

International Wine Review

Spanish Wines of Value and Quality

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Grapes of Spain has been importing wines from Spain since 2002 and currently has a portfolio of some 36 producers and 90+ wines from all parts of the country. Located just outside Washington DC, the company is owned and operated by Aurelio Cabestrero who is originally from Madrid. Before becoming an importer, Aurelio worked as a sommelier in Spain's Café de Oriente and in Washington DC for the Taberna del Alabardero and Marcells restaurants. We have come to know Aurelio over the years as a first-class sommelier and a highly knowledgeable and dynamic importer of Spanish wines.

We recently visited with Aurelio and his long term colleague Andrew Holod to catch up with Grapes of Spain's top value wines. As Aurelio has often said: "I always search for wines that provide the best value for the money whether at \$10 per bottle or \$100." After examining our reviews of the wines in Aurelio's portfolio, readers will realize if they don't already that Spanish wines offer tremendous value for money and are authentic expressions of the country's diverse terroir. Moreover, there are many talented winemakers and Spanish cooperatives producing wines of value and quality. Of note is the unique collaborative venture between Aurelio and Isaac Fernandez, one of Spain's most acclaimed winemakers.

The wines reviewed below by appellation are only a small portion of Aurelio's selections, but they are a good representation of the wines currently being produced in Spain today. They are also for the most part priced at \$15-\$20 per bottle. Further information about these and other wines and individual producers can be found at www.grapesofspain.com.

The Wines

RIAS BAIXAS

Adegas Gran Vinum 2018 Mar de Viñas Rias Baixas (\$17)_90 An Albariño with rich and concentrated flavors of citrus and melon. Very dry and mineral-like with floral and earthy notes. Beautifully focused. Sourced from purchased and estate fruit of 10-40 year old vines. **Adegas Gran Vinum 2018 Gran Vinum Albariño Selección Especial Rias Baixas (\$30) 92** A 100% Albariño that's rich and complex, offering fresh garden herbs, pineapple, and tropical fruit. Lovely purity and focus with a creamy mouth feel. Elegant with purity of fruit on the palate that evokes lemon tart. Purity extends to the finish with lemony acidity. Delicious and beautifully focused. **Adegas Gran Vinum 2018 Nessa Albariño Rias Baixas (\$17)_90** The Nessa Albariño offers a lovely light tropical fruit nose with hints of melon and citrus. It is fresh and round on the palate with a leesy character and excellent extract of tropical fruit. A little further from the sea than the Mar de Vinas and a little riper. **Adegas Gran Vinum 2018 Essencia Divina Albariño Rias Baixas Val do Salnes (24)_92** The

2018 Essencia Divina Albariño is a 100% Albariño crafted from estate grown fruit. Made from only free run juice, it is rich tasting with great intensity of flavor and mouth filling with a silky texture. Aged 3 months in tank on the lees, it reveals a chalky mineral character with medium acidity. Still young and will evolve to greater heights.

TXAKOLI

Bodega Zudugarai 2018 Malda Getariako Txakoli (\$20) 89 This Txakoli is incredibly fresh and bright. It offers light effervescence, citrus, and tangy acidity with a saline note and creamy texture. Fermented in stainless steel and aged on the lees for a few months prior to bottling. Readers who like Vinho Verde will enjoy this wine even more. 100% estate grown near the Atlantic.

BIERZO/RIBEIRA SACRA

Isaac Fernandez 2016 Adras Mencia Ribeira Sacra (\$24) 90 This bottling displays a black raspberry nose with earthy dark red fruit, and a hint of smoke on the palate. It has a medium weight palate but reveals quite rich flavors and good length with a nice silky texture.

Bodegas y Viñedos Luna Beberide 2017 Godello Bierzo (\$24) 91 Floral, white melon and fennel on the nose. There's good volume and weight in the mouth with fennel on the palate again along with white orchard fruit. Quite glycerin in the mouth with superb mineral like extract. Quite a refined wine. Rich extract on the back of the palate and on the finish. **Bodegas y Viñedos Luna Beberide 2015 Finca la Cuesta Bierzo (\$24) 91** Semi-opaque. Spicy, fresh nose with bright red notes and earth scents. It offers a silky attack with firm tannic structure and a dry, lingering finish. **Bodegas y Viñedos Luna Beberide 2016 Art Bierzo (\$55) 93**. This 100% Mencia is sourced from 70-80 year-old vines from nearly all slate soil. It offers rich and concentrated black fruit with floral traits and minerals. Aged 12 months in 100% new French oak. Sourced from 70-80 year old vines on slate soil at 800+ meters altitude. **Bodegas y Viñedos Luna Beberide 2015 Paixar Bierzo (\$80) 94** The 2015 Paixar is 100% Mencia and is sourced from many small, high elevation bush-vines. Semi opaque in color, it has a perfumed nose of black raspberry with a slight charred note. Refined on the palate with a silky feel and bright acidity. Aged 18 months in new French oak barrels.

CAMPO DE BORJA



Isaac Fernandez Selección 2017 Legado del Moncayo Dry Muscat Campo de Borja (\$14) 89 Medium yellow straw. Very aromatic with effusive rose petals show on nose. Perfumed floral palate with tropical fruit notes, finishing dry and crisp. **Isaac Fernandez Selección 2017 Legado del Moncayo Garnacha Blanca Campo de Borja (\$15) 88** Crisp, spicy, citrus and pineapple nose. Creamy and soft on the attack with a nice mineral touch on the finish. Clean and simple. **Isaac Fernandez Selección 2018 Legado del Moncayo Garnacha Campo de Borja (\$12) 89** This 100% Garnacha is fermented and aged in stainless steel. Unoaked, it is soft, rich and fruity and easy to drink. Sourced from a high altitude vineyard of clay and limestone. **Isaac Fernandez Selección 2017 Legado del Moncayo Vendimia Seleccionada Montaña Campo de Borja (\$15) 91** This 100% Garnacha is sourced from 40-60 year-old vines. Fermented with native yeast and aged 7 months in 100% used French oak, it is dark ruby in color and displays concentrated and very ripe and spicy dark red fruit flavors. It is rich and

complex on the palate with thick extract and round tannins on the finish. **Picture: Aurelio and Isaac Fernandez**

LA MANCHA

Pago de la Jaraba 2014 Viña Jaraba Reserva La Mancha (\$16).90 A blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot. Semi opaque in color, this bottling offers aromas of forest floor, soy and lead pencil on the nose. Soft on the attack, it has good density with notes of red fruit and good richness. **Pago de la Jaraba 2016 Viña Jaraba Cosecha La Mancha (\$11).87** A blend of 80% Tempranillo, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot. This bottling has lots of upfront fruit flavors with toasty, earthy notes. It has a soft attack, medium weight, but lacks depth of flavor on the mid-palate **and has a short finish.** **Pago de la Jaraba 2014 Vina Jaraba Reserva La Mancha (\$29).90** A blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot, this semi-opaque bottling offers forest floor, soy and lead pencil on the nose. It is soft on the attack with considerably better density than the preceding wines with notes of red fruit. **Pago de la Jaraba 2015 Vina Jaraba Seleccion Especial La Mancha (\$20).91** A blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot barrel fermented in large oak vats and the remainder in small inox tanks. Aged 12 months in French and American oak. This is a meaty, rich tasting wine, soft on the attack with dark red richly flavored fruit. Rather ripe with medium acidity and a long finish.

TERRA ALTA

Bodegas Abanico 2017 Las Colinas del Ebro Garnatxa Blanca Terra Alta (\$15).88 A 100% Garnacha Blanca with vines ranging from 20-50+ years and grapes destemmed prior to crushing. Savory with an herbal nose like Sauvignon Blanc and soft on the attack with citrus and melon flavors. Finishes dry and medium long. **Bodegas Abanico 2017 Las Colinas del Ebro Garnatxa Negra Terra Alta (\$15).89** A blend of 80% Garnacha and 20% Syrah offering aromas of strawberry and cherry. Big and soft on the palate, it has very expressive flavors with a creamy texture and a medium finish. Delicious and soft yet with good structure and soft tannins.

CATALAYUD

Colas Viticultores 2013 Roque Colas Calatayud (\$39).90 The 2013 Roque Colas is a blend of 34% Garnacha, 39% Tempranillo, and 33% Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from organically farmed estate vineyards. Aged 22 months in French and American oak, it is a delicious fruit forward wine offering great flavor and good acidity and freshness with round tannins and good structure.

Isaac Fernandez 2017 Acentor Garnacha Calatayud (\$15).90 This 100% Garnacha from 50+ year-old bush vines is slate-like with a dark cherry, berry and peppery nose. It is soft on the attack with medium acidity and finishes dry and slightly astringent. Aged 7 months in French and American oak.

PRIORAT

Reserva de la Tierra 2015 Vega Escal Crianza Priorat (\$24).91 The Vega Escal Crianza is a blend of 39% Garnacha, 25% Carinena, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Syrah and 4% Merlot. Sourced from granite and slate vineyards, it offers earthy herbal mineral notes on the nose and has a mineral-like texture. It reveals good extract and firmness on the finish. Made by new winemaker Fernando Mora.

RIOJA

Bodegas y Viñedos Union Viticultores Riojanos 2016 Viña Otano Blanco Fermentado en Barrica Rioja (\$21) 89 A blend of 75% Viura and 25% Tempranillo Blanco sourced from a single 90 year-old vineyard. The Viura is fermented and aged in new lightly toasted French oak barrels. The wine shows excellent concentration with a rich lingering extract. Lovely white cherry and almond-vanilla flavors. Firm tannins on the finish. A 100% Viura from estate vineyards averaging 30 years-old. Fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks, it displays a star bright, light yellow straw robe and is fresh and bright with a floral nose. It's crisp and fruity with a clean finish with lingering fruit flavors.

Casa La Rad 2016 Solarce Blanco Rioja (\$18) 89 A blend of 50% Chardonnay, 30% Malvasia, 10% Viura and 10% Tempranillo Blanco, the Solarce Blanco is sourced from organic vineyards and fermented in large format oak barrels and temperature controlled inox. The Chardonnay is aged 6 months in new barriques. Medium yellow-straw, it reveals a lovely perfumed nose with stone fruit and lemon citrus, It is soft on the attack with firm acidity and a reserved palate. Good structure and a nice long finish. **Casa La Rad 2015 Casa La Rad Blanco Rioja (\$37) 92** The 2015 Casa La Rad Blanco is a superb bottling. It displays a medium yellow straw color, a waxy nose with a touch of honeycomb and ripe pear; and a hint of yellow mango. It offers a creamy attack and is full-bodied with well integrated flavors. Hints of ripe orchard fruit. Finishes clean and long. **Casa La Rad 2016 Solarce Blanco Rioja (\$18) 89** A blend of 50% Chardonnay, 30% Malvasia, 10% Viura and 10% Tempranillo Blanco, the Solarce Blanco is sourced from organic vineyards and fermented in large format oak barrels and temperature controlled inox. The Chardonnay is aged 6 months in new barriques. Medium yellow-straw, it reveals a lovely perfumed nose with stone fruit and lemon citrus, It is soft on the attack with firm acidity and a reserved palate. Good structure and a nice long finish. **Casa La Rad 2016 Solarce Tinto Rioja (\$18) 89** The Solarce Tinto is a blend of 60% Tempranillo, 30% Garnacha, 5% Maturana and 5% Cabernet. Dark red and semi-opaque, it offers tangy earthy aromas with herbal notes. Hard on the attack with firm tannins on the palate. Good depth of flavor, but dry and a bit short on the finish. **Casa La Rad 2015 Casa La Rad Tinto Rioja (\$40) 90** The Casa La Rad Tinto is an attractive blend of 40% Tempranillo, 40% Garnacha, 10% Maturana, and 10% Graciano sourced from 40+ year old bush vines in the La Rad Vineyard. Fermented in large (800L) oak vessels and aged 14 months in new French oak barrels. It displays dark red fruit and toast on the nose. Big and soft on the palate with good depth of flavor, density and richness. Finishes with firm tannins and some astringency.

NAVARRA

Bodegas Caudalia 2015 Xi'ipal Garnacha Las Bajanas Single Vineyard Navarra (\$36) 91 The Xi'ipal Garnacha offers dark berries and cherry aromas. It has a nice plush mouth feel and is layered with good depth and fine firm tannins. Aged 12 months in used 500L French oak barrels. Despite some astringency, it is very flavorful and balanced. A delicious wine with a lingering finish. **Bodegas Caudalia 2015 Xi'ipal Tempranillo La Abejera Single Vineyard Navarra (\$36) 90** This 100% single vineyard Tempranillo displays an opaque robe with dark cherry chocolate and toasted oak aromas. It is lush and full on the palate with dark fruit and a slightly smoky note. Aged 12 months in 400L French oak barrels, it offers sweet dark fruit, round tannins and a dry finish. **Bodegas Caudalia 2015 Graciano Garcia Vid Navarra (\$36) 92** This is a superb Graciano displaying a big nose of dark red fruit and a hint of chocolate. It is tangy on the attack with bright acidity and has a lingering finish. Aged 18 months in used 400L French oak barrels. **Bodegas Caudalia 2015 Paal Syrah 01 Navarra (\$24) 89** Organic fruit, hand harvested, aged 27 months in cement. Offering a meaty, forest floor, fish sauce nose, this Syrah is full and silky with smoky, meaty, bacon hints along with blackberry on palate. Tannic finish and a bit

short on finesse. 14.5% alc. **Bodegas Caudalia 2014 Syrah La Celada Single Vineyard Navarra (\$36).92**

This is a meaty Syrah offering aromas of bacon and dark berry fruit. It is full flavored and reveals a silky texture and excellent acidity on the palate. It is mouth filling with fine tannins on the finish. Delightful.

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