Rioja is the heart and soul of Spanish wine. Not only is it one of Spain’s oldest and most prestigious wine producing regions, but no other wine region in Spain is better known or appreciated by consumers both within and outside Spain. As shown in a recent survey, European consumers put Rioja on a par with Bordeaux in terms of recognition for quality wine. Wine critics in both Europe and America rate top Rioja wines as among the best in the world. Contributing to its fame is the fact that the Rioja DOCa’s six hundred wineries make it Spain’s largest producer and exporter.

Perhaps for too long, Rioja rested on its laurels, producing traditional wines that often tasted over-oaked and tired in the international marketplace, especially compared to the fruit-dominated wines of the New World. However, over the past two decades Rioja has undergone a continuing transformation that has led to dramatic improvements in both the quality and diversity of its wines. This transformation began in the 1990s with a new generation of producers intent on realizing the potential of Rioja. They modernized winemaking practices and vineyard management while strongly committing to making authentic Rioja wines that are expressive of their microclimate, soil, and vines. Equally as important as what these new winemakers did is what they did not do. They did not succumb to the temptation to produce the overly extracted alcoholic wines popular in some export markets. The result of this transformation is authentic wines that are richer in fruit with better integrated oak that continue to express their terroir.

These quality improvements can be found in both Classical and New Wave Rioja wines. Classical Rioja obeys the traditional DOCa regulations concerning mandatory oak and bottle aging required for classification as crianza, reserva, and gran reserva. New Wave Rioja rejects these regulations and alters oak treatment and aging depending on the quality of the fruit and the vintage. Many wineries produce and market both Classical and New Wave Rioja wines to satisfy consumers whose tastes range from the traditional to the modern.

In this report, the International Wine Review explores the changes which have taken place in Rioja over the past...
Subscription Information

The International Wine Review is your link to in-depth and analytical reports on important wine regions of the world and expert wine reviews and ratings of new wines on the market. The i-WineReview is published online and in print on a bi-monthly basis exclusively for subscribers—wine enthusiasts and members of the wine trade.

Subscribers also receive Featured Monthly Tasting reports of top new wine selections, access to all previously published i-WineReview reports, a Search of the Review’s tasting notes and ratings archive of more than 3,000 wines and more.

Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact the publishers about eligibility and rates.

Tell your friend about the i-WineReview. A subscription to the i-WineReview makes a perfect gift!

i-winereview.com
Subscribe online at www.i-winereview.com
few decades. Our goal is to identify the factors that have contributed to the re-emergence of Rioja as one of Spain’s most exciting wine producing regions. After a brief look at the region and its winemaking history, we examine the key factors contributing to the improvements in Rioja winemaking in both the vineyard and the winery. We examine the contributions of Rioja’s Consejo Regulador and its regulatory and classification system. We also define the different styles of wine found in Rioja today and how they pair with food. In a final section we analyze how Rioja is positioning itself in export markets and its prospects for export growth especially in the United States market.

What do consumers need to know about purchasing Rioja wines? To help readers make informed choices, our report and website www.i-winereview.com provide tasting notes and ratings for more than 350 Rioja wines. All of these wines are available in the United States but are not all widely available in retail stores. As the shelves of wine stores and/or supermarkets feature different quality levels and styles of Rioja wine, these reviews and ratings are essential to making informed consumer choices. We also provide a list of recommended producers. Given the wide variety of Rioja wines of different prices, styles and vintages on the market at any given moment, knowing the most reliable producers is often the single most essential information to making a wise purchase decision.

Acknowledgements

Many individuals and organizations have contributed to this report, and we would like to thank each and every one of them. First and foremost, Ricardo Aguiriano and Rebeca Gomez of the Consejo Regulador de Rioja for their help in organizing our visit to Rioja. Pia Mara Finkell, Lisa Carley, and Jon Stemel-- The Vibrant Rioja team in CRT/Tanaka for their encouragement and support of all aspects of our work on Rioja. Tom Perry, Rioja Wine Exporters Association for his advice and sharing of information on the Rioja wine industry. We also can’t say enough about the warm hospitality and knowledge and information provided us by winemakers and staff of the wineries we visited. We received a great education thanks to all of them. In addition, this report would not have been possible without the complete cooperation of the importers and distributors who provided us with samples of their wines. We would like to thank Manager Robert Hall and Chef Ramon Martinez and the team of Jose Andres’ Jaleo Restaurant in Crystal City, VA for their collaboration on wine and food pairing. We also appreciate the help of Jose Guerra, Deputy Director, Wines from Spain in New York who encouraged and supported our work and disseminated information about it. We also wish to express our appreciation to our Contributing Editor, Ellen Kirsh, and Tasting Coordinator, Roy Wagner, for their inputs and to Miguel Reinares of the La Vineria wine shop in Logroño for his collaboration and professional insights into the wines of Rioja. Finally, we wish to acknowledge with appreciation Hubrecht Duijker and John Bradford, two passionate wine writers who contributed considerably to our understanding of Rioja and its wines.

Michael Potashnik,  
Publisher, International Wine Review

Donald Winkler,  
Senior Editor, International Wine Review

Rioja’s 30 Noteworthy Classical And New Wave Producers

On the basis of our extensive tastings, the following producers are noteworthy for crafting some of Rioja’s finest classical (CL) and new wave (NW) wines. These producers are among the many outstanding wineries in Rioja whose wines are reviewed in the Tasting Notes and Rating Section of the report which begins on p. 12

- Bodega Abel Mendoza NW
- Bodegas Alzanza CL
- Bodegas y Viñedos Artadi NW
- Bodegas Baigorri NW
- Baron de Ley CL
- Beronia CL
- Castillo de Cuzcurrita NW
- Contino CL
- El Coto CL
- Cune CL
- Finca Allende NW
- Agricola Labastida NW
- Viñedos Labastida CL
- Bodegas Lan CL
- Bodegas Medrano Irazu CL
- Marques de Murrieta CL/NW
- Marques de Caceres CL/NW
- Martinez Lacuesta CL
- Bodegas Muga CL/NW
- Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza NW
- Remirez de Ganuza NW
- Bodegas Palacios Remondo NW
- Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri CL
- Bodegas Roda NW
- Señorio de San Vicente NW
- Sierra Cantabria NW
- Compañía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez NW
- Bodegas Valdemar CL/NW
- Finca Valpiedra CL/NW
- Viñedos de Paganos NW
Had you been around then, you could have drunk wine made in Rioja 3000 years ago. However, the origins of modern wine making in Rioja began only around 1850 with trouble in Bordeaux. Odium, also known as powdery mildew, had been unknowingly imported to Europe from America via garden exchange programs, and it attacked Bordeaux's vineyards with a vengeance. The Bordelaise watched their yields decline dramatically from this then-undiagnosed vine disease, and it did not take long for their profit-driven negociants to look across the Pyrenees for an alternative source of product. The French had been trekking through Rioja for centuries —it is located right on the pilgrimage route to the famous Spanish shrine in Santiago de Compostela—and they knew the high quality of Rioja's wines. Even before odium, there had been some pioneering exposure to French winemaking in Rioja.

Their odium problem really focused the French on Rioja's wines. The Bordelaise brought to Rioja their Cabernet Sauvignon, their equipment and methodologies in the vineyard and winery, and their oak-oriented palates dominated by a preference for ripe grapes. The first commercial winery based on the Bordeaux “chateau and brand” model was established in Rioja in 1850, and the first French consulting winemaker arrived in 1862. Both the Marquis de Riscal and the Marquis de Murrieta built French-style bodegas (wineries) around 1870; both remain major producers in Rioja today. From the Bordelaise, who in Rioja strove to make wine in their native style, came the practices of buying in grapes from the growers instead of wine and the use of small oak barrels for aging wines. Commercial success for their oak-aged wines led to wider use of oak. Rioja became the site of a successful cooperage operation, and American oak was introduced as a cheaper alternative to expensive French oak.

Luckily for Rioja, the discovery of the sulfur cure for odium brought only a brief period of relief for Bordeaux. The arrival in Bordeaux of the vine-killing phylloxera aphid in the 1870’s made the earlier mildew invasion seem like the equivalent of the common cold to the Bordelaise. Unlike mildew, which infects the vines to varying degrees on an annual basis, phylloxera killed the vines and pretty much shut down the Bordeaux wine business. It was not until the early 1900’s that the vines in Bordeaux were grafted onto American rootstock to defeat phylloxera there. In the meantime, the continuing wine deficit in Bordeaux caused a 30-year long explosion of wine sales for Rioja.

But bad news for Rioja arrived with the 20th century. Around 1900, just as Bordeaux was substantially recovering from phylloxera, the evil aphid was discovered in Rioja. While Rioja viticulture benefited from phylloxera's delayed arrival there—they knew the remedy and quickly grafted—phylloxera still caused vineyard devastation and required replanting. At the same time, Rioja’s markets disappeared with Bordeaux’s recovery, and 20th century politics exacerbated this already difficult commercial situation. The diversion of resources necessitated by the Spanish civil war and both World Wars resulted in the neglect and/or abandonment of many Rioja vineyards, some of which were replanted with cereal crops to feed the commercially isolated Spanish population. The wine industry in Rioja stagnated. Nevertheless, there were limited positive events during this era, including the founding of several new bodegas, and increased trade with the USA in the absence of French exports in the World War I period. Also during this time, the Spanish wine law system was enacted with the intention of improving wine quality, and in 1926 Rioja was the first Spanish wine region to appoint a Consejo Regulador, which oversaw all aspects of quality wine production and trade.

The Modern Era

Rioja’s modern era began in the 1950’s, and matured in the 60’s and 70’s. An important factor was a new railroad line to the port of Bilbao. The fantastic 1970 vintage in Rioja solidified the region’s reputation for quality above all others in Spain. Also contributing were the “discovery” of Rioja by international wine connoisseurs starting in the 60’s, and new post-Franco Spanish politics beginning in 1975. And unintentionally, the Bordeaux chateaux helped Rioja once again, this time by raising their prices high enough to force the Bordeaux wine trade to look elsewhere for a source of supply. The mystique of Rioja’s wine—made in the same style as those of pre-phylloxera Bordeaux—spurred international demand, attracted new investment, and lured some of the best consulting wine makers to Rioja. More help came from Bordeaux in the form of a University of Bordeaux-bred and trained winemaker, the eminent enologist, Emil Peynaud, who built a new winery at his family’s Rioja property, the Marquis de Caceres, and led the way towards a more international style that emphasized fruit over oak.

Rioja became Spain’s first Denominación de Origen (DOC) in 1926. and its first Denominacion de Origen Calificada (DOCa) a new, higher level of regional classification, in 1991. The 90’s saw the incorporation of the accoutrements of modern winemaking and production of new, international styles of wine. Fortunately for Rioja, as demand for wine in the local Spanish market declined, the international market for Rioja wines continued to grow. This momentum has continued into the 21st century, and Rioja is today well positioned for further evolution in quality wine production and expansion of wine exports.

The Region

Rioja is the only DOCa in Spain comprised of more than one region, or comunidad autónoma. Rioja, in fact, covers all of the region La Rioja plus parts of Navarra and the Basque Country. Rioja begins in the north with the Cantabrian Mountains, which protect Rioja from the harsh winds and Atlantic storms of Northern Spain. The Cantabrion are also the source of the Rio Ebro, which flows through Rioja,
in a southeasterly direction. As Rioja stretches out along the Ebro, its climate changes from being predominantly Continental to more Mediterranean. The diverse climatic influences of rainfall, temperature and hours of sunlight along with changes in soil and altitude give Rioja its many terroirs. (See Map of Rioja in Annex 1)

The Rioja DOCa includes three distinct regions—Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa, and Rioja Baja—which have, respectively, 43%, 21%, and 36% of total vineyard plantings in the DOC. The Rioja Alta is on the west side of the Ebro and lies entirely within the region of La Rioja. The Rioja Alavesa is located north of the river and Rioja Baja is to the east.

Lying in the foothills of the Cantabrians, both the Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa share similar characteristics in terms of altitude, soil, and climate. Both enjoy an Atlantic climate with mist, fog and cooling showers, especially for the foothill vineyards. Most of Rioja's high altitude, cool climate vineyard sites are located here, with accompanying problems of frost and seasonal hail. Rioja Baja, located further south along the Ebro, includes part of the region of Navarre. It has a hot, semi-dry Mediterranean climate and vineyards of lower average altitude. With a flat valley floor and lots of sun, grapes grow easily in Rioja Baja, although producing high quality grapes with good acidity, low alcohol and good phenolics can be challenging.

Rioja has various microclimates for growing grapes and, as noted, a heterogeneous terroir. There are three major soil types in the Rioja region: clay and limestone (with gravel sub-soils), clay and ferruginous, and alluvial. These soils types are distributed throughout the region, although there are concentrations of clay and limestone in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa and alluvial soils in Rioja Baja. The clay and limestone soils with their gravel sub-soils facilitate root penetration of vines and provide good drainage.

The differences in terroir and microclimate within the Rioja DOCa are reflected in the grapes grown and the wines produced. Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa favor Tempranillo, while Rioja Baja favors Garnacha, which does better in its warm, dry climate.

Rioja’s Classification System

Rioja was declared Spain’s first official Appellation of Origin Denominación de Origen (DOC) in 1926. With this declaration, Rioja’s borders were carefully delineated and to this day only wine made from grapes grown in that delineated Rioja region (and since 1992, only wine bottled in that geographic area) may be called Rioja on the label. In 1988, Spain’s wine law was amended to include a superior level of geographic classification, (Denominación de Origen Calificada) and in 1991 Rioja became the first Spanish wine region to be elevated to a DOCa. Currently, Priorat is the only other region with this elevated status, although other wine regions like Ribera del Duero may soon win DOCa status.

The overall legislative framework for Rioja and Spain’s other wine regions is the Ley Estatal de la Viña y el Vino [State Law of Vineyard and Wine] of 2003. Under this law, Rioja and other wine regions are governed by their own Consejo Regulador [Regulatory Council]. The Consejo regulates all aspects of wine production and sale for the region. For example, Rioja’s Consejo approves the quantity of grapes which may be produced per hectare of vineyard, the grape varieties and quantities of each which may be used in the Rioja blend, and many other aspects of viticultural and winemaking practice. All wines entitled to the DOC status also bear the Consejo’s official, numbered back label, called a contraetiqueta.

The Rioja Consejo comprises wine producers, growers, merchants and Government representatives from the Department of Agriculture. In 2004 Rioja took the unprecedented step of creating an inter-professional body (the OIPVR) which is independent of the local department of agriculture, and now controls production, marketing, and other important functions formerly under the Consejo’s jurisdiction. The purpose of this move was to ensure that quality control was being emphasized as much as regulation. The Consejo in Rioja now functions essentially as an enforcement agency. Important recent changes in the Rioja wine regulations, including the addition of grapes allowed in the blend, can be attributed to the OIPVR.

Like other wine regions, Rioja’s classification system categorizes wines by age and drinkability. The 2003 Spanish wine law, as applied in Rioja, provides for three ageing categories: Crianza, Reserva, and Gran Reserva, and wines without oak ageing that are now classified as Joven (previously called “Sin Crianza”). Oak ageing has been the cornerstone of Rioja winemaking since the French wine trade arrived in the 1850’s. However, it is interesting to note that the meaning of certain terms for aging like “Reserva” only date back to the 1950s. Before then, terms like “Reserva” were use in Rioja as elsewhere in Europe to designate the quality of a wine, not its aging.
The Grapes

Rioja's winemakers have traditionally used four main red grapes for making wine: Tempranillo, Garnacha Tinta, Graciano and Mazuelo. White wines are mainly produced from Viura and Malvasia. In recent years, some winemakers have begun to experiment with other red grapes and the Consejo Regulador has approved the use of several new white wine grapes.

- **Tempranillo** is king in Rioja. It represents 78% of all grapes planted in the region. As noted in Report #8 The Wines ofRibera del Duero, Tempranillo is also widely planted throughout the rest of Spain and takes on different characteristics in different regions. As Jorge Muga has noted “there are as many Tempranillos as there are soils.” Tempranillo takes its name from the Spanish word temprano meaning early, referring to its ripening ahead of other varieties. However, in the cooler growing areas in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa, Tempranillo is usually harvested in mid-October and produces wines with good acidity and structure. In the warmer areas, such as in Rioja Baja, Tempranillo ripens faster and produces wines that are on the jammy side and somewhat high in alcohol. In Rioja Baja, Tempranillo has slowly replaced Garnacha Tinta as the dominant grape, although some say that Garnacha is better suited for Rioja Baja’s soil and climatic conditions.

- **Garnacha Tinta** also has a long history in Rioja both as a blending grape with Tempranillo and as a single varietal. It was once widely grown, especially in Rioja Baja, but was uprooted in favor of Tempranillo and today only represents 11% of the total of grapes planted in Rioja vineyards. Garnacha Tinta is difficult to grow in most of the higher altitudes of Rioja as it flowers late and has difficulty maturing. On the other hand, it does well in Rioja Baja’s warmer Mediterranean climate. Many winemakers have a renewed interest in it, mainly for young wines since it is highly oxidative and doesn’t age well.

- **Graciano**, a native Spanish variety, is being used more and more as a blending grape with Tempranillo. Winemakers favor it because it helps stabilize color, adds depth and acidity and some say even aroma. Graciano was popular years ago, but today it represents only 2% of total vineyard plantings. While it adapts well to all climates, it fell out of favor with growers because it is difficult to grow and is susceptible to disease. In Rioja, a number of winemakers like Jesus Madrazo of Contino are passionate about Graciano and bottle it as a single variety wine.

- **Mazuelo** is used as a blending grape with Tempranillo. It offers wonderful color and acidity and also adds a fresh floral component. It buds and ripens late so is best suited for warm climates. It is difficult to manage, and yields need to be kept below four tons per acre. It is also expensive to grow and is susceptible to oidium.

- **Viura** is Rioja’s main white wine grape. It is widely used in making whites, but still only represents 7% of total vineyards. Viura can produce fresh tasting white wines that are crisp and high in acidity. However, it is regularly blended with Malvasia Riojana, an indigenous grape, to provide aromatics and body. Some producers most notably Abel Mendoza are also producing wines from Garnacha Blanca.

There is some limited interest in Rioja in experimenting with other red and white grapes, but most winemakers appear to be more interested in producing better wines with the major classical grape varieties. Some Maturana Tinta is grown at Finca Valpiedra (4 ha) and Cabernet Sauvignon is grown in the vineyards of Marques de Riscal, by exception. However, the Consejo has basically not permitted the use of new red varieties. On the other hand, in the interest of stimulating the production of white wines considered more marketable than Viura, the Consejo has sanctioned the use of white grapes such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Verdejo. However, currently there is little evidence of interest by producers in these grapes.

In the Vineyard

The top winemakers in Rioja today are members of a chorus singing the same tune, which is that continued improvements in the quality of the wine will come from the vineyard. This emphasis on the vineyard lies behind the increasingly popular practice of producing estate wines in Rioja.

Traditionally, Rioja winemakers purchased most their grapes or fermented juice from cooperatives and from independent, small winegrowers scattered throughout the region. This practice is the product of tradition and necessity, as there are few winemakers who would not prefer to directly manage their own vineyards, if they could purchase them. In the absence of being able to manage their own vineyards, winemakers are increasingly defining every detail of vineyard management in their contracts with growers in an efforts to get the highest quality fruit possible.

The practice of purchasing grapes from numerous growers is the result of inheritance laws which divided family vineyards into increasingly small parcels with the passing of generations, such that today most vineyards are less than one hectare in size. Winemakers can purchase several small vineyards to produce their own grapes, but managing large numbers of widely dispersed small parcels is both costly and logistically difficult. The options are to try to assemble small plots into larger parcels, find new locations where land is still available to do new plantings, or contract with the owners of small parcels for the delivery of their harvest.

High end boutique wineries like Roda or Finca Allende own and manage small, widely dispersed parcels of old vines of special terroir. The prices their special wines command in the market permit them to absorb the costs of this practice. With his background in real estate, Fernando Remirez de
in Spain is about 6 thousand Euros per hectare. However, has to tear out its vineyard. Currently, the price of this right from an existing vineyard in, say, Jumilla which then vineyard in Ribera del Duero, for example, can purchase that rights. This means that someone wishing to plant a new plantings. This resulted in a system of planting rights for each country which has translated into a price for planting rights. Since 1978, the European Union has attempted to regulate production of high quality wine. Artadi, for example, uses twenty-one different vineyards for its grapes, which are vinified separately and blended prior to bottling.

**Old Vines and New Plantings.** Producers of top quality wines seek out old, bush vines of Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Graciano. These old, low-yielding vineyards are small, scarce, and widely dispersed throughout Rioja. Wines produced at Finca Allende, Sierra Cantabria, Artadi are produced from such vineyards, and the top cuvees of other wineries, such as Aro at Muga and Culmen at Lan source their fruit from these old vineyards.

**New Plantings.** Top quality producers tend to avoid the commercially available clones of Tempranillo, many of which prioritize productivity over quality, and instead plant new vineyards with selected cuttings from old vineyards, a practice labeled massal. Roda has taken this practice one step further and systematically identified the different types of Tempranillo [about 550 in number], selected the most healthy ones not subject to common viruses [about 225], and from planting of those types found fourteen biotypes, or clones, that yield the best quality grapes. Cuttings from these successful clones are now being sold commercially.

**EU and DOCa Regulations**

Since 1978, the European Union has attempted to regulate the price and production of wine by prohibiting additional plantings. This resulted in a system of planting rights for each country which has translated into a price for planting rights. This means that someone wishing to plant a new vineyard in Ribera del Duero, for example, can purchase that right from an existing vineyard in, say, Jumilla which then has to tear out its vineyard. Currently, the price of this right in Spain is about 6 thousand Euros per hectare. However, in Rioja the price is about six times that amount because the Rioja DOCa does not allow planting rights to be transferred from another region to Rioja. In effect, Rioja has imposed its own region specific limit on vineyards. This serves to limit production, raise the price of grapes, and also raise the price of Rioja wine. The EU prohibition on plantings was scheduled to expire in 2013, to be replaced by financial incentives to vineyard owners to rip out vines. However, on April 29, 2008, a new EU regulation was issued extending the prohibition to 2018. Also, by establishing planting rights, the EU and Rioja have created a very powerful interest group—existing vineyard owners—who would lose financially from elimination of the prohibition. Hence, it is likely the prohibition on new plantings will remain for the foreseeable future.

The DOCa regulates quality by specifying the grape varieties that can be grown and sold using the Rioja name and by controlling production. Production is controlled by mandating a maximum density of vines per hectare, prohibiting irrigation, and restricting total production per hectare to 6,500 kilos per hectare for reds and 9,000 kilos per hectare for whites. The first two regulations are controversial as high density planting is today often seen as a means of stressing the vine and reducing production, not increasing it, and irrigation can help establish young vines and reduce vine mortality and improve quality and yields in times of drought. The DOC applies these regulations with a degree of flexibility, but they remain controversial nonetheless. The restriction on total production is less controversial, as quality wineries already limit their production to significantly less—about 4,000 kilos per hectare—than the regulation specifies.

**Vintage Variation**

The variable climatic conditions in Rioja, such as the winds from the Atlantic, impact the quality of vintages from year to year, and the Consejo Regulador in the Rioja DOCa like its counterparts throughout Spain, rates vintages annually. While these official ratings are a good guide to the quality of the vintages, they are not necessarily definitive in determining the quality of particular wines from that vintage. Even in off years, skilled winemakers are generally able to turn out good wine thanks to their knowledge and experience in working under adverse conditions. Below are the official ratings for vintages that still have wines on the market. We are especially bullish on the wines from the 2001 vintage as readers will discover in our tasting notes and ratings.

**Rioja Vintage Guide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wine Making

Improvements in the vineyards of Rioja are mirrored in the winery. A new generation of oenologists are carefully harvesting and sorting fruit, fermenting separately by varietal and plot, 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. Despite the high cost of French oak, they increasingly prefer it to the sweet vanilla and balsamic flavors imparted by American oak. And, perhaps most shocking, they often forgo the traditional crianza-reserva-gran reserve classification in order to gain the freedom to choose the oak treatment which best suits the particular fruit (and vintage) they happen to be working with.

Selecting Fruit

The selection of fruit begins on the vine, with mid-summer’s green harvest to focus the vine’s energy on a few select bunches and ends on the sorting table. The treatment of the picked fruit varies with its special qualities. At Muga, for example, grapes for ordinary crianzas are transported in large wagons, while those destined for the top cuvees (Prado Enea, Torre Muga, and Aro) are packed in small, 20 kilo containers transported from field to winery in refrigerated trucks. Remirez de Ganuza takes this one step further and stores harvested grapes in refrigerated warehouses while waiting sorting and pressing. The sorting process also differs with the quality of grapes, with double-sorting for the very top cuvees of wineries like Artadi 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 do their picking by hand as the bush vines throughout much of the region do not lend themselves to automated harvesting. Sorting aside, there are, of course, significant variations in the quality of the grapes themselves. As noted earlier, small to medium sized wineries having personal relationships with contracted growers can exert a high degree of quality control over the vineyard, but this is more challenging for large wineries and wine-producing cooperatives. One option, demonstrated at Rioja’s largest cooperative, Viñedos de Aldeneuva, which has 850 members, is to take a sample of grapes delivered by a grower, subject it to an extremely rapid fermentation, and then chemically analyze its acidity, alcohol level, color, etc., resulting in a quality index that determines the price paid to the grower.

Gravity, Fermentation, Racking and Assemblage,

Rioja’s winemakers are employing a variety of techniques to produce wines that are fresh tasting, balanced and age-worthy. In addition to careful handling and selection of fruit, the top wineries are using gravity wherever possible in the winemaking process to transfer grapes to destemmers and crushers and then to steel tanks or 8000 liter “tinas” for fermentation, and later to barriques for aging. In addition, these wineries are employing more gentle methods of crushing and pressing grapes to avoid the bitter tannins resulting from roughly crushed seeds and skins. For example, Artadi and some other wineries still crushes grapes under foot in open fermenters.

Winemakers are experimenting with a variety of fermentation techniques. The use of native yeasts is now commonplace. For the top cuvées, several wineries have built small fermenters to permit the separate fermentation of fruit from different parcels prior to assemblage. Some have as many as 16 to 20 different small fermenters. Others are using open wooden vats and avoiding pump-overs to protect finesse. Most malo is done in late winter, but Muga tries to do malo in Spring following harvest (April-May). Jorge Muga 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 “trasiego” or 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 tens of thousands of barrels and hundreds of thousands of bottles of wine resting in underground cellars.

Traditionally, the quality of Rioja wine has been marked by the designation crianza-reserva-gran reserve 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- a relatively long time for barrel use- so that all crianzas have at least an acceptable minimum of 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 Lopez de Heredia continue to make barrels in-house to their own specifications.

Many types of oak—French, American, Russian, even Chinese—can be found in the Rioja winery today, but the 225 liter American oak barrel is still the most common. American oak contributes to the classical flavor profile of Rioja wine. It is sweet and generous and offers notes of vanilla, cinnamon, 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.

French barriques are increasingly used in Rioja. They originally came along with French winemakers in the time of phylloxera, but as the cost of the barrels increased, many producers converted to American oak. Today, Rioja wineries are once again going back to using French oak as well as American oak for aging wine. Some like Roda use French oak exclusively; others use a combination of American and French oak. Provided the fruit is phenolically ripe and of high quality, winemakers such as Miguel Angel de Gregorio, tend to prefer French oak over American oak to impart complexity and finesse in their wines.

French barriques are increasingly used in Rioja. They originally came along with French winemakers in the time of phylloxera, but as the cost of the barrels increased, many producers converted to American oak. Today, Rioja wineries are once again going back to using French oak as well as American oak for aging wine. Some like Roda use French oak exclusively; others use a combination of American and French oak. Provided the fruit is phenolically ripe and of high quality, winemakers such as Miguel Angel de Gregorio, tend to prefer French oak over American oak to impart complexity and finesse in their wines.

French barriques are increasingly used in Rioja. They originally came along with French winemakers in the time of phylloxera, but as the cost of the barrels increased, many producers converted to American oak. Today, Rioja wineries are once again going back to using French oak as well as American oak for aging wine. Some like Roda use French oak exclusively; others use a combination of American and French oak. Provided the fruit is phenolically ripe and of high quality, winemakers such as Miguel Angel de Gregorio, tend to prefer French oak over American oak to impart complexity and finesse in their wines.

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

Rioja produces a wide variety of red wines. While there is in reality a continuum of styles, for the purposes of exposition we discuss two main styles—Classical and New Wave. Interestingly, many wineries produce both styles. For a list of notable producers of each style, see p. 3

**Classical Rioja**

Classical Rioja wines are the wines that made Rioja world famous. They’re produced from the Tempranillo grape, albeit frequently blended with small amounts of Graciano or other varieties to enhance acidity, color and flavor. Some Classical wine is produced from estate-owned fruit only (e.g. Lopez de Heredia), but more often than not the grapes or juice for these wines are sourced from other growers. Most Classical red wines are fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel or large oak tinas. After malo, which is usually done in oak, the wines are aged in a mix of American and French oak barriques (225 liters) for periods of a year or more.

What perhaps most distinguishes Classical Rioja is its aging in oak barrels and bottle, as required under the traditional DOCa classifications of Crianza, Reserva, and Gran Reserva. Today, over 40 percent of all Rioja wine falls into one of these three classifications. As with all Rioja wines, the quality of Classical Rioja is mainly determined by the quality of fruit with wineries often selecting their best grapes for the Reserva and Gran Reserva classifications. The extensive aging of Classical Rioja translates into its being ready to drink upon release by the winery, although many Reservas and Gran Reservas can age gracefully for at least another decade.

Classical Rioja wines can be quite delicious, especially to the experienced connoisseur and pair beautifully with food. However, to young wine drinkers accustomed to fruit forward New World wines they are an acquired taste. At its best, Classical Rioja offers up an enticing balance of black cherry and plum fruit wonderfully balanced with notes of vanilla and leather. At its worst, Classical Rioja is a clumsy, overly oaked wine, with gamey aromas, harsh tannins and little fruit.

The traditional DOCa classification categorizes wines by their age in barrel and bottle. Some wine enthusiasts interpret this classification as an indicator of quality. Our tasting shows that for a given producer a Gran Reserva, is often better than a Crianza, if only because higher quality fruit is typically used to make the Gran Reserva and extensive aging in oak and bottle often rounds out and integrates fruit and secondary flavors. But a Gran Reserva of one producer is not necessarily better than the crianza of another.

Crianzas and reservas are rather similar in style. Both offer dark red fruit and balsamic aromas combined with vanilla and oak spices. On the palate, the integration of fruit and oak makes for flavors of earth, leather, cigar box and roast meat. Most, but by no means all, crianzas and reservas on the market are ready to drink. Some exhibit rather dry and hard tannins suggesting either under ripe fruit or rough handling of fruit during the winemaking process. Reservas are distinguished from Crianzas mainly by selection of fruit—in the vineyard or in barrel—and the use of better and newer oak, which can produce a richer, better balanced wine. However, some producers use similar fruit for both and simply age the Reserva longer. Our tasting finds this practice seldom produces a higher quality wine.

Gran reservas made by good producers are unique in the world of wine. Their extensive aging in oak barrels results in an enticing bouquet of dried herbs, cassis, black cherries, smoke, and leather. They are often light garnet in color with orange rims and yield delicate flavors of dried cherry, plum, and roasted nuts. Older vintages often exhibit some degree of oxidation, which the cognoscente do not regard as a defect. Gran reservas may also reveal dry mid-palates and finishes.

**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. These producers give top priority to their vineyards and take great care to obtain the finest, phenolically ripe fruit for their wines. Most New Wave producers also source their fruit from relatively old bush vineyards (50+-
In the winery, New Wave producers use a considerably higher proportion of French than American oak as well as a relatively high percentage of new oak. The rich, ripe fruit easily absorbs new oak without acquiring the overtly wood flavors of Classical Rioja. The wines are also aged a shorter time than Classical Rioja. New Wave Rioja producers do not use the DOCa classification, but, if they did, the short aging time would mean some of Rioja’s most highly sought after (and expensive) wines would have to be sold as crianzas. Many of these wines are world class while retaining the authenticity of Rioja.

If young wine drinkers find some Classical Rioja challenging, they would find New Wave Rioja more familiar. The wines are generally fruit forward in character, and reveal concentrated, pure Tempranillo and other fruit aromas and flavors (raspberry, black cherry, plum, even cranberry) not always found in Classical Rioja wines. Despite the abundant use of new French oak, which can be noticeable in younger wines, in general New Wave Rioja offers nicely balanced wines with round tannins.

The success of the pioneer producers of New Wave Rioja has, of course, led to many more traditional wineries adding New Wave bottlings to their Classical Rioja line. These new wines are distinguished by the absence of the traditional DOC classification. Many of these new wines from traditional wineries also carefully select fruit and use a high percentage of French oak in aging. Several of these wines are reported in the tasting notes that follow.

**Rioja Whites**

While white wines are only a small percentage of total wine production in Rioja, their evolution parallels that of red wines. Most Rioja whites are made of Viura, often blended with a small amount of Malvasia. Classical whites are given extensive aging in oak and have somewhat oxidized flavors of dried fruit. The Viña Tondonia of Lopez de Heredia is an excellent example of the Classical White of Rioja. This delicious wine may not be to everyone’s taste, but few would question its quality and authenticity.

New Wave whites differ from Classical whites in their freshness and dominance of fruit over oak flavors. However, some New Wave producers like to craft oak-aged Viura. In addition, a few producers are experimenting with new varietals. Abel Mendoza leads this effort with his single varietal offerings of Garnacha Blanc, Malvasia and Viura. Another example of a New Wave white is Remelluri’s Blanco, an exotic blend of Viognier, Chardonnay, Roussane, Marsanne, Garncha Blanca, Moscatel and Sauvignon Blanc aged 16 months in new French oak barrels. The Remelluri Blanco is allowed on an exceptional basis by the Consejo Regulador, but its success both in quality and sales suggests that perhaps relaxing DOCa regulations could lead to greater commercial success for Rioja whites.
touch of flavor, color and acidity. For this dish we tried two Tempranillo wines, a 2005 Cantos de Valpiedra and a 2004 Palacios Remondo La Montesa Crianza. Here again the group was unanimous in its verdict that the Cantos de Valpiedra worked best with the dish because of its light and fruity character. One taster felt that “the wine brought all the flavors of the dish together.” The fruit also combined well with the saltiness of the dish. The La Montesa is a wine of good balance and depth but lacked the overt fruitiness required by the dish. Our fourth dish was also fish, a spectacular and creative cod with smoked Idiazabal sauce, dried fruits and Pedro Ximenez reduction. Cooked briefly and combined with a cream of spinach, Idiazabal sauce, pine nuts and a PX reduction, this smooth and buttery dish was truly decadent. And so was the wonderful wine paired with it: a 2001 Montecillo Gran Reserva. The tasters couldn’t have been more surprised and elated at how well this humble Gran Reserva paired with the rich Bacalao.

Pairing Rioja wines with two meat dishes was our next challenge. We had three terrific Reservas to marry: a Cune 2001 Viña Real, a Lan 2004 Reserva and a Luis Cañas 2004 Hiru 3 Racimos. The first dish consisted of tender lamb chops with a wonderful cauliflower couscous (grated cauliflower lightly sautéed and like couscous in appearance) and rosemary sauce. The second was braised pork cheeks with oranges. The cheeks were cooked initially for 7 hours in orange juice with orange zest, chicken broth, rosemary, roast onion and leeks. They were then cooked for another 3 hours without the juice and ended up being simply spectacular—with melt in your mouth tenderness and rich flavor. Of the three wines we tasted, our tasters were essentially in agreement on the following: the Hiru 3 Racimos is a phenomenal wine, international in style with ripe fruit and expensive oak, served up in an elegant style. However, it was most impressive on its own, rather than as a food wine. The Lan Reserva with its pure ripe fruit and earthy qualities complemented both dishes the best, but the Cune Reserva with its soft very ripe sweet flavors and round mouth feel was a close second.

We concluded our tasting with a palate cleansing fresh Loriñon Rioja sorbet which hit the spot and prepared us for the final cheese course with a very special treat—a preview of the upcoming International Wine Review report on Sherry. For this course we combined two cheeses: a pungent Picon blue cheese and a soft nutty La Serena with an Alvear Pedro Ximenez “Solera 1927” Our tasters claimed this dark amber colored sherry was “liquid raisins” with an outstanding nose of honey and sweet molasses and a viscous mouth feel perfectly balanced and a fitting conclusion to an extraordinary tasting!!!!

Let us know about your experiences pairing Rioja wines with food. Email us at info@i-winereview.com or post your comments on our blog.

The Market for Rioja

Ever since the French produced wine in Rioja to replace that lost in the phylloxera-infested vineyards of Bordeaux, exports have been important to Rioja but never more so than today. In 2007 Rioja exported 31 percent of its production [i.e., bottled wine of all types supplied to the market]. Rioja’s dependence on the export market has grown over time as per capita wine consumption in Spain has declined, although the share of total production exported has remained essentially unchanged over the past decade. The export market is particularly important when it comes to premium wines [reserva and gran reserva] which represent 31 percent of exports but only 14 percent of domestic consumption.

Two countries dominate the export market—the UK with a 37 percent share of total Rioja exports and Germany with a 17 percent share. The US has a minor share [8%] of the market, especially given its population. The devaluation of the dollar relative to the Euro poses a special challenge to marketing Rioja in the US. According to data generously provided to us by the Rioja Wine Exporters Association, Rioja exporters have on average adjusted to this to some extent by reducing their export prices [in Euros] to the US, but the rising US dollar price of a popular Rioja crianza like El Coto puts it at a new price point forcing it to compete with premium wines from elsewhere in the world. This, in turn, puts pressure on Rioja exporters to improve the quality of their products. But it also means that Rioja wines are unlikely to be competitive at the lower end of the market, where wines from Argentina, Chile, and other parts of Spain may offer better value.

Rioja exporters have adjusted to the weakness of the dollar in part by moving up-market. A recent American survey by the Rioja Wine Exporters Association shows, for example, that in New York 37 percent of the Rioja wine found on the shelves of major wine stores is priced above $40 per bottle. The hitherto small size of the American market also helps. Most Rioja wineries have had a limited presence in the US market, so there’s upside potential as more wineries begin aggressive marketing.

Aside from the falling dollar, another challenge facing producers wishing to increase US sales is the reputation of Rioja as being old-fashioned, light-bodied, and over-oaked. In the US market where consumers appear to prefer fruit forward, richly concentrated wines that reputation, however false it may be, is damaging. In this respect, the industry-wide promotion efforts like that of the VibrantRioja campaign targeted on changing the consumer’s impression of Rioja would appear to be spot on. However, to be successful in their efforts to increase market share in the US, Rioja producers need to in addition be more assertive about showcasing their wines in person.

In sum, despite the rising dollar price of Rioja wines in the US, the future in terms of both sales volume and quality appears bright, especially if the wineries and their industry associations, including the Consejo Regulador, continue and expand their ambitious marketing efforts.
Wines of Rioja: Tasting Notes and Ratings

The International Wine Review team tasted more than 350 wines for this report. We normally taste wines blind under controlled conditions. However, for this report we also tasted many wines in Rioja during our visit in June 2008.

The i-WineReview rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines which receive a rating of below 85 points. The ratings are as follows:

95-100 A wine of distinction
90-94 A wine of outstanding or superior quality
85-89 A wine of good to excellent quality
84 and below Not recommended

Because of the large volume of wines reviewed for the report, we unfortunately were unable to publish all reviews. However, subscribers will be able to read each and every review in the i-WineReview's Tasting Notes and Ratings Archive using our new Search. The Archive is located at www.i-winereview.com

All of the wines reviewed here are sold in the U. S or will soon appear in retail wine shops here. However, some wines are unfortunately, in very short supply and readers will have difficulty finding them. The i-WineReview is more than happy to advise readers where they might get hold of certain wines reviewed in the report. Obviously, the web is a great place to start a search, if local wine shops don’t have them. We also encourage readers to check with our Recommended Retailers throughout the country listed on www.i-winereview.com.

★ Bodega Abel Mendoza produces high quality and original new wave white and red wines sourced from 34 small vineyards in the mountain ranges of the Sierra Cantabria. These wines exhibit fresh fruit, high acidity and are well-structured. A Burgundian winemaker in Rioja.

Abel Mendoza 2007 Garnacha Blanca Fermentado en Barrica Rioja ($30) 90
An unusual grape for Rioja, but a lovely wine, nonetheless. Medium lemon in color with a rich nose of banana, gardenia, and baked apple. It is very ripe with creamy mouth feel and a long finish. Quite delicious fruit and beautifully balanced.

Abel Mendoza 2006 Graciano Rioja ($80) 90
One of the better single varietals of Graciano. Deep ruby in color with a pink rim. Ripe, boysenberry aromas with a fresh soft attack creamy mouth feel, light mid-palate, high acidity and layered flavors.

Abel Mendoza 2001 Jarrate Rioja ($25) 87
This is an easy drinking wine with a dark ruby color and smoky oak and cigar box scents. It offers a simple and straightforward attack, with tasty red and black fruit flavors, soft tannins and a firm finish.

Abel Mendoza 2006 Tempranillo Rioja ($55) 90
Opaque ruby with aromas of black raspberry and black pepper. Flavorful attack of blackberry, and black currant, nicely structured and beautifully balanced, with a silky texture, gripping tannins and a long finish.

★ Bodegas Agricola La Bastida is a small family winery founded in 1992 in Rioja Alavesa by Carlos Fernandez and neighboring growers. These are three excellent wines from the winery’s portfolio. Importer: Elite Wines, Lorton, VA

Bodegas Agricola la Bastida 2004
El Belisario Rioja ($--) 90
The Belisario is produced from low yielding old vines Tempranillo and is fermented in American oak with malo in the same barrels. The wine is aged for 14 months in barrels and 6 in bottle. The wine has a deep ruby color with an opaque core and aromas of dark fruit, vanilla, and cedar notes. It offers a sweet, soft round attack with lush mouth feel and flavors of black fruit with vanilla oak, balsamic, and black cherry. It finishes with soft chewy tannins.

Agricola la Bastida 2004 Tierra de Fernandez Gomez Crianza Rioja ($--) 88

Agricola la Bastida 2004 Tierra Fidel Rioja ($--) 89
50% Graciano, 50% Garnacha. Deep ruby. Very aromatic, red fruit, toasty oak. Focused, concentrated plum fruit with sweet, vanilla oak. Long finish.

★ Bodegas Altanza is a small family winery located in Rioja Alta that produces high quality wines. It sources its grapes from its own 120 ha estate, which includes low-yielding old vineyards, and from local growers. Importer: Quality Wines of Spain New York, NY (Reviewed by i-WineReview in February 2008)

Altanza 2001 Altanza Reserva Seleccion Especial Rioja ($39) 88
This medium ruby wine of 40+ year old vines is aged 18 months in new French oak casks. It’s honest and straightforward in style with a lovely cherry nose and dried cherry fruit flavors on the palate, complemented by a nice gripping finish.

Altanza 2006 Capitoso Rioja ($17) 87
The youthful 2006 Capitoso is 100% Tempranillo and displays a medium ruby color with aromas of black cherry, herbs and sweet oak. On the palate it offers a soft mouth feel that is medium weight and is slightly rustic and tart on the finish.

Altanza 2004 Lealtanza Crianza Rioja ($22) 91
100% Tempranillo with 12 months in French and American oak, this medium dark ruby Rioja has aromas of herbs and cigar box and a nice soft attack of black and red fruit framed
in spicy oak. Well-balanced with nice purity of flavor and a long, flavorful finish complemented by soft tannins. An extra year in bottle has improved this wine, and our score. Great value!

★ Bodegas Amador Garcia is a family owned and operated winery in Rioja Alavesa that produces fruit forward traditional and modern wines. Importer: The Ravensvale Group, Naples, FL

Amador Garcia 2006 Peñagudo Tinto Rioja ($15) 86
The Peñagudo Tinto displays a bright youthful deep ruby color with baked strawberries and jammy notes on the nose. It has a very bright, tart attack with almost citrus-like acidity. Good for making sangria.

Amador Garcia 2004 Peñagudo Crianza Rioja ($24) 87
Good for making sangria. It has a very bright, tart attack with almost citrus-like acidity.

Amador Garcia 2004 Vendimia Seleccionada Rioja ($48) 88
Medium dark ruby. A blend of 90% Tempranillo, 5% Garnacha, and 5% Mazuelo aged in oak for 14 months. It offers a soft, fruity attack with medium high acidity and a tart dry finish.

Amador Garcia 2006 Peñagudo Crianza Rioja ($15) 86
Medium dark ruby. A blend of 90% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano and offers earthy aromas of blackberry and plum fruit, savory herbs, spice and cedar. On the palate it displays ripe fruit and earthy flavors, good balance and a pleasant finish.

★ Bodegas Antión is a young winery located in Rioja Alavesa that practices high precision viticulture and modern winemaking. These two wines suggest that the winery has a promising future. (not available yet in the US)

Antión 2005 selección Rioja ($45) 91
A 100% Tempranillo wine sourced from very low-yielding vineyards. Fermented in traditional French oak tinas. Dark ruby with aromas of licorice, cedar, smoke, leather and roasted meats. Soft attack of espresso coffee with vanilla extract. Sweet, fairly ripe tannins. Ripe overall. If you like oak, you’ll love this wine. A real crowd pleaser.

Antión 2006 Víniatal Rioja ($22) 89

★ Bodegas y Viñedos Artadi is one of Rioja’s finest boutique wineries. Established in 1985, initially as a cooperative and later as a private winery, it is owned and operated by Juan Carlos Lopez de Lacalle. All of Bodegas y Viñedos Artadi’s cuvees are produced from high altitude low-yielding old vineyards using both modern and conventional winemaking methods (eg. foot trodding for crushing grapes) and exhibit purity of fruit, elegance, complexity and balance. One of the leading New Wave producers which began as a cooperative!

Artadi 2005 El Pison Rioja ($190) 96
The El Pison is sourced from a 2.4 ha vineyard planted in 1945. It displays a dark ruby color and aromas of violets, minerals, and ripe cherry. The attack is rich and concentrated with pure black cherry fruit and notes of cocoa, tobacco, and minerals, rounded tannins and outstanding balance. In essence, it is a wine of tremendous depth, complexity and finesse. A very special Rioja.

Artadi 2005 Pagos Viejos Rioja ($95) 93
Pagos Viejos is produced from 50-80 year old vines. It displays a dark ruby color with an opaque core and aromas of black cherry and plum. Fermented in wood tanks and aged fro 14-16 months in new French oak, it reveals a soft rich attack of concentrated black and red fruit, huge depth and layered flavors. Elegant and pure.

Artadi 2005 Víniatas de Gain Rioja ($25) 91
Víniatas de Gain offers a lovely dark ruby color and fresh aromas of dark cherry, leather, and earth. On the attack it reveals more fresh dark cherry, plum and raspberry fruit. It is medium- bodied with perfectly integrated oak, good structure and round gripping tannins on the finish. A new wave authentic Rioja wine of 100% Tempranillo from old vines.

★ Bodega Baigorri is a small family winery in Rioja Alavesa producing high quality wines in a modern gravity fed winery using native yeasts, small conic fermentation tanks, and French oak barriques. (Reviewed by i-WineReview in February 2008 ) Importer: Quality Wines of Spain New York, NY

Baigorri 2005 Blanco fermentado en barrica Rioja ($40) 87
This 100% light to medium bodied Viura from 70+ year old vines is aged twelve months in new French oak. It has aromas of tropical fruit suffused with vanilla oak. The attack is very soft with predominantly warm vanilla flavors that carry through to the finish.

Baigorri 2004 Crianza Rioja ($30) 88
Medium dark ruby in color and aged twelve months in new French oak casks, this traditionally crafted Rioja offers up lovely cherry and sandalwood aromas. Round and full on the palate with dark cherry fruit flavors and a dollop of spicy oak. Finishes long and fruity.

Baigorri 2003 Reserva Rioja ($48) 92
An exceptional, rich and delicious modern wine of dark ruby color, aged 18 months in new French oak. The dark cherry and cigar box nose gives way to a big, soft attack of fruit and warm oak. The mouth feel is lush with ripe, concentrated dark plum fruit.

Baigorri 2003 Vino de garage Rioja ($95) 93
Made from 70+ year old, low-yielding vines and aged 18 months in new French oak, this dark ruby, medium-bodied, modern-styled wine has aromas of cigar box, sandalwood,
and leather with red fruit notes. Silky and elegant on the palate with lovely black cherry and plum fruit beautifully married to expensive-tasting toasted oak. Finishes soft and long. Should continue to age nicely.

★ Founded in 1985 in the province of Navarra, Baron de Ley became a public company in 1995 and is part of the group of El Coto Rioja. It has a state of the art winery and sources grapes from its own 160 ha estate. Finca Monasterio is its top cuvee. Importer: Frederick Wildman and Sons New York, NY

Baron de Ley 2004 Reserva Rioja ($25) 88
A clean and fruit rich wine with intense blackberry and polished oak aromas, followed by ripe black fruit and notes of coffee, leather and black pepper on the palate. A soft lush round mouth feel is followed by ripe tannins and a long firm finish. Look for this wine on the market in Spring 2009.

Baron de Ley 2004 Finca Monasterio Rioja ($50) 91
Opaque ruby. A blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon from low-yielding vines. Black fruit aromas with spicy notes. Rich, lush attack. Very ripe concentrated cherry and blackberry fruit flavors with polished oak notes. (aged for 18 months in new French oak). Dense and chewy tannins on the finish. A big wine which will continue to improve with age.

Baron de Ley 1998 Gran Reserva Rioja ($40) 90

★ Bodegas Berceo was reputedly established by the French in 1872 in Rioja Alta and named after a monk, Gonzalo de Berceo, who wrote lovely poetry in Spanish. It was purchased by the Gurpegui family, its current owners, in 1980. The Los Dominos de Berceo Prefiloxerico Crianza is their most interesting wine.

Bodegas Berceo 2004 Viña Berceo Rioja ($-- ) 87
This is medium-ruby-colored wine which offers slightly musty aromas of black cherry, leather, licorice and loam. On the palate it combines juicy plum fruit with more spice, earth and leather notes, with slightly dry tannins.

Los Dominios de Berceo 2004 Prefiloxerico Crianza Rioja ($48) 89
This is an attractive complex wine sourced from two hectares of pre-phylloxera Tempranillo vineyards. It reveals an initial slightly musty aroma followed by notes of black cherries and plum fruit, earth, leather, cedar, chocolate, and herbs. On the palate it offers more savory flavors including dry herbs and rocks, with hints of violets.

Los Dominos de Berceo 2001 Reserva Rioja ($-- ) 86
This is a rustic earthy wine, medium ruby in color, and offering moderate fruit flavors with dominant wood spice aromas and dry, tart astringent black cherry fruit flavors. Soft round tannins and a short finish.

★ Bodegas Beronia was founded in 1970. It was purchased by sherry producer, Gonzalez Byass in 1982 and began operations in a new winery. Beronia has 10 ha of vineyards and buys fruit from neighboring growers. The top wine is Illa. C. Beronia. Importer: San Francisco Wine Exchange San Francisco, CA

Beronia 2005 Crianza Rioja ($14) 88
The Crianza is well-made and flavorful. It is medium ruby in color and consists of 82% Tempranillo, 14% Garnacha and 4% Graciano. If offers ripe raspberry aromas with smoky notes and a musty scent. It is soft on the attack, with nicely integrated toasty oak and cherry fruit on the palate. It shows good balance and structure.

Beronia 2004 III a.C. Beronia Rioja ($75) 91
The III a.C Beronia is a blend of 88% Tempranillo, 7% Graciano, and 5% Mazuelo. It is deep ruby garnet in color and exhibits brambly red fruit and strawberry jam notes along with some volatile acidity and cedar on the nose. It is rich and concentrated on the palate revealing lovely sweet, lush fruit and spice, black pepper, and oak. This beauty is also well balanced with round tannins and a long lasting finish.

Beronia 2001 Reserva Rioja ($19) 88
This Reserva displays a deep garnet with an orange rim and offers aromas of red and black fruit, leather and cedar. It is soft on the attack and the palate, showing nice fruit but is rather oaky and dry on the finish.

★ Bodegas Bilbainas is an old winery founded in 1901 and purchased in 1997 by the Codorniu Group. The winery and its vineyards (260 ha) have been renovated and the quality of the wines has clearly improved and will likely get even better in the years ahead.

Bodegas Bilbainas 2005 Viña Zaco Rioja ($9) 87
An uncomplicated wine blending Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo displaying a dark ruby color and aromas of black cherry and loam. Nice light red cherry fruit on a medium bodied palate. Good acidity. Ripe tannins and a nice long finish.

Bodegas Bilbainas 2003 La Vicalanda Reserva Rioja ($23) 89
A complex wine produced from 30+ year old Tempranillo vines from the La Vicalanda vineyard plot. It is deep ruby garnet and boasts ripe dark plum, blackberry aromas with a touch of violet and ash. It offers very flavorful pure black cherry fruit on the attack, complemented by charred oak. It is accessible with youthful tannins. Well done.

Biurko Gorri 2005 Crianza Rioja ($20) 86
This Crianza is a blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Graciano. It is deep ruby in color with a dark core. It offers sweet raspberry and strawberry scents on the nose followed by a soft ripe attack of fresh red berries. It is slightly tart with dry tannins on the finish.
Bierko Gorri 2004 Graciano Rioja ($20) 88
This is a lovely fruit forward Graciano deep ruby in color with aromas of dark cherry, black pepper and spice, and a touch of garrigue. On the palate, it offers concentrated wild cherry fruit flavors, good acidity, with a pleasantly tart finish.

Bierko Gorri 2001 Bierko BK Rioja ($50) 90
The BK is mainly sourced from old Tempranillo and Garnacha vines. It displays a lovely dark ruby purple color with aromas of black raspberry, wild cherry, very ripe plum and charred oak spice. It is soft on the attack with dark plum fruit, leather rounded tannins, and big grip on the finish. A classic earthy Rioja.

★ Bodegas Bretón combines traditional and modern winemaking techniques and styles at a new modern winery in Rioja Alta. Grapes are sourced from Breton's own estates, Loroñon and Domino de Conte and from neighboring producers. The first winemaker at Bodegas Breton was the talented Miguel-Angel de Gregorio, currently making his own wine at Finca Allende. Bodegas Bretón wines are competently made and primarily classical Rioja in style. Importer: Classical Wines, Seattle WA

Bretón 2006 Loroñon Barrel Fermented White Wine Rioja ($13) 87

Bretón 2004 Dominio de Conte Rioja ($41) 89
An attractive blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano sourced from the 22 ha Breton finca in Briones. Spends 18 months in American oak. Dark ruby. Aromas of plum, cedar, vanilla and balsamic on the nose. Ripe, soft fruit forward attack with notes of cedar, tobacco and tea. Soft tannins and a long lasting finish.

Bretón 2004 Alba de Breton Rioja ($53) 88

Bretón 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja ($41) 90
Dark garnet. Aromas of raspberry, tar and balsamic. A soft attack of ripe red and black fruit, notes of spice and black pepper, good acidity firm tannins and a long finish. Well done.

★ Bodegas Campillo was established in 1990, but the Campillo brand has been around a lot longer. The parent company is Faustino which also produces wine under its own label. These wines are traditional Rioja in style. Importer: Palm Bay International, Syosset, NY

Campillo 1994 Gran Reserva Rioja ($49) 88
Medium to deep garnet in color, this Gran Reserva displays aromas of dark cherry, charred oak and vanilla notes on the nose followed by fruit of medium concentration and notes of dill and vanilla. A fully mature wine that is at the end of its life, but is perfect for those who like the old classical Rioja style.

Campillo 1999 Reserva Rioja ($34) 87
The 1999 Campillo Reserva reveals a deep garnet ruby color and aromas of ripe cherry, strawberry, earth and game. Aged for 24 months in American oak and for 36 months in the bottle, it shows its age with flavors of dried fruit, oak and vanilla and finishes with coarse chewy tannins.

★ These are two first class wines from Castillo de Cuzcarrita, a small estate in Rioja Alta owned by The Bergé industrial group. Alvaro Ybarra is President of the winery and Ana Martin serves as winemaker. Modern vineyard management, rigorous selection of grapes, and gentle handling of fruit help explain the high quality of these new wave Rioja wines. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Castillo de Cuzcarrita 2002 Señorio de Cuzcarrita Rioja ($45) 89
This is an attractive earthy 100% Tempranillo that is aged for 12 months in French oak. It is dark ruby garnet in color and offers aromas of black cherry leather and roasted meat. These traits carry over on to the palate are complimented by round tannins, good acidity and a firm finish.

Castillo de Cuzcarrita 2001 Cerrado del Castillo Rioja ($80) 90
Made only in special years, and sourced from this estate's high altitude single vineyard. 100% Tempranillo produced from 37 year old vines and aged for 13 months in French oak. Displays a medium ruby garnet color with aromas of black fruit, sweet vanilla, balsamic and earth. On the palate, the wine offers complex black fruit, secondary notes and attractive oak highlights. Finishes with big chewy tannins that will need time to age. Great aging potential.

Colina Verde 2006 Colina Verde Rioja ($18) 88
A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha and 10% Mazuelo. Medium dark garnet with an intriguing bouquet of smoky, sweet oak with a hint of mint. The medium-bodied palate offers a lovely combination of cherry fruit, leather and sweet oak. Has a good structure and grip on the finish. This is a wine that will show even better with food. Importer: The Artisan Collection, New York, NY

★ Viñedos de Contino is one of the very top performing wineries in Rioja today. Located in Rioja Alavesa, it is one of the few wineries that produces all of its wines from its own 62 ha estate, which consists of low-yielding old bush vines. José Madrazo who served as winemaker at Contino until 1998 introduced many qualitative improvements which have been further advanced by his son, Jesus Madrazo who took over winemaking responsibilities in 1998. Contino is 50% owned by Cампания Vinicola del Norte de Espanа. All the wines at this winery are top of the line classical Rioja wines. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, New York
Contino 2005 Graciano Rioja ($145) 90
Jesus Madrazo loves Graciano and this single varietal bottling shows it. It displays a brilliant opaque ruby core with a purple rim and provides an intense blackberry nose with toast and floral notes. On the attack, the wine reveals rich and extracted blackberry and boysenberry fruit flavors that are clean but lack complexity. Nonetheless, the wine is nicely balanced and offers round tannins and a persistently fruity finish.

Contino 2001 Reserva Rioja ($47) 93
The 2001 Reserve is a gorgeous wine from a top vintage. It is a blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano, and 5% Garnacha/Mazuelo. It spent 3 years in 60% 2-year French oak and 40% American and 2 years in bottle. Medium ruby garnet in color, it offers aromas of leather and dried red fruit followed by a soft attack of dried red cherry fruit with a touch of cinnamon and spice. Concentrated with a seamless, silky texture, soft round tannins, and a long finish.

Contino 2005 Viña del Olivo Rioja ($147) 94
The Viña del Olivo is Contino’s top cuvée, consisting of 90% Tempranillo, 9% Graciano and 1% Mazuelo. It has an opaque, ruby purple color and offers lovely aromas of black fruit, sweet oak, coffee, mocha and coconut. Aged in 100% new French and American oak it boasts a rich and concentrated palate of blackberry fruit with notes of wood spice and a lush mouth feel, seamless and beautifully balanced. The tannins are round and ripe and the finish is long.

Contino 2004 Reserva Rioja ($47) 90
This Contino Reserva is a blend of 80% Tempranillo, 15% Graciano, 5% Garnacha and Mazuelo. It offers lovely black cherry and red fruit aromas and a soft attack of spicy black cherry fruit. Aged for 3 years in oak and 1 year in the bottle, it is soft, round and lust tasting. Fruit rich with round tannins and a persistent finish. Well done. More reviews of Bodegas Contino wines may be found in the i-WineReview Tasting Notes Archive.

Cueto 2005 Envite Crianza Rioja ($18) 90
This is a well-made blend of 60% Tempranillo, 25% Grenache, and 15% Mazuelo produced by Bodegas San Prudencio. The grapes are sourced from high altitude 50 year old vines and aged for 14 months in 60% French and 40% American oak. The wine displays a medium dark ruby color with complex aromas of cigar box, roasted meat and earth, with a violet note. It is soft on the attack with pretty blueberry and plum fruit accompanied by more smoky, meaty notes and a persistent finish. Excellent value! Importer: Quality Wines of Spain New York, NY

Cueto 2007 Tinto Rioja ($10) 87
Here is a straightforward, medium-ruby colored wine made from 90% Tempranillo, 5% Grenache, and 5% Mazuelo. It shows a fruit forward nose of very ripe, red berry fruit. And a palate best described as round and soft with very fresh, pretty red berry fruit. Don’t cellar this easy drinking wine. Drink it up! Importer: Quality Wines of Spain New York, NY CVNE (The Companía Vinicola del Norte de España) referred to by its brand name, Cune was founded in the early 1880s. A century later it was one of the most modern wineries in Rioja and winemaking was in the hands of the talented Jose Madrazo who also made the wines at Contino. Today the winery produces very good classical style wines in wineries located in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa; its CUNE Imperial and Viña Real bottlings are especially appreciated by wine enthusiasts. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, New York

Cune 2007 Monopole Blanco Rioja ($18) 87
One of the best known Viura on the market. Pale straw. Crisp, dry and fresh-tasting with a lightly fruited nose and lean palate. Nicely tuned acidity. The Monopole improves with time in the bottle, acquiring a more interesting flavor profile of lychee and a rounder mouth feel.

Cune 2005 Crianza Rioja ($18) 89
This Crianza of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Garnacha is medium ruby in color and displays aromas of black cherry fruit with a touch of leather and roasted meat. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in American oak, it offers a soft attack of lush red and black fruit that is nicely integrated with oak, round tannins and a long finish. Exhibits modern winemaking techniques, especially managing oxygenation.

Cune 2001 Viña Real Reserva Rioja ($37) 90
Dark ruby garnet, this 2001 Reserva form Rioja Alavesa offers aromas of black fruit, charred oak and leather scents. On the palate, it boasts a lush a silky mouth feel of nicely concentrated dried cherry fruit and cola notes. Layers of flavors, round ripe tannins and a long lasting finish.

Cune 2001 Imperial Reserva Rioja ($52) 92
One of this winery’s premier wines, the Imperial Reserva shows a lovely deep garnet color with a touch of pink on the rim. It boasts a rich and complex nose of earth and leather, dried plum, and black cherry. It reveals a ripe attack of red and black fruit with a touch of cedar and herbs. It is a beautifully balanced wine, seamless in texture and a fine example of classical Rioja at its best. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, New York

Bodegas D. S. Londoño 2005 Cortijo II Crianza Rioja ($14) 88
Cortijo II is sourced from diverse vineyards in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa. It is produced by the talented winemaker, David Sampedro who also makes the wines of Exopto. This is a well-made easy drinking wine, medium-deep ruby in color with very ripe blueberry and raspberry aromas and flavors, a touch of cedar, and ripe tannins on the finish. Importer: Ole Imports Manhasset, NY

★ Bodegas Diez-Caballero is a family owned winery in Rioja Alavesa which sources fruit from its own 27 hectare vineyard and produces wines of good quality in good vintages that are generally fruit forward in character. Importer: The ENYE Imports Group Chicago, IL

Diez-Caballero 2004 Crianza Rioja ($16) 87
A new wave style Crianza fresh, clean and pleasantly tart,
with a medium ruby color and aromas of fresh strawberry and a touch of vanilla. Bright, black cherry fruit flavors are offered on the palate with medium acidity. No real presence of oak. Lovely food wine.

**Bodegas Dinastia Vivanco and Museum of Wine Culture**

Bodegas Dinastia Vivanco is a modern winery launched in the early 1990s by Pedro Vivanco a Rioja wine merchant and passionate collector of wine-related artifacts. The winery is part of a grander project which includes an attractive Museum of Wine Culture located near the winery in the town of Briones in Rioja Alta.

**Bodegas Dinastia Vivanco** is operated by Pedro Vivanco’s sons, Santiago and brother, Rafael who is also the winemaker. Below are some notes on Vivanco wines we tasted during our visit to the Museum of Wine Culture. As these wines are currently not exported to the United States, no prices or ratings are provided.

The 2004 Crianza is medium dark ruby in color and displays aromas of black cherry, vanilla and spice. On the palate, it is soft and straightforward with light red berry fruit, medium acidity, and dry tannins on the finish. The 2005 Graciano “Parcelos de Graciano” is a new wave fruit forward wine with ripe aromas of blackberry fruit, very ripe and pure with notes of sweet and highly concentrated black fruit and round tannins. The wine is also high in alcohol (15.5%) and provides a big burn on the finish. The 2005 Quatro Variedades, our favorite, offers attractive aromas of black cherry, plum and toasted oak with vanilla highlights. On the palate, it is soft and supple with ripe mouth filling fruit, round tannins and a long firm finish. The 2001 Reserva is another delicious wine fruit forward in character offering dried red cherry and plum fruit aromas followed by a soft attack of moderate fruit flavors and a dry and slightly astringent palate.

**Diez-Caballero 2001 Seleccionada Rioja ($40) 89**

This wine is only made in the best vintages and is harvested by hand from 60+ year old vines. Aged 24 months in American and French oak, it exhibits a rustic character with a medium dark ruby color, hues of garnet and aromas of sweet fruit and coconut on the nose. On the palate it offers tart plum fruit flavors with a touch of smoky wood and peppery oak spice. Well done.

**Bodegas Dios Ares 2004 Crianza Rioja ($18) 89**

This dark ruby colored modern 100% Tempranillo produced by winemaker, Carlos San Pedro of Bodegas Pujanza, offers aromas of clean ripe black cherry fruit with a touch of herbs and attractively integrated oak. On the palate, it is soft and concentrated with lush ripe fruit, and notes of chocolate and licorice. The wine is also beautifully balanced with soft round tannins and a long lasting finish. Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA

**Bodegas Domeco de Jarauta 2007 Lar de Sotomayor Rioja ($15) 87**

A youthful deep purple ruby color is followed by whole berry carbonic notes, wet hay, cherry, and strawberry aromas. Fresh and fruity from carbonic maceration, with touches of reduction, tartness, and slight CO2. Importer: Frontier Wine Imports Dover, NJ

**Exopto Cellars 2006 Horizonte ($37) 88**

A new wave wine with a deep ruby color and consisting of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha and 10% Graciano. Aged for 10 months in new mostly French oak. It boasts pure dark cherry aromas followed by a soft attack and a fruited palate with ripe aromas and a pleasant finish. A lovely easy drinking and food friendly wine. Importer: Ole Imports Manhasset, NY

**Bodegas Faustino 1996 Tinto Gran Reserva Rioja ($35) 88**

This Gran Reserva is from one of Rioja’s oldest and best known wineries. It is medium to deep garnet in color with a slight orange rim. On the nose it reveals aromas of light plum fruit and game. On the palate it reveals dried fruit...
flavors, leather and earth with a touch of licorice and tar. This is a fine example of an old classical style Rioja Gran Reserva. Importer: Palm Bay Imports Syosset, NY

★ Finca Allende is producing some of Rioja’s most stylish and high quality wines. Winemaking is under the direction of Miguel Angel de Gregorio, formerly with Bodegas Breton. Finca Allende is located in the town of Briones in Rioja Alta and has over 90 other parcels keeping abreast of the potential of each. Miguel Angel blends modern and traditional winemaking methods, using old vertical presses yet experimenting with 300 liter barriques for aging. The wines are new wave in style, clean, fruit forward, elegant and complex.

Finca Allende 2006 Allende Blanco Rioja ($25) 90 This white is a blend of very ripe 70% Viura and 30% Malvasia which spends eight months on the lees in new French oak (and seven months in oak with out lees). The result is a very rich and creamy mouth feel and 14.5 alcohol, atypical of Viura. It is a wine with great aging potential, perhaps for 15 years, not unlike the white wines of Lopez Heredia Viña Tondonia.

Finca Allende 2004 Allende Tinto Rioja ($25) 91 This 100% Tempranillo is fermented in tank and French oak barriques, including 14 months of malo and an additional 14 months of aging in new French oak. It is medium ruby in color and displays remarkably fresh aromas (for all the time in barrel) of cherry fruit followed by a soft and elegant attack of ripe fruit flavors. The palate is beautifully balanced with silky soft tannins and a lasting finish. This is a wine that will improve with age, but can be consumed now and enjoyed. A fabulous wine that moves Rioja in a new direction.

Finca Allende 2005 Aurus Rioja ($250) 95 Aurus is sourced from a special high altitude “pago” or parcel, blending 85% Tempranillo with 15% Graciano. Dark ruby in color, it exhibits a subtle, yet complex nose of red and black fruit, white ash, spice and scents of elegant toasted oak. On the palate it displays soft ripe concentrated fruit with spicy notes that are in perfect balance yet still young and in need of more time to evolve. A big price tag too.

Finca Allende 2005 Calvario Rioja ($110) 94 This is a terroir-driven wine, ruby opaque with lovely aromas of black cherry, minerals and hints of toasted oak. Soft ripe and elegant on the palate, seamless and juicy. It offers pure extracted fruit and toasted oak in perfect harmony with round soft round tannins and a long lasting finish.

★ Finca Valpiedra is a beautiful 80 acre estate of the Martinez Bujanda family situated on the Ebro river in Rioja Alta and devoted to the production of high quality estate wines in a modern state-of-the-art winery. Winemaking is in the hands of Arancha de Lauren, Technical Director. The quality of these wines is high. Importer: Friend Wine Marketing DBA CIV (USA) Sacramento, CA

Finca Valpiedra 2005 Cantos de Valpiedra Rioja ($18) 88 This is an easy drinking wine of fresh strawberry and dried cherry aromas with a dash of black pepper, followed by light dark cherry flavors, a touch of cedar. It has good balance, excellent acidity and soft round tannins on the finish.

Finca Valpiedra 2004 Reserva Rioja ([$40]) 90 This Reserva displays a deep ruby color with earthy aromas of minerals, dark cherry and plum. Aged in French and American oak, it is soft on the attack and nicely concentrated, with ripe dark plum and spice flavors, soft round tannins, excellent balance with a rustic finish.

Finca Valpiedra 2005 Reserva ([$40]) 92 The 2005 Reserva which spends 22 months in new French oak, has a lovely opaque ruby color and aromas of pure ripe black cherry fruit with nicely integrated touches of French oak. On the attack it reveals more raspberry fruit flavors, a soft texture, round tannins, beautiful balance, and some earth notes on the finish. A terrific classical wine.

Freixenet Vasa 2006 Rioja ($12) 86 Freixenet Vasa 2004 Rioja ($15) 87 These two Vasa wines are produced by Bodega Solar Viejo, a winery located in Rioja Alavesa. The 2006 Yasa is a delicious wine for early drinking. It offers a lovely light ruby-purple color, fresh aromas of whole cluster red berry fruit, cherry, toast and vanilla. On the palate it is soft and round with red berry fruit flavors ripe tannins and a firm finish. The 2004 Crianza displays a medium ruby color and has lovely aromas of plum, toasty oak and vanilla. On the palate it offers a soft lush attack of dried black cherry and plum fruit, notes of leather and cigar box and round tannins on the finish. Nicely made.

G/H

Bodegas Y Viñedos Heras Cordon 2001 Reserva Rioja ([$45]) 88 The 2001 Reserva displays a youthful dark ruby color and offers fresh and juicy black cherry and plum fruit aromas. On the palate it is nicely balanced with more berry fruit and a touch of sandalwood. Although this classical Reserva is not complex, it is well crafted and tasty. Importer: Frontier Wine Imports Dover, NJ

Bodegas Y Viñedos Heras Cordon 2004 Vendimia Seleccionada Rioja ([$30]) 87 Light ruby garnet in color, this Vendimia Seleccionada offers dried cherry and plum fruit aromas followed by a palate of slightly astrigent red berry fruit; hard tannins, and a short finish. It is not apparent why this wine is labeled a Vendimia Seleccionada. Importer: Frontier Wine Imports Dover, NJ

Heredad Guzmán Aldazabal 2005 Graciano Rioja ($24) 90 This is a new wave Rioja wine and one of the top100% Graciano varietals. Opague purple ruby in color, if offers a blackberry and boysenberry fruit forward nose with a touch of reduction, loam and spice. On the palate it tastes very fresh and young with a somewhat jammy fruit attack. This very ripe style of wine has a lot in common with Zinfandel. Lots of fruit, good structure and very drinkable. Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA
Heredad Guzmán Aldazabal 2001, Rioja ($30) 89
Dark ruby with aromas of plum, pepper and spice and an overlay of smoke and wood. A soft attack of pure red and black ripe fruit flavors, round tannins, good balance and long lasting on the finish. A delicious wine ready to drink. Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA

★ The Herdad Ugarte family has been growing wine in Rioja since 1870 although the current company and winery was only established in 1989. The winery produces a full panoply of wines at all price levels totaling some 60,000 cases. Most of the wines are traditional in style and of good quality. However, a few of the reservas and higher end wines are more modern and of better quality. Importers: Casa Ventura Imports, Bellingham, WA. The ENYE Imports Group Chicago, IL

Heredad Ugarte 2005 Crianza Rioja ($15) 87
The medium ruby 2005 Crianza exhibits black cherry and leather aromas followed by a soft medium-bodied attack of more black cherry fruit, medium weight and nicely integrated charred oak flavors. The wine is well balanced with ripe tannins and a lasting finish.

Heredad Ugarte 2003 Martin Cendoya Reserva Rioja ($37) 87
The Martin Cendoya Reserva displays a deep ruby color with light red fruit aromas and gamey notes on the nose. On the plate it offers lightly concentrated spicy red fruit with hints of oak and leather. A tasty wine with some firm tannins and a solid finish.

Heredad Ugarte 2001 Cedula Real Gran Reserva ($50) 90

Heredad Ugarte 2004 Anastasio Rioja ($175) 92
Named after the Ugarte family patriarch, the Anastasio displays a deep ruby purple color with aromas of black fruit, cigar box, violets and sandalwood. On the attack it offers highly concentrated pure ripe black fruit flavors, with a soft texture and elegant mouth feel. Nicely balanced and a long-lasting finish. A rich tasting Tempranillo with a price to match.

★ Bodegas Hermanos Peciña is a relatively young winery located in Rioja Alta which only became operational in the mid-1990s. It has 50 ha of its own vineyards with an average age of 25 years, planted with Tempranillo, Garnacha and Graciano. The winery uses modern methods to make classic and new wave-style wines.

Bodegas Hermanos Peciña 2005 Chobeo de Peciña Rioja ($34) 89
This wine is produced from whole grapes which are carefully destemmed and transferred into fermentation tanks by gravity for 12 days of maceration and 9 months in new American oak. The resulting wine is dark ruby purple in color with aromas of fresh boysenberry and blackberry. On the palate it is offers purity of fruit flavors, a soft silky texture, and round tannins with hardly any traces of oak aging. An interesting new wine that should continue to evolve and probably become more interesting and complex.

ropsychological

Bodegas Hermanos Peciña 2003 Crianza Rioja ($32) 88
This hot vintage produced a Crianza which is garnet in color with light aromas of fruit, vanilla and American oak. Light in style, it offers dried cherry fruit, soft mouth feel, round elegant tannins, and a pleasant finish.

Bodegas Hermanos Peciña 1998 Gran Reserva Rioja ($50) 92
This is one of the finest Gran Reserva's we have run across from the 1998 vintage. Light to medium garnet in color with an orange rim, it exhibits an elegant nose of dried red cherry fruit followed by a silky soft attack of sweet cherry, licorice and vanilla. It also has a lovely mouth feel, beautiful balance, and a complex finish. Worth the search!

★ Bodegas y Viñedos Labastida Located in the foothills of the Sierra Cantabria, this highly successful cooperative winery is producing some of the finest classical style wines in Rioja today. The cooperative is composed of growers around the village of Labastida who produce wines from their own grapes. Winemaking is in the hands of Manuel Ruiz, is young highly skilled winemaker. The flagship wine here is the Manuel Quintano Reserva Especial. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Labastida 2004 Crianza Rioja ($15) 88
The dark ruby Crianza displays complex aromas of smoke, cigar box, leather, roasted meat and orange peel aromas. On the attack it reveals soft and flavorful dried black cherry fruit, good acidity, rustic tannins and a long finish.

Labastida 2001 Manuel Quintano Reserva Especial Rioja ($60) 94
This superb bottling is made from 100% old vines Tempranillo. Aged in American oak for 36 to 40 months, it reveals a deep ruby garnet color with orange hues on the rim and offers aromas of dried dark cherry and smoked meat followed by a lush attack of sweet and concentrated dried fruit flavors and notes of cigar box and tobacco. It finishes with firm round tannins and persistence and should age well.

Labastida 2001 Reserva Rioja ($22) 91
This lovely Reserve displays a dark garnet color with aromas of red cherry licorice, and toasted oak. Soft and silky on the attack, it exhibits excellent balance and a lingering finish. Simply elegant.

★ Bodegas Lan was established in the early 1970s. The name Lan comes from the first three provinces that produce Rioja wine: Logroño, Alava, and Navarra. It has a large modern winery and 72 ha of vineyards which it uses for its best cuvées. It also sources grapes from neighboring growers. Lan has been introducing improvements in vineyard management and winemaking over the past 10 years which have contributed to the high quality of its wines.
Lan 2005 Lan a Mano Edicion Limitada Rioja ($40) 90
Deep ruby with cherry and black currant fruit aromas with toasty notes. On the palate, the fruit is ripe and concentrated with notes of chocolate and minerals. The wine shows beautiful balance and structure, ripe tannins, yet is still a little young and in need of more bottle age. It is a close competitor of Culmen.

Lan 2004 Reserva Rioja ($17) 88
Dark ruby in color with aromas of black raspberry, ripe plum, coffee and herbs. Soft on the attack, it offers good mouth feel with flavors of black cherry and tea, medium acidity, hard tannins and firm grip on the finish.

Lan 2004 Culmen Reserva Rioja ($60) 92
Culmen is Lan's top cuvée. It is estate bottled and only produced in the best years from old vines. Opaque ruby in color, it exhibits attractive aromas of black cherry and blackcurrant, toasted oak followed by a velvety smooth attack. On the palate it offers pure and dense ripe black fruit flavors with soft round mouth feel, outstanding structure, and some firm tannins on the finish. Impressive.

Las Orcas 2004 Pagos de Valdeorca Rioja ($40) 88
A lovely wine with a color of deep ruby and a touch of garnet. The palate reveals dark cherry and plum fruit, oak, and coconut. The tannins are round and chewy.

Las Orcas 2004 Solar de Ranzo Crianza Rioja ($17) 87
Medium ruby, garnet, nicely integrated red berry fruit and oak aromas, fresh concentrated soft sweet attack, moderate, medium-bodied, ripe and soft finish.

Las Orcas 2007 Solar de Ranzo Tempranillo Rioja ($12) 86
Medium purple ruby, strawberry, black cherry, whole cluster carbonic fermentation notes on nose, banana and wet straw. Fruity, clean, soft attack, simple, light and astringent.

★ Bodegas Leza García has been in the wine business for generations, starting as growers and later becoming winemakers. Located in Rioja Alta, they produce classical Rioja styled wines under their own label and under Valdepalacios and Barón de Villacampa. Importer: Norstar Global Imports

Bodegas Leza García 2005 Familia Seleccionada Rioja ($21) 87
A blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Garnacha. Dark ruby. Spicy nose of plum and cherry. Medium weight. Toasty oak, plum and cherry flavors. Dry tannins. Importer: Norstar Global Imports

Bodegas Leza García 2006 LG Rioja ($70) 88
The LG is this estate’s top of the line wine. Dark ruby in color, it offer a fresh, fruity nose of plum and cherry followed by a soft attack of medium weight cherry fruit and dry tannins on the finish. Importer: Norstar Global Imports Smithtown, NY

Bodegas Leza García 2001 Baron de Villacampa Reserva Rioja ($25) 88
The 2001 Baron de Villacampa Reserva displays a dark ruby color with attractive aromas of ripe plum and oak. Aged for 12 months in French and American oak, it is classical in style, it offers a soft attack with nicely concentrated fruit flavors, good balance and round tannins on the finish.

★ La Rioja Alta is one of Rioja’s finest wineries producing wines of excellent quality and classical in style. The winery celebrated 100 years of operation in 1990 and has steadily improved the quality of its wines. All the wines are delicious and exemplary of the classical Rioja style. Importer: Europvin-Christopher Cannan Selections; Michael Skurnik Wines, (Syosset, NY); Bacchus Importers (Baltimore, MD) and others.

La Rioja Alta 1995 Gran Reserva 904 Rioja ($50) 92

La Rioja Alta 2005 Marques de Haro Reserva Rioja ($--) 93
Dark ruby opaque core, this 100% Tempranillo which spends 16 months in American oak, offers warm aromas of roasted coffee and blackberry. On the attack, it exhibits ripe and concentrated black cherry and other dark fruit flavors, cinnamon and clove. Beautifully balanced with classic Rioja style, it is a wine which can be consumed now but will also be terrific in years to come.

La Rioja Alta 2001 Viña Alberdi Rioja ($22) 88

La Rioja Alta 2000 Viña Ardanza Reserva Rioja ($28) 89

★ Bodegas Lar de Paula is a small family winery producing well-made classical Rioja wines. Located in Rioja Alavesa, the winery sources all of its grapes from local growers. Their best wines are Cepas Viejas and Merus 4. They also produce table wines under the Herdade de Baroja label. Importer: American Estate Wines, NJ

Lar de Paula 2004 Cepas Viejas Rioja ($36) 88
This bottling is sourced from 40-50 years old vines from high altitude vineyards. It is ruby opaque in color with lovely dark cherry, tobacco, mint, and violet aromas. Spending 14 months in new American and French oak, it reveals ripe black fruit layered with notes of balsamic and 14.5% alcohol. Firm ripe tannins and a long finish.

Lar de Paula 2004 Merus 4 Rioja ($120) 90
This estate's top wine. Dark ruby, opaque core, brick rim. 100% new French oak for 12 months. 15-20 days of

★ Lopez de Heredia is one of the oldest and most celebrated wineries in Rioja. Founded in 1877 by Rafael Lopez de Heredia, the winery has a well earned reputation for producing the most traditional wines (and some of the most interesting) of Rioja. The grapes for these wines are sourced from Lopez de Heredia’s own vineyards (ie. Gravonia and Tondonia) totaling 170 hectares in Rioja Alta. Importer: Think Global LLC Santa Barbara, CA.

Lopez de Heredia 1989
Viña Tondonia Reserva Rioja ($48) 92
Gold in color with aromas of dried apricots, white almonds, dried figs and butterscotch. Soft, and round on the attack with oxidized flavors of dry sherry and dried fruit. The wine exhibits good acidity and balance, and a very long finish. Great match with foie gras, or eggs scrambled with truffles and shiitakes.

Lopez de Heredia 2002 Viña Cubillo Crianza Rioja ($28) 89
This Viña Cubillo is medium ruby in color with a garnet rim. It displays aromas of dried cherry, dried mushroom, and forest floor. Soft and sweet on the attack, it reveals flavors of dried cherry, raspberry and vanilla with leather notes. Tannins are round and the finish is firm.

Lopez de Heredia 2000 Viña Basconia Reserva Rioja ($39) 92
This terrific wine is a blend of 80% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha, and 5% Mazuela/ Graciano. Medium dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of black cherry, cigar box, and smoky oak followed by earthy, meaty flavors of dark fruits with good acidity and great depth of flavor. Round and mouth filling.

★ Lubberri is a small family winery in Rioja Alevesa, owned and operated by Florentino Martinez Monje. It has 35 ha of low-yielding old vine vineyards. Vineyard management is a top priority and yields are kept low. The wine sat this estate are well made: clean, fruit forward and modern: De Maison Selections, Inc Chapel Hill, NC.

Lubberri 2005 Seis de Lubberri Rioja ($18) 89
The Seis de Lubberri displays a dark ruby color with aromas of black cherry and plum fruit, licorice, leather, and spice box. On the palate it exhibits highly concentrated dark red and spicy fruit flavors, chewy tannins and a long finish. This is a delicious wine that would benefit from a year or more in the bottle.

Lubberri 2004 Biga Rioja ($22) 87
Medium ruby in color, this 100% Tempranillo from old vines exhibits an earthy spicy character with red berry fruit aromas, minerals and notes of white pepper. On the palate it reveals more ripe red fruit flavors, mineral like notes, round gripping tannins, and a dry finish.

Lubberri 2003 Monje Amestoy Rioja ($31) 90
This deep ruby colored wine offers attractive aromas of ripe black raspberry and plum fruits and sweet smoky charred oak. It is soft and lush on the attack with concentrated ripe black fruit, mineral notes and spice, excellent balance and a long lasting finish.

Luis Cañas The Luis Cañas winery began making bulk wine in 1928 and bottling its own wine in 1970. Over the past decades, under Juan Luis Cañas, son of the founder, the winery has modernized its winemaking operation, and today produces high volume traditional and modern style wines. Stylistically, its Crianzas and Reservas tend to be rustic, earthy and meaty with more than a hint of oak. Most noteworthy are the Amaren series, only produced in the best years, and Hiru 3 Racimos sourced from hand-selected old vines Tempranillo. Importer: Henriot NY, NY

Luis Cañas 2001 Reserva Selección de la Familia Rioja ($30) 88
Dark ruby, pleasant ripe plum and black cherry aromas, big and concentrated flavors, savory. Soft attack, ripe concentrated dark plum fruit, nicely balanced, cherry tannins and grip. Would benefit from cellar time but you could enjoy it with big flavorful roast meats.

Luis Cañas 2004 Hiru 3 Racimos Rioja ($118) 93
This wine is the result of meticulous winemaking at Luis Cañas. Produced from a careful selection of fruit from high altitude old vine vineyards, this Hiru 3 Racimos is opaque ruby in color with rich aromas of black fruits and toasted oak. On the attack it offers a silks soft texture with pure mouthfiling blackberry fruit and minerals on the palate, rounded tannins and terrific balance. It is a most expressive wine that could be mistaken for a New World wine in a blind tasting, but is a fine example of new wave Rioja winemaking.

Luis Cañas 2001 Amaren Tempranillo Reserva Rioja ($--) 89
Made in the better vintage years, this Amaren exhibits a deep ruby garnet color and aromas of black cherry, leather, and roasted meat. On the palate it offers a soft attack of dried plum fruit with earthy notes and hints of balsamic and herbs followed by round and chewy tannins and good grip on the finish.

M/N/O

★ Marques de Caceres led the revolution in Rioja winemaking in the 1970s. Built by owner Enrique Forner, along specifications inspired by the famed French enologist, Émile Peynaud, the winery was the most modern for its time. Since then, Marques de Caceres has been at the forefront of traditional winemaking in Rioja and its wines are generally very good in terms of quality and price. Gaudium is an especially noteworthy modern wine of a very high quality. Importer: Vineyard Brands, Inc.

Marques de Caceres 2004 Crianza Rioja ($13) 87
The 2004 Crianza is a blend of Tempranillo, Grenache, and Graciano. Medium ruby in color, it offers aromas of earthy black cherry fruit followed by a soft lush attack of light cherry and plum fruit, spice and rounded tannins on the finish. This is a tasty every day wine made in the traditional style.
Marques de Caceres 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja ($35) 90
This Gran Reserva is a blend of Tempranillo, Mazuelo, and Graciano. It offers aromas of rich, dark red fruit with a touch of toasty oak followed by a soft lush attack of red and black fruit with leather notes. It Youthful with lovely integration and balance. Assertive but ripe tannins. Doesn’t have the dried fruit character and charm of traditional Rioja.

Marques de Caceres 2001 Reserva Rioja ($25) 88
The Reserva blends Tempranillo, Mazuelo, Graciano and exhibits a subdued nose of dried cranberry and pomegranate with toasted oak notes. It reveals a lush attack of cocoa-infused ripe dark red fruit, excellent balance, dry tannins and a long finish.

Marques de Caceres 2002 Gaudium Rioja ($64) 93
The superb 2002 Gaudium is a blend of 95% Tempranillo, 5% Graciano sourced from old low yielding vineyards. It exhibits an opaque ruby color with aromas of boysenberry, cassis, and rich oak notes followed by a soft lush attack of concentrated and pure red and black fruit. Dense, almost unctuous in mouth feel, savory with a long finish. A new wave wine with plenty of potential for aging.

★ Marques de Murrieta was founded in 1852. Its founder, Luciano de Murrieta, Marqués de Murrieta, brought the latest winemaking technology to Rioja from Bordeaux and for many years this winery was at the forefront of modern winemaking in Rioja. After a period of decline, the winery has been revitalized under Vincent Dalmau and is once again making some excellent wines at the 300 ha. Ygay Estate in Rioja Alta. Importer: Maisons Marques & Domaines USA

Marqués de Murrieta 2003 Capellanía White Reserve Rioja ($26) 89

Marqués de Murrieta 2000 Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial Rioja ($55) 88
This Ygay Gran Reserva displays a garnet color with a port-like nose, including a touch of volatile acidity. It is jammy wine with dark cherry fruit flavors and leather. Slightly oxidized and at the peak of its maturity. A classical old Rioja style wine.

Marqués de Murrieta 2004 Dalmau Red Rioja ($165) 94
A jewel in the crown of this estate. Dark ruby garnet in color with ripe red and black fruit aromas, combined with attractive vanilla and toasty oak. On the palate, it exhibits a claret-like character with plum, cassis, white ash, and a silky yeasty texture. Grainy tannins and long lasting on the palate with great potential for aging.

★ Bodegas Marques de Riscal has been a pioneer in modern winemaking along French lines in Rioja. Established in 1858 it was the first to introduce the use of barriques for aging wine and the first to produce wines using Cabernet Sauvignon. The recent construction of an exciting new tourism hotel by architect Frank Gehry has given Marques de Riscal a face lift. The wines here are traditional and New Wave in style with Baron de Chirél recognized as the winery’s best wine. The 150 Aniversario which celebrates the winery’s founding is even a notch better Importer: Shaw Ross International, Miramar, FL

Marques de Riscal 2003 Barón de Chirel Reserva Rioja ($60) 89
Produced on a limited scale from 90-100 year old Tempranillo vines. Aged for 20 months in American oak and 12 months in bottle, it displays a deep ruby core and ripe aromas of black cherry and balsamic. Highly extracted on the palate with intensity of fruit and oak flavors followed by young chewy tannins.

Marques de Riscal 2001 150 Aniversario Gran Reserva Rioja ($40) 90
A beautiful dark ruby-garnet color. Produced from selected grapes of a top vintage. Complex aromas of sour cherry, blackberry, and leather. Although aged for 32 months in barrels and 48 months in the bottle, it exhibits remarkable freshness with a soft fruit rich attack, round tannins excellent balance and a firm finish.

Marques de Riscal 2004 Reserva Rioja ($14) 87
Dark ruby purple. Aromas of red and blackberry fruit with notes of leather. Light fruit attack with touches of licorice and cedar. Hard astringent tannins on the finish. This wine could benefit from more time in the bottle.

Bodegas Marques de Vargas,
Bodegas 2003 Reserva Rioja ($32) 87
A rustic wine with a dark ruby color and a garnet edge. It offers secondary aromas of mushroom, forest floor, and meaty notes followed by an attack of sweet lush dried dark fruit with lots of oak and a touch of vanilla. The tannins are slightly dry and the finish is firm. Importer: Steve Miles Selections Denver, CO

Bodegas Martin Codax 2005 Ergo Rioja ($15) 86
Martin Codax is better known in Spain for its white wines produced in the Rias Baixas. But it also has a winery in Rioja. Ergo is a youthful, fruit forward Tempranillo with a fresh nose of red berries followed by a soft attack of tart juicy red fruit, soft tannins and a pleasant finish. Excellent quaffing wine. Importer: E & J Gallo Winery Healdsburg, CA

★ Bodegas Martinez Lacuesta is a small family winery with 50 hectares of vineyards situated in Rioja Alta. It produces excellent quality Rioja wines that are classical and new wave in style combining complexity, flavor and elegance. Importers: Spain Wine Collection, Congers, NY and Dreamride/Alliance Wines Corp, Durham, NC

Martinez Lacuesta, 2005 Ventilla 71 Rioja ($35) 89
Opaque ruby in color with attractive aromas of well integrated black fruit and French oak with a touch of touch of earth and violets. On the palate, this 100% Tempranillo displays layers of concentrated black fruit and spicy chocolate and a persistent finish with lingering pure sweet fruit. Well done and offered at a great price.
Bodegas Martinez Laorden 2006 El Talud Rioja ($15) 87
The El Talud is a straightforward tasty wine offering fresh raspberry/boysenberry fruit on the nose followed by pure ripe red fruit on the palate with round tannins and a long finish. An easy drinking wine.

Bodegas Martinez Laorden 2004 La Orbe Rioja ($22) 88
La Orbe offers fresh aromas of red berries and oak with a touch of earth. It is soft and round on the attack with red fruit flavors and vanilla on the palate. Well made and delicious. Importer: Grapes of Spain. Lorton, VA

Bodegas Medrano Irazu 2001 Reserva Rioja ($22) 91
This Reserve is a lovely Reserva with a deep garnet core and an orange brick rim. It is classical Rioja with an earthy, dusty, smoked meat character, combining sweet dried fruit flavors, slightly dried tannins and a long lasting palate. Very well done.

Bodegas Miguel Merino 2000 Reserva Rioja ($45) 87
Deep garnet, brick rim, dried cherry and plum with nicely integrated cedar aromas. Soft on the attack, with a ripe cherry and oaky mid-palate along with notes of leather and dry tannins. Textbook classical Rioja. Importer: Frontier Wine Imports Dover, NJ

Montebuena 2006 Red Wine Rioja ($13) 87
This wine produced by Bodegas Labastida exhibits a deep ruby color with ripe fruit forward blackberry aromas and lovely oak notes. Soft on the attack followed by dark red fruits, pepper, ripe tannins, good acidity and a tart finish.

Montebuena 2006 Red Wine Rioja ($13) 87
This wine produced by Bodegas Labastida exhibits a deep ruby color with ripe fruit forward blackberry aromas and lovely oak notes. Soft on the attack followed by dark red fruits, pepper, ripe tannins, good acidity and a tart finish.

Montecillo 2002 Reserva Rioja ($21) 87
The 2002 Reserva displays a deep garnet color with aromas of black cherry, smoke, leather, roasted meat and charred oak. On the palate, it offers a soft attack of dried cherry fruit, round tannins and a rather long and dry finish.

Montecillo 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja ($28) 88
This Gran Reserva offers dried fruit aromas with earth notes followed by a soft attack of black fruit, with notes of loam, cigar box, and charred oak. Soft tannins with light fruit and a very dry finish.

Montecillo 1994 Aniversario 130 Gran Reserva Rioja ($35) 89
Released for Bodegas Montecillo's 130th anniversary. Opaque garnet with a brick rim, this Gran Reserva offers complex aromas of dried fruit, earth, leather and spice notes. On the palate it reveals a dry attack of raisin fruit, old leather and musty notes with a long finish. An attractive wine for those who like the Gran Reserva style.

Muga 2005 Torre Muga Rioja ($75) 94
Torre Muga is a blend of 75% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo, and 10% Graciano. It is sourced from high altitude old vineyards and aged for 18 months in 100% new French oak. (Allier) Dark ruby in color, it exhibits black fruit and earth aromas followed by a soft attack of pure blackberry fruit and a complex layered mouth feel. (contributed by the Mazuelo and Graciano). Tannins are round and soft and the finish is long lasting. Terrific purity of flavor.

Muga 2005 Aro Rioja ($175) 96
Aro is Muga's top of the line new wave cuvée, a blend of
Bodegas Olarra 2004 Cerro Añon Crianza Rioja ($15) 87
This Crianza displays a medium dark ruby color and a nose of ripe cherry with notes of leather and sweet vanilla. On the palate it reveals a soft and round mouth feel with ripe tannins and a long pleasant finish.

Bodegas Olarra 2002 Añares Reserva Rioja ($--) 87
Pure dark ruby. Clean, fresh pure aromas of dark cherry and cedar. Soft attack of lush, juicy dark cherry fruit, chewy tannins and a tart finish.

Bodegas Ondarre 2001 Mayor de Ondarre Reserva Rioja ($--–) 88
Medium ruby garnet. Earthy in style with aromas of leather, meat, and game notes. Mulberry fruit on the palate with a soft attack of sandalwood and cigar box and a dry finish.

Bodegas Olarra 2005 Añares Crianza Rioja ($--) 86
The Añares Crianza has a dark ruby garnet color with aromas of dried cherries, mushroom and earth. It has a soft attack with flavors of cherry and vanilla and a dry tannic finish. Classical Rioja in style.

Bodegas Ondarre 2004 Reserva Rioja ($--) 87

★ Bodegas Ondalán was established in 1976 in Rioja Alavesa by Julio Martínez-Bujanda. The winery produces classical and new wave style Rioja wines. The 100 Abades Graciano is especially noteworthy. Importer: P.R. Grisley Co. Salt Lake City, Utah

Bodegas Ondalán 2005 100 Abades Graciano Rioja ($30) 90
The 100 Abades is a 100% Graciano varietal that spends 15 months in new French oak and additional aging time in bottle before release. It is a young wine with a dark ruby color and lovely aromas of red and black fruit and notes of pepper, leather and toasted oak. Soft on the attack, it is medium weight and offers a soft fruity mouthfeel with more pepper and spice notes, leather and smoke followed by round tannins and a firm finish. Well done.

Bodegas Ondalán 2005 Crianza Rioja ($15) 87
This blend of 70% Tempranillo and 30% Graciano exhibits a dark ruby color with bright, fresh black cherry and spice aromas. Aged for 14 months in American and French oak, it offers a well-balanced palate of ripe cherry fruit, light toast notes with a hint of cocoa, and a long finish.

Bodegas Ondalán 2002 Reserva Rioja ($22) 88
The dark ruby garnet Reserva displays aromas of leather, smoke and cherry. On the palate, it is medium weight with flavors of dry cherry, spice and toasted oak, followed by soft tannins and a long finish.

★ Bodegas Palacio began operations as a family winery under Cosme Palacio in the mid-1890s. It was later sold to private French investors in 1972. Its current owners, Hijos de Antonio Barceló, took over the winery in 1998 and have made major investments in the winery and vineyards. The wines are classical Rioja in style with some modern accents. All the wines are very well made.

Bodegas Palacio 2004 Bodegas Palacio Especial Reserva Rioja ($40) 91
Made only in the best years from old vines Tempranillo, this Reserva displays an opaque purple ruby color with aromas of fresh dark boysenberry fruit with cigar box notes. Dense plums and black cherry are offered on the flavorful palate with nicely integrated oak. Firm, round tannins very present on the finish.

Bodegas Palacio 2004 Cosme Palacio Y Hermanos Reserva Rioja ($35) 88
Opaque ruby with a big smoky oak nose, dark cherry and spice. Elegant, soft, and round attack of dense, fresh dark red fruit. Nicely balanced. Oak well-integrated. Tannins are ripe and assertive.

Bodegas Palacio 2005 Cosme Palacio Tinto Rioja ($15) 87
Deep ruby purple, this Tempranillo offers a fresh, plum fruit nose with smoke and toast aromas. On the palate it shows soft, ripe fruit flavors with good intensity and chewy tannins.

★ Bodegas Palacios Remondo is a family winery that has been producing wine in Rioja since the mid-1940s. Alavaro Palacios, son of founder, Antonio Palacios, and best known for his Ermita and other outstanding wines of Priorat and Bierzo, is also the current winemaker at Bodegas Palacios. The wines reviewed here are fruit rich, complex and balanced---examples of high quality new wave Rioja winemaking. Importer: Folio Fine Wine Partners Napa, CA
Palacios Remondo 2006 Placet Finca Blanco Rioja ($20) 89

Palacios Remondo 2004 La Montesa Crianza Rioja ($20) 88
Deep ruby, garnet hues, this blend of Garnacha, Tempranillo, Mazuelo and Graciano offers youthful dark cherry and raspberry aromas with notes of smoked meat. Full-bodied, soft attack, excellent balance, nicely concentrated dark cherry fruit, garrique, round tannins, firm finish.

Palacios Remondo 2006 La Vendimia Rioja ($14) 88
This medium ruby 50-50 blend of Garnacha and Tempranillo, vinified with partial carbonic maceration, reveals fresh red berry aromas and a soft attack of dark berry fruit, lots of spice, light to medium-weight, and a silky texture. Ready to drink.

Palacios Remondo 2005 Propiedad H Rioja ($40) 92
60% Garnacha and 40% Tempranillo vinified in traditional large tinos (oak tanks) with extended maceration and 14 months of aging in mainly French Oak. Dark ruby, with aromas of pomegranate, citrus, and cedar. Soft lush attack of ripe red and blue berry fruit, notes of graphite and toast, nicely integrated, lasting finish

Bodegas Pastor Diaz 2007 Castroviejo Rioja ($--) 86
This is a simple and straightforward quaffing wine with aromas and flavors of raspberry and cherry liquor. It would probably show best served chilled.

Bodegas Patrocnio 2006 Zinio Tempranillo-Graciano Rioja ($16) 87
Dark ruby, clean raspberry and strawberry fruit aromas, nicely integrated oak, lush attack, ripe tannins, clean, easy drinking, rustic. Importer: The ENYE Imports Group Chicago, IL

Bodegas Patrocnio 2004 Zinio Vendimia Seleccionada Crianza Rioja ($19) 88
Medium-deep ruby garnet, fresh fruit nose, fresh herbs, touch of sandalwood, soft attack, dark cherry, chewy tannins, Garnacha-like, slightly alcoholic, Importer: The ENYE Imports Group Chicago, IL

Bodegas Primicia, 2004 Crianza Rioja ($20) 86

Bodegas y Viñedos Pujanza, 2004 Pujanza ($40) 90
Dark ruby with a nose of dark cherry and plum compote. On the palate shows dense concentrated attack, full-bodied, well-integrated oak, firm, minerals, ripe chewy tannins. Big wine that needs more time in the bottle to show all of its virtues. Importer: Grapes of Spain, Lorton, VA

Palacios Remondo 2003 El Molino de Puelles Rioja ($30) 88
Opaque ruby, nose of black cherry and black currant fruit, toasted oak, ripe pure, soft round mouth feel, rich and concentrated, blackberry fruit, beautifully balanced, soft round tannins, long-lasting finish. Importer: Las Arribes LLC/Manolo's Wines Bloomington, IN

Ramon Bilbao 2005 Crianza Tempranillo Edicion Limitada Rioja ($--) 85
This Crianza exhibits a dark ruby core with a brick rim. Closed on the nose, it reveals some notes of leather, smoke and a touch of violet. It has full-bodied attack of tart dark fruit, somewhat bitter tannins and an astringent finish.

Ramon Bilbao 2005 Mirto Rioja ($--) 86
Deep ruby, dark core. Smoky black fruit aromas with black pepper notes on the nose. Soft, sweet attack with a slightly dry mid-palate and dry hard tannins.

★ Granja Nuestra Señora de Remelluri The Remelluri estate located high in the foothills of the Sierra Cantabria was purchased in 1968 by Jaime Rodriguez its current owner. The first Remelluri wines were produced in the early 1970s and many fine wines have been produced since first under the direction of Telmo Rodriguez, Jaime Rodriguez’ son and currently by Ana Barron Lopez. Grapes are sourced from Remelluri’s own 105 ha estate and winemaking is essentially modern with mainly French oak barrels used for aging wine.

Remelluri 2006 Blanco Rioja ($30) 92
This Rioja white has attracted the attention of wine enthusiasts for many years. It is a tasty blend of Vigonier, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Moscatel, Marsanne and Roussanne (approved by the Consejo Regulador in 1990). The 2006 which was harvested at the end of October-early November is very ripe and high in alcohol (14.5) offering tropical fruit, white peach and floral aromas and flavors with notes of vanilla and oak. It has a lovely creamy round mouth feel and is nicely balanced.

Remelluri 2004 Reserva Rioja ($25) 88
The Reserva is made of 90% Tempranillo and small amounts of Graciano and other grapes. It is sourced from the fruit of 31 different vineyards and has an earthy character with a nose of leather and game and dense fruit flavors. The tannins are chunky and the finish is firm.

Remelluri 2003 Coleccion Jaime Rodriguez Rioja ($80) 92
Despite the fact that 2003 was a difficult year, this wine is relatively well balanced and elegant offering ripe cherry fruit on the nose with notes of balsamic and sweet oak. On the palate it reveals complex red and black fruit flavors with mineral notes and hard tannins that will need time to soften. A blend of Tempranillo and about 25% Garnacha.

★ Bodegas Fernando Remirez de Ganuza is a small boutique winery owned and operated by Fernando Remirez, who bought and sold vineyards before establishing his own winery in Rioja Alavesa. The winery sources fruit from it
own 70 ha-vineyard mainly planted with old low-yielding Tempranillo vines. The vineyards and winemaking at this estate are first-class in every respect.

Fernando Remírez de Ganuza 2003
Fincas de Ganuza Reserva Rioja ($75) 90

Fernando Remírez de Ganuza 2006 R. Blanco Fermentado en Barrica Rioja ($-- ) 89

Fernando Remírez de Ganuza 2004 Reserva Rioja ($75) 92

Fernando Remírez de Ganuza 2005
Trasnocho Reserva Rioja ($70) 91

★ Rioja Vega is an old winery founded by the Ugalde family in the late 19th century. It is presently owned by Group Principe de Viana which purchased the estate in 1983 and has invested heavily in improving the quality of its wines. The wines reviewed here are at the entry level.

Rioja Vega 2006 Joven Rioja ($9) 86
This is a flavorful young wine consisting of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Garnacha. Medium ruby in color, it displays aromas of black cherry with a touch of oak and meaty notes. Light on the palate, it has a tart, dry and short finish. Offered at a great price. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Rioja Vega 2004 Crianza Rioja ($13) 86
This Crianza is a blend of 50% Tempranillo, 35% Mazuelo, and 25% Garnacha. It has a deep ruby garnet color and reticent earthy aromas. On the palate it offers flavors of vanilla and light red plum fruit and spice. Good acidity. Decent finish. Somewhat rustic. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Bodegas Riojanas 2004 Gran Albina Vendimia Rioja ($45) 87

Bodegas Riojanas 2001 Monte Real Reserva Rioja ($23) 88
Medium dark ruby garnet. Touch of oxidation, chocolate cherries, vanilla and cedar. Soft, dry attack of light, dried fruit... Dry finish of leather and oxidative notes... Soft tannins. Importer: Vintage Wines NY, NY

★ Bodegas Roda is an outstanding boutique winery owned by Mario Rottlan and his wife Carmen Daurella, both from Catalonia. Agustín Santolaya, a top viticulturalist, heads the winery which currently produces three very high quality cuvées from Tempranillo and Graciano. Roda sources its grapes from 16 high altitude low yielding old vineyards sites in Rioja Alta and has steadily improved its vineyards through massal and genetic research. Roda is a quintessential new wave Rioja winery producing stunning wines for the upscale consumer. Importer: Kobrand Corporation Purchase, NY

Roda 2003 Roda I Reserva Rioja ($70) 92
The Roda I Reserva is sourced from 35 year old low-yielding vines. It is ruby in color and intensely aromatic displaying plum, raspberry and cedar. On the palate it offers a soft attack, elegant mouth feel with lots of pure concentrated dark red berry fruit and spice. The fruit is phenolically ripe and the tannins round and somewhat chewy.

Roda 2003 Roda II Reserva Rioja ($45) 91
Medium ruby garnet, the Roda II Reserva, sourced from over 30-year old vines offers fresh cherry and plum fruit with hints of wood spice, and a slightly coconut sweet attack. The palate offers ripe red fruit flavors, ripe tannins, and a long finish. Nicely crafted and well structured.

Roda 2005 Cirsion Rioja ($300) 95
Cirsion is sourced from 50 year-old vines and is vinified similar to Roda I and Roda II, but is only aged for 8 months in 100% new French oak and bottled for 4 months.Opaque ruby, with aromas of pure blackberry, toasted oak, white ash, and a touch of herbs. New World in style, it offers a soft attack with concentrated flavors of ripe fresh berries, with hints of smoke, espresso, and toffee. Very rich and elegant—with an atypical style for Rioja.

Bodegas Ruiz de Vinaspre 2002 Crianza Rioja ($14) 87

★ Bodegas Santiago Ijalba is a small family winery which began operations in the mid-1960s and is today producing Classical Rioja wines under the direction of Roberto Ijalba Perez. Ogga is considered this winery's best wine, but unfortunately is not reviewed here.
Bodegas Santiago Ijalba 2004 IREP Rioja ($44) 87
Produced from low-yielding pre-phylloxera vineyards in Rioja Alta. Medium deep ruby, black cherry savory aromas, meaty note, carries over on to the palate. Moderate concentration, medium-full bodied well-balanced with a long finish.

Bodega Cooperativa San Pedro Apostol 2007 Herdad de las Suertes Rioja ($14) 88

★ These are two wines from Castillo de Sajazarra, a small winery located in the Northwestern corner of Rioja Alta with 48 ha of vineyards situated at 500-700 meters.

Castillo de Sajazarra 2003 Reserva Rioja ($27) 87
is sourced from estate grapes and spends 24 months in new French and American oak. It is dark garnet in color with an orange rim. Slightly musty with aromas of dried cherries, forest floor and herbs. A rather dry palate with more red berry fruit, a touch of vanilla and dry tannins.

Castillo de Sajazarra 2004 Digma Rioja ($75) 90
is the stronger wine of this duo. It reveals a dark ruby color with fresh plum, cherry and vanilla on the nose. On the attack it offers pure concentrated fruit flavors with elegant toasted notes, excellent balance and soft round tannins. A lovely new wave wine. Importer: Country Vintner, Oilville VA

Senorio de San Vicente 2005 Rioja ($50) 94
Senorio de San Vincente is a wine produced from an 18 ha (44.5 acres) high density low-yielding finca (la Canoca) in San Vicente de la Sonsierra, owned and operated by Marcus Eguren of Sierra Cantabria. The 2005 is very ripe and pure, offering aromas and flavors of black cherry fruit, earth, toast and minerals. On the attack it reveals a soft elegant texture and is explosive in the mouth with tremendous complexity, beautiful balance and structure, and good tannins for long aging. A tour de force in winemaking.

★ Marcus Eguren’s Sierra Cantabria is producing some of the most exciting wines in Rioja today. His wines are both new wave and traditional in style, and of the highest quality. The Egurens started their own winery in the 1970s after many years as growers. Today Marcus Eguren produces wine under three brands: Sierra Cantabria, Senorio de San Vicente, and Viñedos de Paganos.

Sierra Cantabria 2005 Amancio Rioja ($160) 94
The Amancio is a terroir-driven wine from a small single vineyard of gravel and limestone in San Vincente de la Sonsierra. Yields are less than 25 hl/ha (less than 2 tons per acre). Dark ruby with an opaque core, this lovely wine reveals aromas of raspberry, blackberry, pepper, spices, and minerals with scents of aromatic herbs, and mocha/cacao on the nose. Spending 24 months in new French oak, the wine is soft and lush on the attack, and offers pure dark fruit flavors, round tannins and a long persistent finish. Still very young and requires at least a couple of years of aging.

Sierra Cantabria 2004 Crianza Rioja ($20) 90
Aged for 15 months in French and American oak, this dark ruby garnet Crianza offers aromas of black cherry fruit with notes of minerals and earth. Soft on the palate with pure ripe fruit, toasted oak, good acidity, good depth and round tannins. Very clean. Classic Rioja in style.

Sierra Cantabria 2001 Gran Reserva Rioja ($40) 91
This Gran Reserva exhibits a dark garnet robe with a brick rim. It shows a very ripe nose of plum and framboise liquor with mineral-like notes. Soft and very sweet in the mouth with intense fruit and balsamic flavors. Soft tannins with grip. Lots of life still left in this one. A terrific wine from a great vintage.

Sierra Cantabria 2006 Finca el Bosque ($160) 95?
Sourced from a gravelly 1.5 hectare “pago” and aged for 18 months in new French oak, this newly bottled (May 2008) Finca el Bosque displays a dark ruby opaque color with aromas of raspberry, dark fruit and hints of toasted oak, cocoa, wet rocks and violets. Young and assertive, the wine is beautifully structured with ripe fruit, round tannins and grip on the finish. Needs at least two years in the bottle to settle down. Enters the market in September 2008. (Tentative score)

T/U/V

★ Bodegas Compania de Vinos de Telmo Rodriguez is the winery of one of Spain’s most productive and innovative winemakers. Trained in Bordeaux, Telmo Rodriguez initially served as winemaker at Remelluri and later left to produce his own wines in other parts of Spain. Telmo currently makes wines in Ribera del Duero, Rueda, Cigales, Alicante, Toro, Valdeorras, Malaga and Rioja. He is one of the pioneers of the quality revolution in Spain. These three wines all produced from Tempranillo are exemplary of his new wave winemaking style. They are sourced from vineyard parcels in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa. Importer: Virtus Wine Imports, Pleasantville, NY

Telmo Rodriguez 2007 LZ Rioja ($17) 90
Dark ruby with aromas of plum fruit. Soft on the attack and offering mouth filling ripe Tempranillo fruit flavors with notes of minerals, spice and earth. Just enough acidity for freshness on the palate, soft round tannins and a long finish. You can drink this wine now, but it will also age nicely over the next couple of years.

Telmo Rodriguez 2005 Lanzaga Rioja ($34) 92
A lovely wine offering aromas of ripe plum and sandalwood followed by a soft attack of pure concentrated plum fruit flavors, herbs and minerals. On the palate it is elegant and beautifully balanced with soft silky tannins and a long finish. Although aged for 14 months in new French oak, the fruit and the wine are one. Excellent balance and a long finish.
Telmo Rodríguez 2005 Altos de Lanzaga Rioja ($125) 95
This is a gorgeous wine sourced from low-yielding 70+ year-old vines from vineyard parcels in Ollauri in Rioja Alta and Lanciego in Rioja Alavesa. Exhibiting an opaque ruby color, it offers complex aromas of red and black fruit, roasted meat, earth and leather. It is soft on the attack with a richly textured palate filled with concentrated fruit and notes of chocolate and coffee. After spending 19 months in new French oak, it has taken on a soft round mouth feel that is silky smooth and sensual. Beautifully balanced with soft tannins and drinkable now, but also age worthy. It will grab you, if you are fortunate enough to find a bottle to drink.

Bodegas Tobia 2005 Crianza Rioja ($22) 87
Blends 85% Tempranillo and 15% Graciano. Offers medium ruby, youthful aromas of cedar, plum and black cherry. Soft attack with flavors of pomegranate, earth and leather. Tart, ripe tannins on the finish.

Bodegas Tobia 2001 Tempranillo Reserva Rioja ($35) 91
A big wine with a dark garnet color and aromas of old leather, meat, and dried cherry. Some floral notes too. Soft and lush mouth feel, followed by dark plum and chocolate, ripe tannins, and a long lasting finish. A lovely Rioja in the classical style. Importer: Frontier Wine Imports, NJ

★ Bodegas Valdemar is one of Rioja’s largest and oldest commercial wineries. Founded in 1889 by Martinez Bujanda, it produces very good quality wines in a modern facility in Rioja Alavesa. Its Inspiration series is especially noteworthy for its high quality. Importer: Friend Wine Marketing DBA CIV (USA) Sacramento, CA

Valdemar 2004 Crianza Rioja ($14) 87
This is a light-bodied Crianza with a ruby garnet color and aromas of dried cherry fruit and smoke on the nose. The palate offers moderate red fruit flavors, high acidity, and a tart finish.

Valdemar 1998 Conde de Valdemar
Gran Reserva Rioja ($35) 90
This Gran Reserva displays a dark garnet color with aromas of charred oak and dried red fruit. It is very soft and lush on attack and reveals concentrated flavors of dried blackberry fruit, earth, leather, and smoke blackberry fruit. The wine has some chunky tannins on the finish, but overall is very pleasant.

Valdemar 2001 Inspiración Valdemar
Graciano Rioja ($100) 92
This is a lovely single varietal wine from a top vintage. It exhibits a dark ruby opaque core and has attractive aromas of cherry liquor, earth and tobacco. On the palate it boasts ripe and concentrated mouthfilling plum and black fruit flavors, soft tannins and excellent balance. This wine is drinkable now but will get even better over the next 3-5 years.

Valdemar VO4 Rioja ($50) 88
This is a complex and flavorful blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano. It displays a dark garnet color and orange hue on the rim and aromas of cooked plum compote, toasted oak and scents of oxidations. It offers a lush attack of more jammy fruit, toasted meat, and sweet vanilla notes. It exhibits moderate intensity of flavor, soft round tannins and a short dry finish.

Compañía Bodeguera Valenciso
2002 Reserva Rioja ($35) 89
Founded in 1998, Bodega Valsacro is a joint venture by Riojans Luis Valentin and Carmen Enciso with other minority partners. They produce one modern wine released as a Reserva, from low-yielding vineyards. The wine is fruit forward offering aromas of strawberry, plum, earth and cedar, followed by a soft attack of sour cherry and spice, good balance and a firm finish. Good aging potential. Importer: Classical Wines, Seattle WA

Bodega Valsacro Razon 2004 Dioro Rioja ($55) 90
This winery located just outside the Rioja DO boundaries produces both DO and Table Wines [Vino de Mesa]. From an excellent vintage, the 2004 Dioro is a blend of 40 percent Tempranillo, 40 percent Garnacha and 10 percent Graciano. Aged in new French oak for 12-14 months, it displays a dark ruby color with dark smoky plum aromas and a touch of sandalwood. Lush and ripe, it has a very soft attack, light mid-palate, and a flavorful, fruity long finish. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA

Viña de Nabot 2004 Nabot Rioja ($108) 89
The 2004 Nabot is a big wine with a dark ruby color and aromas of dark berry fruit, mocha, and sweet oak. 100% Tempranillo, it offers a soft lush attack of heavily oaked fruit, chewy tannins, and a well structured finish.

Viña de Nabot 2004 Santalba Rioja ($65) 88
The Santalba displays a medium ruby color, brambly dried cherry and raspberry aromas, herbal notes, leather and spice. It is a straight forward tasty wine with good balance and finish. Importer: P.R. Grisley Co. Salt Lake City, Utah

★ Viña Izadi is produced by Viña Villabuena. The winery is located in the foothills of the Sierra Cantabria range of Rioja Alavesa. The grapes for its top cuvées are sourced from old vineyard parcels. Izadi wines are mainly new wave in style and generally well made.

Viña Izadi 2004 Crianza Rioja ($18) 88
This is 100% Tempranillo aged for 11 months in new American oak. Medium ruby in color it offers aromas of fresh plum and black cherry fruit, with hints of oak. On the palate, it is easy drinking revealing flavors of dark plum, cranberry, and balsamic, round tannins and a pleasant finish.

Viña Izadi 2001 Expresión Rioja ($100) 88
Produced from 70+ year old vines, the 2001 Expresión displays an opaque ruby color with lots of toasty oak and chocolate notes on the nose.. On the attack it reveals pure concentrated dark fruit, heavy oak flavors and big chewy drying tannins. A modern wine with lots of heavy oak.

Viña Izadi 2001 Seleccion Rioja ($75) 91
This is a superb blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Graciano sourced from old vines. It is opaque ruby in color and displays aromas of black cherry, plum, smoke and earth. On
the palate it reveals a soft lush attack and a velvety mouth feel of savory black cherry fruit, spice box, and balsamic. The tannins are round and firm and the finish is long and satisfying. Meaty and delicious!!

★ Viña Salceda is owned and operated by the Civite family, owners of Bodegas Civite in Navarra. The wines of Viña Salceda are generally well made and classical in style. Importer: Kobrand Corporation Purchase, NY

Viña Salceda 2001 Reserva Rioja Alavesa ($22) 89
This is a Reserva from an outstanding vintage. Deep ruby in color with dark plum and prominent cedar aromas on the nose. Offers a soft attack of ripe black cherry fruit with lush texture, ripe tannins and good acidity and structure for aging well.

Viña Salceda 2004 Crianza Rioja Alavesa ($15) 86
The Crianza exhibits a medium deep ruby color with plum and cherry aromas. It is light and tart on the attack with moderate fruit concentration and dry tannins on the mid-palate.

★ Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C. is among the largest wine cooperatives in Rioja. Located in Rioja Baja, it has some 850 members from whom it purchases fruit. The cooperative produces wines of good quality at reasonable prices—250,000 cases annually. Azabache is the major brand. Importer: Country Vintner, Oilville, VA

Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.
2007 Azabache Tempranillo Rioja ($14) 87

Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.
2004 Azabache Crianza Rioja ($14) 86
Dark ruby in color and rustic in style with aromas of dark cherry fruit, cigar box, and loam. Soft, lush attack of plum, black cherry and black currant. Dry tannins.

Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.
1999 Azabache Tradicion Gran Reserva Rioja ($52) 88

★ Viñedos de Paganos is owned and operated by Marcos Eguern of Sierra Cantabria. It produces two vineyard-designated wines of great distinction: El Puntido and La Nieta. Both vineyards have high density low-yielding plantings of Tempranillo. Grapes are destemmed by hand, followed by rigorous sorting and selection of fruit by grape before vinification. Fermentation and aging are carried out in French oak barrels.

Viñedos de Paganos 2006 El Puntido Rioja ($160) 95

Viñedos de Paganos 2006
La Nieta Rioja ($160) 96
This Tempranillo (tasted the very day it was bottled) exhibited a dark purple ruby color and aromas of minerals black raspberry fruit and violets. On the palate it revealed pure red fruit flavors reminiscent of the very ripe 2005 Burgundies. Youthful with firm tannins and a very long lasting finish. A wine of tremendous depth of flavor and complexity that will need time to show all of its countless virtues. Fabulous. (tentative score)

Vinos Sin Ley 2006 Gra 1 Puntalta Rioja ($13) 88
This wine is produced from 100% Graciano. Opaque purple ruby in color, it is fruit forward and offers aromas of boysenberry and plum. On the palate it is concentrated, with lush ripe red-black berry fruit, firm tannins well-matched to the fruit, and a rich finish. Good example of the variety. Importer: Ole Imports Manhasset, NY

★ Bodegas Ysios belongs to Domecq Bodegas, one of Spain’s largest commercial wine producers. The winery is located in Rioja Alavesa and was designed by the renowned architect, Santiago Calatrava. It is a modern winery and a jewel architecturally.

Ysios 2004 Reserva ($35) 88
A 100% Tempranillo classical in style. Displays a dark ruby color with aromas and flavors of blackberry fruit, vanilla with notes of cacao and sweet oak. Aged for 14 months in French and American oak. Has a soft mouth feel with good balance.

Ysios 2004 Edicion Limitada Reserva ($60) 87
Sourced from 50+ year-old vines and spends 16 months in mainly French oak. opaque ruby garnet in color with aromas of leather and dried fruit, soft on the attack with bright red and black fruit. Astringent and tart on the palate with a finish that has lots of tannic grip.
MAP OF RIOJA
Source: Vibrant Rioja
### Inexpensive-Wines $15 and under

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Vintage</th>
<th>Name of Wine</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Rosado Tinto</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Ruiz de Vinaspre</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Crianza Tinto</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Palacio</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Conde de Valdemar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Coto</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Blanca</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinos Sin Ley</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Gra 1 Puntalita</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodega San Pedro Apostol</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Heredad de las Huertas</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Beronia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas D.S. Londoño</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Cortijo II Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Medrano Irazu</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Martinez Lacuesta</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo Labastida</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Blanco Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Caceres</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Bilbondar</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Vina Zaco</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cueto</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Tinto</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Breton</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Lorioñon Barrel Fermented White Wine</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Caceres</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montebuena</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Red Wine</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Beronia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Beronia Tempranillo</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Leza Garcia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Valdepeñas Vendimia Seleccionada</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Ruiz de Vinaspre</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Coto</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lar de Paula</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Madurado Rioja</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacios Remondo</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>La Vendimia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Azabache Tempranillo</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Domeco de Jarauta</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Lar de Sotomayor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Olarra</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Ceño Añon</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Onalan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freixenet USA</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Vasa</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinez Lorden, Bodegas</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>El Talud</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Martin Cendoya Malvasia Fermentada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montecillo</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Montecillo Blanco</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioja Vega</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Joven</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Lan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Las Orcas</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Solar de Ranzo Tempranillo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freixenet USA</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Vasa</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rioja Vega</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Azabache Crianza</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Amador Garcia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Peñagudel Tinto</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Conde de Valdemar Blanco Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Codax</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Ergo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Salceda</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Azabache Mazuelo Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Miguel Angel Muro</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Miguel Angel Muro</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Cañas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave Wines by Price and Rating

### In the Middle-Wines $16 to $35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Vintage</th>
<th>Name of Wine</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Cuvée Especial</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacios Remondo</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>La Montesa</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remelluri</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Blanco</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compania de Vinos Telmo Rodriguez</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Lanzaga</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Altanza</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Lealtanza Crianza</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Medrano Irazu</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo Labastida</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Martinez Lacuesta</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artadi</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Viñas de Gain</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Allende</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Allende Tinto</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Tobia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Tempranillo Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Selección Especial</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cueto</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Envite Crianza</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Malvasia Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacios Remondo</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>La Montesa</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Salceda</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herdad Guzmán Aldazabal</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Graciano</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artadi</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Viñas de Gain Blanco</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Allende</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Allende Blanco</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Garnacha Blanca Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Ondalán</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>100 Abades Graciano</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cune</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Viña Real Reserva</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Organa</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luberry</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Monje Amestoy</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Palacio</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Cosme Palacio y Hermanos Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Conde de Valdemar Gran Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqués de Caceres</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compania de Vinos Telmo Rodriguez</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>LZ</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Dios Ares</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Inspiracion Valdemar</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cune</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luberry</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Seis de Luberry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacios Remondo</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Placet</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cune</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Viña Real Crianza</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antion, Proconsol Bodega</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Varietal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Bilbainas</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>La Vicalanda Reserva</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqués de Murrieta</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Capellanla White Reserva</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Lan</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Viña Lancia Reserva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rioja Alta</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Viña Ardanza Reserva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez de Heredia</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Viña Cubillo Crianza</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herdad Guzman Aldazabal</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Cañas</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montecillo</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Anniversario 130 Gran Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valenciso</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Lan</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colina Verde</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Colina Verde</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Valpiedra</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Cantos de Valpiedra</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Izadi</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Beronia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Beronia Reserva</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Patrocínio</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Zinio Vendimia Seleccionada Crianza</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Vintage</td>
<td>Name of Wine</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Izadi</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Torrontes Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biurko Gorri</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Graciano</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Ondalan</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rioja Alta</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Viña Alberdi</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Coto</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Coto de Imaz</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron de Ley</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Leza García</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Barón de Villacampa Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lar de Paula</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Caceres</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remelluri</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senorio de Libano</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Castillo Sajazarra Reserva</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqués de Murrieta</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montecillo</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Patrocinio</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Zinio Vendimia Seleccionada Reserva</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baigorri</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Puelles</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>El Molino de Puelles</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Cañas</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva Selección de la Familia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Izadi</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Faustino</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Tinto Gran Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Diez-Caballero</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Patrocinio</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Zinio Tempranillo-Graciano</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cune</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Cune Monopole Blanco</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Altanza</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Capitoso</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Las Orcas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Solar de Randez Crianza</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Riscal</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Viura Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montecillo</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Reserve</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Tobía</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luberrri</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Biga</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinez Laorden, Bodegas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>La Orbe</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Riojanas</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Monte Real Reserva</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Rioja Jarrarte</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron de Ley</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Beronia</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Beronia Gran Reserva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo de Sajazarra</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Y Viñedos Heras Cordon</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Heras Cordon Vendimia Seleccionada</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Vargas, Bodegas</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Campillo</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valenciso</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Breton</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Loroñ Reserva</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lar de Paula</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biurko Gorri</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primicia, Bodegas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Crianza</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Leza Garcia</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Familia Seleccionada</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Dominio de Ugarte Reserva</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Riojanas</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Viña Albina Reserva</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Santiago Ijalba</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Jarrero Limited Edition</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Santiago Ijalba</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Jarrero Reserva</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Breton</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Tinto Crianza</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Riojanas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Monte Real Crianza</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Santiago Ijalba</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Mutuo Viticultura Ecologica Crianza</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Amador Garcia</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Penagudo Crianza</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Diez-Caballero</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave Wines by Price and Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Vintage</th>
<th>Name of Wine</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Paganos</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>La Nieta</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Aro</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artadi</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>El Pison</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Alto de Lanzaga</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>El bosque</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Paganos</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>El Puntido</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Allende</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Auras</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Roda</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Cirison</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senorio de San Vicente</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>San Vicente</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo Labastida</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Manual Quinto Reserva Especial</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muga, Bodegas</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Torre Muga</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Allende</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Calvario</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contino</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Vina del Olivo</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Amancio</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqués de Murrieta</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Dalmau Red</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contino</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Caceres</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Gaudium</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artadi</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Pagos Viejos</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baigorri</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Vino de Garaje</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Cañas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Hiru 3 Racimos</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez de Heredia</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Viña Bosconia Reserva</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Valpiedra</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baigorri</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez de Heredia</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Viña Tondonia Reserva</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Hermanos Peciña</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Rioja Alta</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Gran Reserva 904</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cune</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Imperial Reserva</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Lan</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Culmen Reserva</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Allende</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Graciano</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Roda</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Rota I Reserva</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remelluri</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Colleccion Jaime Rodriguez</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Inspiración Valdemar Graciano</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Altanza</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Lealtanza Reserva Spanish Artist Collection</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Anastasio</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Palacio</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bodegas Palacio Especial Reserva</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Cantabria</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antion, Proconsol Bodega</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Seleccion</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Roda</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Rota II Reserva</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez de Heredia</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Viña Tondonia Reserva</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Seleccion Personal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron de Ley</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Finca Monasterio</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Beronia</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>III a.C., Beronia</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Remirez de Ganuza</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Izadi</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Seleccion</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lar de Paula</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Cepas Viejas</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finca Valpiedra</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Lan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Lan a Mano Edicion Limitada</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Riscal</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>150 Aniversario Gran Reserva</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pujanza, Bodegas y Viñedos</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Pujanza</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron de Ley</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pujanza, Bodegas y Viñedos</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Pujanza</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contino</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Reserva</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Coto</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Coto Real Reserva</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biurko Gorri</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Biurko BK</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Hermanos Peciña</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Vendimia Seleccionada</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Cedula Real Gran Reserva</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave Wines by Price and Rating

### Indulgent-Wines over $35 - Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Vintage</th>
<th>Name of Wine</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Tempranillo</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodega Valsacro Razon</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Dioro</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Remírez de Ganausa</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Trasnocho Reserva</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo de Sajazarra</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Digma</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abel Mendoza</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Graciano</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo de Cuzcurrita</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Cerrado del Castillo de Cuzcurrita</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez de Heredia</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Viña Tondonia Gran Reserva</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lar de Paula</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Merus 4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña de Nabot</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Nabot</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Diez-Caballero</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Seleccionada</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Breton</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Domino de Conte</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo de Cuzcurrita</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Señorio de Cuzcurrita</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marques de Riscal</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Barón de Chirel Reserva</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contino</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Graciano</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exopto Cellars</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Horizonte de Exopto</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Altanza</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Altanza Reserva Seleccion Especial</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Las Orcas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Pagos de Valdeorca</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacios Remondo</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Propiedad</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Coto</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Coto de Imaz Gran Reserva</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Y Viñedos Heras Cordon</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Heras Cordon Reserva</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Amador Garcia</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Vendimia Seleccionada</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Campillo</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Valdemar</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Inspiración Valdemar VO4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viñedos de Aldeanueva S.C.</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Azabache Tradicion Gran Reserva</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Breton</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Alba de Breton</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senorio de Libano</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Castillo de Sajazarra Gran Reserva</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marqués de Murrieta</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña de Nabot</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Santalba</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Leza Garcia</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>LG</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remelluri</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senorio de Libano</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Digma</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viña Izadi</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Expresión</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heredad Ugarte</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Martin Cendoya Reserva</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baigorri</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Blanco Fermentado en Barrica</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Santiago Ijalba</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>IREP</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Miguel Merino</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Miguel Merino Reserva</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Riojanas</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Gran Albina Vendimia</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Cañas</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodegas Diez-Caballero</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Gran Reserva</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References and Further Reading

Issue 1  California Petite Sirah (September 2005)

Issue 2  Red Table Wines of Portugal (January 2006)

Issue 3  Grenache Wines of Australia, California, France and Spain (May 2006)

Issue 4  Syrah: California, Washington State and Oregon Wines (September 2006)

Issue 5  Malbec: Argentina’s Magnificent Malbec (December 2006)

Issue 6  The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality (March 2007)

Special Report  Red Wines of Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha (June 2007)

Issue 7  New Zealand’s Exciting Pinot Noirs (July 2007)

Issue 8  The Wines of Ribera del Duero (September 2007)

Issue 9  Champagne (December 2007)

Issue 10  Unoaked Chardonnay: It’s More Than Wood (February 2008)


Issue 12  California Petite Sirah II • Syrah Update • Selections from California and Washington State (June 2008)