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Everything You Never Wanted to Know About Spanish Wines (and a Few Things You Did)

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EVERYTHING YOU NEVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SPANISH WINES

(AND A FEW THINGS YOU DID)

By

John Phillips Wacker

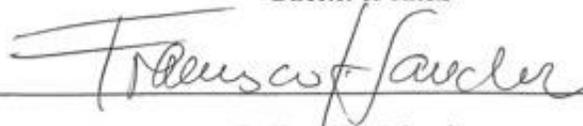
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Thesis Summary

The Spanish wine scene is incredibly diverse, and an immense number of different wines are made in the country. Likewise, Spain is incredibly rich in culture, with a wide array of languages, histories, cultures, and cuisines found throughout the nation. The sheer number and variety of Spanish wines and the incredible variety of cultures found in Spain may be daunting to the uninitiated. Thus, a guide to Spanish wine and culture, which not only details the two but links them, as well, may prove very helpful to the Spanish wine newcomer or perhaps even a sommelier.

This thesis-guide was compiled through the research of the various *Denominaciones de Origen* of Spain, the history of Spain, the regions of Spain and their individual histories and cultures, and, of course, the many, many wines of Spain. The regions' wines and cultures were then compared to determine if they reflect each other, influence each other, or are otherwise intertwined. One wine from each of the seven regions was then selected, summarized, and paired with a traditional dish from the wine's region.

The wines from each *autonomía* and region are highly intertwined with the cultures of their respective regions. Each wine reflects its region's climate, geography, and cuisine, of course, but it also reflects its region's history, culture, uniqueness, and even its political attitudes.

While Spain has a very old vinicultural history, it is just now being 'discovered' by much of the world. This thesis aims to serve as a guide to those who may want to learn more about Spain's wines, cultures, or both. Spain's diverse wines are a form of expression for its equally diverse cultures, and this thesis intends to capture their intricate and unique relationships.

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Introduction

While this thesis is intended to serve as a guide to Spanish wine, it is much more than that. It is intended not only to educate on the many fantastic and varied wines found in Spain but to educate the reader on how they have grown and evolved with Spain's equally varied culture. Considered by many to be a 'nation of nations,' Spain is a product of its fractured and fascinating history. After centuries of warfare, numerous foreign invasions, and a decades-long fascist dictatorship, Spain today is a decentralized parliamentary monarchy, composed of 17 *autonomías*, autonomous communities whose governments have significant power over their regions, similar to the power structure of the United States. Included in these powers is the regulation of their respective wines, however this is further delegated to the *consejos reguladores* who oversee each *Denominación de Origen* (DO). This is the main structure of Spanish wine law, which is modeled after the EU so that Spanish wines may be legally accepted by the European government in Brussels. While many wines throughout the world highlight the grapes used in the wine and place secondary importance on the place of origin of the wine, most Spanish wines do the opposite. While there are many exceptions, most Spanish wines have labels with the focus on the area of origin, often the DO, and secondary importance placed on the varietals used in the wine.

There are countless Spanish wines, most of them undoubtedly fantastic, that have a classification below that of DO, such as *Vinos de la Tierra*. However, the focus of this thesis is on the main Quality Wine classification, the DO, and its slightly higher classification, the *Denominación de Origen Calificada/Denominació d'Origen Qualificad* (DOCa/DOQ). There are a few reasons for this. First, the legal nature of the DO means its geographic area, climate, soil, grapes, and wines are well-documented and specific, whereas *Vinos de la Tierra* and the wines under that classification may stretch over an entire *autonomía*, and they are not as well-regulated. Second, the DOCa/DOQ is simply a DO of guaranteed high-quality, whereas the more specific *Denominaciones de Pago* (DOP) are given to single vineyards and estates that may come from outside a DO or DOCa/DOQ and so may have a wider variety of wines. Extending this thesis to cover wines under DOP classification would result in an even lengthier production that spends more time covering the specifics and histories of wines that are not as relevant to the cultural makeup of their respective *autonomías* and may not express the vinicultural traditions of the regions they are from.

As Spain is a composition of many cultures and histories and therefore languages, some of the wines, DO names, and locations may be in other languages. As much as it is possible, the names of the content, if in another language, specifically Basque, Galician, or Catalan, are listed first in their local names and second in their Spanish names. This is to give preference to the local languages and thus the local cultures that the wines express so well. Additionally, non-English words that are not proper nouns are written in italics to designate their differences, and the names of certain regions and *autonomías* are written in Spanish unless the language barrier would interfere with the reader's understanding of the name (i.e. País Vasco vs. Canary Islands).

In this thesis, Spain is divided to 7 regions based on overall geography, history, culture, and climate. While the *autonomías* within each region have their different cultures and histories, they may be tied together so that their wines may be better related to their cultures as a whole.

At the end of each region's section, after the connection between their wines and histories is related, a wine selection and food pairing are included. I sampled each wine, and although I am very uneducated in tasting techniques, I included my opinion of the wine (heavily influenced by

the manufacturer or distributor's opinion), and a suggested local dish that may be paired with the wine to exemplify concretely the connection between culture and wine.

A Brief History of Wine in Spain

While grapes have been in Spain for around 2.5 million years and vines have been cultivated in Spain since between 4000 and 3000 BC, Spain's recorded vinicultural history began around 1100 BC, when the Phoenicians founded the city of Gadir (now Cádiz) on the southwestern coast of Spain. Here, the Phoenicians traded extensively, especially with wine, usually kept in amphorae, clay containers prone to leakage and breaking. Eventually, the Phoenicians began making wine in the area around Gadir, where the climate, soil and geography resembled their homeland of the near middle east. Low, fertile, and hot, this area produced tough-skinned, sweet grapes, popular for the wines at the time, eventually evolving into what is known as Sherry Country of today.¹

Later, the Carthaginians settled the area, founding present-day Cartagena, and further expanded the local wine production. Around 100 BC, the Romans expanded their territory to encompass most of Spain, planting more vines and bringing new vinicultural practices. At the time, the provinces of Baetica (now Andalucía) and Tarraconensis (now Tarragona) became some of their largest wine-producing areas.² Local tribes, specifically the Celts in the west and the Iberians in the center and the east, adopted the Roman practices of fermenting in stone troughs and the storage of wine in smaller, more durable amphorae, methods which are still used in the Spanish countryside in the aptly-named *método rural* (rural method).³ Years after Rome fell, the Moors defeated the ruling Visigoths in 711 AD to control most of Spain, to them known as Al-Andalus (from which the name Andalucía is derived), however the advancement of wine production largely stagnated during their rule.⁴

In later years of the Reconquista, and especially after its end when the Christians overthrew the Moors in 1492, Spanish wine began to be heavily exported to England.⁵ At the time, Spain's wines were largely heavy and either sweet or in the *rancio* style (fully oxidized and heavily reduced), and by the 16th and 17th Centuries, wine was grown all over north and central Spain. In an attempt to counteract the large problem of oxidation, Spanish *viñeros* developed *tinajas*, large clay vats with narrow openings at the top, filled with as much wine as they could hold and sealed with a heavy lid so that as little wine as possible came in contact with the outside air.⁶ At the time, wine was transported using small skins, with each skin imparting on the wine its own flavors and smells. Around the 1500s, casks began to be used for fermentation and storage and laws mandated they be high quality and untainted from other products to maintain the integrity of the wine inside.⁷

By the 18th Century, wine in Spain was still produced using the Roman methods, by then almost 2,000 years old. However, around the end of the century, a *viñero* from Rioja, Manuel Quintano, began importing *barricas* (fine casks) from Bordeaux, then known for its skillful cooperage. Quintano began shipping his Rioja wine to America, discovering upon arrival that the wine had not only been kept extremely well, but that it had begun to take on an oaky flavor from

¹ Radford, *The New Spain* (Mitchell Beazley, 2004) 8 and Robinson, et al., *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (Oxford University Press, 2015) 693.

² Robinson, et al. 693.

³ Radford 9.

⁴ Radford 9 and Robinson, et al. 693.

⁵ Robinson, et al. 693.

⁶ Radford 10.

⁷ Radford 10.

its time spent in the casks.⁸ In 1860 and 1872, the first bodegas in Rioja were founded by Luciano de Murrieta García-Lemone (the Marqués de Murrieta) and Don Camilo Hurta de Améxaga (the Marqués de Riscal), respectively, both of whom studied winemaking in Bordeaux while in exile.⁹ Soon after, the government office in the province of Álava noticed the spectacular results the new bodegas exhibited, so it hired the French winemaker Jean Pireau to show the local winemakers the technology and style of winemaking from Bordeaux. The Marqués de Riscal later hired Jean Pireau to supervise his bodega, whose wine by then fetched incredible prices. Soon, many winemakers in Rioja, who had previously scoffed at this foreign technology, followed his successful model.¹⁰ Simultaneously, French vineyards were devastated first by the powdery mildew epidemic and then by phylloxera, both introduced from the New World, leading to a drastic decrease in French wine supplies. To compensate for their losses, French winemakers imported vast quantities of wine from Rioja and Navarra, furthering the influx of French influence and expertise on the wines of the regions. Much later, the vines of Spain were devastated by the two blights, and the local varieties that did not graft resistant American roots onto their vines were driven almost to extinction.¹¹

On the heels of this devastation, Spain's Civil War (1936-1939) caused many vineyards to be neglected and destroyed, and the outbreak of World War II shortly thereafter hampered economic recovery and closed off Spanish exports. Under the rule of dictator Francisco Franco, co-operative wineries were built across Spain in the 1950s, leading to an overproduction of cheap, bulk wine sold under brand names or generic names, which were quickly outlawed by the European Union.¹² At the same time, Spanish winemaker Miguel Torres observed stainless-steel winemaking technology in France and Australia and soon brought them back to his Catalanian winery. After he achieved great success with the new technology, echoing the pattern of French influence in Rioja, most of Spain adopted his newfound techniques for their own wineries.¹³ Along with the Sherry boom of the 1960s and the international rediscovery of Rioja in the 1970s, the Torres family's single-handed transformation of the wines of Penedés greatly helped Spanish wine's international standing. After Franco's death in 1975 and the subsequent restoration of democracy, greater economic freedom led to a growth in Spain's middle class, which in turn stimulated a renewed interest in high-quality wines.¹⁴ After Spain joined the EU in 1986, its wine laws were modified to match those of the EU, allowing its wines to be exported to many European markets, and Spain's wines have been growing in value and international stature ever since.¹⁵

⁸ Radford 10.

⁹ Radford 10.

¹⁰ Radford 11.

¹¹ Robinson, et al. 695.

¹² Robinson, et al. 695.

¹³ Radford 11.

¹⁴ Robinson, et al. 695.

¹⁵ Radford 11 and Robinson, et al. 695.

Types of Grapes in Spain

Grapes of almost every variety are grown in Spain, many of them on experimental vineyards, thus the following list contains the most important varieties native to Spain.¹⁶

Red Varieties

Bobal: The fourth most commonly grown grape in Spain, Bobal is usually sold to other regions to be mixed with other grapes.

Cariñena: A grape that makes robust, well-balanced wines, it is known in France as Carignan and in Rioja, where it is most importantly grown, as Mazuelo.

Garnacha: Often blended but used on its own to make big and bold wines, it is an important component of the traditional Rioja blend. It is known in southern France as Grenache and in certain areas of Castilla y León as Aragón and Tinto Aragonés.

Garnacha Tintorera: Often blended with other grapes to provide color and weight to wines, especially with Mencía in Bierzo, it is one of the few grapes with colored juice. It is also called Alicante.

Graciano: Used sparingly in Rioja, this is a low-yield grape that adds tannins to a blend, often *gran reservas*, increasing its ageing capability.

Juan García: Native to the Femoselle region of Zamora in Castilla y León, Juan García gives local *Vinos de la Tierra* a pleasant, easy-drinking fruit.

Listán Negro: Grown in the Canary Islands, especially in Tacoronte-Acentejo on Tenerife, it produces rich, ripe red wines.

Manto Negro: Native to the Balearic Islands, and grown most importantly in Binissalem, it yields light, fresh wines that age well.

Mencía: Grown in Galicia and northern Castilla y León, especially in Valdeorras and Bierzo, Mencía yields an early-drinking wine with fresh, crisp fruit. It also blends well with Garnacha Tintorera.

Monastrell: Particularly significant in Jumilla, Yecla, and Murcia, Monastrell produces wines with vibrant fruit and great ripeness. It is also used in Catalonia to make *rosada* (pink) Cava, and it is known in France as Mourvèdre.

Moristel: Not a very well-known grape, it is only grown in Somontano, but it gives fruity, early-drinking *joven* wines and blends well with imported varieties.

¹⁶ This information is taken from Radford 16-19.

Negramoll: The most common grape in Tacoronte-Acentejo, it yields light, soft, early-maturing wines, especially when blended with Listán Negro.

Tempranillo: The main and most famous native red grape of Spain, Tempranillo on its own makes great *jóvenes* that are fragrant, deeply-colored, and rich in fruit. In Rioja, it is often blended with Garnacha, Graciano, and Mazuelo (Cariñena) to age into a rich wine with raisin and cinnamon flavors. In Ribera del Duero, it is used to make spicy *crianzas* and *reservas*, and in Navarra, Toro, and Cataluña, it is often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon. In Portugal (especially in Douro), it is grown as Tinto Roriz. It is also known as Ull de Llebre in Cataluña, Cencibel in southern Spain, and Tinto Fino, Tinto del País, and Tinta del Toro in Castilla y León.

White Varieties

Airén: The most abundant grape in Spain, and some claim in the world, it is mostly grown in Castilla-La Mancha to produce a cool, fresh, and creamy white wine.

Albariño: Believed by some to actually be Riesling brought by monks traveling on the Camino de Santiago, a network of pilgrimage roads terminating in Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia. However, this is most likely a native of Galicia, grown especially in Rías Baixas to create wines with peachy fruit that age into full-bodied, dry whites.

Albillo: This grape may have originated in Sherry Country, but it is primarily grown in Ribeiro and Vinos de Madrid, where it is the main white grape.

Alcañón: A native of Somontano, Alcañón produces light whites and blends well with other grapes, especially those of French origin.

Godello: A high-quality and aromatic grape native to Galicia, it is grown especially in Valdeorras to produce ripe, rich whites similar to those made from Albariño but with more acidity.

Loureira: Another aromatic Galician grape, Loureira is usually found alongside Teixadura and is sometimes blended with Albariño. It yields rich and soft whites with peachy fruit.

Macabeo: This grape is grown all over northern Spain, and in some more southern parts, in areas licensed to produce Cava. In Cataluña, it is added to Cava with Xarel-lo and Parellada to give the sparkling wine crispness and acidity, but in other areas of Spain, it is mostly used to make Cava on its own. In Rioja and Navarra, it is the main grape used to make still white wines, yielding aromatic wines with herbs and spices on the nose. It is also known in Spain as Viura, and in France as Macabeu.

Malvasía: Originally from Greece but found in Valencia, Zamora, and the Canary Islands, where it produces a sweet, semi-fortified wine known as Canary Sack. In Rioja, a type called Malvasía Riojana is grown to add a spicy edge to white wines, and in Cataluña it is known as Subirat-Parent.

Merseguera: Found in Valencia, it is the main white grape of the Levant, where it is mainly used for everyday white wines sent to Europe.

Moscatel: Found in Andalucía and Valencia, it is used to make sweet *vinos de licor*. In France, it is known as Muscat d'Alexandrie.

Palomino: The main grape of Jerez, it is used to make Sherry. It is also called Listán Blanco.

Parellada: One of the main grapes used in Cava (in Cataluña), it gives it a soft, creamy base. It is also grown in Cataluña for everyday whites meant to be drunk immediately.

Pedro Ximénez: Supposedly brought from Germany by a soldier named Pieter Siemens (from whom it may get its name), this grape is found primarily in Andalucía, especially Montilla. It gives a rich, sweet juice used for dessert wines.

Treixadura: Grown in Galicia, as it does very well in mountainous terrain, this grape yields highly aromatic whites.

Verdejo: The main grape grown in Rueda, Verdejo experienced great problems with oxidation until recently, when technology, specifically refrigeration and inert-gas blanketing, allowed it to produce its famous white wines with crisp fruit and a bone-dry finish.

Xarel-lo: In Cataluña, it is used to give Cava its base strength. Similar to Verdejo, it experienced oxidation problems until recently, and its still whites are becoming more widely available in Cataluña.

Classifications of Wines (Spanish Law)

In 2003, Spain's wine laws were overhauled (notably formally allowing irrigation for certain arid regions) to formalize the present system of classification of wines based on their quality and location. An important part of the Spanish system of classification is the *consejo regulador*, a regulating council for each *Denominación de Origen* (DO) that administers the laws and decides on regional rules of production, planting, and growing. Each *consejo regulador* is made up of vine-growers, wine producers, and wine merchants local to the area it oversees.¹⁷

Table Wine

This is the EU classification for wines of basic quality that are not classified under Quality Wine.

Vino de la Mesa (VdM)

These are the most basic of wines, blended from various regions, often combining the fruit and acidity of northern wines with the warmth and strength of southern wines.

Vino de la Tierra (VdIT)

Often called country wines, these wines possess a definite local character, as they are often from a small area or an area encompassing an autonomous community.

All wines of VdIT quality and higher have a *contraetiqueta* on the back of the bottle with the regulator's logo, official seal, and a serial number.

Quality Wine

These wines must follow strict EU standards of supervision and quality control, with a specifically delineated geographic area for wine production. Each *consejo regulador* publishes a *reglamento* (a set of rules of the region), which is then ratified first by the regional government and then by the national government in Madrid, then the EU government in Brussels is notified of the change.

Vinos de Calidad con Indicación Geográfica (VCIG)

The lowest of the Quality Wine classifications, this is used as an intermediate level for new DO zones and a backstop for those that are current but struggling. If a DO loses its status, it may drop down to this level while it re-establishes itself without losing its Quality Wine certification. Wine-producing zones may apply for DO status after 5 years at this level.

Denominación de Origen (DO)

With about 60 DO zones in Spain, this is its main Quality Wine classification. At this level, the *consejo regulador* polices all aspects of the zone's vineyards, including planting, cultivating, harvesting, vinification, and ageing. After 10 years at this level, a DO may apply to become a DOCa.

¹⁷ This information is taken from Jeffs, *The Wines of Spain* (Mitchell Beazley, 2006) 7-8 and Radford, 22-23.

Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa, DOQ in Catalan)

First introduced in 1988, Rioja gained the first DOCa status, with Priorat as the only other zone of this level. To achieve this, the wines of the DO must perform at the highest quality over many years.

Denominación de Origen de Pago (DOP)

Introduced by the 2003 wine law, this classification was first established by the regional government of Castilla-La Mancha. It is reserved for estates with fantastic reputations that may or may not be within a DO or DOCa. These estates must use their own grapes, but they are permitted to be grapes not traditional to their region. If the estate falls within a DOCa, a *Vino de Pago*, wine from a DOP, may call itself a *Vino de Pago Calificado*.

Cava

The laws concerning Cava are different, as it is its own DO, and while it is also geographically defined, it is mainly concerned with the method of its production, the *método tradicional*, the same process used to produce Champagne in France. Most Cava is produced in Cataluña, but certified vineyards may produce it in other areas, as well.

Classifications of Wines (Ageing)

In Spain today, most wines are aged in barrels using American oak. American oak staves are sawn, have larger pores, and have a higher vanillin content than that of French oak staves, giving aged Spanish wines a signature style that they have become known for. Recently, however, French oak barrels have been increasingly used. Being split instead of sawn and having smaller pores, the French staves can add a final burnish to its wine during the ageing process. Additionally, new oak has a larger impact on the wine than old oak, with the impact decreasing over time. The official ageing time must be spent all in the bodega, and time must be spent in a bottle if it is not in cask. Additional ageing does not count towards official classification, but it can deeply affect the character of the wine. Each ageing period may also be slightly adjusted, depending on the local laws.¹⁸

The following ages may be in a cask, at most 600 liters, or bottle, or a combination of both:

Noble: 12 months

Añejo: 24 months

Viejo: 36 months, must show oxidative ageing

The following ages may only apply to wines from a DO or DOCa and must be in casks up to 330 liters:

Joven: Meaning ‘young,’ these wines spend little to no time in cask and it must be less time than the minimum for *crianza*. They are made for immediate drinking.

Semi-crianza/Roble: An unofficial term (roble means ‘oak’), these wines have some oak ageing (around 6 months) but not enough to be classified as a *crianza*.

Crianza: Red wines must be aged for at least 24 months, with at least 6 months in cask. *Rosados* and whites must be aged at least 12 months, with at least 6 months in cask.

Reserva: Red wines must be aged for at least 3 years, at least 1 year of which must be in cask. *Rosados* and whites must be aged for at least 2 years, with at least 6 months in cask.

Gran Reserva: Only the best vintages or the best grapes in good vintages may be aged to become a *gran reserva*. Red wines must be aged for at least 5 years, at least 18 months of which must be in cask. *Rosados* and whites must be aged at least 4 years, with at least 6 months in cask.

¹⁸ This information is taken from Jeffs 6-7 and Radford 23.

Geographical Regions

1 – The North¹⁹

The northern coast of Spain, bordering the Bay of Biscay, encompassing Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia, and the País Vasco

Asturias

1 province: Oviedo

No DO zones

Cantabria

1 province: Santander

No DO zones

Galicia

4 provinces: A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense/Orense, Pontevedra

5 DO zones: Monterrei, Rías Baixas, Ribeira Sacra, Ribeiro, Valdeorras

País Vasco

3 Provinces: Araba/Álava, Gipuzkoa/Gipúzcoa, Bizkaia/Vizcaya

1 DOCa: Rioja (part)

3 DO zones: Getariako Txakolina/Chacolí de Getaria, Bizkaiko

Txakolina/Chacolí de Vizcaya, Arabako Txakolina/Chacolí de Álava

2- The Center-North

South of the Pyrenees, between Cataluña and the País Vasco, encompassing Aragón, La Rioja and Navarra

Aragón

3 provinces: Huesca, Teruel, Zaragoza

4 DO zones: Calatayud, Campo de Borja, Cariñena, Somontano

La Rioja

1 province: La Rioja

1 DOCa: Rioja (most)

Navarra

1 province: Navarra

1 DOCa: Rioja (part)

1 DO: Navarra

3- Cataluña and the Balearic Islands

Cataluña: Northeast Spain, south of the Pyrenees

Balearic Islands: Off the coast of Cataluña and Valencia in the Mediterranean Sea

Cataluña

4 provinces: Barcelona, Girona/Gerona, Lleida/Lérida, Tarragona

1 DOQ: Priorat/Priorato

¹⁹ For reference, see “Map of Spain” in Appendix.

11 DO zones: Alella, Catalonia, Conca de Barberà, Costers del Segre, Empordà-Costa Brava, Montsant, Penedès, Pla de Bages

Balearic Islands

1 province: Palma de Mallorca
 4 islands: Mallorca, Menorca, Eivissa/Ibiza, Formentera
 2 DO zones: Binissalem, Pla i Llevant de Mallorca

4 – Castilla y León

South of The North region, borders Portugal on the west

Castilla y León

9 provinces: Ávila, Burgos, León, Palencia, Salamanca, Segovia, Soria, Valladolid, Zamora
 5 DO zones: Bierzo, Cigales, Ribera del Duero, Rueda, Toro

5 – La Meseta

Borders Portugal on its west, Valencia on its east, Murcia on its southeast, Andalucía on its south, and Castilla y León on its north; encompasses Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, and Madrid

Castilla-La Mancha

5 provinces: Albacete, Ciudad Real, Cuenca, Guadalajara, Toledo
 7 DO zones: Almansa, La Mancha, Manchuela, Méntrida, Mondéjar, Ribera del Júcar, Valdepeñas

Extremadura

2 provinces: Badajoz, Cáceres
 1 DO: Ribera del Guadiana

Madrid

1 province: Madrid
 1 DO: Vinos de Madrid

6 – The Levant

Southeast of La Meseta to the Mediterranean; encompasses Valencia and Murcia

Murcia

1 province: Murcia
 3 DO zones: Bullas, Jumilla, Yecla

Valencia

3 provinces: Alicante, Castellón de la Plana, Valencia
 3 DO zones: Alicante, Utiel-Requena, Valencia

7- Andalucía and the Canary Islands

Andalucía: Southern Spain, bordering the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean

Canary Islands: off the coast of Morocco in the Atlantic

Andalucía

8 provinces: Almería, Cádiz, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaén, Málaga, Sevilla

6 DO zones: Condado de Huelva, Málaga, Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Montilla-Moriles, Jerez/Xérès/Sherry, Sierras de Málaga

Canary Islands

2 provinces: Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (3 islands: Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote), Santa Cruz de Tenerife (4 islands: El Hierro, La Gomera, La Palma, Tenerife)

9 DO zones: Abona, El Hierro, Gran Canaria, La Palma, Lanzarote, Monte Lentiscal, Tacoronte-Acentejo, Valle de Güímar, Valle de la Orotava, Ycoden-Daute-Isora

THE NORTH

Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia, and the País Vasco

While Asturias and Cantabria are rich in history and culture and are beautiful *autonomías* on Spain's northern coast, they do not possess any *Denominaciones de Origen* and as such, this section will only focus on Galicia and the País Vasco.²⁰

Galicia

Archaeological evidence records the first Celtic settlers inhabiting present-day Galicia around the 6th Century BC. When the Romans encountered them, they named them the Gallaeci, a cognate of Gaul (present-day France), reflecting the two regions' shared Celtic culture.²¹ Today, many remnants of Galicia's Celtic heritage can still be seen, from the ancient *hórreos*, stone granaries perched on mushroom-shaped rocks to keep out rodents, to the *gaita*, a Galician bagpipe, to the city of Vigo's soccer team, the Real Club Celta de Vigo.²² Even Galicia's weather is reminiscent of the Celtic stronghold of Ireland, as it is one of the wettest and greenest parts of Spain (although it is significantly warmer than Ireland).²³ To the Romans, Galicia was the end of the world, thus they named a cape in the area *Finisterra*, meaning "end of the earth."²⁴ After Rome fell, Galicia saw a series of invaders, from the Swabians to the Visigoths and finally the Moors, however the last group inhabited the region only briefly. In the 9th Century, Galicia was assimilated into the Kingdom of Asturias, the leading Christian kingdom in the fight to drive out the Moors. St. James the Apostle (called Santiago in Spain, the patron saint of the nation) is entombed in Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia. After Galicia assimilated into the Kingdom of Asturias, the Camino de Santiago became a major pilgrimage route and is now the oldest, most traveled, and most famous route in Continental Europe. At the time of the Reconquista, the route contributed greatly to the spread of Romanesque art and culture (and wine) in Spain and became a rallying point for Christians fighting to expel the Moors.²⁵

In 1492, after the Reconquista concluded, Galicia became a part of Spain. Galicia has two official languages, Spanish and Galician (*Galego* locally), a sort of mix between Portuguese and Spanish, owing to its location just north of Portugal.²⁶ On Galicia's west coast are its beautiful *rías*, long fjords or estuaries with steep slopes, where southern Galicia's large, slow rivers meet the Atlantic Ocean. Further inland, Galicia's countryside is verdant and mountainous.

Galicia is composed of four provinces, A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense/Orense, and Pontevedra, with five *Denominaciones de Origen*: Monterrei, Rías Baixas, Ribeira Sacra, Ribeiro, and Valdeorras.²⁷

Monterrei

Located in southern Galicia, bordering Portugal in the province of Ourense, Monterrei gained DO status in 1996. It is divided into two subzones: Val do Monterrei, in the valleys of the river Támega, and Ladeira de Monterrei, higher up on the hillsides.

²⁰ See Appendix.

²¹ Radford 26.

²² Radford 26.

²³ Symington, *Galicia* (Footprint Handbooks, 2015) 5.

²⁴ Clark, et al. *Lonely Planet Spain* (Limited, 2018) 611.

²⁵ Clark, et al. 611 and Harris and Lyon, *Frommer's Spain* (FrommerMedia LLC, 2004) 387.

²⁶ Harris and Lyon 387 and Symington 89.

²⁷ The data on the *Denominaciones de Origen* in this region were drawn from Jeffs 207-228 and Radford 28-41.

Geography

Most of the vineyards are in the Val do Monterrei subzone, with elevations ranging from 1,300 – 1,400 feet.

Climate

The hottest part of Galicia, Monterrei has a continental climate, with average temperatures of 55° F.

Soil

Most of the soil here is reddish, alluvial clay with fertile topsoil.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are Mencía, Alicante, and Tempranillo, and the white grapes grown are Dona Blanca and Godello.

Wines

Monterrei produces a small amount of very light reds, while most of its wines are refreshing and slightly fizzy whites.

Rías Baixas

Its name meaning ‘low estuaries,’ this DO was founded in 1988, with the subzone Ribeiro do Ulla added in 2000. After a disastrous oil spill in 2002 severely damaged the fishing industry, the vineyards were indirectly affected following a decrease in tourism and a deeply impacted seafood culture. Rías Baixas has five subzones: Condado do Tea and O Rosal, both along the Portuguese border; Ribeiro do Ulla, immediately south of Santiago de Compostela; Sotomaior, the smallest subzone, in the valley of the river Vigo; and Val do Salnés, the oldest subzone, on the west coast.

Geography

Vineyards are planted along the *rías* and rivers, from sea level up into the mountains, up to about 1,000 feet, often on terraced vineyards.

Climate

On Galicia’s coast, this DO has an Atlantic climate, with dry and pleasant summers and more average rainfall than any part of England.

Soil

All subzones have a granite-based subsoil, with alluvial soil overtop in some parts.

Grapes

The vast majority of grapes grown are Albariño, with some Loureira and Godello.

Wines

Almost exclusively white wines, most are fresh and acidic and best enjoyed young and chilled.

Ribeira Sacra

Meaning ‘sacred hillside,’ this beautiful area in the provinces of Lugo and Ourense was given DO status in 1996. It is made up of 5 subzones: Amandi, on the banks of the river Sil; Chantada, on the right bank of the river Miño; Quiroga, on the right bank of the Sil; Ribeiras do Miño, on the left bank of the Miño; and Ribeira do Sil, on the left bank of the Sil.

Geography

The vineyards in Ribeira Sacra are located on the hillsides of the confluence of the Sil and Miño rivers, planted in steep, terraced vineyards and lush woodlands.

Climate

Warmer and drier than Rías Baixas, this DO has many microclimates along the rivers, still with plentiful rain and high winds rushing through the valleys.

Soil

There are a great variety of soil types, from plutonic acid rocks to Silurian slate and schist.

Grapes

The red grape Mencía is grown, however most vineyard area is dedicated to the white grapes Albariño, Godello, Treixadura, and Loureira.

Wines

Red wines produced are 100% Mencía; white wines are crisp and dry.

Ribeiro

Located in the province of Ourense in the valley of the Miño, inland to the east of Rías Baixas, Ribeiro gained DO status in 1954. Records show exports of wine from the area to England and Italy in the 16th and 17th centuries, indicating a long history of wine production. After Rioja and Jerez, Ribeiro boasts the third best-known wine in Spain.

Geography

Planted in the river valleys and up the surrounding slopes, vineyards in this DO range from 300 to 1,100 feet in elevation.

Climate

Humid and cool, Ribeiro receives plentiful rain.

Soil

Mostly granite bedrock with alluvial soils, soil for higher-quality wines is found in the higher elevations.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are Mencía, Caiño, and Tempranillo, and the whites grown are Albariño, Treixadura, Godello, and Palomino

Wines

Palomino produces heavy neutral whites with some *enverado* wines, early-picked and low in alcohol. Albariño, Godello, and Treixadura yield crisp whites. Some light red wines are produced.

Valdeorras

Meaning ‘golden valley,’ Valdeorras is located on the river Sil in eastern Ourense, bordering Castilla y León. It received its DO status in 1945.

Geography

Vineyards here are planted in the river valley and hillsides, with elevations from 780 to 1,050 feet.

Climate

The furthest inland Galician DO, Valdeorras experiences a continental climate, with hot summers, long falls, and cold winters, and is drier than other parts of Galicia.

Soil

Most soils in this DO consist of slate bedrock under alluvial soils with some limestone outcroppings.

Grapes

The only significant grapes grown are Godello and Mencía.

Wines

Valdeorras traditionally *joven* wines, with fresh, crisp, and fruity whites and light reds.

País Vasco

Called ‘Basque Country’ in English and *Euskadi*, meaning ‘collection of Basques,’ in the native Basque language, the area that this present-day autonomous community encompasses was first settled by the Basque people. No one is quite sure where the Basque people come from, however it is believed that they were the first people to colonize this part of Europe during the Stone Age.²⁸ When Rome expanded over the Iberian Peninsula, they conquered the Basque people, but they did not settle extensively in their area. Isolated by the Cantabrian Mountains, the *Cordillera Cantábrica*, and nestled against the coast, the Basque culture was largely protected from the Romans, Visigoths, and Moors during their invasions. Included in this is the Basque language, the only non-Indo-European language in Western Europe; no related languages exist anywhere in the world.²⁹ The País Vasco was ruled from the city of Gernika (Guernica) until 1937, when Franco’s forces, aided by the German Luftwaffe, bombed and destroyed it during the Civil War (memorialized in Picasso’s famous painting bearing the name of the city).³⁰ During Franco’s rule, Basque culture was oppressed and the Basque language was banned, sharing the

²⁸ Harris and Lyon 345 and Radford 42-43.

²⁹ Harris and Lyon 345.

³⁰ Radford 43.

fate of Catalan and Galician. Since the 1978 constitution, Basque is an official language of the País Vasco, which is now ruled from Bilbao.³¹

The *autonomía* has three provinces: Gipuzkoa (Gipúzcoa) and Bizkaia (Vizcaya), along the coast and west to the French border; and Araba (Álava), south of the Cantabrian Mountains.³² There are three DO zones in the País Vasco, all three of which are small and very similar, thus they have been grouped into the same entry.

The Three Txakolis³³

This group is made up of the three Basque *Denominaciones de Origen*: Arabako Txakolina (Chacolí de Álava), Bizkaiko Txakolina (Chacolí de Vizcaya), and Getariako Txakolina (Chacolí de Getaria). Arabako, upgraded to DO status in 2001, is inland in the province of Araba towards the *autonomía* La Rioja. Bizkaiko gained its DO status in 1994 and is centered around Bilbao by the coast with a separate area that reaches inland. Getariako gained its DO status in 1990 and is located west of San Sebastián near the coast of the Bay of Biscay.

Geography

The three Txakoli DO zones are mountainous, with vineyards planted from sea level up to about 500 feet in elevation.

Climate

They all share a very wet maritime climate, but the inland areas are hotter and drier.

Soil

Each has loose alluvial and sandy soils over a clay, marl, or limestone base.

Grapes

Unique to this area, the vines are on their own roots, having been unaffected by phylloxera, and some vines are up to 80 years old. The red grape Ondarribi Beltza and the white grape Ondarribi Zuri are exclusively used, both of which have unknown origins and are not found outside of the País Vasco.

Wines

All the wines produced are *joven* with a crisp, grapey fruit. In Getariako and Bizkaiko, the wines are fresh with a green-fruit style, and in Arabako, they have a higher alcohol and peachy fruit, similar to the whites of Galicia.

Culture of the Galicia and the País Vasco

Galicia and the País Vasco share a similar climate, different from the rest of Spain, save for Asturias and Cantabria, and they have similarities in the uniqueness of their languages, cultures, and their wines. Additionally, both cultures and languages were repressed, often brutally, under Franco and did not gain a recognized status until 1978.

³¹ Clark, et al. 487 and Radford 43.

³² See Appendix.

³³ The information on these *Denominaciones de Origen* was drawn from Jeffs 203-206 and Radford 44.

Uniquely in Spain, Galicia has strong Celtic roots, still shown in its culture today. Its proximity to Portugal is exhibited in the Galician language, being a sort of blend of Portuguese and Spanish, with Galician more popular in the areas closer to the border with Portugal and Spanish more popular in the areas farther from Portugal. Interestingly, its wines also demonstrate a Portuguese influence, with light and sometimes even slightly fizzy whites, similar to Portugal's famous *Vinho Verde*.³⁴ However, like its language, Galicia's wines also reflect the somewhat modest but prevalent influence of Castilian Spain. As Galician culture was tied Spain by the Camino de Santiago, its production of light, fruity reds, tie it to the broader Spanish viniculture.

The Basque people are known for being fiercely independent, with a history of resistance to subjugation, and industrious, from the laborious task of working the steep, hillside farms to the País Vasco being the industrial workhorse of modern Spain.³⁵ Interestingly, the Basque people even have a unique blood type: the Basques have mainly A-type and Rh-negative blood, while the rest of the world has predominantly Rh-positive blood.³⁶ The fierce independence of the people is mirrored in the grapes used for the wines, as like the Basque language, they are found nowhere else in the world and they have very murky origins. In the País Vasco, there are *txokos*, societies dedicated to food and drink that meet and celebrate the local gastronomy and wines.³⁷

Both Galicia and the País Vasco, due to their coastal locations, have a cuisine focused heavily on seafood. Galicia is famous in Europe for its fisheries (and likewise its white wines), and the Basque cuisine is known for its *pintxos*, appetizers similar to tapas that consist of bread topped with small portions, often seafood. The *pintxos* are often accompanied with a white wine to be drunk in a social setting.³⁸ The fruitiness of the whites from the Txakolis also reflect the famous sweet and dry ciders of the region, famous throughout Spain and the world. The seafood, geography, and climate of both regions heavily favor white wines, and their different but similarly unique cultures have been tied intricately with their different and also similarly unique wines.

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected for this region is a 2016 vintage of *Louro*, a wine from Rafael Palacios. From the DO Valdeorras, this wine is made from Godello grapes aged in French oak *foudres* (barrels of 3000L) for 4 months. It is a heavier white with hints of citrus and green apple and a slightly sweet finish.³⁹

This wine would go very well with *filhoas de mexilóns* (mussel crêpes), made from mussels cooked in white wine and rolled in crêpes with cream and parsley. Similar to the crêpes of Brittany, this dish reflects the Celtic culture Galicia shares with Brittany and other regions across Western Europe.⁴⁰

³⁴ Jeffs 213.

³⁵ Woodworth, *The Basque Country* (Signal Books Limited, 2007) 15.

³⁶ Radford 43.

³⁷ Radford 43.

³⁸ Harris and Lyon 332, Clark, et al. 494-495, and Woodworth 64.

³⁹ An incredibly detailed description of *Louro* can be found in "Louro" from *European Cellars*.

⁴⁰ "Mussel Pancakes," *Spain Recipes*.

THE CENTER-NORTH Aragón, La Rioja, and Navarra

Aragón

The Carthaginians first established an outpost in present-day Aragón, which was later colonized by the Romans into the city of Caesaraugusta, known today as Zaragoza, the capital of the *autonomía* of Aragón.⁴¹ As the Moors were being pushed back southward, in 1035 Aragón emerged as a kingdom between the Kingdom of Navarra and the County of Cataluña. After quickly merging with Navarra, Aragón merged with Catalonia in 1137, becoming a powerful Kingdom in the emerging Christian Spain. Over 300 years later, the heir to the throne, Prince Ferdinand, married Queen Isabella of Castilla in 1469, and in 1479, Ferdinand became King of a united Spain.⁴² The Moors were soon after expelled in 1492 to end the Reconquista. As the seat of power for hundreds of years, Aragón enjoyed a great deal of investment in its wine production, as the wealthy members of the court provided a large market for expensive, high-quality wine. With its proximity to France, just over the Pyrenees,⁴³ Aragón also enjoyed a large export market for its wine for centuries.⁴⁴ However, the wines of Aragón missed out on the rush for Bordeaux-style wines that those of Rioja and Navarra experienced, and so it missed a great deal of investment, and was kept in the past with regards to its wine styles. Until recently, the wines of Aragón were strong and heady, as was the old style. Presently, Aragón is recovering well and its wines have greatly increased in quality, but it still lags behind the famous wines of Rioja and Navarra.⁴⁵

Aragón consists of 3 provinces: Huesca, Teruel, and Zaragoza; with 4 *Denominaciones de Origen*: Calatayud, Campo de Borja, Cariñena, and Somontano.⁴⁶

Campo de Borja

Established as a DO in 1980, Campo de Borja is named for the Borja family, the same family that gave rise to the Borgia family of Italy when Alfonso de Borja was elected Pope in 1455. Campo de Borja is located south of the river Ebro, contiguous with and forming an extension of southern Navarra.

Geography

This DO is located on the slopes of the *Sierra de Moncayo*, part of the *Cordillera Ibérica*, with vineyards planted at altitudes of 980 to 2,500 feet.

Climate

Campo de Borja experiences a continental climate, with extreme temperatures and low rainfall. It has hot summers with plentiful sunshine and cool nights.

Soil

The soil here, light loam over limestone, is stony and drains well.

⁴¹ Clark, et al. 443 and Harris and Lyon 320.

⁴² Clark, et al. 442, Harris and Lyon 320, and Radford 90.

⁴³ See Appendix.

⁴⁴ Radford 90.

⁴⁵ Radford 90.

⁴⁶ The information for the *Denominaciones de Origen* of Aragón is taken from Jeffs 64-82 and Radford 92-96.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are predominantly Garnacha and Tempranillo with some Mazuelo. While not many are planted, the white grapes are mostly Macabeo.

Wines

Most wine is produced using Garnacha, yielding a dark yet fruity red. There is also a strong production of *rosados*.

Calatayud

The largest DO in Aragón, Calatayud derives its name from a nearby castle (*qalat* in Arabic) built by the Moorish governor Ayub. The area has been inhabited since ancient times, as the nearby Roman city of Bilbilis established a large population long ago. Notably, the Roman poet Martial was born and died in Calatayud. The DO is located in southern Aragón, southwest of Zaragoza.

Geography

The area is hilly, and the vineyards are planted at high elevations, ranging from 1,600 to 3,000 feet in altitude.

Climate

Having a continental climate, this area is hot and dry, but has some areas with rainfall up to 22 inches.

Soil

The soils in this DO are rich in limestone, marl and slate, and are brown, loose and stony with a gypsum base.

Grapes

Most red grapes are Garnacha (locally called Tinta del Monte) and Tempranillo, with some Monastrell and Mazuelo planted. Most white grapes planted are Malasía.

Wines

Calatayud produces reds with great depth, complexity, and structure.

Cariñena

In 1932, Cariñena became one of the first wine-producing areas in Spain to be clearly delineated, however it did not receive DO status until 1960. The city of Cariñena was originally founded by Romans as Carae, and the area has had its own wine regulations since 1696. The Cariñena grape is native to the region, but it only accounts for 6% of the red grapes grown. Cariñena is located to the southwest of Zaragoza, east of Calatayud.

Geography

Consisting of high plains and small hills, its vineyards are planted into the foothills of the *Sierra de Algairén*, part of the *Cordillera Ibérica*, at altitudes of 1,300 to 2,600 feet.

Climate

As a continental climate, it has cool nights during its long, hot summers, and little rain during either the summers or the cold winters.

Soil

Cariñena's soils are mostly limestone and chalk with sporadic slate and alluvial deposits.

Grapes

Most red grapes planted are Garnacha and Tempranillo, with some Cariñena and Monastrell. Macabeo makes up most of the white grapes planted.

Wines

Wines are mainly *joven* in all three colors (red, *rosado*, and white). Traditionally, it was known for sweet wines of great strength and color.

Somontano

The newest DO in Aragón, it gained its status in 1985. While no wines of note were produced here before its promotion to a DO, its history with wine is old. When Rome collapsed in the fifth Century AD, its legions stayed behind in the area and inevitably shared their winemaking knowledge with the locals. Positioned just south of the French border in the province of Huesca, the area has continuously maintained a strong connection with France.

Geography

Somontano's vineyards are planted in the foothills, river valleys, and terraced slopes of the Pyrenees at elevations of 1,100 to 2,100 feet.

Climate

While it has a continental climate, the DO is sheltered by the Pyrenees, and so it is more moderate with slightly higher rainfall.

Soil

The soil is fertile and high in sandstone, clay, and calcium, and has excellent drainage.

Grapes

The red grapes Moristel and Parraleta are native to the area, but Tempranillo, Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Syrah are more popular. The native white grape Alcañón is grown as well, but is less popular than Macabeo, Chardonnay, and Gewürztraminer.

Wines

Somontano's wines usually take the styles of nearby Cataluña, with barrel-fermented Chardonnay and a focus on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

La Rioja

Taking its name from the local Río Oja (*oja* means 'leaf'), La Rioja's history is essentially the history of wine in Spain, as it is the most famous red wine region in Spain.⁴⁷ When the Romans invaded the area, the Celtiberi tribe was already inhabiting the land and making wine. Romans further developed the wine industry along its famous roads and showed the locals how to maximize output and increase the quality of the wine. By the time the Moors invaded, wine was very important to the local economy; it was so deeply entrenched in the region it survived their strict laws on alcohol.⁴⁸ However, Christian forces soon recaptured La Rioja, and wine production increased again. When Navarra, Aragón, and Cataluña rose to power, the money from the various royalties poured into the industry as the wealthy sought high-quality wine, and Rioja soon began exporting wine across Europe.⁴⁹ As detailed earlier in the section "A Brief History of Wine in Spain," the efforts of the Marqués de Murrieta and the Marqués de Riscal, combined with the phylloxera devastation in France, led to modern Rioja becoming a player on the world stage.

La Rioja has only one province, La Rioja, and one DOCa, Rioja.⁵⁰

Rioja⁵¹

Having Spain's first *consejo regulador* and subsequently becoming Spain's first *Denominación de Origen*, Rioja is undoubtedly Spain's great red wine region. Even before obtaining this status, Rioja had its own wine laws for many years. In 1560, the local government passed regulations concerning the treatment of grapes, musts, and wines. In 1635, the mayor of Logroño banned traffic from the streets next to bodegas to prevent vibrations from hurting the vines. In 1787, the Real Sociedad Económica de Cosecheros de la Rioja Castellana was established. In 1902, a national law was passed protecting the Rioja name for its wine, origin, and labeling.

Rioja has three subzones: Rioja Alta, northwest in La Rioja; Rioja Alavesa, northwest in Araba in the País Vasco; and Rioja Baja, southeast and partly in Navarra.

Geography

Rioja stretches along the Ebro Valley, 31 miles wide at its widest, sheltered by the *Sierra de Cantabria* to the north and by the *Sierra de la Demanda* to the south. In the Alta and Alavesa subzones, the vineyards are planted in the highlands from 1,300 to 1,600 feet in altitude. In the Baja subzone, the vineyards are lower, at about 1,000 feet in altitude.

⁴⁷ Radford 72.

⁴⁸ Radford 72.

⁴⁹ Jeffs 89 and Radford 72.

⁵⁰ See Appendix.

⁵¹ The information for the DO Rioja is taken from Jeffs 83-96 and Radford 74-77.

Climate

In the Alta and Alavesa subzones, Rioja has a partly Atlantic climate with moderate rainfall. In the Baja subzone, the climate is more Mediterranean, and in the subzone's lower extremities, the climate is continental.

Soil

The Alta and Alavesa subzones have calcareous, clay-based and alluvial soils with some iron and chalk, while the Baja subzone has ferruginous clay and alluvial soils.

Grapes

Authorized red grapes for Rioja are Tempranillo, Garnacha, Mazuelo (the local name for Cariñena), and Graciano, while authorized white grapes are Viura, Malvasía Riojana, and Garnacha Blanca.

Wines

The wines of Rioja range from barrel-fermented whites with spice and oak to red *gran reservas* with dark, raisiny complexity. The Basques in the Alavesa subzone prefer light, fruity Tempranillos, while the *Riojanos* like the mature, traditional grape mix (mostly Tempranillo with some Garnacha and a little Graciano and Mazuelo), and the *Navarros* like the warm and rich Garnachas.

Navarra

Originally inhabited by the Vascones, the same people who also settled the País Vasco and later became the Basque people, Navarra became an important medieval kingdom under Sancho the Elder, around 1000 AD.⁵² However, upon his death, his kingdom collapsed and eventually passed to various French dynasties, beginning around 1200 AD. Eventually, the Gran Duque de Alba defeated the French and claimed the land south of the Pyrenees for King Ferdinand of Aragón.⁵³ Shortly thereafter, under a united Spain, King Ferdinand signed a charter in 1512 granting Navarra certain rights in exchange for its loyalty. As a result, Navarra is unique in Spain as a *comunidad foral* (chartered community).⁵⁴ As a result of its location⁵⁵ and diverse history, Navarra's culture is an intersection of Roman, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Pagan influences, with especially strong Basque influences in the north and Castilian influences in the south.⁵⁶

Along with Rioja, Navarra was an important supplier for Bordeaux-style wine after phylloxera devastated France. Navarra originally attempted to create a DO for itself in 1933, but the Civil War delayed it the process until 1958.⁵⁷ Navarra consists of one province, Navarra, and one DO, Navarra. It also contains part of the DOCa Rioja.

⁵² Clark, et al. 523 and Radford 82.

⁵³ Radford 82-83.

⁵⁴ Radford 82.

⁵⁵ See Appendix.

⁵⁶ Clark, et al. 523-524.

⁵⁷ Jeffs 143-144 and Radford 85.

Navarra⁵⁸

A DO since it finally gained the status in 1958, Navarra consists of 5 subzones: Baja Montaña in the northeast; Ribera Alta (itself with three sub-regions: Olite, Larín, and Marcilla), adjoining Valdizarbe to its south; Ribera Baja around Tudela in the south; Tierra de Estella, the westernmost subzone; and Valdizarbe, in the middle of the DO.

Geography

As the DO covers almost the entire community of Navarra, it has great variety in geography. In Tierra Estella and Valdizarbe, the vineyards are planted around 1,800 feet in altitude. In Baja Montaña, Ribera Alta, and Ribera Baja, the vineyards are planted from the foothills of the Pyrenees to the banks of the Ebro around 800 feet in elevation.

Climate

The higher elevations have cooler, wetter climates, while the lower, central zones have hotter and drier climates. Due to this variety, most major wineries in the DO source different grapes from around the region to fill out their blends.

Soil

The soils throughout the subzones are generally similar, being loam over gravel with limestone and chalk bedrock. However, Ribera Alta has more alluvial soil and Ribera Baja has sandier soil.

Grapes

Most of the red grapes grown are Garnacha, but a lot of Tempranillo grapes are grown, along with some Graciano, Mazuelo, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. The majority of the white grapes grown are Viura (Macabeo) with some Garnacha Blanca, Malvasía, Moscatel de Gran Menudo, and Chardonnay.

Wines

Traditionally Navarra made, and continues to make, famous *rosados*, however about 70% of the wine produced is now red, with about 25% *rosado*, and 5% white. Experimental varieties are popular, led by the Estación de Viticultura y Enología de Navarra, which researches everything about the winemaking process and evaluates wines made from its own vineyards to better advise the local winemakers.

Culture of the Center-North

Aragón, La Rioja, and Navarra all have a history of Roman occupation and influence, similar to the majority of Spain. Particular in this region, however, is the lasting impact the Romans had on the taste of the local wines. Along with some of their men, the Romans left behind a taste for sweet, honeyed wine.⁵⁹ This preference for sweeter wines lasted for centuries, and even today some locals prefer sweeter wines. In La Rioja and especially Navarra, the Basque

⁵⁸ Information for this DO is drawn from Jeffs 139-145 and Radford 84-85.

⁵⁹ Radford 96.

settlers left behind a very independent culture, and the more Basque-influenced areas still exhibit a preference for and increased production of lighter and fruitier wines.⁶⁰ In the areas with a higher degree of Castilian influence, especially in Navarra, Garnacha is the favorite grape, reflecting its ties with Christian Spain as an important kingdom in the middle ages. As the center of power in the early Reconquista, Aragón, Navarra, and La Rioja all experienced an influx of the aristocracy's money and turned their focus to the production of high-quality wines. As some routes of the Camino de Santiago run through the region, the traveling pilgrims and monks established a tradition of exportation and importation to and from France.⁶¹ Importantly, the wine trading with France, and the region's proximity to France, led to a history of cultural exchanges, especially reflected in the wines of Navarra and La Rioja, culminating in their transformation into high-quality, Bordeaux-style wines known throughout the world.

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected for this region is a 2017 vintage of *Don Ramón*, a wine from Bodegas Aragonesas. From the DO Campo de Borja, this wine is a blend of Garnacha (75%) and Tempranillo (25%), aged in American oak for 3 months. It is a light and subtly sweet red wine, with notes of black cherry and a slightly oaky finish.⁶²

This wine would go excellently with *cordero asado*, a traditional local roast lamb dish. The suckling lamb is marinated in garlic, herbs, and lemon, then cooked over an open fire and served with a side of potatoes, pairing well with the light but subtly smoky *Don Ramón*.⁶³

⁶⁰ Harris and Lyon 329.

⁶¹ Clark, et al. 442, Harris and Lyon 320, and Radford 90.

⁶² Inspired by notes from Winestore, where *Don Ramón* was purchased.

⁶³ "Cochinillo Asado," *Spain Recipes*.

CATALUÑA AND THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

Cataluña

Situated in an ideal location for trading and ports in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea,⁶⁴ Cataluña (Catalunya in the Catalan language) has long been a prosperous area but has been subjected to numerous invasions throughout its history. The Greeks first invaded the area in the 6th Century BC, with the Carthaginians, the Romans, and later the Moors following suit. Soon after, Charlemagne helped to liberate Cataluña from Moorish rule, but then annexed the area into the Frankish Empire.⁶⁵ In 865 AD, Cataluña gained its independence and shortly thereafter united with Aragón in 1137. Cataluña subsequently experienced a sort of Golden Age, expanding its influence and territory and experiencing continued prosperity until 1387. In 1469, the union of Aragón and Castilla saw the balance of power in Reconquista-era Spain shift away from Cataluña, marking the culmination of its decline of power.⁶⁶ Cataluña did not regain autonomy until 1932, however Franco's victory in the Civil War in 1939 resulted in its autonomy being stripped away soon after; Franco quickly banned the Catalan language and symbols of Catalan independence. Under the new Constitution in 1978, Cataluña regained its autonomy, and a sort of backlash against the previous cultural assimilation began with a renewed sense of independence very prevalent.⁶⁷ On Oct 27, 2017, after holding what Madrid called an illegal referendum, the Catalan Parliament declared independence, attempting to establish a Catalan republic and sparking a constitutional crisis. As a result, the national government rescinded the autonomy of Cataluña, placing it under the direct rule of Madrid, and charged the Catalan President and 13 of his ministers with rebellion and sedition; the President and his ministers fled to Brussels, where they reside today.⁶⁸ As a result, thousands continually protest in Barcelona in favor of independence, and the Catalan flag can be seen hanging from many balconies throughout the city.

Until the 1940s, Cataluña mainly produced heady *rancios* and *vinos de licor*, with the exception of Cava, for which it is most famous.⁶⁹ During World War II, only America was open for exporting wine, so a local winemaker named Miguel Torres began exporting trans-Atlantic and even traveled to America himself to promote his family's wines. In the 1960s, his son Miguel Agustín Torres took over the business and became the first winemaker in Cataluña to use stainless-steel technology. Much of the Spanish, and especially Catalan, wine industry owes its advances and success to the Torres family, and today, they own the largest winery in Spain.⁷⁰

Cataluña has four provinces: Barcelona, Gerona/Girona, Lleida/Lérida, and Tarragona; and 11 *Denominaciones de Origen*: Alella, Catalunya, Conca de Barberà, Costers del Segre, Empordà-Costa Brava, Montsant, Penedès (DOCa), Pla de Bages, Priorat, Tarragona, and Terra Alta. While mostly located in Cataluña, the *Denominación* Cava has certified vineyards across Spain, but it will be included in this section.⁷¹

⁶⁴ See Appendix.

⁶⁵ Radford 102.

⁶⁶ Clark, et al. 376 and Radford 102.

⁶⁷ Jeffs 9, Radford 102, and Rodgers and Rodgers, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Spanish Culture* (Routledge, 1999) 90.

⁶⁸ Clark, et al. 376-377.

⁶⁹ Jeffs 9 and Radford 102.

⁷⁰ Radford 11, 102.

⁷¹ Information on the *Denominaciones de Origen* of Cataluña, excluding Cava, is drawn from Jeffs 9-62 and Radford 103-122.

Catalunya

Similar in its design to Bordeaux in France, this DO was created in 1999 to encompass all the other DO zones in Cataluña and enable wine blended from multiple areas and wine produced outside the other DO zones (but still within Catalunya) to still have the label of DO Catalunya. The Torres family was a driving force behind the creation of this special DO.

Alella

Located less than 10 miles north of the city of Barcelona, Alella gained DO status in 1952. Having such close proximity to Spain's second-largest city, Alella has been transformed into a land of suburbs and commuters, and as a result is about three times smaller than it was originally.

Geography

Alella has three distinct districts: the coastal area, with vineyards from sea level up to 300 feet in elevation; the traditional, intermediate area, with vineyards at 300-500 feet in altitude; and the new vineyard area in the foothills of the *Cordillera Catalana*, with vineyards up to 850 in elevation.

Climate

The coastal and traditional areas experience a Mediterranean climate with mild winters, hot summer, and moderate rainfall, and the newer, higher area has a cooler but also more continental climate.

Soil

All the areas have light and sandy soil. The older vineyards are on *sauló*, porous, sandy soil over granite, and the newer vineyards are on limestone.

Grapes

In the coastal area, Garnacha Blanca is planted. In the traditional area, the white grapes Pansà Blanca (the local name for Xarel-lo) and Pansà Rosada are planted, along with the red grapes Garnacha Tinta and Ull de Llebre (the local name for Tempranillo). In the newer area, Pansà Blanca is planted, along with some planting of various international varieties.

Wines

Traditionally producing semi-sweet white wines, Alella now makes some *rosados* and light, fresh, Pansà Blanca meant to be drunk young.

Conca de Barberà

West of Penedès, north of Tarragona and east of the largest part of Costers del Segre, this DO gained its status in 1989. Growing some of the best grapes for Cava in the Anoia valley, Conca de Barberà is named for the nearby village of Barberà de la Conca, which in turn takes its name from the *concas* (*cuencas* in Spanish), crater-shaped valleys that populate the area.

Geography

The *concas* provide the DO with undulating valleys, and the nearby mountains of Tallat, Prades, and Monstsant provide it with shelter. Vineyards are planted from 650 feet to 1,600 feet in elevation.

Climate

Conca de Barberà experiences a Mediterranean climate, but it is far enough inland that it experiences hotter summers, colder winters, and relatively high humidity.

Soil

The soils are chalky and alluvial over limestone bedrock.

Grapes

This DO mainly grows white grapes, with Macabeo, Parelleda, and Chardonnay planted. However, it does grow red grapes, planting Trepát (most likely a variety of Garnacha), Garnacha Tinta, Ull de Llebre, and some Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Wines

Uniquely, Conca de Barberà developed a technique to produce two wines in each vintage, producing both cheaper, everyday wines and longer-term, finer wines. However, most of the grape production in the DO is dedicated to grapes for Cava.

Costers del Segre

Gaining status in 1988, Costers del Segre means ‘banks of the Segre,’ the river that flows from the Pyrenees through Lleida. This DO has six subzones positioned around the city of Lleida in a clockwise fashion: Pallars Jussà, Artesa de Segre, Valls du Riucorb, Segrià, and Raïmat. Raïmat, separated from the other subzones and the most important subzone, was essentially built by one man, Manuel Raventós. Raventós transformed a ruined castle and its surrounding fields of poor, salty soil into a village and vineyards by first planting pine trees and then subsequently fruit orchards to create soil well-suited for grapevines.

Geography

Most vineyards are planted around the river Segre, with various geographies depending on the subzone, at elevations of 650 to 1,150 feet.

Climate

This also varies by subzone. With the coolest nights, Raïmat has a continental climate, while Artesa has the harshest climate. Overall, the DO experienced unpredictable rainfall.

Soil

Overall, the DO has alkaline, sandy topsoil over limestone.

Grapes

The DO grows the red grapes Garnacha, Ull de Llebre (often called Gotim Bru, meaning ‘brown bunch’), Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Monastrell, Trepát, Cariñena, and Pinot Noir. It also grows the white grapes Chardonnay, Macabeo, Xarel-lo, Parellada, and Garnacha Blanca.

Wines

Raïmat produces Cava and other high-quality wines, while most smaller bodegas mainly produce grapes for Cava.

Empordà-Costa Brava

Called Ampurdán-Costa Brava in Spanish, this area gained DO status in 1975 and is located around the town of Figueres on the Mediterranean coast up to the French.

Geography

The vineyards in this DO are planted from the coast inland up to 650 feet in elevation, usually in *concas*.

Climate

The DO experiences a Mediterranean climate, but the Pyrenees and a cold north wind known as the *Tramontana* help moderate the temperature.

Soil

The area has light, fertile, and well-drained soil over limestone.

Grapes

The main red grape grown in Cariñena, with some Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Garnacha grown, as well. The white grapes grown are Chenin Blanc, Muscat, Riesling, and some Gewürztraminer.

Wines

Traditionally, this area made *vinos de licor* and *rosados* from the Cariñena grape with little French influence, and now more experimental varieties are grown, in addition red wines from Garnacha and assorted white wines. However, its signature wine is still a *rosado* blend from Garnacha and Cariñena.

Montsant

Formed from the vineyards of the DO Tarragona’s Falset subzone in 2001, Montsant nearly surrounds the hill that the DO Priorat is on in a horseshoe shape.

Geography

The vineyards of Montsant are planted in a mountain valley and the surrounding foothills at an average elevation of 1,100 feet, extending up to 2,300 feet at the maximum.

Climate

Montsant experiences a sheltered climate with moderate rainfall.

Soil

Most of the soil is lime clay and sandy with some granite and slate.

Grapes

The red grapes grown here are Cariñena, Garnacha Cabernet Sauvignon, Monastrell, and Tempranillo. The white grapes grown are Chardonnay, Macabeo, Pansal (a local name for Xarel-lo), and Parellada.

Wines

As Montsant was formed using some of the best vineyards in the DO Tarragona, it produces premium red wines approaching the quality of Priorat.

Penedès

Receiving its DO status in 1960, Penedès is located on the coast about 20 miles from Barcelona and about 10 miles east of Tarragona. Although the area has a history of winemaking since before the Phoenicians, its wine production truly began in the 1960s when Barcelona's mayor encouraged nearby vineyards to produce red wines, permitted by the many microclimates of Penedès. The Torres family winery is here, and it leads the area in the advancement and innovation of winemaking and possesses the largest vineyards of Catalan grapes in the region.

Geography

Vineyards in Penedès are planted in three different levels: *baix*-Penedès (low-Penedès) along the coast from sea level to 800 feet in elevation; *mitja*-Penedès (middle-Penedès), rolling hills from 820 to 1,640 feet; and *alt*-Penedès, in the foothills of the mountains from 1,600-2,800 feet.

Climate

Baix-Penedès, while moderated by the Mediterranean, is the hottest of the three areas, while *mitja*- and *alt*-Penedès have climates that are more continental.

Soil

The soils are deep and well-draining through all three levels with more limestone by the coast and more chalk in the higher elevations.

Grapes

The red grapes grown in the DO are Garnacha, Monastrell, Cariñena, and over 120 varieties native to Catalunya. The white grapes grown are Macabeo, Xarel-lo, Parellada, and Chardonnay.

Wines

The white wines of Penedès are internationally recognized, and world-class red wines are produced, often a blend of Spanish and international wines. Tempranillo from Penedès blends particularly well with Cabernet Sauvignon.

Pla de Bages

Located in the western part of the province of Barcelona about 40 miles northwest of the city, this DO gained its status in 1997. Pla de Bages takes its name from the ancient Roman city of Bacassis, likely named for the Roman god of wine Bacchus, however it is unknown if this indicates that the area was important in Roman wine production.

Geography

Pla de Bages is fairly mountainous with most of its vineyards planted around the river Llobregat from 650 to 1,650 feet in elevation.

Climate

Being inland, the DO experiences a Mediterranean climate but with limited rainfall.

Soil

The soils vary significantly throughout Pla de Bages, but it generally has loam with clay, sand, or chalk.

Grapes

Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, and Merlot are the main red grapes grown, while Picapoll and Macabeo are the main white grapes grown.

Wines

Most wines produced in this DO are fresh and light everyday *joven* white wines, but some reds are produced and are rising in popularity.

Priorat

Known as Priorato in Spanish, this area gained DO status in 1954 and was promoted to *Denominación d'Origen Qualificad* (DOQ) status in 2003. Located in Tarragona and almost entirely surrounded by the DO Tarragona, Priorat takes its name from *priorato*, which means 'priors,' derived from the Priorato de Scala Dei, founded in 1163, although its monastic cellars are still in use today. Along with Rioja, it is one of only two areas with DOQ/DOCa status.

Geography

Most vineyards are planted in the mountains on terraced slopes on inclines of up to 30 degrees at altitudes of 300 to 2,300 feet.

Climate

Although inland and thus experiencing a continental climate, the mountains lower the temperature, resulting in a sometimes very mild summer, somewhat unique in Cataluña.

Soil

Most soil in the DO is *llicorella*, alternating layers of slate and quartzite. The DO is also situated over schist bedrock, the same substratum that extends under central Spain and reemerges in the Port vineyards of Douro in Portugal.

Grapes

Most red grapes grown are Garnacha with a sizeable amount of Cariñena, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. Garnacha Blanca, Macabeo, Pedro Ximénez, and Chenin Blanc are the white grapes grown in the area.

Wines

Most Priorat wines are cool, fresh, and less oaky than those of northern Spain, ranging from *jóvenes* to *gran reservas*.

Tarragona

Gaining DO status in 1933, Tarragona stretches inland east and west of the city of Tarragona. The DO is composed of two subzones: Comarca del Camp to the east and Comarca Ribera d'Ebre to the southwest.

Geography

In the Comarca del Camp subzone, vineyards are planted on the plain around Tarragona from sea level to about 650 feet in elevation. In the Comarca Ribera d'Ebre subzone, vineyards are planted on the banks of the Ebro from 300 to about 1,450 feet.

Climate

Both subzones have a Mediterranean climate with average rainfall.

Soil

The Comarca del Camp subzone has dark brown soil with some limestone, while the Comarca Ribera d'Ebre has mostly fertile, alluvial soil.

Grapes

Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Cariñena are the red grapes grown and Macabeo, Xarel-lo, Parellada, and Garnacha Blanca are the white grapes grown.

Wines

This DO still makes its traditional *Tarragona Clásico*, a strong, semi-sweet and fortified wine. However, it has moved on to include Cava and *jóvenes* in all three colors in its production. Tarragona also exports large amounts of wine to the rest of Europe to be used as communion wine.

Terra Alta

Gaining its DO status in 1985, Terra Alta is a highland region in the very south of Cataluña, bordering Aragón on its west and nearly bordering Valencia to the south.

Geography

Terra Alta is dominated by highlands with rolling hills, and its vineyards are planted at elevations of about 1,000 feet to about 1,650 feet.

Climate

While the climate in the DO is continental, it is slightly moderated by the Mediterranean and experiences the *cierzo*, a dry wind from the Ebro Valley.

Soil

Terra Alta's soil is well-drained limestone with some clay.

Grapes

Tempranillo is the main red grape grown with some Garnacha and Cariñena, as well, while Macabeo is the main white grape grown, with some Garnacha Blanca, Parellada, and Moscatel grown, too.

Wines

While the DO was previously known for its *rancios* and *mistelas* (made from unfermented grape juice and spirits), and still many of these are still made and sold locally, Terra Alta produces red wines from Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon. However, many of the grapes grown are intended for Cava production.

Cava⁷²

While Cava is a *Denominación*, its label does not include *de Origen*, as it is only one of two Spanish wines, along with Sherry, not legally required to include those words. While 95% of Cava is from Cataluña (and 75% is from the area producing Penedès table wines), it comes from approved wineries in other areas across Spain, thus it does not have one specific location it must be from. Regulation is instead based on the vineyards, grapes, and process, known as the *método tradicional*, that produce the Cava. *Cava* means 'cellar' in Spanish, and while *bodega* does, as well, *bodegas* may be on the ground level, while *cavas* must be underground. By law, the Cava bottle's cork must have a four-pointed star and 'Cava' written on its base. As it may be from regions across Spain, the climates it is produced in vary widely, so the description of this *Denominación* will focus on the grapes used and types of Cava.

Grapes

Grapes approved for Cava are: Parellada, Xarel-lo, Macabeo, Subirat (the local name for Malvasía Riojana), and Chardonnay, with Monastrell and Garnacha used for *rosado* Cavas.

Variations

Cataluña's traditional blend uses Macabeo, Parellada, and Xarel-lo, while the rest of Spain mostly uses only Macabeo. Macabeo gives Cava crispness and acidity, Xarel-lo gives it body, and Parellada gives it fragrance and finesse. The styles of

⁷² Information on the *Denominación* Cava is taken from Jeffs 373-377 and Radford 124-127.

Cava are, from driest to sweetest: extra brut, brut, extra *seco*, *seco*, semi-*seco*, and *dulce*.

The Balearic Islands

An archipelago off the coast of Cataluña and Valencia in the Mediterranean Sea, the Balearic Islands (known as *Las Islas Baleares* or just *las Baleares* in Spanish) consist of the islands of Mallorca, Menorca, Eivissa/Ibiza, Formentera, and a number of smaller islands.⁷³ Like Cataluña, the Balearic Islands have passed from one occupier to another throughout their history. The islands were previously ruled by the Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Romans, and the Moors. In 1229, King James I of Aragón expelled the Moors from the Islands and subsequently encouraged Catalan immigration to the new Kingdom of Mallorca, a vassal state of the Kingdom of Aragón. The new kingdom flourished through extensive trade, but it soon began to decline, culminating with Aragón's attack and reclamation of the islands in 1349.⁷⁴

The oldest winery on the Balearic Islands was established in 1711 on Mallorca. Later, in the late 1700's, a mission of Franciscan monks led by Junípero Serra, left for California. Thus, some of the first vineyards in Sonoma and the Napa Valley originate from the monks and were likely planted with Balearic vines.⁷⁵ In the 1960s, the islands produced wine of little fame, however Spain's opening to tourism greatly boosted the islands economy, as they quickly became extremely popular destinations.⁷⁶ Made up of only one province, Palma de Mallorca, the Balearic Islands possessed no *Denominaciones de Origen* of their own until 1991, when DO Binissalem was established. DO Pla i Llevant followed in 2001, and the two of them are still the islands' only DO zones.⁷⁷

Binissalem

Located in the center of the island of Mallorca, DO Binissalem radiates outward from the town of Binissalem, for which it is named.

Geography

Binissalem is situated on a gently rolling plain and has no rivers (the island only has *torrentes*, temporary rivers that form during rainstorms), but the plains retain rainwater very well. Vineyards here are planted at elevations of 250 feet to 650 feet.

Climate

Binissalem experiences a Mediterranean climate with mild winters, average rains, and cooler summers than those of mainland Spain.

Soil

The soil in the DO is loam over limestone and clay.

⁷³ See Appendix.

⁷⁴ Harris and Lyon 405 and Radford 130.

⁷⁵ Radford 130.

⁷⁶ Radford 132.

⁷⁷ Information on the *Denominaciones de Origen* Binissalem and Pla i Llevant is taken from Jeffs 341-348 and Radford 131-132.

Grapes

Almost all of the grapes grown are native to Mallorca, with Manto Negro and Callet the main red grapes, and Moll (also known as Prensal Blanc) the main white grape.

Wines

Red wines from this DO must be at least 50% Manto Negro; they age very well, gaining much complexity the longer they are aged. The white wines of Binissalem are light with good acidity.

Pla i Llevant

Encompassing the southeast half of Mallorca, this DO is large but very thinly planted. Its name roughly translates to ‘the plain and east coast’ of Mallorca.

Geography

As its name suggests, Pla i Llevant is located on a plain on the eastern side of Mallorca with vineyards planted from sea level to about 300 feet in elevation.

Climate

Its climate is very similar to that of Binissalem, being Mediterranean with mild winters and cooler summers than those of mainland Spain.

Soil

Its soil is also similar to that of Binissalem, but it is mostly alluvial with light topsoil over clay and some limestone.

Grapes

Pla i Llevant also grows many local varieties but has more varied grapes than Binissalem. The red grapes grown are Callet, Fogoneu and Manto Negro (all local grapes) with some Tempranillo, Monastrell, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. The white grapes grown are Moll, Moscatel, Macabeo, Parellada, and Chardonnay.

Wines

Pla i Llevant produces highly-rated red wines, especially blends of Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo. It also produces dry Muscats and some *aguja*s, light, sparkling white wines.

Culture of Cataluña and the Balearic Islands

Similar to the País Vasco, the people of Cataluña and the Balearic Islands are fiercely independent and speak a language separate from the rest of Spain, although Catalan is a blend of Old French and Spanish.⁷⁸ Although their independences were short-lived, both autonomous communities were previously their own, prosperous kingdoms. As a result of the repression experienced under Franco, Catalan culture has experienced a sort of reawakening and revival in

⁷⁸ Jeffs 9.

modern times.⁷⁹ Mirroring the Catalan language's similarity to France, the proximity of Cataluña to France, and Cataluña's history as a part of the Frankish Empire, Catalan wine shares some similarities to French wine, most notably with Cava. Until recently called Spanish Champagne, Cava is produced using the same method as Champagne and the two are very similar in taste.⁸⁰ Additionally, the DO Catalunya mirrors the model of Bordeaux, and perhaps may eventually achieve the same success. Catalan cuisine is heavily influenced by the Mediterranean, as it maintains a focus on seafood, so naturally, it favors light, fresh white wines. However, as the Catalans often break from the norm, so do their wines: Cataluña produces some of Spain's best red wines and one of the world's best sparkling wines (Cava even overtook Champagne in worldwide popularity in 2001).⁸¹

Due to the extensive Catalan immigration experienced as the Kingdom of Mallorca, the Balearic Islands have a culture heavily influenced by Cataluña. Catalan is an official language of the islands, and like Cataluña, they grow grapes native to their lands, however, the wine production on the islands heavily favors the local grape varieties. Balearic cuisine is also focused on seafood, but here it approached a religion-like dedication. Each May, the city of Palma de Mallorca, the capital of the *autonomía*, holds a food and wine festival to celebrate local produce, cuisine, and wine.⁸² Interestingly, mayonnaise was first made in the town of Maó (Mahón in Spanish), and so became known as *maonès* (*mahonesa* in Spanish).⁸³

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected from this region is, of course, a Cava, *La Cuvee Gran Reserva 2013*. Made from the Familia Gramona winery outside Barcelona (and of course of the *Denominación Cava*), this brut Cava is made from Xarel-lo and Macabeo, and as a result is dry and floral with notes of green apple.⁸⁴

As a drink usually reserved for appetizers, this Cava would go very well with a popular local *tapa*, *pa amb tomàquet*. Translating to 'bread with tomato,' this appetizer consists of a small piece of bread with a topping smashed tomato and olive, a perfect light snack to accompany a cool glass of this Cava.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Jeffs 9, Radford 102, and Rodgers and Rodgers 90.

⁸⁰ Radford 125-126.

⁸¹ Jeffs 374 and Radford 100, 126.

⁸² Rodgers and Rodgers 440.

⁸³ Radford 130.

⁸⁴ Influenced by notes from Winestore, from where *La Cuvee* was purchased.

⁸⁵ Clark, et al. 57.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN

Castilla y León

Often referred to as ‘Old Castile,’ Castilla y León is the largest of Spain’s 17 *autonomías* and the historical heartland of Castilian Spain.⁸⁶ After the Moors invaded Spain, and after briefly controlling Asturias, the *Cordillera Cantábrica* became a buffer between the Kingdom of Asturias and Al-Andalus. As the lone bastion of Christian Spain, Asturias slowly began to push the Moors southward, uniting the kingdoms of first Castilla and then León, and the new area became a heavily fortified frontier zone.⁸⁷ *Castilla* is Spanish for ‘castle,’ and the area derives its name from the large number of castles built in this volatile frontier between warring armies. As the fighting took place above ground, secret passages and escape routes were built by the occupying armies as a means of defense and escape. After the fighting moved southwards as the Reconquista progressed, the passages became useful for winemaking, and they are still used today.⁸⁸ Castilla’s capital at Burgos and the now world-famous university at Salamanca led to an expanded market for high-quality, expensive wines and a subsequent boom in the wine industry during the later years of the Reconquista, once the fighting in the area subsided. After the union of Castilla and Aragón in 1469, the royal court of the newly united Spain was moved to Valladolid, but in 1561, it was moved to Madrid in an area referred to as ‘New Castile,’ the part of Spain that had been more recently recaptured from the Moors and far from the bitter politics of the various kingdoms and principalities of ‘Old Castile.’⁸⁹

The previous influx of money had firmly established areas of Castilla y León, especially the areas around Valladolid, as producers of high-quality wine, helped by their location along the Duero, known in Portugal as the Douro, along which the famous Port and *Vinho Verde* vineyards are planted.⁹⁰ In Castilla y León today, wine is still made in the classic Castilian style of old: strong, fruity, and slightly oaky. The modern Castilla y León is made up of 9 provinces: Ávila, Burgos, León, Palencia, Salamanca, Segovia, Soria, Valladolid, and Zamora. The *autonomía* has 5 *Denominaciones de Origen*: Bierzo, Cigales, Ribera del Duero, Rueda, and Toro, and all but Bierzo are located along the Duero.⁹¹

Bierzo

Located in the very northwest of Castilla y León, bordering the DO Valdeorras in Galicia, Bierzo was promoted to DO status in 1989. Uniquely in Castilla y León, aside from being the lone DO not located along the Duero, its wines are a mix between the light wines of Galicia and the heavy red wines of the Duero valley.

Geography

Most of the vineyards are located along the river Sil and its tributaries in a hollow surrounded by mountains, planted at altitudes of 1,650 to 2,000 feet, often in terraced vineyards on the slopes.

⁸⁶ See Appendix.

⁸⁷ Radford 48.

⁸⁸ Jeffs 155.

⁸⁹ Radford 48.

⁹⁰ Jeffs 155 and Radford 48.

⁹¹ The information for the *Denominaciones de Origen* of Castilla y León is taken from Jeffs 155-188 and Radford 50-66.

Climate

Much like the wines of Bierzo, the climate is a mix between those of Galicia and Castilla y León: it is a sort of intermediate between temperate and continental with average rainfall.

Soil

Beirzo's soil is alluvial with traces of iron on the banks of the rivers and slate in higher elevations.

Grapes

As the DO that makes the most use of Mencía, this is the most popular red in the area by far, with some Garnacha Tintorera seeing use, as well. Most white grapes grown are Palomino (a remnant of the days of overproduction when quantity was favored over quality), with some Godello and Doña Blanca used additionally.

Wines

Bierzo's red wines tend to be fruity and ripe with great ageing capabilities, and its whites have fragrance and finesse, especially those made from Godello.

Cigales

North of Valladolid and west of the DO Ribera del Duero, Cigales attained DO status in 1991. Cigales is distinguished by its *luceres*, chimneys poking above the surface from ancient, underground cellars, often located around 30 feet underground.

Geography

High on the central plain, Cigales is drained by the river Pisuerga, and its vineyards are planted at altitudes of 1,300 to 1,450 feet.

Climate

Cigales has a high continental climate with hot summer, cold winters, and cooler nights.

Soil

Most of the soil is lightweight over limestone, clay, and marl.

Grapes

The most popular red grape is Tinto del País (a local name for Tempranillo), with some Garnacha Tinta seeing use. The white grapes grown are Verdejo, Viura (Macabeo), Palomino, and Albillo.

Wines

Although Cigales grows white grapes, it does not produce any white wines, instead reserving them for use in its famous *rosados*. Its red wines are usually 85% Tinto del País.

Ribera del Duero

Centered around Aranda del Duero in the center-east of Castilla y León, Ribera del Duero gained DO status in 1982. As in Cigales, it is populated with ancient Roman cellars which were used during the Reconquista as hideouts, many of them linked up to create escape routes.

Geography

Vineyards are planted on either side of the Duero on high and hilly terrain at altitudes of 2,300 to 2,800 feet.

Climate

Ribera del Duero has a high continental climate, and like Cigales, the significant temperature drop allows the vines to ‘rest’ at night. This allows nutrients to remain in the soil for absorption during the day, when they are drawn into the grapes, increasing the quality of the wines produced.

Soil

Composed of gypsum and high levels of chalk, Ribera del Duero’s soil is partly over the same schist bedrock that the vineyards of Priorat are planted over.

Grapes

Most of the red grapes grown are Tinto Fino (another local name for Tempranillo), with some Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Garnacha (here known as Tinto Aragonés) grown. Albillo is the only white grape grown.

Wines

Like Cigales, Ribera del Duero does not produce white wines, only *rosados* and reds. Most of its wines are bold and bright; its *jóvenes* are fruity and crisp, its *crianzas* have hints of vanilla and spice, and its *reservas* and *gran reservas* are big, dark, fruity, rich, and complex.

Rueda

The furthest south of Castilla y León’s DO zones, Rueda gained DO status in 1980. As the area was recaptured by the Christians in the 11th Century, the retreating Moors burned everything in their path, leaving the area devastated. King Alfonso VI encouraged winegrowing in the area, and its heavily-oxidized, strong, and sherry-like whites became popular for centuries. Because the local grape Verdejo oxidizes by itself, it was not until the early 1970s that the wine changed style. When the director of the Marqués de Riscal estate in Rioja arrived in Rueda in 1972, he introduced new technology to allow the production of non-oxidized white wines, and the Verdejo de Rueda soon took off.

Geography

On the flat, high countryside, vineyards are planted at elevations of 1,950 to 2,550 feet.

Climate

Rueda has a continental climate with irregular rainfall.

Soil

Made of sandstone and clay, Rueda's soil is mostly sandy and stony with some alluvial soils and limestone.

Grapes

Verdejo is the most important grape grown in Rueda, with the additional white grapes Sauvignon Blanc and Viura. Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Garnacha are the red grapes grown in the DO.

Wines

Rueda is famous for its Verdejo, producing a crisp, fruity, aromatic, and bone-dry white, however the red wine Rueda Sauvignon is increasing in popularity (red wines have been allowed in the DO since 2001).

Toro

Gaining DO status in 1987, Toro is located west of Rueda and east of the town of Zamora, taking its name from the town of Toro, located along the Duero.

Geography

Located on Spain's central plateau, its vineyards are planted south of the Duero and around its tributary, the Guareña, at altitudes of 2,000 to 2,600 feet.

Climate

Toro has a continental climate with very little rainfall.

Soil

The DO has sandy, well-drained, and infertile soil with some calcium throughout.

Grapes

Most popular are the red grapes Tinto del Toro (yet another local name of Tempranillo) and Tinto Aragonés, while the white grapes Malvasía and Verdejo are also grown.

Wines

Historically, Toro was known for its very dark and very strong (up to 17% ABV) red wines, but in the 1980s, more high-quality wines started being produced. Now, Toro makes some crisp and dry whites and *rosados* with plenty of acid and length. However, it is most well-known for its reds, which are usually 100% Tinto del Toro, being bold and fruity, and strong, fruity, and long if aged to *reserva* or *gran reserva*.

Culture of Castilla y León

As the center of Christian Spanish operations during the early Reconquista, Castilla y León developed a distinctly Spanish culture.⁹² Modern Spanish culture has strong Castilian

⁹² Clark, et al. 169.

influence; the official name for the Spanish language, Castilian or *Castellano*, derives its name from the region. Castilla y León's violent past is exemplified by its immense number of castles, and its deeply Christian roots can be seen through its numerous cathedrals.⁹³ As it is located on the Spanish high plains, Castilla y León's cuisine is centered on meats and cheese, from *chorizo* to the famous *jamón* and all types of sheep's milk cheeses, pairing well with the region's strong, robust red wines.⁹⁴ While its wines naturally reflect its cuisine, the region's wines are equally reflective of its history and culture. While Rueda was newly under Castilian control, Jerez was still in Moorish Spain, thus Verdejo's highly oxidative nature saw its use as Christian Spain's answer to Sherry.⁹⁵ Castilla y León's firmly Spanish culture has led to its wines that reflect purely Spanish tastes: Castilian wines are powerful, high-strength, fruity, and slightly oaky, contrasting Navarra and Rioja's Bordeaux-style wines that exhibit French influence.

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected for this region is a 2014 *reserva* from the DO Cigales, produced by Finca Museum. Made solely of Tempranillo grapes, some from vines over 100 years old, and aged in French oak, this is a full-bodied red wine with fruity, floral notes and a slightly oaky finish.⁹⁶

This wine would pair excellently with *cochinillo asado*, a traditional local dish. A roast suckling pig, *cochinillo asado* has a crispy skin lined with a very thin layer of fat.⁹⁷

⁹³ Clark, et al. 169 and Harris and Lyon 114.

⁹⁴ Harris and Lyon 116 and Radford 48.

⁹⁵ Radford 60.

⁹⁶ Inspired by notes from Winestore, from where Finca Museum's *reserva* was purchased.

⁹⁷ "Cochinillo Asado – Roasted Suckling Pig," *Spain Recipes*.

LA MESETA

Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, and Madrid

Castilla-La Mancha

Located in the center of Spain, south and east of Madrid,⁹⁸ Castilla-La Mancha is a large *autonomía* of vast, windswept plains and subsequently one of Spain's least-populated regions. The region was first settled by the Romans, who established Toledo as a hilltop fortress. The Moors later built up Toledo further, establishing it as a city of three cultures, with Sephardic Jews, Moors, and Christians all coexisting relatively peacefully.⁹⁹ Castilla-La Mancha, however, is perhaps most famous internationally for the setting of the majority of the novel *Don Quixote*, and the region is truly mostly rural, with many of the villages and towns retaining their old culture shown in the classic work.¹⁰⁰ Today, the biggest industry of Castilla-La Mancha is sheep farming, and it is famous for its Manchego cheese (*Manchego* is the Spanish demonym for La Mancha, and the cheese has its own DO).¹⁰¹ The region is made up of 5 provinces: Albacete, Cuenca, Ciudad Real, Guadalajara, and Toledo; and 7 *Denominaciones de Origen*: Almansa, La Mancha, Manchuela, Méntrida, Mondéjar, Ribera del Júcar, and Valdepeñas.¹⁰²

Almansa

In the eastern corner of Castilla-La Mancha, Almansa gained DO status in 1966. Bordering the DO zones of Alicante, Jumilla, and Yecla, its wines more closely resemble those of the Levant than those of La Meseta. Almansa is the location of the last castle built during the Reconquista, and its name may be derived from *Al-Almankha*, 'the dry place' in Arabic.

Geography

Unlike the plains of La Mancha, this DO features rolling foothills, with vineyards planted at elevations around 2,300 feet.

Climate

As its possible Arabic name suggests, Almansa has a continental climate, seeing little rainfall, very hot summers, and very cold winters.

Soil

Almansa has permeable soils with a high chalk content.

Grapes

Monastrell is the main red grape grown, with Garnacha Tintorera, Cencibel (the local name for Tempranillo), and some Cabernet Sauvignon grown, too. Merseguera and Airén are the white grapes grown.

⁹⁸ See Appendix.

⁹⁹ Harris and Lyon 98.

¹⁰⁰ Radford 161.

¹⁰¹ Clark, et al. 58 and Radford 161.

¹⁰² The information on Castilla-La Mancha's *Denominaciones de Origen* is drawn from Jeffs 238-240, 270-288 and Radford 162-170, 173.

Wines

Historically known for its high-strength reds, Almansa today produces well-balanced and elegant reds, while having little production of whites and *rosados*.

La Mancha

The largest DO in Spain, and the world's largest wine-producing area, La Mancha stretches from the DO Vinos de Madrid in the north to the DO Valdepeñas in the south. Established as a DO in 1966, La Mancha is situated on the vast, gently sloping plain in the center of Spain. Its vineyards are planted in a checkerboard pattern, the *marco real*, as a way to maximize the use of what little water is available. The symbol of this DO has the silhouette of its arguably most famous native, Don Quixote, riding his horse, Rocinante.

Geography

Vineyards are planted on the vast plains from altitudes of 1,600 feet in the north to altitudes of 2,100 feet in the south.

Climate

La Mancha has a continental climate and most of the little rainfall it gets is concentrated in the winter.

Soil

La Mancha mostly has red-brown, sandy clay with some limestone and chalk, as well.

Grapes

The most popular red grape is Cencibel, and Moravia, Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah are also grown. The white grapes Airén, Macabeo, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc are grown here.

Wines

La Mancha produces many *joven* red wines; they are powerful, rich, and hearty.

Manchuela

Bordering the DO zones of La Mancha and Ribera del Júcar in the west, Utiel-Requena in the northeast, Almansa in the southeast, and Jumilla in the south, Manchuela gained DO status in 2004.

Geography

Vineyards are planted here between the Júcar and Cabriel rivers at altitudes of 2,300 to 2,600 feet.

Climate

Manchuela's climate is transitional between continental and Mediterranean with a high amount of rainfall.

Soil

The soil in this DO is mostly clay over limestone.

Grapes

The vineyards in Manchuela are mostly Bobal with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cencibel, Garnacha, Monstrell, Moravia Dulce, and Syrah grown, as well. The white grapes Albillo, Chardonnay, Macabeo, and Sauvignon Blanc are grown.

Wines

Manchuela's wines are mostly used for bulk production, especially in blends, however it also produces easy-drinking, fruit reds and light, fresh whites.

Mérida

Located in the northern part of the Toledo province, Mérida gained its DO status in 1960. Mérida adjoins the DO Vinos de Madrid, and part of it is actually in the *autonomía* of Madrid.

Geography

Mérida is mostly flat with some hills in the northwest, and its vineyards are planted at altitudes of about 650 to 1,600 feet.

Climate

Mérida has a continental climate.

Soil

Here, the soil is sandy with clay and limestone.

Grapes

Garnacha and Cencibel (also locally known as Tinto de Madrid, another name for Tempranillo) are the red grapes grown, while Albillo, Macabeo, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay are the white grapes grown.

Wines

Historically, Mérida produces bulk wines for exporting to other parts of Europe, but its wines are slowly improving in quality. The production of white wines was first allowed in 2003.

Mondéjar

Promoted to DO status in 1997 and the only significant winemaking area in the Guadalajara province, Mondéjar borders the DO La Mancha and is contiguous with the DO Vinos de Madrid. Historically, Mondéjar was a staging post on the royal road between Valencia and Madrid, and so it produced wines in bulk for sale in Madrid. Mondéjar is composed of two sub-areas, one centered around the town of Sacedón to the east of the city of Guadalajara, and one in the south around the town of Mondéjar.

Geography

Mondéjar is on a gently sloping plain, around 2,600 feet in elevation.

Climate

Mondéjar has a continental climate but is slightly tempered by the Mediterranean.

Soil

The soil in Mondéjar is red-brown over limestone.

Grapes

Cencibel/Tinto de Madrid, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, and Jaén are the red grapes grown in Mondéjar along with the white grapes Malvar, Macabeo, and Torrontés.

Wines

Mondéjar produces fresh and fruity red wines along with some whites. While none of its wines are of much note, they are improving.

Ribera del Júcar

Formerly a part of the DO La Mancha and located between it and the DO Méntrida, Ribera del Júcar gained DO status in 2001, although it did not elect a *consejo regulador* until 2003.

Geography

Ribera del Júcar consists of a rolling plain with vineyards planted at around 2,450 feet.

Climate

The climate of Ribera del Júcar is continental, similar to that of the DO La Mancha, but has some Mediterranean influences.

Soil

Ribera del Júcar's soils are also similar to those of La Mancha but with outcroppings of marl and limestone.

Grapes

The red grapes Cencibel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Bobal, Merlot, and Syrah are grown here.

Wines

Ribera del Júcar only produces red wines, making robust, rich, big, and powerful reds like La Mancha, but those of Ribera del Júcar are a slightly more delicate and perfumed.

Valdepeñas

Almost completely surrounded by the DO La Mancha, Valdepeñas gained DO status in 1964. Like Mondéjar, it is located on the royal road from Valencia to Madrid, and the area produced only white wines until French red grapes were introduced around the 12th Century.

Geography

On a small plain surrounded by mountains, the best vineyards of Valdepeñas are found in two distinct geographic zones: Los Llanos ('the plains') in the west and Las Aberturas ('the passes') in the north. Vineyards are planted at altitudes of 2,100 to 2,700 feet.

Climate

Valdepeñas has a typical continental climate with very hot summers and very cold winters.

Soil

Valdepeñas means 'valley of stones,' and its soil is true to its name: its shallow soil is full of small stones and has a chalky subsoil.

Grapes

The most popular red grape is Cencibel, with Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Petit Verdot grown, as well. Valdepeñera (the local name for Airén), Macabeo, Chardonnay, Verdejo, Sauvignon Blanc, and Moscatel Grano Menudo are the white grapes grown in the DO.

Wines

Since the French red grapes were introduced, Valdepeñas has been producing red wines of great quality, up to *gran reservas*. Traditionally, it was known for its light red wines, *claretas*, with its darker reds being robust and heady. Valdepeñas also produces fruity whites with little acidity.

Extremadura

Located on extremely fertile, rolling plains and bordering Portugal on the west, Castilla y León on the north, Andalucía on the south, and Castilla-La Mancha on the east,¹⁰³ *extremadura* roughly translates to 'the extreme limit of the land beyond the Duero.' When Christian Spain was confined to Asturias, Extremadura was exactly that: a distant land beyond the Duero.¹⁰⁴ The Romans planted vines when they first settled the area in 25 BC, establishing the city of Emerita Augusta (now Mérida), the capital of their province of Lusitania.¹⁰⁵ Later, the city of Badajoz was established as the capital of the Taifa de Badajoz, a Moorish kingdom in Al-Andalus. Post-Reconquista, Extremadura was the homeland of many conquistadores, including Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and Hernando de Soto.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See Appendix.

¹⁰⁴ Jeffs 297 and Radford 176.

¹⁰⁵ Jeffs 297 and Radford 176.

¹⁰⁶ Harris and Lyon 436.

Having such fertile land, Extremadura is a region of heavy farming and is still dominated today by *latifundia*, large agricultural estates popular in the south of Spain, stemming from the Reconquista, when large amounts of land were given as rewards to nobility for their service in the wars.¹⁰⁷ As Spain's fourth-most important wine region, Extremadura produces wine that nonetheless mostly ends up in bulk wine destined for Jerez.¹⁰⁸ Extremadura is made up of two provinces, Cáceres and Badajoz, and has only one DO, Ribera del Guadiana.

Ribera del Guadiana¹⁰⁹

Established as a DO in 1997, Ribera del Guadiana consists of 6 distinct and fairly different sub-regions: Tierra de Barros at the center of the province of Badajoz, the most important of the sub-regions with 80% of the vineyard area; Cañamero in the east; Matanegra in the south around the town of Zafra; Montánchez in the province of Cáceres to the northeast of the city of Badajoz; Ribera Alta del Guadiana in the east of the DO; and Ribera Baja del Guadiana in the west of the DO. All 6 sub-regions were formerly separate *Vinos de la Tierra* but were combined to form the DO.

Geography

The sub-regions all have differing geographies: Tierra de Barros is a fairly flat area along the Guadiana river and has vineyards planted at altitudes of 1,000 to 1,150 feet; Cañamero is in the hills of the *Sierra de Guadalupe* and has vineyards planted around 1,700 feet; Matanegra has vineyards at an average elevation of 2,000 feet; Montánchez is in the *Sierra de Montánchez* with vineyards at around 2,000 feet in elevation, as well; Ribera Alta has its vineyards at around 1,400 feet in altitude; and Ribera Baja has its vineyards at around 900 feet in altitude.

Climate

All six sub-regions have a continental climate with plentiful rain.

Soil

Generally well-irrigated by the Guadiana, the soils in the valley are fertile with alluvial clay and are limestone at higher elevations.

Grapes

Many of Ribera del Guadiana's grapes grown are native varieties found nowhere else in Spain. The red grapes grown are Tempranillo, Bobal, Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Graciano, Mazuelo, Merlot, Monstrell, Syrah, Garnacha Tintorera, and Pinot Noir. The white grapes grown are Pardina, Alarije, Borba, Cayetena Blanca, Macabeo, Chardonnay, Pedro Ximénez, Parellada, Verdejo, Chelva, Mantúa (also known as Montúa), Malvar, Eva Cigüente, Moscatels de Alejandría and Grano Menudo, Perruno, Morisca (also known as Mourisco), and Sauvignon Blanc. Tempranillo and Pardina are the most popular and second-most popular grapes, respectively.

¹⁰⁷ Rodgers and Rodgers 296-297.

¹⁰⁸ Radford 176.

¹⁰⁹ Information on the DO Ribera del Guadiana is drawn from Jeffs 297-300 and Radford 178.

Wines

Traditionally, Ribera del Guadiana has produced mostly white wines and the base wines for Brandy de Jerez, but its red wines are increasing in popularity.

Madrid

In the center of Spain and the center-north of La Meseta,¹¹⁰ Madrid was first established by the Moors as a fortified position in 854 AD called Mayrit, from the Arabic word *majira* ('water channel').¹¹¹ Madrid remained small and poor until King Felipe II moved the Royal Court to Madrid when he made it the capital of post-Reconquista Spain in 1561. Madrid subsequently boomed during Spain's Golden Age in the 17th Century. Later, in 1805, Napoleon invaded and occupied Spain. On May 2nd, 1808 the Dos de Mayo rebellion against French rule began, but it was quickly and brutally quelled; it is now commemorated with the Plaza del Dos de Mayo and city-wide festivals are held on its anniversary.¹¹² During the Civil War, Madrid endured a brutal, two-and-a-half-year siege by Franco's forces before the city ultimately surrendered. After Franco's death, Madrid's youth began *la movida*, a movement celebrating creativity and open-mindedness as a backlash against Francoist repression.¹¹³

When the Christian forces recaptured Madrid from the Moors, they replanted vineyards around the city, establishing its winemaking tradition.¹¹⁴ However, Madrid was supplanted by the La Mancha as a regional supplier until the 1970s when La Mancha shifted to export markets. Madrid soon filled this gap in local markets with its increasingly high-quality wines.¹¹⁵ The Community of Madrid has only one DO, Vinos de Madrid.

Vinos de Madrid¹¹⁶

Established as a DO in 1990, Vinos de Madrid consists of three subzones: Arganda to the southeast of the city, Navalcarnero to the west and southwest, and San Martín de Valdeiglesias to the west of Navalcarnero.

Geography

The Navalcarnero subzone is situated on the *meseta* and joins with the DO Mérida, San Martín is located in the gentle hills rising into the *Sierra de Gredos* and also joins with Mérida, and Arganda joins with the DO La Mancha. Vineyards throughout the subzones vary in altitude from 1,700 feet to 2,600 feet.

Climate

Vinos de Madrid has a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. Arganda has the least rainfall of the three subzones, San Martín has the most rainfall, and Navalcarnero receives rainfall levels between those of the other two subzones.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix.

¹¹¹ Clark, et al. 87.

¹¹² Clark, et al. 87-88.

¹¹³ Clark, et al. 88 and Harris and Lyon 2.

¹¹⁴ Radford 158.

¹¹⁵ Jeffs 265 and Radford 158.

¹¹⁶ The information for the DO Vinos de Madrid is taken from Jeffs 261-265 and Radford 158.

Soil

The Arganda subzone has rich soil with clay and marl over granite and limestone, San Martín has brown and slightly acidic soil (also with clay and marl over granite), and Navacarnero has soil of poorer quality with sand and clay throughout.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are Tinto Fino (Tempranillo), Garnacha, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. Malvar, Albillo, Airén, Parellada, Torrontés, Moscatel Grano Menudo, and Viura (Macabeo) are the white grapes grown. In Arganda, the most common grape is Tinto Fino with Malvar and Airén grown, as well. San Martín mainly grows Garnacha and Albillo, and Navacarnero mainly grows Garnacha and Malvar.

Wines

Overall, the red wines of the DO are of good quality (especially those made from Tinto Fino), with a small number of white wines being produced, as well.

Culture of La Meseta

With Madrid as the largest city in La Meseta, and in Spain, it is the center of happenings in the sparsely-populated region.¹¹⁷ Echoing modern Madrid's international and cosmopolitan culture, and as a melting pot of Spaniards and Europeans from all corners of the country and the continent, many of the regional wines were historically exported, thus many of the wines drunk in Madrid were sourced from elsewhere in Spain and France to satisfy the tastes of the wealthy members of the Royal Court.¹¹⁸ Similar to modern Madrid, Moorish Toledo was its own melting pot of cultures.

In the rural areas of La Meseta, even in the Community of Madrid, the culture is largely unchanged from the times of old. Likewise, many of the traditional and easy-drinking wines of the *Denominaciones de Origen* of the region, made for local consumption, still maintain their old character and are largely still consumed locally.¹¹⁹ One of the world's classic works, *Don Quixote* gave La Mancha international recognition as the 'old, traditional Spain' with its short, stubby windmills and wide-open plains. Likewise, the wines of Castilla-La Mancha are similar to those of Castilla y León (the homeland of Castilian culture) – powerful, strong, and distinctly Spanish. As a region of heavy farming, with sheep farming being Castilla-La Mancha's biggest industry and its famous Manchego cheese being world-renowned,¹²⁰ and its heavy production of pork products, especially in Extremadura,¹²¹ the local cuisine naturally pairs well with the bold and powerful reds produced on La Meseta.

¹¹⁷ Clark, et al. 87 and Harris and Lyon 52.

¹¹⁸ Jeffs 264.

¹¹⁹ Radford 161, 164-165.

¹²⁰ Radford 161.

¹²¹ Radford 177.

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected for La Meseta is a 2016 red wine, *Flaco*, from Compañía de Vinos del Atlántico. From the Arganda and Navalcarnero subzones of the DO Vinos de Madrid, this unoaked, 100% Tempranillo red is light and fruity, sweet, and easy-drinking.¹²²

This fresh red wine would go very well with a selection of *tapas*, specifically *jamón ibérico* and *queso Manchego*. Served atop small slices of bread, the famous cured Iberian ham and internationally-known cheese from La Mancha are perfect late-night snacks to begin a night out in Madrid with *Flaco* to wash them down.

¹²² Tasting notes influenced from the product description in “Flaco Tempranillo,” *Olé Imports*.

THE LEVANT Murcia and Valencia

Murcia

Similar to its larger neighbor¹²³ in its culture and climate, Murcia differs from Valencia in its language and history. The Carthaginians first settled the area in 223 BC when they founded the city of Qart Hadasht, which became Carthago Nova under Roman rule. Under Moorish rule, the city eventually became known as Cartajena, which became Cartagena when the city was recaptured by Christian forces in 1242.¹²⁴ The Moors also established the town of Mursiya in the 9th Century, which is now known as Murcia. Fully united with Christian Spain in 1266, most Murcians today trace their ancestry to the unifying Castilian armies. As opposed to Valencia, which was reconquered by the Moors and then united under the Catalan armies, Murcia remained under Castilian control and thus the most common language today is Castilian.¹²⁵

Murcia's owes much of its historic prosperity to its *huertas*, fertile inland fields. Along with wine, some of Murcia's chief exports have been livestock and produce, thanks to these market gardens.¹²⁶ Historically, Murcia has made heavy, strong red wines meant for blending with the lighter wines of Alicante and Valencia to give them body.¹²⁷ Murcia is made up of one province of the same name and has three *Denominaciones de Origen*: Bullas, Jumilla, and Yecla.¹²⁸

Bullas

The newest of Murcia's DO zones, being established in 1994, Bullas is a large but thinly planted DO in the western half of Murcia. The area has grown wine since it was under Roman rule, historically producing strong, heady wines for sale in bulk. Bullas is composed of three sub-areas in the northeastern, central, and western areas of the DO; the western area is the most important.

Geography

Bullas barely touches the Mediterranean coast and rises inland through the hills to the border of the DO Jumilla. In the western area, vineyards are planted from 1,600 feet to 2,650 feet in altitude. In the central area, they are planted in elevations from 1,600 feet to 2,000 feet, and in the northeastern area, they are found at elevations ranging from 1,300 feet to 1,650 feet.

Climate

The climate of this DO ranges from Mediterranean by the coast to continental in the areas further inland.

¹²³ See Appendix.

¹²⁴ Clark, et al. 906.

¹²⁵ Radford 146.

¹²⁶ Clark, et al. 902, 905.

¹²⁷ Radford 146.

¹²⁸ Information on Murcia's three *Denominaciones de Origen* comes from Jeffs 241-245, 256-258 and Radford 149-154.

Soil

Brown and hard in the hills, the soils of Bullas change to sandy and alluvial in the valleys, with some chalk throughout the different elevations.

Grapes

Monastrell is the most common red grape grown, with Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, Syrah, and Merlot seeing use, as well. Macabeo and Airén are the only white grapes grown.

Wines

Bullas produces *jóvenes* in all three colors of wine, particularly *rosados*, and the few red wines it makes are light and fresh.

Jumilla

Bordering the DO Almansa in the north and the DO zones of Alicante and Yecla in the east, Jumilla gained DO status in 1966. Mostly located in Murcia, some parts of this DO are also in the province of Albacete in Castilla-La Mancha. In 1988, phylloxera arrived very late to the area, but nonetheless was still devastating in its effect, and Jumilla's vineyards were ravaged. However, this decimation gave the local winemakers an opportunity to transition from producing bulk wines intended for blends to more high-quality wines.

Geography

With no trees, aside from nuts and olives, and with little wildlife, Jumilla has vineyards planted at high altitudes, from 1,300 feet to 2,600 feet in elevation.

Climate

Jumilla's climate is southern continental, seeing relatively cold winters and very hot, very dry summers.

Soil

Part of the reason it took phylloxera so long to reach Jumilla was its soils, as they are light and sandy with a high chalk content.

Grapes

Monastrell is the main red grape in the area, followed by Cencibel (Tempranillo), Garnacha Tinta, Garnacha Tintorera, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Airén, Macabeo, and Pedro Ximénez are the white grapes grown in the area.

Wines

Jumilla mainly produces red wines from Monastrell grapes, however it also produces some white and *rosado* wines, as well as sweet wines and *vinos de licor* made from Pedro Ximénez and Monastrell when the latter grapes are harvested overripe.

Yecla

Established as a DO in 1975, Yecla is a small, inland zone around the town of Yecla, surrounded by the DO zones of Alicante, Jumilla, and Almansa. While it is the only DO in Spain that covers only one municipality, it nevertheless has two subzones: Campo Arriba, located to the north, and Campo Abajo, located to the south. Wines from Campo Arriba may have that subzone's name on the label.

Geography

The terrain of Yecla consists of gentle hills surrounded by mountains. Its vineyards are planted at elevations ranging from 2,300 feet to 2,600 feet in Campo Arriba, and from 1,950 feet to 2,100 feet in Campo Abajo.

Climate

With a southern continental climate, Yecla has somewhat cold winters, hot summers, and a low amount of rainfall.

Soil

Generally thick loam over limestone, Yecla's soil is deeper in Campo Arriba and has more clay in Campo Abajo.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are mostly Monastrell, with Garnacha, Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, and Merlot grown, as well. Merseguera, Macabeo, and Airén are the white grapes grown in the DO.

Wines

Campo Arriba produces fruity but intense and alcoholic red wines, while Campo Abajo produces fresh and acidic whites and reds lower in strength.

Valencia

Located on Spain's Mediterranean coast to the south of Cataluña,¹²⁹ Valencia was first settled by the Romans when they founded the city of Valentia in 138 BC. Although it was destroyed in 75 BC by Pompey, Valentia evolved into Valencia, now Spain's 3rd-largest city.¹³⁰ As the easternmost sheltered harbor on the central Iberian coast, Valencia was a major stepping-stone between Africa and Spain during the days of Al-Andalus. In 1094, the famous Spanish hero El Cid beat back the Moors and took Valencia for the Christians, but the Moors reclaimed the city shortly thereafter. In 1238, the Catalan armies under King James I of Aragón retook Valencia and its surrounding lands from the Moors, and so Valencia became a part of greater Cataluña.¹³¹ The modern-day language of Valencian is thus a close relative of Catalan, however Valencian contains far more words of Arabic origin as a result of the lengthy Moorish occupation.¹³² During the 15th and early 16th Centuries, Valencia was one of the strongest trading

¹²⁹ See Appendix.

¹³⁰ Clark, et al. 861.

¹³¹ Clark, et al. 861, Harris and Lyon 222, and Radford 136.

¹³² Radford 136.

centers in the Mediterranean. The city was the capital of Republican Spain during the Civil War, and during Franco's rule, Valencian experienced much of the same repression as Catalan.¹³³

Today, in addition to being a large exporter of the region's world-famous oranges, Valencia is Spain's largest port for the export of wine. Recently, the railways and river in the center of Valencia were moved underground to enhance trade, and thus many winemakers moved to the outskirts of the city to allow expansion.¹³⁴ The *autonomía* of Valencia has a unique law that allows wines made in the DO Utiel-Requena to be blended and bottled in Valencia and subsequently sold under the DO Valencia.¹³⁵ Valencia consists of three provinces, Alicante, Castellón de la Plana, and Valencia, and contains 3 DO zones: Alicante, Utiel-Requena, and Valencia.¹³⁶

Alicante

Locally called Alicant and encompassing the southern part of the *autonomía* of Valencia, Alicante gained DO status in 1957. Alicante is comprised of two subzones: La Marina, an area in the north stretching inland from the coast to around the town of Denia, and Clásico or Alicante, the area of the original DO around the city of Alicante, stretching into the foothills of the *meseta*. The Clásico subzone is partly located in Murcia.

Geography

Both subzones share similar terrain, and both have vineyards planted from sea level to about 1,300 feet in elevation.

Climate

Both subzones have a Mediterranean (hot and humid) climate near the coast and they become more continental (hotter and drier) as they reach inland.

Soil

The subzones also share similar soils of limestone, sand, and clay mixes.

Grapes

The red grapes grown are mainly Monastrell with some Garnacha, Tempranillo, and Bobal seeing use. Merseguera and Moscatel Romano are the main white grapes grown, but Macabeo, Planta Fina, Airén, Riesling, and Chardonnay are grown, as well.

Wines

Today, Alicante produces *jóvenes* in all three colors, using Merseguera for whites, Garnacha for *rosados*, and Monastrell for reds, as well as Moscatel made from Moscatel Romano for use in fortified *vinos de licor*. However, the area is traditionally known for its Fondillón, a unique dessert wine fortified to 16% ABV

¹³³ Clark, et al. 861.

¹³⁴ Harris and Lyon 222 and Radford 136.

¹³⁵ Radford 136.

¹³⁶ Information on Valencia's three *Denominaciones de Origen* is drawn from Jeffs 232-236, 248-254 and Radford 138-144.

and aged for 8 years in oak, giving it the nuttiness of tawny port to complement its sweetness.

Utiel-Requena

The largest and furthest inland of Valencia's DO zones, situated to the west of the city of Valencia around the towns of Utiel and Requena, Utiel-Requena gained DO status in 1957. Similar to certain areas of Castilla y León, it has many underground cellars dotted throughout the landscape.

Geography

An undulating plain surrounded by mountains, Utiel-Requena has its vineyards planted around the river Magro at altitudes from 1,950 feet to 2,950 feet.

Climate

The continental climate of Utiel-Requena is among the harshest in Spain, second only to that of La Mancha.

Soil

In the valleys of the river Magro, the soil is alluvial, while in the highlands, the soil is marl and clay over sandstone with some limestone outcroppings.

Grapes

The most common red grape is Bobal, followed by Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Cabernet Sauvignon. The white grapes planted here are Macabeo, Merseguera, Planta Nova, and Chardonnay.

Wines

Utiel-Requena produces white wines of Merseguera and Macabeo, *rosados* of Garnacha and Bobal, and reds of Bobal and Tempranillo. The area is famous for its blended wines using the *doble pasta* style, producing wine with high extract and color, using Valencia's special law to balance out the lighter wines of the DO Valencia to be sold under that label.

Most of Utiel-Requena's wines are *jóvenes*, as the heat and altitude make the grapes mature quickly, thus not many *crianzas* are produced.

Valencia

Gaining DO status in 1957, Valencia is composed of 3 subzones. The subzone Alto Turia is east and northeast of the city of Valencia, while the subzone Clariano is separate, located in the south of the province of Valencia. The third subzone, Valentino, is itself composed of two sub-areas, Cheste and Marquesado (which used to be a separate DO), both to the west of the city of Valencia.

Geography

Alto Turia is hilly and at higher elevations than the other two subzones; its vineyards are found at altitudes of 1,300 to 2,300 feet. Clariano has vineyards at

500 to 2100 feet in elevation, and Valentine, a coastal plain reaching into higher elevations, has its vineyards at up to 1800 feet in elevation.

Climate

Valencia has a Mediterranean climate by the coast and a continental climate in the areas further inland.

Soil

Alto Turia's soil is sandy with some chalk and Clariano's soil is similar but with more clay. Valentino has dry and sandy soils with some alluvial soil over limestone.

Grapes

Monastrell is the most common red grape, followed by Garnacha Tinta and Tintorera, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Forcayat, a local variety found in Clariano. The most common white grape is Merseguera, followed by Malvasía Riojana, Planta Fina, Pedro Ximénez, Moscatel Romano, Chardonnay, and Verdil (another local variety also known as Tortosí).

Wines

Valencia produces white wines from Macabeo and Merseguera, *rosados* from Garnacha and Bobal, and reds from Bobal and Monastrell. While most of its wines are produced in high quantities for sale in supermarkets, it nonetheless produces light, fresh, and pleasantly herby white wines. Additionally, Valencia makes many sweet wines from Moscatel Romano and Pedro Ximénez, and some *vinos de licor* from Moscatel Romano.

Culture of the Levant

While the two *autonomías* of the Levant have similar cultures, they differ due to the separate armies that defeated the Moors during the Reconquista. Having been incorporated into greater Cataluña by James I of Aragón, Valencian culture reflects Catalan culture, but with its separate language (albeit highly similar and considered by many to be a dialect of Catalan) and the city of Valencia, third in Spain by size behind Madrid and Barcelona, Valencia has developed into a culture of its own.¹³⁷ Valencia's light, fruity red wines reflect its production of its famous Valencian oranges and its hot Mediterranean climate, and they pair well with *paella*, a now world-famous dish developed in the region. The closest link between Valencian culture and wines, however, is the development of the *merienda*. Popular in the region, *meriendas* are a late afternoon snack followed by a sweet dessert and often paired with a dessert wine, especially the local Fondillón from Alicante.¹³⁸ The two likely even developed together, as Fondillón is an old, legendary wine in the region.

Murcia's separate language derives from its Castilian roots, as it was these armies that drove the Moors from the area.¹³⁹ Similarly, Murcia historically produced heavy, heady reds like those from other areas of Castilian Spain, often used to complement the lighter reds of Valencia

¹³⁷ Clark, et al. 861, Harris and Lyon 222, and Radford 136.

¹³⁸ Rodgers and Rodgers 330.

¹³⁹ Clark, et al. 906.

in blends.¹⁴⁰ Today, Murcia makes a good deal of sweet wines, especially from Pedro Ximénez, similar to the wines of Andalucía, exhibitiv of the more extensive Moorish influence Murcia has than Valencia.

The wines of the two *autonomías* of the Levant historically reflected their positions as major trade hubs, as most of them were made for blending and export to other part of Europe, but this has thankfully shifted in recent decades to higher-quality and lower-quantity wines.¹⁴¹

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

The wine I selected for this region is a 2015 *Finca Terrerazo* from Bodega Mustiguillo in the *Denominación de Origen Protegida* El Terrerazo. Established in 2010, this DOP is near the town of Utiel in western Valencia, and as such is within the DO Utiel-Requena. This *Vino de Pago*, the first to be so certified in the Levant, is made from 100% Bobal and aged for 21 months in French oak. The resultant full-bodied red has chocolate and blackberry notes with an oaky finish.¹⁴²

This high-caliber wine would pair well with *paella*, the famous Valencian meal. A large rice dish with vegetables, beans, and meat, *paella* can be made with many different ingredients to produce all varieties of the dish, but *paella* with chicken and rabbit would complement this smooth wine excellently.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Radford 146.

¹⁴¹ Jeffs 230-231 and Radford 146.

¹⁴² The tasting notes are influenced by Winestore, from where *Finca Terrerazo* was purchased.

¹⁴³ “Paella Recipes,” *Spain Recipes*.

ANDALUCÍA AND THE CANARY ISLANDS

Andalucía

Taking up the southeast corner of Spain, Andalucía is the nation's second-largest and most populous *autonomía*.¹⁴⁴ The Phoenicians first settled in the area when they founded the city of Gadir, now known as Cádiz, around 1100 BC. These maritime people likely planted their first vineyards outside Gadir in what is known as Sherry Country today, producing sweet and strong wines built to survive long journeys at sea in their poorly-sealed *amphorae*.¹⁴⁵ The Phoenicians brought vines from their homelands of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt, and so they were properly suited for the hot lowlands of Andalucía. Gadir quickly became a major trading center due to its location at the 'edge' of the Western world. After the decline of Phoenician culture, the Romans settled in a region they called Baetica, establishing the port of Hispalis, now known as Sevilla.¹⁴⁶ There, they grew much of the Roman Empire's wheat, olive oil, and wine. In 711 AD, the Moors landed at Gibraltar and launched their campaign to conquer Spain and establish Al-Andalus, from which the name Andalucía is derived, starting with the area from Sevilla to Córdoba. After the Moors were driven from their last stronghold at Granada in 1492, Andalucía began exporting its fortified wines across Europe, and they became especially popular in England.¹⁴⁷ During the industrialization of Spain, the Andalusian economy began to decline, however an increase in tourism, especially after Spain opened itself to broader tourism in the 1960s, provided an economic counterbalance: Andalucía is now a major tourist destination, especially along its Mediterranean coast.¹⁴⁸

Andalucía today consists of 8 provinces: Almería, Cádiz, Córdoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaén, Málaga, and Sevilla; and contains 6 *Denominaciones de Origen*: Condado de Huelva, Málaga, Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Montilla-Moriles, Jerez/Xérès/Sherry, and Sierras de Málaga. Málaga and Sierras de Málaga fall under the same *consejo regulador*, thus they will be discussed together. The DO zones of Jerez/Xérès/Sherry and Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda will also be discussed together due to their regulatory and geographic similarities.¹⁴⁹

Condado de Huelva

Located in the province of Huelva and extending east from the Atlantic Ocean towards, and slightly into, the Parque Nacional de Doñana, Condado de Huelva gained DO status in 1964. Originally, much of the area's wines were sold to Jerez to make Sherry, but by law Sherry can no longer source its wines from other DO zones.

Geography

As the DO is along the coast, its vineyards are planted from sea level to about 80 feet in elevation.

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix.

¹⁴⁵ Radford 184.

¹⁴⁶ Clark, et al. 694 and Radford 184-185.

¹⁴⁷ Jeffs 303-304 and Radford 185.

¹⁴⁸ Clark, et al. 694, Harris and Lyon 143, and Radford 182.

¹⁴⁹ The information on the *Denominaciones (de Origen)* of Andalucía is taken from Jeffs 305-337 and Radford 186-199.

Climate

Condado de Huelva experiences a mix of Mediterranean and Atlantic climates and sees plentiful rainfall.

Soil

This DO has some *albariza* (a white marble of clay and marl) soils, with alluvial and sandy soils, as well.

Grapes

Vineyards in Condado de Huelva may only grow white grapes, with the local variety Zalema being the most popular, followed by Palomino/Listán, Garrido Fino, Moscatel, and Pedro Ximénez.

Wines

The area traditionally has made *generoso* wines, however it has recently expanded its styles of wine. Today, its wines fall into two categories: Condado *pálido*, a *fino* style made from Garrido Fino and Palomino (15.5% ABV), and Condado *viejo*, old-style, semi-fortified wines (17-23% ABV). Since 1984, however, Condado de Huelva has emphasized the production of *joven afrutado*, a cool-fermented, light white wine.

Málaga and Sierras de Málaga

Consisting of two *Denominaciones de Origen* falling under the jurisdiction of the same *consejo regulador*, Málaga and Sierras de Málaga were established as DO zones in 1933 and 2001, respectively.

As its rich, strong, and long-lasting wines were very popular in the 1800s, Málaga used to be highly successful, however it has declined greatly since. Málaga is composed of three subzones: Axarquía, located along the Mediterranean coast from the city of Málaga to Nerja, extending inland to the border with the province of Granada; Cuevas de San Marcos, located in the northern mountains; and Molina, situated around the town of the same name.

A new DO, Sierras de Málaga is positioned in the mountains above the subzone Cuevas de San Marcos and around the towns of Ronda and Arriate.

Geography

Málaga extends from the coast inland, with vineyards planted from sea level up to elevations of 2,300 feet in the Cuevas de San Marcos subzone. Sierras de Málaga has its vineyards at higher elevations of around 2,450 feet.

Climate

A Mediterranean climate dominates along the coast, while a continental climate is seen at higher elevations with cold nights in especially high elevations.

Soil

The soil is alluvial with clay, quartz, and mica along the coast, with more clay found as the elevations increase. Chalk is found in the soil throughout the area.

Grapes

The vineyards in Málaga are only authorized to grow white grapes, with Pedro Ximénez (locally called Pedro Ximén) being the most popular, followed by Moscatel de Alejandría, Moscatel Morisco, Lairén (a local name for Airén), and Doradilla.

In Sierras de Málaga, both red and white grapes are authorized, with the red grapes Romé, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Tempranillo, Garnacha, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, and Petit Verdot grown, along with the white grapes Pedro Ximénez (also called Pedro Ximén), Moscatel, Chardonnay, Macabeo, Sauvignon Blanc, Lairén, Doradilla, and Colombard.

Wines

The best white wines are made from Pedro Ximénez, with some blended with Moscatel. A typical Málaga wine is fortified and made from aged, sun-dried grapes.

Montilla-Moriles

Established as a DO in 1933, Montilla-Moriles is located in the province of Córdoba. Like the DO Condado de Huelva, Montilla-Moriles traditionally sent its wine to Jerez to be made into Sherry, however it now makes mostly unfortified wines from Pedro Ximénez grapes.

Geography

Consisting of low hills, Montilla-Moriles has vineyards planted from 400 to 2,250 feet in elevation.

Climate

While a continental climate, Montilla-Moriles has plentiful rain, however most of the rainfall is concentrated between November and April.

Soil

The soils in this DO fall into two groups: *albarizas* (here called *albero*) and *ruedas*. The *albarizas* are high in chalk, while the *ruedas* are mostly sandy areas found on the border of the DO.

Grapes

Only white grapes are permitted in Montilla-Moriles, with the most popular being Pedro Ximénez, followed by Lairén, Baladí, and Torrontés.

Wines

Montilla-Moriles makes *jóven afrutado*, often from Baladí, Torrontés, or Pedro Ximénez, and sometimes from Moscatel to create light and fresh cool-fermented white wines. Some of its wines, the *vinos generosos*, are very similar to Sherry, made in the *solera* system (described later) and separated into three categories: *finos*, *olorosos*, and *amontillados*. Montilla-Moriles also produces wines from sun-dried Pedro Ximénez grapes fortified with *aguardiente* (clear brandy). A very

sweet, rich, full-bodied and inky black dessert wine, it is often poured into a hole carved out of a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Jerez/Xérès/Sherry and Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda

Established as *Denominaciones de Origen* in 1933, these two zones comprise a triangle formed by the towns of Jerez de la Frontera, El Puerto de Santa María, and Sanlúcar de Barrameda in the province of Cádiz. The town of Jerez was originally called Ceret by its first settlers, then later Scheris by the Moors and Xeres by the Castilians. Sherry saw its popularity explode when Sir Martin Frobisher attacked Cádiz in 1587 and stole around 3,000 barrels of the precursor to Sherry to bring back to England. Immensely popular, this wine became known as ‘Scheris Sack,’ and it saw a boom lasting for almost 400 years. Arguably the most famous Spanish wine, Sherry attained protected status in the EU in 1996. Made in the *solera system*, it is one of two wines designated as a *Denominación* by its production process (Cava being the other wine).

Geography

Sherry Country consists of a rolling slope, with vineyards planted at altitudes from 65 feet to 320 feet.

Climate

The area has an Atlantic climate with decent rainfall but hot summers.

Soil

The soils in Sherry Country fall into three categories: *albariza*, *barro*, and *arena*. *Albariza* soil contains a high amount of chalk and almost all the vineyards are planted in the areas with this soil. *Barro* and *arena* soils both have a high iron content, with *arena* soils having more sand.

Grapes

Only three grapes are grown here (all white): Palomino (also called Listán or Listán Palomino), Moscatel, and Pedro Ximénez.

Wines

While Moscatel is often made into a varietal wine and Pedro Ximénez can be made into its own varietals, as well, (but is often used for sweetening Sherry), Sherry is undoubtedly the most popular wine of the region.

The *Solera* System

The *solera* system is an ageing process by which Sherry and wines similar to sherry are made. The system consists of a three-row pyramid, usually with 7 barrels on the bottom row (the *solera*), 6 on the row above (the first *criadera*), and 5 on the top row (the second *criadera*). Each year, only one-third of the wine from the *solera* may be sold. When this third is withdrawn, it is assembled into a *cabeceo* (*cuvée* in French). The *solera*, being short 1/3 of its wine, is topped off with wine from the row above it. In turn, this row is topped off with wine from the top row. The top row is filled by adding wine made the previous year, the

añadas. Wine may take anywhere from 5 years to 100 years to journey through the *solera* system. Wines take on the characteristics of the wines that have previously gone through the system, giving the process a natural form of quality control.

Sherry is sold in six types:

Fino – the lightest and driest; usually 5-10 years old; known as *manzanilla* in Sanlúcar de Barrameda

Amontillado – aged longer than *fino* (around 15 years); darker, richer, and more aromatic; savory

Oloroso – darker, richer, and more powerful; last up to 100 years or more; golden, nutty fragrance with a dry finish

Palo Cortado – rare; savory like *amontillado* but dry like *oloroso*

Cream Sherry – sweet; made by adding sweet wine from Pedro Ximénez or Moscatel

Age-dated Sherry- the name has the age of the wine on the label

The Canary Islands

Situated off the coast of Morocco in the Atlantic Ocean, the Canary Islands make up Spain's southernmost *autonomía*.¹⁵⁰ First inhabited by the Guanche people, the Canary Islands were named by the Romans, who landed on the island of Fuerteventura and found it full of wild dogs. Thus, they named the island *Insula Canum*, meaning 'Dog Island.' This later evolved into *Las Islas Canarias*, as they are known in Spanish.¹⁵¹ In 1402, the first serious expedition to the islands was chartered by Spain, which found the Guanche still living on the islands with stone-age technology. By 1496, they were firmly in Spanish control.¹⁵²

Allegedly, the first vines planted on the Canaries came from Crete and were used to make *Malvasía* of Lanzarote, called Canary Sack in England, which became immensely popular in the 1600s.¹⁵³ As a volcanic archipelago, the Canaries have very fertile, volcanic soil. While there are no rivers on any of the islands, they have freshwater springs, and some rainfall flows through lava-carved ravines called *barrancos*. The vineyards on the Canaries have never experienced phylloxera, so they are not grafted and remain on their own roots.¹⁵⁴ The Canary Islands are made up of two provinces covering 7 main islands: Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, covering the islands of Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, and Lanzarote, and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, covering the island of El Hierro, La Gomera, La Palma, and Tenerife. There are 10 *Denominaciones de Origen* on five of the Canary Islands: El Hierro on the island of El Hierro; Lanzarote on the island of Lanzarote; La Palma on the island of La Palma; Gran Canaria and Monte-Lentiscal on the island of Gran Canaria; and Abona, Tacoronte-Acentejo, Valle de Güímar, Valle de la Orotava, and Ycoden-Deute-Isora, all on the island of Tenerife.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ See Appendix.

¹⁵¹ Jeffs 351 and Radford 202.

¹⁵² Jeffs 351.

¹⁵³ Jeffs 351-353.

¹⁵⁴ Radford 202.

¹⁵⁵ The information on the Canary Islands' *Denominaciones de Origen* is taken from Jeffs 353-367 and Radford 204-214.

Abona

Located in the very south of the island of Tenerife and established as a DO in 1996, Abona supplies much of the wine for the very strong tourist industry along the island's coast.

Geography

Planted on the slopes of Mount Teide, Spain's highest mountain, Abona's vineyards can be found at elevations of 650 feet to 5,575 feet.

Climate

Abona has a subtropical climate that gets colder with increasing altitude and sees varying rainfall.

Soil

Up to about 2,000 feet in elevation, the soil on Abona is volcanic and sandy with clay and alluvial deposits, while above 2,000 feet, it is mainly volcanic ash with volcanic gravel.

Grapes

Abona's red grapes are Bastardo Negro (used long ago to make Canary Sack), Listán Negro, Malvasía Rosada, and Tintilla. Its white grapes are Listán Blanco, Verdello, Malvasía, Gual, Bermejuela, and Sabro.

Wines

Most of Abona's production is in white wines, with some *rosados* and a few reds seeing production, with *jóvenes* in all three colors.

El Hierro

Gaining its status in 1966, this is the only DO on El Hierro, the westernmost and smallest of the Canary Islands. The Englishman John Hill planted the first vines on the island in 1526, using them to make Sack, the sweet and strong wine popular in the 1600s.

Geography

The island of El Hierro doesn't have a volcano; it is instead on the rim of a larger, underwater volcano. Its vineyards are terraced into the slopes of the island at elevations of up to 2,300 ft.

Climate

El Hierro has a very mild climate with varying rainfall.

Soil

The soils on this island are sandy or stony over volcanic bedrock.

Grapes

Listán Negro and Negramoll are the main red grapes planted, followed by Vijareigo Negro and Baboso Negro. The white grapes planted are Verijadiego (or

Vijariego, called Bujariego on other islands), Listán Blanco, Bremajuelo (also called Bermejuelo), Uval, Verdello, Torrontés, Pedro Ximénez, and Moscatel.

Wines

El Hierro makes traditional, sweet wines from Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel, as well as an increasing amount of reds and *rosados*.

Gran Canaria

Formerly a *Vino de la Tierra* called Gran Canaria El Monte until its promotion in 2003, this DO is the newest in the Canaries and covers all parts of the island of Gran Canaria not covered by the DO Monte Lentiscal.

Geography

All of Gran Canaria's vineyards are in the northeast of the island on the slopes of the nearby volcano at elevations ranging from 160 feet to 4,250 feet.

Climate

Gran Canaria has a subtropical climate that varies with altitude.

Soil

Sandy at sea level, the soils of this DO contain more clay and become more volcanic at higher altitudes.

Grapes

Listán is the main red grape grown, followed by Negramoll and Tintilla, along with the white grapes Gual, Pedro Ximénez, Marmajuelo, Breval, Vijariego, Albillo, Moscatel, and Listán Blanco.

Wines

Gran Canaria makes fresh and fruity *jóvenes* along with the traditional sweet wines made from Malvasía and Moscatel.

Lanzarote

Established as a DO in 1994, this is the only DO on the island of Lanzarote, the easternmost Canary Island. In 1730, the volcano at the center of the island erupted for 6 years, leaving the center of the island covered in solidified lava and the rest coated in black ash called *ceniza*. As a result, the soil must be dug through until fertile soil is reached so the vines may grow. Vines are also grown in man-made hollows, *hoyos*, or cairns, *abrigos*, to protect them from the light but hot, humid, and relentless western winds, called *alicios*. The DO Lanzarote is comprised of three subzones: La Geria in the south, Tinajo/San Bartolomé in the center, and Haría-Ye in the north.

Geography

Vineyards are planted on the mountain slopes, which rise up to 2,200 feet in elevation.

Climate

Lanzarote's climate is warm and varies only slightly and sees irregular, low rainfall.

Soil

The topsoil of *ceniza* is infertile, but the soil underneath is fertile.

Grapes

Listán Negro (known locally as Negro Común) and Negramoll (locally called Mulata) are the red grapes grown on the island, along with the white grapes Listán Blanco, Malvasía, Diego and Burra Blanca (both native to the Canaries), and Moscatel.

Wines

Lanzarote produces the traditional sweet wines, both naturally sweet or fortified, as well as *jóvenes* in white, red, and *rosado*.

La Palma

Gaining DO status in 1994, it is the only DO on the island of La Palma, the farthest northwest of the Canaries, nicknamed 'La Isla Bonita' ('The Beautiful Island'). One of La Palma's volcanoes erupted in 1971, but it did not cause much significant damage. In addition to vineyards, the island is covered in banana plantations, which often leads to friction between the banana growers and winemakers. The DO La Palma is comprised of three subzones: Fuencaliente-Las Manchas in the south, Hoyo de Mazo in the center-west, and Norte de Palma in the north, which is further subdivided into its northeast and northwest areas. In this northeast area, wines are made using modern techniques, while in the northwest, everything is hand-made and nothing is bottled.

Geography

La Palma's vineyards are mostly planted around the coasts in terraces on the sides of valleys and *barrancos*, while some are found towards the center of the Caldera de Taburiente in caves carved out of the rock. The vines are planted at elevations of 650 to 3,900 feet.

Climate

There is plentiful rain between the altitudes of 1,600 and 5,000 feet, while it is drier below 1,000 feet, with some parts having a semi-arid climate.

Soil

La Palma's soil is rich and volcanic.

Grapes

The red grapes Listán Negro, Prieto, and Negramoll are grown in La Palma, along with the white grapes Albillo, Bujariego, Gual, Listán Blanco, Malvasía, and Sabro.

Wines

La Palma produces *jóvenes* in all three colors, wines from Malvasía ranging from dry *jóvenes* to sweet *vinos de licor*, and some wines from Gual, Bujariego, and Sabro, all three of which are extinct on the Iberian Peninsula. Not falling under the DO La Palma, some vineyards in the area produce *vino de tea*. *Tea* is the Canary-Spanish word for the native pine tree that fills the forests on La Palma and from which the barrels that age the *vinos de tea* are made. Interestingly, *vino de tea* sees some use as a homeopathic medicine.

Monte Lentiscal

Previously the *Vino de la Tierra Santa* Brigída and situated around the town of Santa Brigída on the island of Gran Canaria, Monte Lentiscal gained its DO status in 1997.

Geography

The vineyards of Monte Lentiscal are planted in *barrancos* and on the slopes at elevations from 1,000 feet to 2,600 feet.

Climate

Monte Lentiscal has the same climate as Gran Canaria: subtropical and varying with altitude.

Soil

The soil in this DO is volcanic.

Grapes

Listán Negro (Negro Común), Malvasía Rosada, and Negramoll (Mulata) are the red grapes grown in the area, while the white grapes grown are Breval, Malvasia, Pedro Ximénez, Moscatel, and Vijariego.

Wines

Monte Lentiscal is best-known for its robust and powerful Tinto del Monte ('Mountain Red'), but it also makes pleasant and refreshing *rosados*, as well as a very small amount of sweet wines for local consumption.

Tacoronte-Acentejo

Located on the northwest coast of the island of Tenerife, Tacoronte-Acentejo became Spain's second offshore DO (after Binissalem) when it gained DO status in 1992. Tacoronte-Acentejo is a very modern DO and is the largest in the Canary Islands.

Geography

The vineyards of Tacoronte-Acentejo are planted up the northwestern mountainside on terraces facing the sea at elevations of 650 feet up to 2,600 feet.

Climate

This DO has a subtropical climate.

Soil

In its lower levels, Tacoronte-Acentejo has loam over volcanic bedrock, which thins out with increasing elevation.

Grapes

Listán Negro, Negramoll, Malvasía Rosada, Moscatel Negro, and Tintilla are the red grapes grown in the DO, while Gual, Listán Blanco, Malvasía, Marmajuelo, Pedro Jiménez (a local spelling), Forastera Blanca, Moscatel, Verdello, Vijariego, and Torrontés are the white grapes.

Wines

The vast majority of Tacoronte-Acentejo's wines are red (90%), with many of them aged in Spanish or French oak rather than American.

Valle de Güímar

On the eastern side of the island of Tenerife, Valle de Güímar is essentially a continuation of the DO Abona. Established as a DO in 1996, Valle de Güímar was traditionally an area of small family vineyards producing old-fashioned wines, but now has seen advancements in the technology used and wine styles produced.

Geography

The vineyards of this DO are planted on the south-facing slope of the volcano Teide at elevations from 650 feet to 4,600 feet.

Climate

Valle de Güímar has a subtropical climate.

Soil

Rich and fertile on the lower slopes, the soil in the area becomes volcanic farther up the mountain.

Grapes

The red grapes Listán Negi, Negramoll, and Tintillo are grown, along with the white grapes Listán Blanco, Malvasía, Moscatel, Gual, and Vijariego.

Wines

Valle de Güímar mainly produces white *jóvenes* made from Listán Blanco, but it also makes sweet wines from Malvasía and Moscatel.

Valle de la Orotava

In the center of the island of Tenerife, and extending to its northwest coast, Valle de la Orotava gained DO status in 1996, although its viticultural history is much longer: its first vines were planted shortly after Spain took control of the Canaries in the late 15th Century.

Geography

The vineyards of Valle de la Orotava are planted from the coast up into the western foothills of Mount Teide, from sea level up to 2,600 feet in elevation.

Climate

The climate in this DO is subtropical but with little rain. However, the humid winds, known as the *alicios*, keep the vineyards wet.

Soil

Valle de la Orotava has very acidic, volcanic soil with some clay dispersed throughout.

Grapes

The red grapes grown in this DO are Listán Negro, Malvasía Rosada, Tintilla, Vijariego Negro, and Negramoll. The white grapes grown are Listán Blanco, Gual, Malvasía, Verdello, Vijariego, and Torrontés.

Wines

Valle de la Orotava produces dry whites along with light and fruity reds, but they are all consumed by its local market, thus it does not export any of its wine.

Ycoden-Daute-Isora

Located on the western tip of the island of Tenerife, this DO, established in 1994, is named for three areas inhabited by the Guanche when the Spanish arrived.

Geography

The northern part of the DO is composed of a mountain range that ends in a low, flat plain, while the western part of the DO consists of mountains, ravines, and cliffs. Vineyards are planted in both areas at elevations from 650 feet up to 3,300 feet, the best wines being produced from the vineyards at higher elevations.

Climate

The hottest and wettest part of Tenerife, Ycoden-Daute-Isora benefits from the *alicios*, as they help ensure the vines are always well-watered.

Soil

Near the coast, the soil of the DO is sandy, while it is composed of clay over volcanic rock farther inland.

Grapes

The red grapes grown in this DO are primarily Listán Negro, with Negramoll, Malvasía Rosada, Moscatel Negro, Tintilla, and Vijariego Negro also seeing use. The white grapes primarily used are Listán Blanco, but Gual, Malvasía, Vijariego, Moscatel, Bermejuela, Forastera, Sabro, Pedro Ximénez, Torrontés, and Verdello are grown, as well.

Wines

Ycoden-Daute-Isora is known for its white wines, but it also makes *rosados* and reds, the latter of which are mainly *jóvenes*.

Culture of Andalucía and the Canary Islands

The modern culture of Andalucía is viewed by many foreigners to be stereotypically Spanish, consisting of *flamenco* dances, bullfights, and *gazpacho*.¹⁵⁶ While Andalusian culture does have these elements, it is far more than a stereotype of Spain. Andalucía reflects the influence of many cultures, not the least of which from the Moors, who ruled the region for over 700 years, having their first emirate in Córdoba and their last in Granada.¹⁵⁷ As the first significant wine-growing region of Spain and home to Spain's arguably most famous wine, Andalucía has a history intricately tied to its legacy of wine production. Originally, strong, long-lasting wines were made so that they would survive the Phoenicians' long sea voyages, and modern Sherry is a direct descendent of this legacy.¹⁵⁸ As a brutally hot region in the summer, Andalucía has adapted and perfected the practice of the *siesta*, a mid-afternoon nap, often after a light afternoon drink of a cold *fino*, *manzanilla*, or *joven afrutado*. Later in the evenings, Andalusians enjoy *tapas*, often of seafood, perfect for another light wine, especially Sherry. As a seafood-centric cuisine, the light wines fit in perfectly, especially with the stereotypical *gazpacho*.¹⁵⁹ Wine is sometimes even had with dessert, as the aforementioned vanilla ice cream and Pedro Ximénez pairing shows.

Similar to Andalucía, the Canary Islands have a very old history of wine production, especially of sweet, fortified wines. The culture of the Canary Islands still maintains influences from its pre-colonial, tribal past, like Silbo, a whistled language of the Guanche still in use today in some parts of the island of La Gomera.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, because the islands have been spared the destruction of phylloxera, vineyards on the Canaries still grow old vines that have gone extinct elsewhere. Additionally, while many vineyards have modernized, many places still use very old techniques to produce wine, avoiding bottles and hand-making their wines.¹⁶¹

Both Andalucía and the Canary Islands have economies heavily supported by tourism, and much of their wine production is centered on this.¹⁶² While the regions were known for their fortified wines, both the Sherry industry and that of the older Canary Sack industry are not nearly as influential as they once were. Additionally, the Canary Islands have a very small export market compared to the rest of Spain. As such, their relatively newfound reliance on tourism has seen their wines shift to appease the tastes of tourists, with more local and sometimes easy drinking varietals seeing increased production¹⁶³.

Wine Selection and Food Pairing

For this region, I selected a *manzanilla* Sherry from Bodegas Osborne. From a very old bodega, founded in 1772, this very old style of wine from DO Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de

¹⁵⁶ Harris and Lyon 143 and Radford 185.

¹⁵⁷ Clark, et al. 782.

¹⁵⁸ Radford 184.

¹⁵⁹ Radford 185

¹⁶⁰ Rodgers and Rodgers 79.

¹⁶¹ Radford 202.

¹⁶² Clark, et al. 694, Harris and Lyon 143, and Radford 182.

¹⁶³ Jeffs 352-353 and Radler 182, 186, 189.

Barrameda is made from Palomino grapes and aged 3-4 years. Produced through the *solera* system (as all Sherry is), this *manzanilla* is dry with mineral and vanilla flavors.¹⁶⁴

This unique and traditional pairs very well with *salmorejo*, a relative of the famous *gazpacho*. Thicker and less acidic than *gazpacho*, *salmorejo* is a cold soup made of tomato and bread with olive oil and chunks of ham and cheese on top, the perfect pair for a hot summer afternoon and a cold class of *manzanilla*, followed up with a *siesta* to escape the heat.

¹⁶⁴ The tasting notes on the *manzanilla* were influenced by Luyten, “Osborne Manzanilla Fina.”

Conclusion

While it is certainly not the only wine-producing country, and arguably not the most famous world-wide, Spain is undoubtedly unique in the international wine scene. Owing to its complicated history, especially during the Middle Ages and the Reconquista, Spain is a decentralized country composed of various nations, each with their own unique cultures, histories, and in some cases, their own languages. Climate, geography, and soil are all well-known factors in the wine produced in any given area, contributing greatly to the types of vines grown and the characters of the resultant wines. In Spain, however, the tremendous variety in cultures also greatly influences the styles of wine produced in each region. In the predominantly Castilian areas of Spain, mainly in the center of the country, but also in other parts, such as southern Navarra, the wines show a predominant focus on powerful, fruity reds, reflecting a distinctly Castilian Spanish taste. The wines produced in other areas reflect the independence or foreign influence of their respective cultures: Galician wines resemble that of nearby Portugal, similar to how Galician resembles Portuguese, and Catalan wines, especially Cava, have a character of their own yet still resemble the wines of nearby France, just as the Catalan language derives in part from Old French. Not only do Spanish wines reflect the peculiarities of their native cultures, but sometimes the two have evolved together, like the Basque *txokos* or the Valencian *meriendas*. However, the Spanish wine scene doesn't just reflect the various cultures of the regions, it reflects Spain as a whole. When viewed as a whole, Spanish culture is a fascinating union of the individual cultures of the many nations within the country. Likewise, the Spanish wine scene is a blend of the different wines from all corners of the country, creating a spectrum from the dry whites of Galicia to the famous reds of Rioja and all varieties in between.

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Appendix

Map of Spain

