

Welcome to our third edition of our Catavino Newsletter! Over the past two months, we've committed ourselves solely to the topic of Rioja, exploring everything from their food culture to their diverse styles of wine. Although to be honest, we did have some large detours covering an international food and wine fair in Barcelona called, Alimentaria; were judges at Blue Wine Magazine's Wine Fair called, Essencia do Vinho; and were covering Pancho Campo's two day conference on how climate change is affecting wine. Add this to the everyday details of running a business with only two of us, and you can imagine how creative and motivated we've been. That said, we're ecstatic to finally get this out to you.



So what did we learn from our two months dedicated to the emblematic region of Rioja? To be honest, our trip was an eye opener. Having had several poor experiences with Rioja wines in the past, we walked into this project a little skittish, fearful that what it would be a repeat of uninteresting and/or over-oaked wines. However, we're happy to report that we now have a newfound appreciation for this historic beverage. Granted, we still have issues with the fact that 95% of all restaurants in Spain choose La Rioja as their only regional wine, but aside from this, we are excited that Rioja wine has worked its way up on our list of wines we adore.

These past months, we've tasted several wines that we've agreed were absolutely remarkable; while at the same time, tasted a fair amount of mediocre wines that really suffered from a different kind of Riojaitis. What this means is that there were some wines that relied on their name more than they focused on quality. Fortunately, these were the exception and not the rule. We also stumbled across a few new wineries producing some incredible wines, as well as fantastic wines ranging from \$10 treats all the way to \$50 treasures. In short, the diversity of Rioja wines in both style and price is exceptional, and should be absolutely be explored.

New Format

This month, we're shaking it up a bit and trying something new, as a result of the enormous amount of information we'd acquired over the past eight weeks. Having visited 11 bodegas, tasted countless wines and written dozens of stories on everything from the traditional fried pig's ears to pacharan, we were looking at a 50 page pdf, and who wants to download that?! So instead, we created an interactive, living archive at www.catavino.net/rioja. Take a peak and then come back.

Ok, your back? What did you think? It's still a bit rough, but it's our first try, and a project we intend on repeating for all of our future regional reports. Each region/area of focus will receive its own micro site. Well, "micro" might not be completely accurate, but it is a site and is intended to expand as we continually add more tasting notes, bodega profiles and wineries. In this way, it will be a living record of our experiences with Rioja. Additionally, every story written about Rioja on Catavino.net will have a link on Catavino.net/rioja so that you continually have current reference to articles, news and tasting notes.

So why keep the newsletter? Well, we have a goal of providing you with a buying guide for the regions we cover. While, Catavino.net/rioja will list every wine we tasted with full notes, the newsletter will only offer up the wines that we think you *should* try or *must* try. As we get better at this, we'll also give some suggestions on what to pair with the wines, as well as the occasional tidbit of fun advice on the region as a whole. We hope you like it, and if you have a suggestion or a comment, as always, feel free to email us at: comments@catavino.net



Recipe for Pacharán

As promised in our article about the traditional La Rioja liqueur, Pacharán, we've provided a recipe you can make in your own home. However, our only stipulation is that you please let us know how it turned out!

Ingredients for a one liter bottle:

3 / 4 of a kilo of sloe berries.

Anise brandy or any white brandy.

40 grams of sugar.

3 coffee beans

1 vanilla bean

Preparation

Wash the sloe berries and place them into a wide neck bottle. Fill the bottle with your hard liqueur of choice. If you desire a liqueur with a touch of sweetness, add sugar. Drop in the coffee and vanilla beans, cover the bottle and leave in a dark, cool place for at least three months. Other ingredients you can add include chamomile or a cinnamon stick.

Buying Guide

This month, we've tasted over 100 wines from Rioja from over 30 bodegas. After much thought and consideration, we've selected a few that deserve to be included in this newsletter. These are wines that we not only felt were the best of the bunch, but also wines that we seriously enjoyed. All of these wines have full tasting notes for them at: www.catavino.net/rioja and with time, we'll be adding both new wines and new vintages. We hope that our Rioja archive continues to grow for many years to come, and as always, if you have any questions, please let us know at: comments@catavino.net

Wines we think **SHOULD NOT** be missed

- ★★2000 Miguel Merino Reserva
- ★★2000 Marqués de Riscal Rioja Gran Reserva
- ★★2006 Alma de Tobia Rosado
- ★★1999 Baron de Ona Reserva
- ★★2000 Prado Enea Gran Reserva, Bodegas Muga

Wines that are worth checking out

- ★2004 Roda I Reserva
- ★2004 Roda
- ★2002 Miguel Merino Unnum
- ★2006 Alma de Tobia Blanco
- ★2003 Marqués de Riscal Rioja Reserva
- ★1998 La Rioja Alta Vina Arana Reserva
- ★1997 Vina Tondonia Rose, Bodegas Lopez de Heredia
- ★2002 Ondalan Reserva
- ★1995 La Rioja Alta Gran Reserva 904
- ★2000 Vina Bosconia Reserva, Lopez de Heredia
- ★2005 MC, Bodegas Marques de Caceres
- ★2004 Oscar Tobia Tinto
- ★2005 Torre Muga Reserva
- ★1999 Vina Tondonia Reserva, Bodegas Lopes de Heredia
- ★2001 Carlos Serres Onamastica
- ★2002 Contino Reserva
- ★2003 Conde de Valdemar Reserva
- ★2005 La Dama, Bodegas Aldonia
- ★2004 Bodegas Aldonia
- ★2001 Dinastia Vivanco Reserva
- ★2004 Alma de Tobia Tinto
- ★2001 Lan Reserva
- ★2004 Muga Reserva
- ★2003 Seleccion Especial, Bodegas Muga
- ★1989 Vina Tondonia Reserva Blanco, Bodegas Lopez de Heredia
- ★2003 Luis Alegre Reserva
- ★2002 Gaudim Gran Reserva, Bodegas Marques de Caceres

Wines that we enjoyed – \$/€ = Great values

2001 Vina Lanciano, Bodegas Lan
2004 Muga Tinto
1998 Monte Real Gran Reserva, Bodegas Riojanas
1998 Marques de Arienzo Gran Reserva
2003 Campo Viejo Reserva
2005 Inspiracion, Bodegas Valdemar
\$/€ 2004 Dinastia Vivanco Crianza
2000 La Rioja Alta Vina Ardanza Reserva
\$/€ 2004 Lan Crianza
\$/€ 2004 Muga Rosado
2005 Luis Alegre Crianza
2001 Marques de Arienzo Reserva Especial
2003 Medrano-Irazu Reserva
2005 Tobia Tinto
\$/€ 2003 Oscar Tobia Blanco
2001 La Rioja Alta Vina Alberdi
2004 La Orbe, Bodegas Martinez Laorden
\$/€ 2004 Monte Real Crianza, Bodegas Riojanas
2002 Ysios Reserva
2005 Ondalan Crianza
2003 Ruiz de Vinaspre
\$/€ 2007 Conde de Valdemar Rosado
2001 Vina Albina Reserva, Bodegas Riojanas
2005 Artacho Joven, Bodegas Riojanas
2001 Campo Viejo Gran Reserva
2005 Medrano-Irazu Crianza
2004 Pontac, Bodegas Luis Alegre
2002 Marques de Arienzo Reserva

Final Note

As always we thank you for your support in making Catavino what it is today. Without you, none of this would be possible. From our trips throughout La Rioja to your generous comments on our site, we thank you and intend on making future regional reports equally as comprehensive. However, if there are aspects of this report that you feel are missing, or need further clarification, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Additionally, if you've found this newsletter interesting, a small donation would be very much appreciated. This project is time consuming, but we honestly feel that it is worthy addition to everything else we provide on Catavino.net.

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Catavino Tasting Policy

- Catavino only recommends wines that we stand behind. Wines we think you should taste. Therefore, rather than using the purple dot or numerical system, we've changed to a "recommended" system
- If a full note is on our site, it is considered "Recommended".
- In special cases, we'll include notes that state, "Seek this wine out" or "Exceptional". These indications are only used when a wine goes above and beyond our expectations for its style.
- From time to time, we'll include notes on wines that are "interesting" but not really worth seeking out. In these cases, the wines will have a reason to be mentioned, either because they are made from a "lost grape variety" or fit a "unique style".
- Once a month, we typically participate in Wine Blog Wednesday, and will always include our tasting note regardless if we enjoyed the wine. However, we'll always be clear in our review if we recommend this wine.
- Wines we rate on Social Tasting Note sites like Addega and Snooth WILL NOT always be recommended on Catavino. For our personal growth, we attempt to take notes on every wine we try, using these sites for recording our tasting history. Therefore, we can always include the bad and the good. We believe that by freely sharing our notes and not charging for them we are in the end helping to grow the amount of information on the web about Iberian wines.
- **Special note for retailers** – We encourage you to use our notes for your shelf talkers and other promotional display. We only ask that you credit Catavino.net and when possible let us know you are using our notes, by sending us an email or a picture!

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