

Rioja Designation of origin

Rioja, the strength of a brand with a historic reputation

Summary

Rioja wines are protected by the oldest Designation of Origin in Spain, officially recognised in 1925. In 1991, it was awarded the highest category - 'Calificada' - making Rioja the only designation to be so honoured. The Rioja wine region is located in northern Spain

The effective application of self-controls run by the "Control Board" that are much stricter than those of other wine regions - Rioja is one of the few that requires that all of its production be bottled at source - has created the sense of safety and trust among consumers that has allowed Rioja to attain its current leading position on the market.

"The Control Board" is a public institution in charge of fostering and controlling the quality of the region's wines, promoting the region and defending the interests of the region's wine sector.

Rioja is a privileged region for growing grapes and making top-quality wines, with a unique personality and an exceptional aptitude for ageing, is the leading wine region of Spain

Rioja wines are sold in more than 110 countries.

Rioja: Vanguard and tradition

Thus are Rioja wines, vanguard and tradition joined together in a wine region that is unique in the world - the best of both the old and the new world of wine. And this also applies to this brand, which represents the solidity of its history and the strength of its experience, renewed and driven forward by the strength of creativity and innovation - colours born in and inspired by the land, the vines and their fruit, and the vine itself, icon of our land and universal symbol of wine. Rioja is quality, prestige and international recognition. Rioja is restless and open; dynamic and creative; synonym of sharing and enjoying.

The control board quality control

Rioja wines are protected by the oldest Designation of Origin in Spain, officially recognised in 1925. In 1991, it was awarded the highest category - 'Calificada' - making Rioja the only designation to be so honoured. Its Regulations establish the borders of the production area, the grape varieties that may be grown, maximum allowable yields, approved vinification and ageing techniques, and so on. The Control Board is a public institution in charge of fostering and controlling the quality of the region's wines, promoting the region and defending the interests of the region's wine sector, whose representatives constitute the Control Board Management team. The effective application of self-controls that are much stricter than those of other wine regions - Rioja is one of the few that requires that all of its production be bottled at source - has created the sense of safety and trust among consumers that has allowed Rioja to attain its current leading position on the market.

The prestige of a thousand-year-old history

Grape growing in Rioja took root thousands of years ago, as shown by the numerous remains of fermentation pools and ceramic implements dating back to Roman times. Gonzalo de Berceo, the first poet to write in the Spanish language, immortalised in his verses Rioja wine which, from the High Middle Ages, constituted a key element in the region's economy. Two thousand year of grape-growing tradition, two centuries of oenological tradition and its official recognition as a Designation of Origin in 1925 have placed Rioja among the elite of historic European designations of origin.

The commitment to excellence of the wines produced in this privileged region, and its ability to adapt to demands by innovation from within tradition, have allowed Rioja to consolidate its prestigious image among consumers, turning into a benchmark for Spanish wines on international markets. Rioja is among the five best-know quality wine regions in the world.

Sales

Rioja is the leading wine region of Spain. During the last two decades, the Rioja wine industry's production and sales have grown spectacularly, particularly in terms of the number of ageing bodegas, which currently surpasses 375, while a total of bodegas bottle [Rioja](#) wine. Thanks to major investments over the past few years, Rioja's bodegas are pioneering the field of oenological technology while the surpass every other wine region in the world in ageing capacity, with a total of over one million 225-litre oak cask in their cellars. Sales of Rioja wine have grown consistently during the last few years, confirming the region's competitiveness while consolidating its aged wines among premium segments. However, Rioja

enjoys an excellent position on all markets for quality wine, from young wines to Gran Reservas. Compulsory bottling at source, a requirement specifically authorised by the European Union and one of the pillars of the region's fame, also contributes to assure the quality and typical nature of its wines.

A privileged region for quality grape growing

Rioja is a privileged region for growing grapes and making top-quality wines, with a unique personality and an exceptional aptitude for ageing. The Rioja wine region is located in northern Spain, on both sides of the. The local terrain perfectly delimits the region and sets it apart from surrounding territories. From an administrative point of view, however, of vineyards are divided between three provinces on the Upper Ebro - La Rioja

The whole area benefits from the confluence of two distinctly opposed climates - Atlantic and Mediterranean - which provide mild temperatures and an annual rainfall of slightly above 400 l/m² - ideal conditions for growing grapes. The wine region has many different soils - chalky-clay, ferrous-clay and alluvial being the main ones - and microclimates - depending on vineyard orientation, protection against wind, etc.- that provide the wines with unique traits. This, together with the use of different grape varieties and growing practices, allows local winemakers to make a wide range of wines with a different personality, although always within the framework of a perfectly-recognisable common identity.

The level of technical development attained by Riojan viticulture throughout its thousand-year-old history constitutes the ultimate foundation

of the superb quality, prestige and uniqueness of Rioja wines. The experience of grape growers and wine makers has resulted in a selection of those grape varieties that best adapt to the region's climate and soils, while producing wine of the highest quality. The result of this historical process is the –grape varieties currently authorised by the Regulations of the D.O.Ca. Rioja - Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo red grapes, and Viura, Malvasía and Garnacha Blanca white grapes. Tempranillo is considered a grape variety native to Rioja and is undoubtedly the wine region's most typical grape. It is the origin of the identity of its wines and covers over 65% of plantations. One of the world's top grape varieties, it is very versatile from an oenological viewpoint and it is capable of producing very well-balanced wines, suitable for long ageing.

In order to optimise wine quality, the Regulations of the D.O.Ca. Rioja set maximum allowable yields which are 6,500 kilograms per hectare for red grape varieties. The wine region's annual production currently stands at about, of which, the rest being white and rose.

Vinification and ageing

Rioja's winemakers have always been at the forefront, applying state-of-the-art oenological techniques and thereby constantly improving the quality of their wines. Both in the most classic Riojas - with unique conditions for ageing, admired by wine lovers worldwide - and in the latest generation of wines with their innovative style, Rioja's winemakers are an example of the pioneering spirit and the application of an oenology backed by excellent technical resources and the utmost expertise.

A notable difference between Rioja wines and those from other regions is the former's suitability for ageing. An appropriate ageing period - in which

oak cask play a decisive role - allows Rioja wines to develop, bringing out their virtues and conferring new aromas and flavours, in addition to helping stabilise the wines. Ageing takes place in 225-litre oak casks, with periodic rackings, completed by a period in the bottle where the wine continues to develop in a reducing atmosphere until it reaches its peak.

Guarantee Labels

Depending on the ageing process, Rioja wine can be put into one of four categories, identified by different numbered back labels or seals, which the Control Board issues to those wines that meet quality and tipicity requirements:

Guarantee of Origin

This category guarantees the origin and vintage of the wine. They are usually wines in their first or second year which preserve their fresh, fruity, primary characteristics. This category may also include other wines which do not fit into the categories of Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva, even though they have undergone ageing processes, as a consequence of their not being certified by the Control Board.

Crianza

Wines which are at least in their third year, having spent a minimum of one year in oak casks. For white wines, the minimum oak cask ageing period is 6 months.

Reserva

Selected wines of the best vintages with an excellent potential that have been aged for a minimum of 3 years, with at least one year in casks. For white wines, the minimum ageing period is 2 years, with at least 6 months in casks.

Gran Reserva

Selected wines from exceptional vintages which have spent at least 2 years in oak casks and 3 years in the bottle. For white wines, the minimum ageing period is 4 years, with at least one year in casks.