

# WINE News

We're always working for new ways to help you find the best wines available right now at K&L. This week, we visit one of our favorite value regions: Spain!



## MAY 20, 2013 FEATURES

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## Spanish Wine: Value and Quality Go Hand-in-Hand

by Joe Manekin

For this edition of our new online newsletter, we're focusing on the wines that I love and am responsible for buying here at K&L: the wines of Spain. Our Spanish sales have never been stronger, no doubt due to the fact that Spain continues to produce an abundance of terrific, high quality, and more importantly, fairly priced wines. In addition to all the Spanish value emails of late (no doubt continuing to flood your inboxes!) we have hit the road for the past three years trying to stretch your dollar, seeking out producers whose wines we think are great and importing them directly as DI's. We began in Rioja, where in his article my colleague Mike Barber focuses his attention on Crianza wines—the workhorse wines of Rioja which offer great insight into a bodega's terroir and house style.

One of Rioja's strengths is that they age the wine for you—oftentimes up to five years or longer prior to releasing it for sale. Focusing on these beautifully aged Reserva wines, our fearless leader and main wine buyer Clyde Beffa will be reviewing a mini-horizontal of a legendary Rioja vintage, 2001, as well as a lovely 1997 Reserva (cementing K&L's reputation as "King of the underdog vintage!")

In my article, I will continue to explore Rioja, a region which was the logical starting point for our Spanish direct import program. We will explore a few wines from the excellent 2005 vintage, as well as talk Txakoli featuring the lovely rosé from our newest DI property, Zudugarai.

The "weak Spanish economy equals great values" narrative is true, if a bit tired and somewhat oversimplified. The greater truth is that Spain has been producing vast quantities of solid values for nearly 20 years. However, Spain's wine landscape is also full of smaller scaled, passionate vigneron, a new generation looking to age old techniques picked up from as diverse a range of influences as Marcel Lapierre (Beaujolais pioneer), Bartolo Mascarello (the famed über-traditionalist Barolo producer), JL Chave and Chateau Rayas—all have been mentioned to me as influences amongst a random sampling of some of my favorite winemakers. Representing the smaller scale, new generation of wineries taking off in Spain, my man Illya Haase in our Hollywood store will be reviewing some delicious red wines from near the capital of Madrid.

To kick things off, here are three of my current faves that represent the value and diversity of wine in Spain right now.

**2012 Zudugarai "Amats" Getariako Txakolina (\$12.99)** We're stoked on our brand new DI Txakoli! From the green rolling hills outside of San Sebastian in northern Spain's Pais Vasco comes this delicious, bright, bone dry, slightly effervescent Basque specialty. It's summer in a glass. Load up, this goes down very quickly! 10.5% ABV.

**2008 Mas Codina Cava Brut Reserva (\$12.99)** Few producers of cava can brag about using all estate grown fruit; Mas Codina is one of them. They also age their wines on the lees for at least 24 months and disgorge by hand. This is my favorite Cava in the store for the money; you will love it.

**2004 Miguel Merino Gran Reserva Rioja\* (\$39.99)** (92 points WA and 91 points ST) This Gran Reserva is from some of Miguel's oldest Tempranillo and Graciano vines, planted in two Briones vineyards in 1931 and 1946. It is elegant, generous and a precociously delicious treat for now, or over the next 15 years.

## Spain's Old & Rare Gems

by Clyde Beffa Jr.



Usually I am extolling the virtues of old and rare Bordeaux, but today I am writing on some outstanding old and rare Spanish wines. You may not know it, but we sell a lot of old and rare Spanish wine. (Spain vies with Burgundy for number three on the list of rarities, just behind old Bordeaux and California wines.) Spanish wines, for the most part, age quite well, but until recently (maybe the last 15 years or so) it was hard to find aged Spanish wine. Most of their wines were drunk young.

I recently enjoyed three outstanding aged reds from Spain. The first was the **2001 Lopez de Heredia "Viña Tondonia" Reserva Rioja (\$39.99)** (95 points WA, 92 ST, and 90 WS) Lopez de Heredia has been producing and selling older reds and whites for quite a while, holding the wines in their cellars and releasing them already aged. They are usually far less expensive than old Bordeaux or California Cabernet. Garnet in color, with sweet aromas of dried fruits, excellent structure and some chocolate nuances on the palate, this is quite nice and a great value, especially considering *Wine Advocate* gave it 95 points! The **2001 Marques de Legarda Gran Reserva Rioja\* (\$29.99)** came next, a bit lighter, but spicier on the nose and palate. From the oldest bodega in Rioja, this

is a truly elegant wine and totally delicious right now. A few nights later, I opened the **1997 Bodegas Las Orcas Solar de Randez Reserva Rioja (\$29.99)**. Loved it! The wine showed fabulously, reminding me a lot of the 1997 Château Lanessian from Bordeaux. Sweet and soft on the palate, with no hard edges, just ripe fruit flavors and a lingering finish. A real eye-opener, and a steal for the price. Buy a case at least!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention one of the most important wines in the K&L portfolio: the **2001 La Rioja Alta "Viña Ardanza" Reserva Especial Rioja (\$29.99)** (93 points WA and 92 ST) In 2012, this was one of the top 25 wines sold by K&L in terms of volume. I have drunk it several times, and I am always amazed by how good it is. La Rioja Alta produces some of the very finest wines in the region, including the "Viña Arana" Reserva, "904" Gran Reserva and "890" Gran Reserva, but the "Ardanza" is the one I've always preferred. In the very best vintages, they will designate it "Reserva Especial," making 2001 even more special since the designation occurred only twice before, in 1964 and 1973. This is classic Rioja, consistent, elegant, and terrifically balanced.

If these delicious, well-priced Tempranillo-based wines are any indication, it's no wonder we sell so much from this category. They are priced fairly and much less than their counterparts from Bordeaux, California and Burgundy. Try some of their excellent older whites as well.

## Incredible Rioja Values

by Mike Barber

Rioja is one of the oldest and most cherished winemaking regions of Spain. The first registered DOC of the country, its winemaking history dates back to the 800s. To the north, the Cantabrian mountains protect Rioja from the harsh winds typical of northern Spain, and its clay soils are rich in limestone, chalk, and iron. All of these factors contribute to a fertile climate for growing quality grapes, and the Tempranillos of Rioja are some of the most legendary of all Spanish red wines. At their best they are medium-bodied, spicy wines of great versatility, perfect with everything from paella to grilled pork, and have great potential for long term aging.

Growing international popularity has made the slower style of the old bodegas less fashionable, and many new wineries have given up on used American oak and long bottle age in favor of more modern, new-world inspired winemaking techniques. Today Rioja has a wide variety of styles that appeal to all sorts of different consumer tastes, and many wines from this world-class region are still very affordable! We offer several high quality Crianzas (red wines aged at least 2 years, with at least 6 months in barrel) that cost less than \$20!

Here are four great examples, all vastly different styles from four very different bodegas. First, the **2008 Bodegas Puelles Crianza (\$15.99)**. Based in the Rioja Alta town of Abalos, Jesús Puelles makes balanced but supple wines in a rich, new world style. This decadent Tempranillo is a more modern expression of Rioja, full of Indian spice flavors, lush

red berry fruits, and edgy tannins. The **2006 Bodegas Casa Juan Señor de Lesmos Crianza (\$12.99)** speaks more of the old style. A new bodega with Old World sensibilities, Lesmos crafts wines with vibrant fruit but lighter and more elegant flavors. They prefer less extraction for their wines and age them a little longer than most before release. This elegant Crianza has lean cherry and vanilla flavors, and an earthy, spicy finish. Miguel Merino, who refers to his style as "updated classic," also blends modern and classic styles. The **2009 Miguel Merino 'Viña Jovenes' Crianza (\$19.99)**, made from younger, fifteen-year-old vines from his estate vineyards in Briones, is intense, ruby red, and packed with supple cherry flavors and light pepper spice.

The oldest winery in Rioja, Marques de Legarda is also among the oldest operating wineries in the world, with a history of viticulture dating to the 14th century. The **2008 Marques de Legarda Crianza Rioja (\$14.99)** (91 points WA) is a lightly tannic Crianza with a gamey, peppery nose that gives way to more classic Rioja flavors of plum, chili spice, and the wet vanilla taste of used American Oak. It's a wonderful wine with many layers of dark and soft flavors that gracefully tell the tale of this most ancient and famous of all Spanish wine regions.



# A Trip to Spain from the Comfort of Your Own Palate

by Joe Manekin

If you love to travel and appreciate wine, there is nothing like combining the two on the old European wine route. It's what I do once or twice a year in Spain—and let me tell you, it's good fun. Sure, there's some real, hard work involved—I'd be lying if I said there wasn't, honest—but still, I feel a bit sheepish saying so, at least to folks who toil away at more conventional jobs: "Man, I have to taste at least 75 wines every day; every meal begins with endless platters of jamon ibérico; there is no green salad to be seen, and I'm not in bed until 1 a.m. most nights." Boo-hoo. That's the work, it's what I signed up for, and I feel fortunate that this is part of the job. Alongside hearing back from regular customers who mention how much they enjoyed that last Spanish recommendation, it's my favorite part of working at K&L.

These past few years have been busy ones for the Spanish category, as we've been building our direct import (DI) program. Why do we personally select wines abroad and arrange for their importation? Simple answer: it results in only one mark-up. Most imported wines have three or more. It's the reason that we have so many terrific grower Champagnes at \$34.99 instead of \$49.99, Brunello at \$39.99 instead of \$59.99, and so much classified growth Bordeaux at competitive prices. I figured it was high time that we picked some Spanish wines and—hopefully—have our customers enjoy them as much as we do.

New for the summer of 2013: DI Txakoli! Anyone who knows me knows I love this stuff: simple, bright, fizzy, low alcohol wines that are especially well-suited to summer sipping or pairing with a wide variety of snacks and seafood dishes. Mikel Errasti is the owner of Zudugarai, a bodega in the Getariako Txakolina sub-zone of Txakoli, known for its windy, sandy vineyards facing the Cantabrian Sea.

**2012 Zudugarai Amats Rosé Getariako Txakolina (\$12.99)** is the sister rosé to the white Txakoli mentioned on the front of the newsletter. It has delicious red fruit, hints of watermelon and just a faint herbal savor to complement ripeness and fizz. Try this with cheese or seafood pintxos, particularly Cantabrian Sea anchovies on sliced bread drizzled with olive oil.

My journey typically starts in Rioja. This river valley tucked between two mountain ranges in northern Spain is not only Spain's largest producing D.O. region, but arguably its most diverse. Based in the Rioja Alta village of Abalos (this is where all their own fruit and small amounts of sourced fruit hail from), Bodegas Puelles has become an early Spanish DI favorite. Amidst an ocean of bland, tank fermented and aged whites, the **2011 Bodegas Puelles Blanco Rioja (\$9.99)** reigns supreme. You can really taste the quality of the Viura, Garnacha Blanca even some Chenin Blanc in this wine's juicy, pear and apple fruit flavors. Its intensity of flavors and persistence, for an under-\$10 white, is remarkable. Speaking of favorites, we brought in 70 or so cases of the **1999 Bodegas Puelles Gran Reserva (\$19.99)** (91 points WA) late last year and it was gone in a flash. We managed to secure some more, which is a good thing, as this wonderfully savory, elegant Rioja is absolutely singing right now. We bought a lot this



*María José Lopez de Heredia (R) and Spanish buyer Joe Manekin's wife Natalie examine an old vine in Viña Tondonia.*

time, anticipating your thirst (and ours!) for fully mature old world reds à la Lanessant, Terry Gros Cailloux, et al. We expect this to sell quickly, so load up! Quick footnote: Jesús and Felix Puelles are 8th generation vineyard owners, truly know their land and farm organically (non-certified) on their 26 hectares of vines.

Staying in Rioja, let's focus on some stellar examples from the excellent 2005 vintage. Along with the 2001 vintage that Clyde explored earlier, 2005 is one for the ages, the same as in Bordeaux and Burgundy. We'll start with some non-DI wines from wineries we love and who continue to make scores of Rioja converts every month. The **2005 Lopez de Heredia Viña Cubillo (\$26.99)** (91 points WA and ST) is so delicious: bright, high-toned red fruit and chalky earth, another classic from one of our absolute favorite producers anywhere. Pedro Lopez de Heredia, RIP. On to another incredibly consistent, muy tradicional bodega, the **2005 La Rioja Alta Viña Araña (\$26.99)** (93 points WA) is a favorite amongst K&L staff.

OK, back to some DI's. Miguel Merino has old vines in Briones, one of the prime villages in Rioja Alta. From the **2005 Miguel Merino Reserva Rioja (\$29.99)** (92 points ST) expect spicy, generous black cherry and blackberry fruit flavors, with well-balanced acidity and chalky minerality. This wine will age well. Heading east from Briones and across the Ebro River into the Rioja Alavesa village of Laguardia, you can find one of our staff's absolute favorites: Bodegas Casa Juan Señor de Lesmos. Their **2005 Bodegas Casa Juan Señor de Lesmos Reserva Rioja (\$19.99)** is a stunner. More rustic and sauvage than the Merino, it has loads of character and it will also age nicely. This is a wine with a strong following, so order it sooner rather than later; it will sell out quickly.

Questions? Comments? Planning a trip to Spain? Please feel free to reach out to me any time via email at [joemanekin@klwines.com](mailto:joemanekin@klwines.com).

# Garnacha by Any Other Name Will Still Taste as Sweet!

by Illya Haase

**Alicante, Aragonés, Cannonau, Garnacho Negro, Garnacha Negra, Garnacha Roja, Garnacha Tinta, Grenache, Tintilla, Toledana, Uva di Spagna:** This grape of many names is one of the most widely planted grapes in the world. But is it any wonder that in Spain, where it all began, this globe-trotting grape produces some of the finest magic in the glass? Let's travel to Denominación de Origen Madrid and D.O. Mentrída in the Castilla y Leon region, and visit Jiménez-Landi and Bernabeveva Navaherreros, two wineries making exceptional Garnacha.

First, let's look at Daniel and Jose Jiménez Landi, the dynamic duo of Bodegas Jiménez-Landi, whose passion for land and vine has created some of the best Grenache by any name. The vineyard, part of their family estate since the 17th century, had been neglected for some time until the cousins revived the old plots with ecological and biodynamic farming methods. They feel that if you treat the land with respect, it will repay your efforts in the bottle.

**2010 Jiménez-Landi "Sotorrondero" Mentrída (\$24.99)** The 2010 Sotorrondero in a blend of 75% Garnacha from younger vines, though still 40–50 years old, and 25% Syrah from 12-year-old vines. If you are seeking Grenache that is understated, complex, full of character and honest without resorting to new oak or ostentation, then look no further than the exquisite and rather brilliant wines of Bodegas Jiménez-Landi, which have rightly been lauded by my predecessors in previous issues. I stand accused of being even more ecstatic about these wines that were riveting earlier this year: wines that stimulate the intellect as much as the senses.

**2008 Jiménez-Landi "Pielago" Garnacha Mentrída (\$29.99)** Pielago is made from old vine Garnacha grown in 11 different small parcels in El Real de San Vicente, at altitudes up to 850 meters. The grapes are hand-harvested into small baskets, and stem inclusion varies from 30% to 100% depending on the parcel. They undergo cold maceration in stainless steel for 25 days, after which the juice is softly extracted, and macerated an additional 10–30 days. Natural malolactic fermentation takes place in barrel, and the wine spends 10 months in large format French oak, on its lees. It's finished unfiltered and unstabilized. In the glass, you get a wonderful ruby red coating. The nose comes through with blueberry and lavender. The palate is a complex medley of rich blackcurrant, leather and earth. Great grip of tannins and a long-lasting finish. I foresee a grilled pork chop in my future!



Before I discuss Bodega Bernabeveva, I should address the first question I always get regarding their wines: What's up with the girl riding a bear with a glass of wine in her hand? Well, the bear represents the goddess of hunt (Bernabeveva means the path of the bear). The girl is Luisa, the daughter of the late owner of the winery. And the glass of wine—it's a glass of their world-class, top-quality wine!

Winemaker Marc Isart Pinos produces some amazing wines at this small winery, showing that Spain can be right up there with the world's top producers. Planted on the eastern edge of Spain's Sierra de Gredos Mountains, the vineyards are more than half a mile above sea level, where the warm days and cool nights lend the wines lovely acidity, body and freshness. The grapes are farmed organically and biodynamically, and the sandy soil that holds these old Garnacha vines elicit some of the greatest expression of this noble grape, in my opinion. I love the elegance of Bernabeveva's wines, but let's get down to brass tacks: How much are these wines going to cost me?

**2011 Bernabeveva "Camino de Navaherreros" Garnacha Vinos de Madrid (\$12.99)** (90 points ST) Such a long, serious sounding name for such a small price. This shows fresh fruit, mineral and a surprising punch that keeps on giving, like all of Bernabeveva's wines. There is very little manipulation in the winery. Their regime emphasizes long fermentations with indigenous yeasts and minimal handling and sulphur. Wines are aged in barrels of different sizes, but they use very little new wood so as not to mask the glorious aromatics. No fining and no filtering.

**2010 Bernabeveva "Arroyo del Tortolas" Garnacha Vinos de Madrid (\$39.99)** (93 points ST) The Arroyo del Tortolas is a north-facing single vineyard with 65-plus year-old vines. Beautiful red berries and fresh flowers on the nose. On the palate, red fruit comes through with a lovely array of spices, tannins are in balance, and the finish has a wonderful mineral note. Only 200 cases produced; this wine is rarely seen on our shores.

So what can you take away from all this? Spain is making some amazing wines with quality, not quantity, in mind. I find that the minimal intervention in the winemaking process—the light use of oak, the use of whole clusters—as well as the long maceration on the skins really gives true voice to these noble grapes. And what better time to enjoy these wines than the spring and summer months? Fire up the grill, pop open a bottle of Bernabeveva and let the beauty of Spain speak to you!

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