



Vinous Media's Spanish editor Josh Raynolds has just published reviews of wines grown across Mediterranean Spain, including wines from Cava, Priorat, Terra Alta, Valencia, Utiel-Requena and Jumilla. We've included his introductory notes for each region as they do an excellent job of introducing the style and current best qualities of each.

### The Case for Cava

One exciting recent development for Spanish wine is the emergence of more and more world-class Cavas from the Penedès region (just south of Barcelona), whose sparkling wines have long been the country's unchallenged standard-bearer for the category. It's been a slow, steep climb for Cava in export markets, which were mostly introduced to the wines in the 1970s and 1980s by inexpensive examples of very low or abysmal quality. The reputation of the region suffered greatly, and even today there are numerous consumers and even members of the trade who judge the entire Cava category based on its lowest common denominator. That's their loss, as there is an ever-increasing number of Cavas made by quality-minded, often artisanal producers whose wines bear comparison to the big dog of the bubbly world, Champagne. Fortunately for sparkling wine producers worldwide, the ever-accelerating price of decent Champagne (and even some not-so-decent) is pushing many consumers to consider alternatives for their fizzy fix, which plays right into Cava's hand.

While there are numerous outstanding Cavas in the under-\$20.00 category, the real action, in my opinion, is in the \$20.00 to \$40.00 category, where I see a range of serious wines that exhibit complexity, depth and balance and the ability to age gracefully. Most of these are made by small, family-owned bodegas, and while they may not be easy to track down, I think curious bubbly lovers will be thrilled by many of them, which, in a fair number of cases, bear comparison to Champagnes costing twice as much or even more. That said, many Cavas, especially those made from the local Xarel-lo, Parellada and Macabeo varieties, do tend to show a slightly more earthy tinge than most Champagnes and often more weight as well, with the exception of no-dosage, Extra Brut or Brut Nature examples. That extra bit of heft generally makes Cava extremely food-friendly, often more so than similarly priced or even more expensive Champagnes that are on the delicate, even dilute side and thus better suited to aperitif duty than serving at the table.

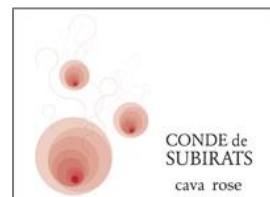
### Conde de Subirats (Cava/Penedès)

#### Conde de Subirats Cava Brut NV – **88 points** – SRP \$14



Green-tinged yellow. Bright and energetic on the nose, displaying green apple and melon scents and a citrus zest topnote. Fleshy, dry and focused, offering Meyer lemon, honeydew and bitter quinine flavors that are given a spicy edge by a subtle ginger note. Closes with nervy cut, repeating citrus character and good persistence. (aged for 18 months on its lees; Lot #L1800813C) 2019-2020

#### Conde de Subirats Cava Brut Rose NV – **89 points** – SRP \$14



Bright orange-pink. Musky red berry, blood orange and floral scents show good clarity and pick up a subtle herbal note as the wine opens up. Sappy and focused on entry, offering redcurrant and bitter cherry flavors that deepen and spread out with air. Chewy and nicely concentrated, delivering solid finishing cut and a lingering orange pith note. (aged on its lees for 18 months; Lot # L1723615TC) 2019 - 2020



### Isaac Fernandez Selección (Cava/Utiel-Requena)

**Biutiful Cava Brut NV – 89 points – SRP \$15**



Pale yellow. Fresh peach and melon aromas are complemented by dusty mineral and floral accents. Silky and open-knit, showing good depth to its juicy pit fruit flavors, which are braced by a refreshingly bitter orange pith flourish. Finishes with good persistence and lingering peach and honeysuckle notes. (Lot #806781; finished at eight g/l of residual sugar, which is relatively dry by standard Cava measures) 2019-2022

**Biutiful Cava Brut Nature NV – 90 points – SRP \$15**



Bright straw-yellow. Sharply focused aromas of Meyer lemon, quince and candied ginger, along with subtle floral and mineral notes. Densely packed but light on its feet, offering refreshingly bitter citrus pith, pear skin flavors and a hint of spicy white pepper. Racy, stony and sharply focused on the finish, which lingers with repeating mineral and floral character. (Lot #8222144; finished at less than one g/l of residual sugar) 2019-2022

**Biutiful Cava Brut Rose NV – 89 points – SRP \$15**



Pale, bright orange. Fresh citrus fruits and red berries on the fragrant, spice-accented nose and in the mouth. Juicy and nicely concentrated, with a floral nuance emerging on the back half. Finishes warm and tangy, with good persistence and repeating spiciness. (Lot #831644; eight g/l residual sugar) 2019-2022

### Maria Casanovas (Cava/Penedès)

**Brut de Brut Reserva NV – 90 points – SRP \$19**



Pale yellow color. Ripe citrus/orchard fruits, a hint of honey and smoky lees on the deeply perfumed nose. Offers nicely concentrated orange, pear nectar and buttered toast flavors that are braced and sharpened by a core of juicy acidity.

Finishes toasty and long, leaving hints of chamomile, succulent herbs and orange pith behind. (no dosage; disgorged on April 30, 2018; aged for 15 months on its lees before disgorgement) 2019-2024

**Brut Nature Pinot Noir NV – 92 points – SRP \$37**



Vivid onion skin color. Aromas of raspberry, rhubarb, blood orange and pungent flowers are complemented by a toasty overtone that builds with air. Dry, focused and lively on the palate, offering intense red fruit and orange zest flavors that are

underscored by a vein of chalky minerality. Blends power and finesse smoothly and finishes with solid thrust and lingering floral and mineral flourishes. (L 2/17; aged for 15 months on its lees) 2019-2023

**Brut Nature Gran Reserva 2014 – 92 points – SRP \$37**



Pale gold. Poached pear, orange pith, smoky lees and a hint of chamomile on the pungent, mineral-accented nose. Fleshy and broad on the palate, offering spice-tinged, leesy orchard/pit fruit flavors. A sweetening touch of honey emerges on the

back half. Shows very good energy and spicy cut on the toasty finish, which hangs on with excellent tenacity. (L 5/17; aged on its lees for 30 months) 2019-2024



## U Mes U Fan Tres [1+1=3] (Cava/Penedès)

**Brut Rosé Selecció NV – 90 points – SRP \$21**



Light, bright orange. Orange zest, redcurrant and lavender, along with a zesty mineral topnote. Silky and focused on the palate, offering energetic red berry, citrus pith flavors and a hint of smokiness on the back half. Closes on a vibrant mineral note, displaying very good energy and a persistent blood orange accent. (Lot 17267; disgorged in November, 2017; eight grams per liter of residual sugar) 2019-2023

**Cygnus Brut Reserva NV (certified organic grapes) – 90 points – SRP \$20**



Light, bright yellow. Displays mineral-accented tangerine, pear and honeysuckle scents that show very good clarity and a candied ginger accent. Smooth, seamless and broad in the mouth, offering ripe citrus/orchard fruit flavors that slowly deepen and become spicier with air. Lingers nicely on a sharply delineated finish that leaves a subtle floral note behind. (Lot 18316; disgorged in October, 2018 after 18 months on its lees; 9 g/l residual sugar) 2019-2024

**Cygnus Brut Nature Reserva NV (certified organic grapes) – 91 points – SRP \$21**



Limpid straw-yellow. Mineral-accented citrus and pit fruits, toasty lees, sweet butter and pungent flowers on the expansive nose. Supple and energetic on the palate, offering ripe tangerine and white peach flavors that show very good clarity thanks to a mineral topnote that gains strength with air. Tightens up steadily on a long, lively finish that leaves notes of pear and candied ginger behind. (Lot 18318; disgorged in May, 2018 after 22 months on its lees; totally dry and zero grams of residual sugar) 2019-2023

### **Tarragona's Myriad Styles and Exceptional Potential**

It's hard to believe that the red wines of Tarragona, especially the world-class versions from the steep hillsides of **Priorat**, have only existed in their current form since the early 1990s. Long home to old plantings of Garnacha (Garnatxa) and Carignan (Carineña or Carinyena), the region's potential was only realized after a handful of young producers, led by Alvaro Palacios, took on the task of elevating the wines to an elite level. Less than a generation later, they have succeeded, often remarkably so. Such is Priorat's quality that in 2009 it was designated as a Denominación de Origen Calificada, or DOCa, Spain's highest regional classification and one that previously had been bestowed on only one other area, Rioja. (They are still the only two DOCa regions in the country.) Priorat is a hot, dry area, and while there's always the danger of superripe fruit and consequently high-octane wines, the best vineyards here are situated high up in the mountains, where cooling winds and cold nights preserve acidity...

The new kid on the block in Tarragona, commercially speaking, is **Terra Alta**, which lies about 25 miles west and just south of Priorat and Montsant. As the name suggests, this is a high-altitude growing region, with clay, limestone and sandy soils that, combined with the relatively cool climate, are conducive to producing elegant, vibrant red wines (based mostly on Garnacha and Carineña) and well-balanced, fresh whites, made mainly from Garnacha Blanca, the best of which I have sometimes confused, blind, with white Burgundy or even Chablis. As with Montsant, pricing for the wines here has not yet caught up with quality, so value-minded readers should pay attention to this region.

## Genium Celler (Priorat/Poboleda)

**Genium Ximenis 2015 (white) – 91 points – SRP \$38**

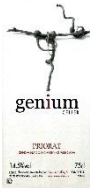


Limpid yellow-gold. Pear nectar, lemon pith, honeysuckle and a hint of toasty lees on the fragrant nose. Silky and expansive on the palate, offering ripe citrus/orchard fruit flavors that deepen and pick up a hint of chalky minerality with air. Closes on a smoky note, displaying very good focus and lingering honey and Meyer lemon notes. (raised in new French oak barrels) 2019-2023



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**Genium 2011 – 92 points** – SRP \$40

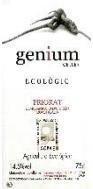


Brilliant ruby. Aromas of ripe, mineral-accented red berries and cherry, along with subtle incense and floral nuances. Sweet and penetrating on the palate, offering bitter cherry and raspberry flavors that show real energy and back-end lift. A spicy note appears on the clinging finish, which features fine-grained tannins and resonating red fruit and mineral qualities. (20% new French oak) 2019 – 2027

**Genium 2013 – 91 points** – SRP \$40

Lurid ruby. Mineral- and spice-accented dark berry and cherry preserve aromas are complemented by suggestions of cola, licorice and pungent flowers. Fleshy and subtly sweet, offering plush blackberry, mocha and floral pastille flavors that are underscored by a smoky mineral quality. Broad and sweet on the persistent finish, which is framed by supple, harmonious tannins. (aged in French oak barrels, 20% of them new) 2019 – 2026

**Genium Ecologic 2011 – 92 points** – SRP \$45



Brilliant violet color. A highly perfumed bouquet evokes red fruit liqueur, candied flowers and exotic spices, along with a smoky mineral overtone. Impressively concentrated, yet lively in style, offering sweet, mineral-tinged raspberry, cherry, lavender pastille and spicecake flavors that open up steadily with air. Very fresh and seamless in texture, finishing with harmonious tannins and strong, floral-driven persistence. (raised in new and used French oak barrels) 2019 – 2026

**Genium Ecologic 2013 – 91 points** – SRP \$45

Deep, bright-rimmed ruby. Smoke- and spice-accented dark berry and cherry scents are complemented by a bright mineral flourish. Sappy and focused on the palate, offering gently sweet blackberry and boysenberry flavors that flesh out on the back half. Finishes subtly sweet and long, with dusty tannins coming in late to add shape and final grip. (50% new French oak) 2020 – 2026

**Genium Poboleda Vi de Vila 2011 – 93 points** – SRP \$45



Vivid ruby. Powerful aromas of cherry liqueur, black raspberry, candied flowers and woodsmoke, with a suave mineral quality adding vibrancy and lift. Offers palate-coating red fruit preserve and spicecake flavors along with hints of licorice, candied flowers and a touch of mocha. Broad-shouldered and densely packed, yet lively as well, finishing impressively long, with strong thrust and velvety tannins. (aged in new French oak barrels) 2019-2026

**Genium Poboleda Vi de Vila 2013 – 92 points** – SRP \$45

Youthful violet color. Ripe dark berry, cherry-cola and lavender aromas are complicated by suggestions of licorice, vanilla and smoky minerals. Sappy and concentrated, offering lush cherry, blackberry liqueur and spicecake flavors that show strong, spicy lift. Smooth, well-integrated tannins and a lingering floral note build on a very long, sweet finish that shows no rough edges. (all new French oak) 2021-2029



### Reserva de la Tierra (Priorat/Gratallops)

**Vega Escal 2014 – 91 points – SRP \$24**



Inky ruby. Vibrant and focused on the nose, displaying fresh, dark berry, pungent floral aromas, hints of licorice and smoky minerals. Offers sharply focused blackberry and bitter cherry flavors that show very good depth as well as vibrancy thanks to a spine of juicy acidity. Finishes with very good focus and mineral drive, leaving behind a subtly sweet floral pastille note. (raised in new and used French/American oak barrels) 2019-2025

**Vega Escal Crianza 2015 – 90 points – SRP \$24**

Brilliant violet color. A spice-accented bouquet evokes fresh cherry, blackberry and licorice, along with floral and mineral overtones. Supple and expansive on the palate, offering juicy red/blue fruit and floral pastille flavors that are sharpened by a peppery flourish. The long, gently sweet finish is shaped by fine-grained tannins leaving zesty spice and mineral notes behind. (raised for 18 months in new and used French oak barrels) 2021-2030

### Bodegas Abanico (Terra Alta/Gandesa)

**Las Colinas del Ebro Garnatxa Blanca 2017 – 90 points – SRP \$14**



Limpid straw-yellow. Mineral-accented aromas of white peach, tangerine and honey take on a floral nuance as the wine opens up. Juicy and focused on the palate, offering fresh citrus and pit fruit flavors that deepen steadily with air. Clings with very good tenacity on the spicy finish, which shows very good clarity and repeating florality. 2019-2024

**Las Colinas del Ebro Garnatxa/Syrah 2017 – 90 points – SRP \$14**

Vivid magenta. Lively black raspberry and floral pastille aromas take on a spicy aspect with aeration. Silky and expansive on the palate, offering appealingly sweet red/blue fruit and spicecake flavors that pick up a peppery quality on the back half. The spicy note comes back on the persistent finish, which is supported by smooth, even tannins. (all stainless steel) 2020-2025

#### **The Generosity of Valencia**

Generally hot, dry conditions in the Valencia region set the stage for generous, full-bodied red wines, mostly produced from the native, late-ripening Monastrell and Garnacha varieties. While it has long been asserted that Monastrell is the same grape as Mourvèdre, recent research casts doubt on that belief, although the two varieties are almost certainly from the same family tree...

Utiel-Requena, which is about an hour's drive west of the coastal city of Valencia, is a relative newcomer to most export markets, and so far, the wines show promise. This is a high-altitude region where winegrowing dates back to at least the 6th century BCE, and the native red variety, Bobal, is still the workhorse. The wines tend to be full-bodied and fruit-driven, while the best examples are made with an eye to energy, making this another region to follow. I have come across a handful of interesting white wines (which make up less than 6% of the zone's production), especially bubbly versions (interestingly, allowed in Requena but not Utiel), but it is the reds that are most worthy of readers' attention for now.

### Anecoop La Viña (Valencia)



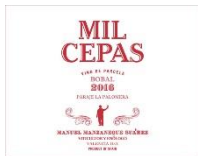
**Casa l'Angel Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 – 89 points – SRP \$14**

Deep ruby. Dried cherry, redcurrant and licorice on the nose, which picks up a smoky nuance with air. Offers bitter cherry and flavors that show good depth and are enlivened by a peppery nuance. Finishes on a bitter chocolate note, with dusty tannins and good, spicy persistence. (all used French oak) 2020 – 2025



## **Manuel Manzaneque Suarez (Valencia)**

**Mil Cepas Bobal 2016 – 92 points – SRP \$60**



Saturated ruby. A complex bouquet displays scents of ripe red berries, cherry-cola, baking spices and woodsmoke, along with a building floral overtone. Broad in shape, offers concentrated black raspberry, bitter cherry and rose pastille flavors that become livelier with aeration. Finishes sweet, pliant and impressively long, displaying harmonious tannins and lingering floral and spice notes. (made from a 0.7-hectare plot of 80-year old vines; 15% whole clusters and 14 months of aging in used French oak barrels) 2021 – 2029

## **Issac Fernandez Selección (Utiel-Requena)**

**Bovale 2016 – 90 points – SRP \$15**



Inky ruby. Primary red/dark berry and vanilla scents are given spicy lift by a suggestion of white pepper. Juicy and seamless in texture, offering plush blackberry, bitter cherry and floral pastille flavors that tighten up steadily on the back half. The smooth, appealingly sweet finish echoes the cherry note and betrays no tannins. (all destemmed grapes; 70% French and 30% American oak) 2020 – 2025

### **Jumilla Delivers Superb Value**

In the case of Jumilla, “insane value” isn’t far off the mark for expressive, fleshy yet energetic, fruit-driven red wines. We’re talking numerous excellent wines in the under-\$15.00 category and even some under \$10.00. This relatively large region encompasses some 32,000 hectares of vines (half of Rioja’s hectareage, six times that of Priorat and a third more than Ribera del Duero, for perspective). Jumilla is home to an impressively vast collection of old, bush-grown and drought-resistant Monastrell vines, which make up almost two-thirds of the entire region’s plantings. While I’ve had plenty of Jumillas stand the test of cellaring, especially the superb wines of Bodegas El Nido, the zone’s true strength, I believe, is in deeply fruity, concentrated and highly perfumed wines that deliver immediate pleasure for ridiculously low prices.

## **Bodegas Sierra Norte (Jumilla)**

**Porta Regia Monastrell Old Vines 2016 – 90 points – SRP \$13**



Brilliant magenta. Assertive aromas of fresh red berries are complemented by a spicy hint of white pepper. Juicy, focused and energetic in the mouth, offering appealingly sweet raspberry and floral pastille flavors that spread out steadily on the back half. Gentle, slow-building tannins lend shape to a smooth, seamless finish that strongly echoes the red fruit note. (all stainless steel) 2019-2024

**Porta Regia Monastrell 5 months 2016 – 90 points – SRP \$16**



Lurid ruby. Smoke- and spice-accented dark berry and licorice aromas are accented by hints of vanilla and cracked pepper. Smooth and broad on the palate, offering sweet cherry and cassis flavors that tighten up slowly on the back half. Shows building sweetness and a subtle floral quality on the gently tannic finish, which leaves a repeating vanilla note behind. (aged for five months in a 70/30 combination of French and American oak barrels, some new and some used) 2021-2026

**Porta Regia Monastrell 12 months 2015 – 91 points – SRP \$19**



Limpid ruby-red. Displays perfumed aromas of ripe red berries, cherry compote and incense, which are complemented by a floral note that builds with aeration. Seamless and nicely concentrated, offering gently sweet raspberry, cherry, spicecake and floral pastille flavors and a spicy white pepper accent. Finishes smooth and long, displaying very good clarity and supple tannins that lend a gentle grip. (aged in 60% French and 40% American oak barrels, all used) 2020-2026

