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Wine Review Online Press round-up of Grapes of Spain wines – October 2019

[Wine Review Online](#) Editor and Managing Partner, Michael Franz has recently published a number of reviews for our wines including the following.

**Paixar, Bierzo (Castilla y León, Spain) Mencia 2016**

(\$79, Grapes of Spain):

Longtime readers of WRO might already be aware of my utter adoration of this wine in almost every vintage, and now that the terrific 2016 is available, you can add another vintage to the list of fantastic Paixar bottlings stretching back to the initial release from 2001. The 2016 leans a bit more toward the sleek, fresh and elegant side of the Paixar spectrum than did the 2015, but with that noted, nobody could fail to appreciate the depth and length of the flavors offered by the 2016 (thanks, no doubt, to the old vines that have always been the source for this wine). The oak is especially well integrated in this vintage, which will make it tempting early on, but the smart money will hold onto this for another five years before cracking into it. Combining the usually divergent virtues of power and intricacy, this is a complete wine of superb quality.

**96 points** Michael Franz Oct 29, 2019



**Bodegas Arrocal, Ribera del Duero (Castilla y León, Spain) "Selección" 2014** (\$40, Grapes of Spain):

Arrocal is a terrific bodega that turns out amazing Tempranillo (or Tinto Fino, as it is known locally) at multiple price levels in every vintage (not almost every vintage; every vintage). I tasted through the entire lineup last summer, and have several reviews to publish soon, but this one deserves some press right now...after turning in the performance of the night at a blind tasting class of 12 wines from 12 countries a couple of weeks ago. Although there were two incredible whites and a 13 year-old, \$130 Napa Cab also in the lineup, this was the standout on account of impeccable purity and virtually perfect balance between fruit, acidity, wood and tannin. It is so seamless and so obviously delicious that, when tasting it, you would never actually think of "fruit, acidity, wood and tannin." Only in retrospect might you reflect on those component parts, as the whole is so compellingly greater than the sum of those parts.

**94 points** Michael Franz Oct 29, 2019



**Bodegas Caudalia, Baja Montaña, Navarra (Spain) Syrah La Celada Single Vineyard “Xi’ipal” 2015**

(\$36, Grapes of Spain):

I’ve traveled to Navarra sporadically for more than 20 years, and confess to being somewhat surprised that the region hasn’t managed to make a bigger dent in the American market. Starting after my first visit in 1997, I guessed that the widespread usage of French vine varieties would help Navarra gain traction in the USA, but events have proved me wrong. Be that as it may, my qualitative evaluations are definitely better than my commercial predictions (which is why it is a good thing I’m a reviewer rather than an importer!), and there’s no doubt that is a superb wine being offered at a price well below its value in relation to fine Syrah from anywhere – including the northern Rhône. Very deeply pigmented and quite dark in color, it shows expressive aromatic notes of violets and black raspberries, followed by delicious, rich fruit with just the right touch of spicy oak and lots of supple, fine-grained tannins. Gutsy but still classy, this is terrific Syrah.

**93 points** Michael Franz Oct 8, 2019



**Bovale (Issac Fernandez), Utiel-Requena (Valencia, Spain) Bobal Old Vines 2016**

(\$15, Grapes of Spain):

I was fortunate to travel to Utiel-Requena in March of this year to learn about Bobal, the most extensively planted of all red varieties in Spain (believe it or not!). I was very impressed by the better examples of the breed, but returned to the USA to find a lamentable shortage of good specimens at prices that could tempt those who don’t know Bobal and are (understandably) reluctant to drop serious cash on a wine from a grape variety they haven’t experienced. This is the wine to fit that bill. It shows good “gutsiness” and density, thanks to the high-elevation, old vines from which it was sourced, but without being heavy or tiring to drink, thanks to having been picked before getting too ripe (and then being vinified skillfully and aged for just 6 months in used barrels). Aromas and flavors of mulberries and black cherries are very attractive, with some savory undertones that keep the wine interesting sip after sip. Made by the exceptionally talented Issac Fernandez and imported by the irrepressible Aurelio Cabestrero, this should be relatively easy to find for the category...and an exceptionally good ambassador for it. A wicked good wine to pair with burgers or other un-fussy foods, but certainly not limited to that purpose.

**91** Michael Franz Oct 15, 2019

