



INTRODUCTION TO *Spanish* WINE

Though Spain has the highest plantation of vines in the world, it is only the third biggest producer of wine. This is due to low yields on arid, dry lands and the fact that there is greater spacing between the vines in Spain than in other countries. Amazingly, there are over 400 grape varieties in Spain but most of the wines we know come from 20 varieties.

The most popular Spanish grapes are (reds) Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Monastrell; (whites) Albariño from Galicia, Verdejo from Rueda, Palomino, Airen, and Macabeo; and the three cava grapes Parellada, Xarel·lo, and Cariñena.

Major Spanish wine regions for the production of wine include: the Rioja and Ribera del Duero regions, which are both known for their Tempranillo production; Jerez, the home of the fortified wine Sherry; Rías Baixas in the northwest region of Galicia which is known for its white wines made from Albariño; and Catalonia which includes the cava and wine producing regions (red and white) of Penedès and Priorat. Spain is a wine lover's country and there is indeed something for everyone.

HOW SPANISH WINES ARE CLASSIFIED

Spanish wine laws created the Denominación de Origen (DO) system in 1932. As of 2009, there were 79 Quality Wine areas across Spain. In addition there are Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa) status for DOs that have a consistent track record for quality. There are currently only two DOCa regions: Rioja and Priorat.

Each DO has a Consejo Regulador, which acts as a governing body that enforces the DO regulations and standards involving viticultural and winemaking practices. These regulations govern everything from the types of grapes that are permitted to be planted, the maximum yields that can be harvested, the minimum length of time that the wine must be aged, and what type of information is required to appear on the wine label.