiologically mature. Many of those wines now taste roasted or stewed, and show evident alcohol. Most suffer from the back-of-the-tongue bite that comes from fruit that has ripened too fast for its corresponding tannins.

The 2003s that succeeded – like the shiny, sculpted Doix from Celler Mas Doix in Priorato, a blend of mostly Cariñena and Garnacha – did so by balancing ultra-ripe fruit with freshness. These wines didn't necessarily taste of their terroir, but that's what often needs to be sacrificed in a freak vintage. If acid needs to be added, add acid. Conversely, if reverse osmosis will strengthen the wine in a weak year, well, strengthening the wine is what a winemaker is supposed to be doing.

It's fashionable to admire non-interventionist winemaking, but remember that all winemaking is interventionist to some extent: those grapes aren't going to end up fermented, bottled and corked without plenty of help from human hands. In an extreme year such as 2003, extreme measures often must be taken to make drinkable wine. There's no shame in that.

- **Use of indigenous varieties should be encouraged.** Some people are calling Syrah the future of Spain. They evidently haven't visited South Australia, Washington state, the Northern Rhone, or even South Africa, all of which have invested heavily in the grape with impressive results. Even if Spain can make perfectly credible Syrahs and Syrah-based blends, why should it bother? Sure, the best of them, such as the Enrique Mendoza from Alicante and the Marqués de Griñón Dominio de Valdepusa from Vino de Mesa de Toledo (neither in this tasting) or journalist Victor de la Serna's Finca Sandoval, are better than anyone had a right to think they'd be even a short time ago. But when tasted alongside wines made from indigenous varieties, they remain comparatively monochromatic, obvious, uninteresting. Part of it is vine age. Old vineyards, the kind that make nuanced wines from

Madrid Fusión, the Fourth International Summit of Gastronomy, took place this year from January 17-19. The event is a series of tastings, competitions, fascinating seminars, tributes to chefs and winemakers, as well as a large exhibition area for producers of wines and foods. ICEX was one of the sponsors of the event. An important tasting held during Madrid Fusión, open only to a select group of international media, was Spain: A Garden of Grape Varieties, which is the subject of Bruce Schoenfeld's article.

The opinions in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of ICEX or Wines from Spain.

the fruit on their low-yield vines, are far more likely to be planted to Tempranillo in its various forms, Garnacha, or Mencía than French imports. But beyond that, Spain is blessed with a wide range of grape types seldom seen in the world marketplace. For a consumer hungry for variety, novelty and sense of place, it's a gold mine. Need a Spanish white? Given the option of Godello, Treixadura, Verdejo or Albariño, there's no need to ever settle for barrel-fermented Chardonnay. And the excitement of reasonably priced reds such as Viñedo del Contino's Graciano 2000 and the Luis Cañas Amarén Graciano 2002 is heightened by the fact that their flavor profile is available nowhere else.

Some of the wines made from varieties such as Bobal and Mallorca's Callet remain mere novelties. And on the other side, there are successful Cabernet Sauvignons, Syrahs, Chardonnays and Merlots that might attract the curious but cautious wine drinker looking for an entree to Spain. But among the benefits inherent in a wine-drinking culture that extends back several thousand years are flavors that are uniquely its own. With no comparable vinous histories, New World countries rely on immigrant grapes. It would be foolish for Spain to turn a strength into a weakness and do the same.

- **Less is more.** Too many wines lose drinkability by using excessive oak or carrying too much alcohol. This isn't a Spanish problem, it's an international one. But while many warm-weather growing regions have little to offer consumers but wines with full-throttle power, that isn't the case with Spain.

For decades, Riojas and the few pioneering wines from the Duero valley saw little or no new oak and lost much of their primary fruit before release. While today's wines – made in cleaner wineries, using grapes that were grown in more intelligently managed vineyards and selected under far more stringent standards – are undeniably better than before, a lesson can be learned from the past.

Those nostalgic for past generations of Spanish wines miss their balance. Those were acoustic melodies rendered as wines, as opposed to the over-amplified thrash guitar of even some of the priciest Spanish bottlings of today.

Balance doesn't mean lack of color, flavor or depth. It can be achieved even with deep, dark, ripe wines, if restraint is used. Winemakers who have confidence in their abilities, as opposed to the need to chase peers, scores and fashion, are more likely to find the qualities inherent in a wine and express them with balance and profundity.

- **Ribera del Duero is the finest region in Spain.** With all the mistakes made by the appellation's wineries – over-planting, planting on bad sites or with unsuitable clones, producing too many boring wines, and too many wines in large volumes – there is still no other Denominación de Origen that can offer the wine drinker so many thrilling options.

Many of the tasting's standouts, such as the richly complex Pérez Pascuas Gran Selección 25 Años 1999 and Vega Sicilia's Valbuena 5 Año 2001, came from long-established producers that are making better wine than ever before. Others, such as Dominio de Atauta's taut Valdegatiles 2003 and Emilio Moro's

earthy Malleolus de Sanchomartín 2003, are welcome additions from newer producers that understand the virtue inherent in making wine that tastes like nothing else. A few others, notably Aalto's P.S. 2001, veer toward the international style, but at the highest level of quality.

And special attention must be paid to the Dominio de Pingus 2003. Ignore, if you can, the preposterous retail price \$900, and don't try to understand why it was included in this event while its obvious peer group (L'Ermita, Vega Sicilia Unico, etc.) wasn't. This edition of Pingus unites its component parts to finally fulfill the potential it has shown since its 1995 debut. A textbook Ribera del Duero, yet also a world standard, its fragrant nose, integrated oak and long finish billboard future greatness.

- **Of all the emerging regions, Bierzo has the most potential.** In Toro, Jumilla, La Mancha and Campo de Borja, Spain has yet another generation of appellations on the rise. But in Bierzo, it has one of the only two regions in the world that I can think of (Italy's Piedmont being the other) with the capacity to make a world-class varietal wine from a grape found only there.

We tasted six Bierzo wines, all made entirely from Mencía. The best of them, the Dominio de Tares P3, combined explosive fruit and firm tannins with the refreshing acidity that is the hallmark of Mencía. Several of the others were nearly as good. Even more compelling, all showed slightly different aspects of this protean grape.

The Valtuille 2001 was lithe and feminine, something like a successful cross between a Burgundy and a Barolo. The Corullón 2003 from Álvaro Palacios homed in on notes of red fruit, strawberries and raspberries, backed by firm structure. It could have been a Sonoma County Pinot Noir, but for a flavor profile rooted somewhere deep in soil of west-central Spain.

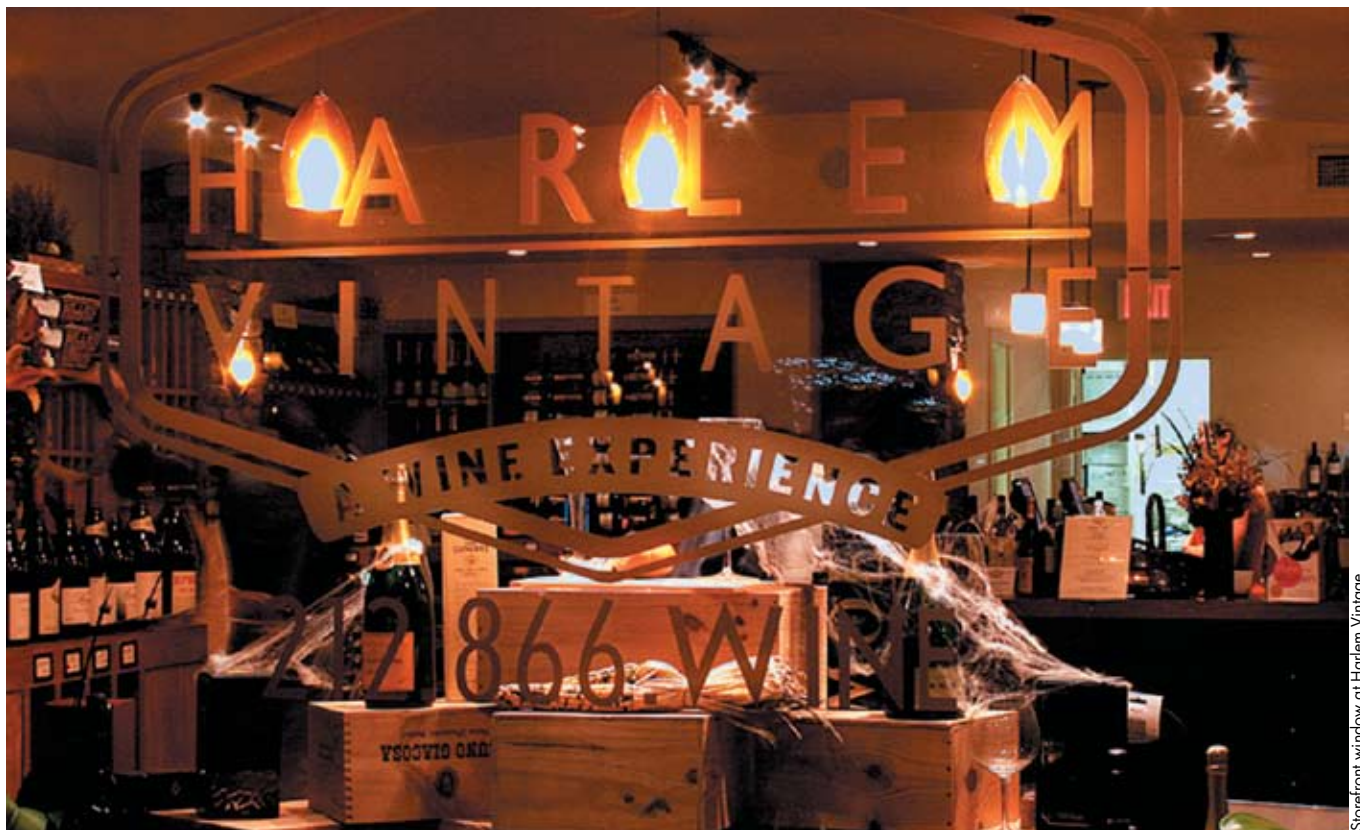
- **Palacios remains the country's most talented and successful winemaker.** I can't imagine that any other country has so many producers proving their mettle in widely diverse areas. Consider this partial list: the Eguren brothers in Rioja and Toro; Mariano García in Ribera del Duero, Toro, and now Bierzo; Australian import Chris Ringland in the awakening areas of Jumilla and Campo de Borja; Telmo Rodríguez everywhere from Rioja to Málaga.

Nobody has managed the balancing act better than Palacios, who makes wines the way Renoir painted: with confidence, economy, and ambition. Wherever he is in the market, he excels. Last year, we tasted the stunning L'Ermita 2002, one of the best Spanish wines ever produced, and admired Palacios's genius. This year, we admire his work ethic. The four Palacios wines – Las Terrasses, Finca Dofí, Corullón and Propiedad Herencia Remondo, each from that difficult vintage of 2003 – were all a pleasure to taste. That's four wines spread across three growing areas, hundreds of miles apart, from a vintage that demanded constant attention.

If the splendor of the L'Ermita 2002 epitomized last year's tasting, the rigor and precision needed to produce these wines epitomizes this year's. If anything, this achievement is even more impressive.

About the author:

Journalist **Bruce Schoenfeld**, who writes frequently about Spain and Spanish wines, is a regular contributor to *Travel & Leisure*, *Cigar Aficionado*, *Sports Illustrated*, and many other national and international publications.



Storefront window at Harlem Vintage.

THE GLOBAL PLATE: SPANISH WINES IN HARLEM

By Lee Campbell

Harlem is a dynamic word that conjures up different perceptions. Many associate it with the Harlem Renaissance, an artistic, intellectual and cultural revolution, which occurred in Harlem in the 1920's and 30's. Others think of it as a longstanding community of working-class African-Americans like my Trinidadian-born grandmother. This was the exciting place to which I escaped when life in the suburbs of New York simply became too humdrum. Whether it was the turbulent 1960's, the bleak 1970's, or the eclectic 1980's, Harlem has always hummed with its unique brand of vibrancy.

First settled by the Dutch in 1658 as "Nieuw Haarlem" after the Dutch city of Haarlem, the community existed as farmland until the beginning of the 20th century. What are now high-rise apartment buildings were then expansive country estates, reachable by lengthy trips on the steamboat, the stagecoach or eventually the New York and Harlem Railroad.

Things have certainly changed! Today, the A train, made famous by Duke Ellington, ferries busy passengers from 59th Street to the heart of Harlem in a mere 10 minutes! And although only a few miles north of Manhattan's commercial districts, Harlem is still very much a modern urban community with brownstones, condominiums and storefronts lining the grid-like streets. These days, Harlem is approaching what many consider

to be a second renaissance. As property values in Manhattan climbed in recent decades, many downtown Manhattanites were attracted to the more affordable housing options in Harlem. What was once a neighborhood populated by African-Americans and immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, Harlem began to be settled by residents of a lighter hue. These newer residents brought with them an influx of financial resources. Today, brightly uniformed construction crews skirt around the neighborhood like worker ants and new buildings seem to appear every week.

Despite all these changes, the Harlem of modern-day still retains the flavor of years past. Regal, aged brownstones line leafy streets like Strivers Row and Convent Avenue. The historic Apollo Theater continues to entertain tourists as well as neighborhood residents with acts rooted in the musical traditions of the African-American diaspora. Clubs like the Lenox Lounge and Showman's Café are still landmarks of Harlem as well as of the jazz music canon. And people of all races, ethnicities and backgrounds are reinvigorating the melting pot concept for which this country has been celebrated.

Moreover, when one thinks of the culinary traditions for which Harlem is best known, they are those of the African and Latin based peoples which have made Harlem their home for the past century. And so the question remains: How does one pair wine,

a beverage traced primarily to Europe, with cuisines of African and American roots? The answer is simple; one does it in the American fashion...with great gusto!

Spain and Africa have of course had their dealings in the past. When Isabella I and Ferdinand II drove the Moors from Spain, that might have marked the end of any cultural exchange. Instead, we can use the beautiful remnants of African culture found in present-day Andalusia as inspiration for pairing Spanish wines with the diversity of foods found in Harlem.

For instance, *moros y cristianos* is a simple dish of black beans and rice which is enjoyed in southern Spain as well as in Cuban-American homes...eaten in the latter on New Year's Day for good luck. *Fritura*, the fried fish of Western Andalusia, doesn't sound too far off from the fried whiting fish found at several take-out joints in Harlem specializing in fried-fish! (Of course, every Harlem resident has his favorite. Mine is currently Lovie's on 8th Avenue.) *Escabeche*, a cooking technique developed by the Moors to preserve meat and fish, finds its Jamaican partner in Escovitch fish, a vinegary dish served at many Caribbean restaurants uptown. Additionally, West Indians make a wide variety of dishes from salt cod, known in Iberia as *bacalao*. And a Sunday dinner was never complete at my grandmother's table without stewed oxtail...known in Andalusia as *rabo de toro a la andaluza*.

The similarities are endless and this fact clearly allows us to include the vast variety of Spanish wines on Harlem's dinner table. Let's begin with that Harlem classic...soul food. Of course, soul food is not limited to the confines of Harlem. African-Americans all over the U.S. can claim ownership to this cuisine. Soul food is generally associated with feelings of pleasure and nostalgia because it is essentially African-American comfort food. These are foods upon which generations have been raised. Fried chicken, black-eyed peas, collard greens, macaroni and cheese, candied yams...the list goes on. In Harlem, there are a few restaurants which top the soul food list. Most know Sylvia's on Lenox Avenue, a true Harlem institution for over 35 years. However, others, like Amy Ruth's and Miss Mamie's Spoonbread Too, also offer all of the traditional fixings. So whether I eat out and bring my own wine (many soul food restaurants do not offer a wine list), or actually create a feast in my own kitchen, what would be my first inclinations in matching Spanish wines with traditional African-American soul food?

A fantastic option is cava, cava and more cava! These foods are rich, one might even say heavy, with a fair amount of heft to them. Please, stay away from the buttery Chardonnays! It's like slathering butter on top of more butter. The antidote is of course crisp, high quality bubbles crafted in the *Méthode Champenoise*. The one in my refrigerator is the "L'Hereu" Brut Non Vintage Cava by Raventos i Blanc. It is crafted from 100% estate-grown fruit by the energetic Josep Raventos i Blanc, a descendant of the Codorniu clan, and it offers the perfect notes of citrusy acidity to balance these foods. One might even be able to handle a second helping of macaroni!

Other possibilities include crisp white wines with plenty of focus and acidity. The regions of Rueda and Galicia have plenty from which to choose. Look for steel-fermented whites such as the 2004 Blanco Nieva Verdejo from Rueda, full of grapefruit and restrained miner-

ality, or the elegant 2004 Pazo de Señoráns from Rias Baixas. Its Albariño fruit, aged on the lees, presents floral aromas and subtle white peach flavors, lending elegance and complexity to an otherwise indulgent meal.

Let's now move to the West Indian table. A distinctive dish such as ackee and salt fish (also known as Jamaica's National Dish) is not usually thought of in the sphere of wine. But serve that dish at an ethnically-inspired brunch in a beautiful brownstone in the swanky Sugar Hill area of Harlem, and wine becomes a must! Ackee is a savory fruit which is boiled and then simmered with salted cod (*bacalao*), vegetables and hot peppers. Considered a delicacy by many, cooked ackee has the consistency and look of scrambled eggs. It is enjoyed by many at breakfast or as an entrée throughout Jamaica. Since *bacalao* is the province of the Basque in Spain, a natural pairing for the ackee and salt fish is a light, zesty Txakoli from the Basque country. A delightful one is the 2004 Ameztoi Getariako Txakolina. The little bit of spritz provides a refreshing balance to the dish's salt and spice. Wow your guests by pouring in the traditional Basque manner...high above the simple glass tumblers!

Within Harlem, an extensive district stretching from 96th to 155th Street, exist several smaller neighborhoods. One of these is El Barrio, or East Harlem, home to many Spanish-speaking residents from Latin America, the Caribbean. Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and several more homelands are represented. A perfect place to enjoy traditional Puerto Rican cuisine is La Fonda Boricua on East 106th Street. Order *bistec encebollado* (onion steak) with fried plantains to go, and dig in with a soothing, juicy red with enough sweet tannins to stand up to the robust flavor of onions. My pairing suggestion is a modern Rioja like the 1999 Barón de Oña Reserva, a wine with earthy black currant fruit and firm tannins; or the 2004 Pago de los Capellanes Ribera del Duero Joven packed with bright black cherries and tobacco.

Appreciably, the African community provides an important culinary touchstone for all of the others in Harlem. For so many of the ingredients and flavors actually migrated directly from Africa to various outposts in the New World as a result of the slave trade. *Mafé*, a classic Senegalese dish seen on several Harlem menus, is a stew made with peanut (called groundnut in Africa) and a meat such as lamb, beef or chicken, traditionally served with white rice. A chicken *mafé* is an easy and satisfying one-pot meal to prepare at home and its flavors pair well with either white or red wine. For a white, I suggest a wine with similar nutty and aromatic flavors such as 2004 Gaba do Xil Godello by star winemaker Telmo Rodríguez. If one is craving a red, try the 2004 Dominio De Tares Mencía with the funky label. It offers dense, chewy fruit in spades. Other great matches would be the 2005 Cabernet Rosado from Enate in Somontano, the bone-dry perfumed Gewurztraminer from the same winery, or heck, even a dry Amontillado from Jerez! It seems that with groundnut stew, the sky's the limit!

Today, Harlem is the crossroads for many different cultures and peoples. In this way, it offers a singular opportunity to unite various culinary experiences. Wine does not trace its origins to the African continent, and yet it is clear that foods of the African diaspora can be elevated by wine, and the converse is true as well. Spanish wines are unquestionably up to the task of matching with these rich, full-flavored dishes to create a new, extraordinary dining experience....perhaps one that few anticipated. Salud!

Lee Campbell is a New York-based certified sommelier, and the manager of Harlem Vintage, a new wine store in Harlem committed to artisanal, estate-produced wines. She is the winner of two wine scholarships awarded in 2004 by Women Chefs and Restaurateurs, and the International Association of Culinary Professionals, and has extensive experience in several top restaurants and wine stores in Manhattan.



A wine tasting at Harlem Vintage.



Daniel Olivella, chef and sommelier

About the author:

Jordan Mackay has written about wine for *Wine and Spirits*, *Food and Wine*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He is the wine and spirits editor of the metropolitan magazine *7x7* in San Francisco, where he lives.

B44: Daniel Olivella speaks out on wine, food and San Francisco.

B44 was opened by chef Daniel Olivella in November, 1999. It's a stylish little Catalan bistro on San Francisco's Belden Place, a bustling little pedestrian alley packed tightly with competing European-style sidewalk cafés. The only Spanish restaurant on the block, B44 has warm reddish glow inside and peppy jazz playing on the stereo. I had to wait a few moments for Daniel, as he's tasting wine with a rep. Not that I mind, as it's always nice to see a chef who knows wine and makes his own list.

Jordan: What's your background in food and wine?

Daniel Olivella: I was born in the winegrowing region of Spain called Penedés, more precisely, in the capital, Vilafranca. I grew up on the outskirts of the city amongst the vineyards, so I've been pretty much aware about wine since I was born. Every week my dad went to the wine co-op and bought about 4 gallons of red wine for the family. He reminds me that the first time I got drunk with wine, I was not even a year old. I really was exposed to good wines when I first moved to the US when I was 17. My uncle had a high-end Spanish restaurant in Chicago and he had been a sommelier in France for many years. I had all the old classic wines, the Tondonias, the Cvnes, Marqués de Murrieta, etc.

Jordan: So, what was the inspiration behind B44?

Daniel Olivella: In 1989 or 1990 I moved to San Francisco to become a chef. I worked at many places, but always with the idea to open a Spanish restaurant. To show people that there is more to Spain than just tapas and sangría.

Jordan: Lots of people today specialize in either wine or food. It's much more rare to find someone who does both so well for his restaurant. Do you look differently at wine than you do at food?

Daniel Olivella: No, I see them together. I am surprised when I see small restaurants with general managers and sommeliers and all sorts of people on the payroll. I wonder, How do they do it? For me the only way for me to stay open is to stay on top of everything. Yesterday, I waited tables. Two days a week I am a waiter, just to see what goes on.

Jordan: What was the Spanish food scene like in San Francisco in 1999 when you opened?

Daniel Olivella: There wasn't one, really. It's still a long shot to establish yourself with food that's not French or Italian. But when I see what's happened

in the last ten years for Spanish food and wine, it's amazing. Nowadays you can go to many of the best high end restaurants and if there are 400 wines on the list, 20 or 30 will be from Spain. Ten years ago that never happened. When I first opened B44, we had 32 wines and I bought everything available. Now we have 150 to 160 wines and it would be more if I had the storage. Customers too: People now know what Albariño is and about Rioja and Ribera del Duero and Priorat. Today you can go to Whole Foods and find Manchego and Idiazábal.

Jordan: Do you have to educate your customers about Spanish wine?

Daniel Olivella: Yes. When we first opened, people would ask "Where is the sangría?" I would say, "We have sangría but we make it to order." Because for me in Spain the sangría is for the tourists in the summer.

Yesterday I had a party of 15 people. The first thing they did was turn to the last page of the wine list, which is where I have my Californian wines — we only have about 9 or 10 of them — and they wanted a pinot noir. I said to them, "You're in a Spanish restaurant, why don't you try a Spanish wine?" They said to bring whatever I wanted. I ended up selling that party 6 or 7 bottles of Emilio Moro from Ribera del Duero, and they loved it.

Jordan: There's been an explosion of exotic and fascinating Spanish wines over the last few years. What are the most interesting discoveries you've made?

Daniel Olivella: I try to go out of my way to find wines from the little known regions. It's not so hard to find great wines from Rioja or Ribera del Duero, but it's much harder to find a wine from Castilla-La Mancha or Campo de Borja or Bierzo. That's where the challenge is. I just found a wine from a little region near Valencia made with Bobal and a little Cabernet Sauvignon. I'm excited when I find something like that. Now I'm trying to find this grape I heard of from the Penedés region that's almost extinct, and they're trying to bring it back. For me a Cabernet from Penedés might be good, but it's not what I'm looking for. I like the indigenous grapes. From Jumilla you've got to find Monastrell, in Priorat, you've got to look for Garnacha. That's the pride of being Spanish, when you go to a region and find a grapevine that has survived for 100 years without anyone giving it anything and it's still alive and they're making wine from it.

Jordan: Your wine list is well balanced between modern and traditional wines, but your



CUINA CATALANA



© Jose Guerra

menu seems to be pretty traditional. Have you kept up with the new Spanish cooking?

Daniel Olivella: I have not really kept up with it. It's not my thing. For me the tendency in Spanish food is that it's too complicated. I go to Spain in the summer and it's hard to find a good regional restaurant. You go to Barcelona and all you find is 80-euro tasting menus. I get more of a kick when I go to a little town and go to a great fisherman's restaurant with fresh fish.

Jordan: When you're buying wine for the restaurant what are you looking for? Compatibility with your food? A certain niche?

Daniel Olivella: I actually don't think too much about it. If I like it, I buy it. I know that because I like it, it will go with my food. I also often get everyone on the staff to taste the wine and get their opinions.

Jordan: Last question, and I know it's a tough one. If you had to choose one wine

off your list paired with one dish off your menu for the rest of your life, what would they be?

Daniel Olivella: No, that's an easy question. I would have arroz negro—the squid ink paella—with Remírez de Ganuza Reserva, from the Rioja region. There's nothing better than that match.

B44 is located at 44 Belden Place, San Francisco. Tel: 415.986.6287
Website: www.b44sf.com





Spain Goes Biodynamic: A More Natural Approach to Making Wines

Four Spanish wineries were represented at the third American tasting "Return to Terroir" Renaissance des Appellations, that took place on March 2, 2006 at the Altman Building in New York City. This event was dedicated to showing wines from different countries and wine regions that are produced according to biodynamic practices, as first taught by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. These principles encourage natural practices in the vineyards and the cellar. The four Spanish companies were Albet i Noya, Compañía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez, Dominio de Pingus and Mas Estela, featuring wines from the following DOs: Penedés, Rioja, Ribera del Duero, and Empordà-Costa Brava.

Marqués de Griñón—Pagos de Familia Selects New Importer

Moët Hennessy USA has been selected as the sole importer in the U.S. for the high end wines produced by the Marqués de Griñón, Carlos Falco, which comprises wines such as: Svmma Varietalis, Emeritvs, Dominio de Valdepusa Syrah, Dominio de Valdepusa Cabernet Sauvignon and Dominio de Valdepusa Petit Verdot. All of them are produced in the D.O. Pago Dominio de Valdepusa. Moët Hennessy USA distributes its products in all 50 states. For more information visit www.mhusa.com.



Jaleo Opens In-Restaurant Wine Shop

Jaleo Crystal City, located in Arlington, Virginia, unveiled its in-restaurant wine shop in December, 2005. Antoni Yelamos, a partner in the restaurant and the company's director of operations, selected the 150-plus wines from the restaurant's award-winning wine list, with an emphasis on rare wines from Spain. Customers may purchase wine from the shop to accompany their meal at the restaurant (with a corkage fee) or to take home. Yelamos aims to fully represent the diversity of regions and terroirs of Spain in this shop. There are two additional Jaleo restaurants, one in Washington, D.C. and the other in Bethesda, MD. The Jaleo wine shop and restaurant are located at 2250A Crystal City, Arlington, VA, Tel: 703-413-8181.

Alegría Announces New Importer ~ Opici Import Co.

Alegría, The New Spanish Wine Group, announced recently that it has appointed Opici Import Co. as its national importer. In this group are several leading brands, including Bajoz, Casa de la Ermita, Mas Igneus, Albet i Noya, and 1707, have been in the market for nearly 3 years. For further information, contact Opici Import Co. at 201-689-3256.

Intervin

From March 6-10, Barcelona was awash in wine as some 1,200 exhibitors and 150,000 professionals descended upon the Catalan capital for Intervin, which occupied two huge pavilions at Alimentaria, Spain's biggest food and wine fair. The exhibits ranged from small producers such as Bernat Oller from Cataluña's Pla de Bagés, to larger producers such as Julián Chivite (Navarra), Bodegas Pérez Pascuas (Ribera del Duero, Marqués de Riscal (La Rioja) and Agustí Torello Mata (Cava). There was something for everyone with the energy to cover the huge pavilions. American importers (Eric Solomon of European Wine Cellars, Aurelio Cabestrero of Grapes of Spain and Stephen Metzler of Classical Wines, among many others) were seen prowling the aisles, greeting the wineries they represent and on the lookout for interesting new ones. ~Gerry Dawes

Great Match Fall Tastings

Wines from Spain will once again sponsor its Great Match series of wine tastings this fall. For information on the series visit www.greatmatch.org.

Martín Códax Releases New Red from Bierzo

Bodegas Martín Códax, renowned producer of Albariño wines, has released a new red wine from the D.O. Bierzo called Cuatro Pasos (Four Steps). It takes its name from the four steps necessary to produce an excellent wine: choosing the best land, caring for the vine, suitable climate and careful winemaking. Made from 100% mencia grapes from over 80-year old vines, Cuatro Pasos is distributed by European Cellars. 704-358-1565.



Kobrand to include Four Spanish Producers

Further developing its quality driven portfolio, Kobrand invested years researching many of Spain's top winemakers and is proud to announce it is now representing: Abadia Retuerta, Bodega Don Oegario, Bodegas RODA, and Bodegas Julián Chivite. For additional information, please visit www.kobrandwine.com or call 212-490-9300.

Spanish Wine Cellar Event Set for April

A showcase event for Spanish wineries and food producers is scheduled for April 25, from 1-6 pm, at the Puck Building in New York City. Known as the Spanish Wine Cellar & Pantry, this trade and media only event provides the opportunity for buyers and sellers to meet and discuss the products and their potential in the US market. The featured wine producers come from these wine regions: Bierzo, Campo de Borja, Cariñena, Cava, Cigales, Empordà-Costa Brava, Jerez, Jumilla, La Mancha, Montilla-Moriles, Penedés, Rias Baixas, Ribeiro, Ribera del Duero, Rioja, Rueda and Toro. To confirm your complimentary invitation, call 718-403-0097. For information visit www.spanishwinecellar.com.

Top Spanish Chefs at the International Culinary Center

The French Culinary Center is partnering with Wines and Foods from Spain for their first annual gastronomy summit to launch The International Culinary Center. The Summit, scheduled for October 12-14, 2006, will celebrate world-renowned, innovative Spanish chefs Ferran Adrià, Juan Mari Arzak and Martín Beresategui. The Summit starts with a gala dinner to benefit The James Beard Foundation, follows with an exclusive merging of top Spanish and American chefs and elite American media, and concludes with a festival open to the public. For further information call 646-254-7549 or email mmiller@frenchculinary.com.



From left, Peter Sisseck, Steve Olson, and Alvaro Palacios. © ICEX



Spain at Culinary Institute's Worlds of Flavor Conference

From November 2-4, 2006, the Culinary Institute of America is planning to stage the largest and most comprehensive conference ever held in the U.S. on Spanish food and wine. The CIA's annual Worlds of Flavor International Conference & Festival is widely acknowledged as America's premier forum on world cuisines and culinary flavor trends for foodservice, beverage and hospitality industry professionals. Titled "Spain and the World Table: Regional Traditions, Invention and Exchange," the conference will be chaired by José Andrés, renowned chef-owner of Jaleo restaurants, and cookbook author. For further information and registration, visit www.prochefs.com/WOF2006.

Most Popular Spanish Wines

"Spain continues to be on a roll," with good quality/value ratio, confirms the April 2006 issue of *Wine & Spirits* magazine. According to their 17th annual restaurant poll, some of the most popular brands are: Marqués de Cáceres Gran Reserva and Crianza, Marqués de Riscal Reserva, Muga Reserva, Sierra Cantabria Colección Privada and Crianza, Torres Gran Coronas, Bodegas Nekeas Vega Sindoa, Vina Mayor Reserva and Crianza, Bodegas Montecillo Reserva and Crianza, and El Coto de Rioja Reserva. ~ *Silvina Guinle*

Two Icons of Spanish Winemaking Showcase Rare Wines in New York City

Alvaro Palacios and Peter Sisseck, two dynamic winemakers from Spain whose wines have reached cult status and are coveted by collectors around the world, appeared in NYC on March 28 at Daniel restaurant, a landmark of fine cuisine, to offer a seminar and lunch for the press and selected trade. Drawing on the prestige of their signature wines, the two led an informative tasting, elaborating on their approach to winemaking, their commitment to the grapes and terroir of their regions, and new projects recently undertaken in Bierzo, Rioja, and

Sardón del Duero. Moderated by Steve Olson, the seminar included a tasting of two vintages of their signature wines, L'Ermita from Palacios and Pingus, produced by Sisseck. Palacios and Sisseck represent the new generation of winemakers, with their integrity, passion, dedication and commitment to excellence. This event marked the second in a tasting series launched in March 2005 by Wines from Spain. For a detailed calendar of Wines from Spain events, and for information on Spanish wines, visit www.winesfromspainusa.com.



S Rated: Recent Ratings of Top Spanish Wines

Over 100 Spanish wines received ratings of 90 and above by Tom Matthews of the *Wine Spectator* in recent issues. These superb wines, from regions all over Spain, are produced by both long-established and modern bodegas. Below is a listing of the top 12 of these wines. For the full listing please visit www.winesfromspainnews.com.

Wine	D.O.	Rating
Numanthia Termes Termanthia 2002	D.O. Toro	96
Bodegas Sierra Cantabria Amancio 2001	D.O.C. Rioja	96
Vega Sicilia Unico Gran Reserva 1994	D.O. Ribera del Duero	96
Bodegas Lan Edición Limitada 2002	D.O.C. Rioja	95
Viñedos de Párganos El Puntido 2001	D.O.C. Rioja	95
Bodegas Mauro Terreus Pago de Cueva Baja 2001	V.T. De Castilla	94
Campo Eliseo 2002	D.O. Toro	94
Bodegas Lan Culmen Reserva 2001	D.O.C. Rioja	94
Alvaro Palacios Finca Dofi 2003	D.O.C. Priorat	94
Vall Llach 2003	D.O.C. Priorat	94
Dominio de Tares Bembibre 2003	D.O. Bierzo	94
Joan Simó Les Eres Vinyes Velles 2003	D.O.C. Priorat	94



POSTMARK: EMPORDÀ-COSTA BRAVA

By Helio San Miguel

After driving all the way from Madrid, I arrived at the Port de la Selva after midnight. I took the narrow, steep dirt road to the Mas Estela winery, where I was going to stay, to find just a gas lamp on the floor awaiting me outside. In the morning, when I opened the window, rows of vines and the rugged Empordà terrain lay in front of me. I took a walk among the vineyards, and in the distance the sea beckoned. The owners of Mas Estela, Diego Soto, an Andalusian born, French trained, Catalanian grafted engineer, incapable of speaking a single sentence in just one language, and his lovely wife Nuria Dalmau greeted and invited us for dinner. When I said that we had a reservation at El Bulli for that night, he reminded me that at El Bulli you don't go to just eat. You go to expand your mind. These two scenes embody the appeal of the extremely beautiful Empordà-Costa Brava region: unspoiled rural charm in perfect harmony with world-class sophistication.

Who would have thought, a decade ago, this remote corner of Spain was destined to become the epicenter of the first culinary revolution of the 21st century, the "Alta Cocina Española." But long before this revolution, Costa Brava, enveloped between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean sea, blessed with a benign climate but whipped by the fierce Tramontana wind, has always been a precious destination. Over 2,000 years ago, the Greeks settled in Roses. The Romans followed, and founded the town of Ampuries, from which the region takes its name, and made wine. It was wisely named "Empordà-Costa Brava," referring both to the mountainous wine area and the coast. Today this region moves forward inspired by the success of neighboring Priorat. It has similar traditional varieties (Garnacha and Cariñena), slate subsoil, and

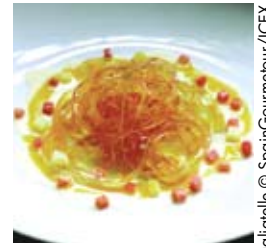
climate, but its personality is split between those who favor tradition (Mas Estela, Masía Carreras), and those who make wine with international varieties like Cabernet and Syrah (Castillo de Perelada, Masía Serra, Oliver Conti).

Because of its long, rich history and a privileged location, the region is dotted with monuments, castles, churches, museums, monasteries, and stunning views; with small towns like Girona, charming medieval villages like Perelada, art centers like Figueres, and beautiful fishing villages like Cadaqués. A long coastline sprinkled with seaside resorts and secluded calas (small rocky beaches), first rate cuisine, and an emergent wine appellation, make this a top travel destination that will not leave you unmoved.

NOT TO MISS:

A few of the many wonderful destinations are:

- Cadaqués: the most picturesque seaside town.
- Figueres: medieval fortress, renowned Dalí Museum.
- Girona: capital of the province. Beautiful old medieval quarter with a Jewish section. Worth staying overnight.
- Perelada: Lovely, well-preserved medieval town with churches, cloisters, and a castle that is home to Castillo de Perelada, a large, family owned winery, newly committed to quality wine. If you have extra time it's worth visiting their new Finca Garbet, whose vines, planted on steep terraces, descend almost into the Mediterranean. They also own the Casino, Wine Museum, and Glass Museum, the largest in Spain, and organize the summer Performing Arts Festival.
- Sant Pere de Rodes: at almost 2,000 ft. stands this 10th century monastery. Raimón Pere de Rodes, a 12th century monk, wrote about winemaking here. Great views and a modern but respectful restoration.



WHERE TO EAT:
EL BULLI: Ferran Adrià's fabled restaurant, and the cradle of the current revolution in Spain's cuisine. Today, simply put, the most sought after table in the world. Set the phone on redial the minute they start taking reservations, and if you get in plan your trip around it. Despite the hype, you'll hardly be disappointed: creative and delicious dishes beyond belief in a traditional setting, and at quite moderate prices. Open only from April to October.
EL CELLER DE CAN ROCA: with two Michelin stars, a worthy rival to its more famous neighbor. Refined, innovative food with traditional roots. One of the best wine lists in the country. Moving soon to a new location.



WHERE TO STAY:

There is no shortage of hotels in Girona, Figueres, and along the coast, but let's single out two special choices:
PARADOR DE AIGUABLAVA: close to Begur, this luxurious parador emerges from a forest and overlooks the Mediterranean.
www.paradores-spain.com.
MAS ESTELA: Nuria and Diego, the charming couple that owns this winery in Selva del Mar, rent the guesthouse attached to it. Hard to find, but worth the trip, especially for wine enthusiasts. Tel: +34-972-126-176, or masestela@hotmail.com.

Helio San Miguel is a Madrid born, New York based wine and food writer and educator.



Glorious Taste



Bright. Intense. Lingering and persistent. Ample and round. 100% Rías Baixas Albariño.

From a mild and humid clima. From ideal terroir.

Classical Galician gem. It tastes glorious. Divine.

Martín Códax

It's more than a wine, it's a Galician culture.

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DENOMINACIÓN DE ORÍGEN