

Wine tasting in Rioja and Ribera del Duero

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The winery tour in Rioja and Ribera del Duero during October 2017 was part of a visit to Spain by Nurit and Asher Tishler, Ronit and Yossi Gershenman, Tali and Benzi Weiner, Claudia Maayan-Nevo and Shlomo Yonas, and Yona and Aldo Bar-Nes. We visited six wineries in Rioja and six wineries in Ribera del Duero and tasted the wineries' current releases and some older ones.

The highest quality and mature wines are often unavailable in the wineries and should be purchased in professional wine stores or in other professional outlets (local importers, internet stores, auctions, etc.), since most of the high quality wineries' production is pre-sold (sometimes several years) in advance. Wines from the last release and, sometimes, from the last 2-3 releases may be available in some, but not all, wineries.

There are numerous hotels, B&Bs, quality restaurants and wine stores in Rioja and Ribera del Duero. Booking rooms well in advance, particularly during holidays and annual wine events, is highly recommended. We stayed in Santo Domingo (Rioja) and Valladolid (Ribera del Duero). Both towns are close to some of the regions' most famous wineries and offer many interesting attractions (culture, scenery, archeology, food, and much more).

This winery trip was planned several months in advance, and was focused on high to very high quality wineries. Thus, no wonder that we ranked many of the wines that we tasted as 'very good' or even 'excellent'. All of the high quality wines that we tasted will age and continue to develop, many of them for 5-30 years.

Finally, there are numerous sources of information on Rioja's and Ribera del Duero's wines, wineries, history, climate and geography. Wikipedia and the references therein is a good place to start.

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Wineries in Rioja

Muga

Muga Blanco, 2016. 7.6 Euro. 13% alcohol. 90% Viura, 10% Malvasia and white Garnacha. Some body. Fairly balanced. Somewhat complex. Simple wine. Drink now. Good wine.

Muga Reserva, 2014. 13.4 Euro. 14% alcohol. 70% Tempranillo, 20% Garnacha, 10% Mazuelo and Graciano. Close to full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Fairly elegant. Drink now up to 5-7 years. Good wine.

Prado Enea Gran Reserva, 2009. 35.2 Euro. 14% alcohol. 80% Tempranillo, 20% Garnacha, Mazuelo and Graciano. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Still closed. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10-15 years. Very good wine.

Torre Muga, 2010. 54.3 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 75% Tempranillo, 15% Mazuelo, 10% Garnacha. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now or, better, within 2-3 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

A large winery. Very nice tasting facility. Nice hospitality. The winery resides in a beautiful area in the town Haro and produces very good wines. The regular tasting included two entry-level wines (this tasting can be skipped by experienced wine enthusiasts), but some of the winery's top wines can be tasted by the glass at a fairly low price (recommended). The winery's top wine, Aro, was unavailable for purchase or tasting. Over the last several years this winery has become somewhat too commercial. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is recommended.

Vinos de Benjamin Romeo

Predicator Blanco, 2016. 20 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. Some body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Young. Fairly simple wine. Drink now up to 4-5 years. Good wine.

Predicator Tinto, 2014. 20 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 95% Tempranillo, 4% Garnacha, 1% Graciano. Close to full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Young. Fairly simple wine. Drink now up to 5-8 years. Good wine.

La Cueva del Contador, 2015. 50 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-4 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Carmen, gran reserva, 2011. 150 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 32% Tempranillo, 38% Garnacha, 24% Mazuelo, 6% Graciano. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Elegant. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-4 up to 25 years. Very good to excellent wine.

A mid-size winery. The winery resides in a beautiful area near San Vicente de la Sonsierra and produces very good wines. Very nice tasting room (in San Vicente de la Sonsierra). Great hospitality. The winery's top wine, Contador, was available for purchase but not for tasting. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Sierra Cantabria

Sierra Cantabria, 2016. 8 Euro. 13.5% alcohol. White wine. 40% Viura, 15% Malvasia, 45% Sauvignon Blanc. Simple wine. Very little body. Balanced. Not complex. Fresh. Young. Drink now up to 2-3 years. Reasonably good wine.

Sierra Cantabria Crianza, 2014. 9 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Less than full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Young. Fairly simple wine. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

El Pundito, 2013. 30 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. Less than full body. Fairly balanced. Fairly complex. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Dry. Drink now up to 10 years. Good wine.

San Vicente, 2013. 30 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Drink in 2-3 up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

Victorino, 2015. (Produced in Toro). 35 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Drink in 1-2 up to 10 years. Good to very good wine.

A large wine producer with several wineries. We visited the winery near Paganos and tasted the wines in the tasting room of the old winery of Sierra Cantabria in San Vicente de la Sonsierra. The winery resides in a beautiful area near Paganos and produces good wines. Very nice tasting room (in San Vicente de la Sonsierra). Great hospitality. The winery's top wines were unavailable for tasting or purchase. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is recommended.

Pujanza

Hado, 2014. 11 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Less than full body. Balanced. Some complexity. Simple wine. Some fruitiness. Young. Soft tannins. Drink now up to two years. Good wine.

Finca Valdepoleo, 2014. 21 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Fairly elegant. Young. Fresh. Soft tannins. Some floral aroma. Drink now up to 8-10 years. Good to very good wine.

Norte, 2014. 50 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Somewhat closed. Fresh. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Some desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 1-2 up to 15-20 years. Very good wine.

Anteportalatina, 2015. 55 Euro. 13.5% alcohol. White wine. 100% Viura. Full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Somewhat closed. Dry. Drink now up to 5-6 years. Very good wine.

A mid-size winery. Very nice tasting facility. Great hospitality. The winery resides in a beautiful hilly area and produces very good wines. The winery's top wine, Cisma, was available for purchase but not for tasting. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Roda

Sela, 2014. 14 Euro. 14% alcohol. 93% Tempranillo, 2% Garnacha, 5% Graciano. Less than full body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Young. Fairly simple wine. Dry. Soft Tannins. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Roda Reserva, 2012. 22 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 89% Tempranillo, 2% Garnacha, 9% Graciano. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 20 years. Good to very good wine.

Roda I Reserva, 2010. 36 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Elegant. Soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Cirsion, 2011. 75 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full and fairly powerful body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Somewhat closed. Desired bitterness at the end. Dry. Drink in 3-5 up to 25 years. Very good to excellent wine.

Cirsion, 2010. 120 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full and powerful body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Somewhat closed. Desired bitterness at the end. Dry. Drink in 3-5 up to 25 years. Excellent wine.

A mid-size winery. The winery resides in a beautiful area in Haro and produces very good wines. Very nice tasting facilities. Great hospitality. All the wines of the current release were available for tasting and purchase. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Tondonia

Vina Bosconia, 2005. 20 Euro. 13.5% alcohol. 80% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha, 5% Graciano and Mazuelo. Less than full body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Soft Tannins. Drink now up to 5-6 years. Reasonable good wine.

Vina Tondonia Reserva, 2005. 25 Euro. 13% alcohol. 75% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha, 10% Graciano and Mazuelo. Less than full body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Soft Tannins. Drink now up to 5-6 years. Good wine.

A large winery. At the time of our tour the winery was not accepting visitors. We tasted two, entry level, wines in the winery's tasting room, which resides in a beautiful area in Haro (100 meters from Roda). The two wines that we tasted do not represent the winemaking of this winery, and we recommend skipping the tasting room. Visiting this winery (with appointment, when it is accepting visitors) is recommended.

Wineries in Ribera del Duero

Mauro

Prima15, 2015. (Toro). 10 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 85% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha and others. Less than full body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Young. Entry level wine. Fairly simple. Dry. Soft Tannins. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Mauro, 2015. 20 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 95% Tempranillo, 5% Syrah. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Noticeable soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 15 years. Good to very good wine.

San Roman, 2014. 23 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Somewhat too low acidity. Noticeable soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 1-3 up to 15 years. Very good wine.

Garmon, 2015. 35 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Dry. Drink in 3-5 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Mauro VS, 2014. 45 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Soft tannins. Some floral aroma. Desired bitterness at the end. Dry. Drink in 1-2 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

A mid-size winery that produces in three locations: Tudela del Duero (Mauro), Ribera del Duero (Garmon) and Toro (San Roman). The Mauro winery, which we visited, resides in a beautiful area near the village Tudela and produces very good wines. Very nice tasting facilities. Great hospitality. The top wine of Mauro, Terreus was unavailable for tasting. There are no wine sales in the winery. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Abadia

GW, 2016. 23 Euro. 15.5% alcohol. 100% Gewurztraminer. Little body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Young. Dry. Fresh. A slight feel of sweetness. Drink now up to 3-4 years. Good wine.

Abadia Retuerta, Seleccion Especial, 2014. 23 Euro. 14% alcohol. 70% Tempranillo, 17% Syrah, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon. Close to full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 5-10 years. Good to very good wine.

Pago Negralada, 2014. 65 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Dry. Soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink in 1-3 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Large winery that produces a wide selection of different, sometimes single vineyard, wines. Resides in a very nice hilly area. We tasted only three wines. The top wines, other than Pago Negralada, were unavailable for tasting. Nice tasting facility. Nice hospitality. It is possible to buy some wines in the winery. Too commercial. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is recommended.

Legaris

Verdejo, 2016. (White wine). 5.5 Euro. 13% alcohol. 100% Verdejo. Some body. Balanced. Somewhat complex. Young. Entry level wine. Fairly simple. Drink now up to 2 years. Good wine.

Roble, 2016. 6.5 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Some body. Balanced. Not complex. Fresh. Drink now. Reasonably good wine.

Legaris Crianza, 2014. 14 Euro. 15% alcohol. 90% Tempranillo, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Less than full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 5-8 years. Good to very good wine.

Legaris Reserva, 2011. 23 Euro. 15% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Too oaky. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 1-3 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

Calmo, 2011. 63 Euro. 15% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Powerful. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-4 up to 20 years. Excellent wine.

A mid-size winery that produces very good wines. The winery resides in a beautiful area near the town Penafiel. Very nice winery and tasting facilities. Great hospitality. Wines from the current release were available for purchase in the winery. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Aalto

Aalto, 2015. 23 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Young. Fresh. Drink now up to 10-15 years. Good to very good wine.

Aalto PS, 2015. 56 Euro. 15% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Young. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-4 up to 20 years. Very good wine.

A mid-size (newly built) winery that produces very good wines. The winery resides in a beautiful hilly area. Very nice winery and tasting facilities. Great hospitality. Wines from the current release were available for purchase in the winery. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Emilio Moro

Finca Resalso, 2016. 6 Euro. 13.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Little body. Balanced. Not complex. Dry. Drink now. Good wine.

Emilio Moro, 2015. 15 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Close to full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Young. Soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 5-7 years. Good to very good wine.

Malleolus, 2015. 25 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-3 up to 15 years. Very good wine.

Malleolus de Valderramiro, 2011. 45 Euro. 15% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Powerful. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 2-3 up to 20 years. Very good to excellent wine.

Malleolus de Sanchomartin, 2011. 98 Euro. 15% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Powerful. Balanced. Complex. Fairly elegant. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink in 3-5 up to 25 years. Excellent wine.

A large winery that produces very good wines. The winery resides in a beautiful location in Pesquera. Very nice tasting facilities. Great hospitality. The wines from the current release were available for purchase. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.

Pesquera

Paraje la Golosa, Gran Reserva, 2004. 20 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Fairly complex. Soft tannins. Drink now up to 10 years. Open 2-3 hours before drinking. Good to very good wine.

Dehesa 14, 2000. 22 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Close to full body. Balanced. Complex. Soft tannins. Desirable bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 7-10 years. Good to very good wine.

Gran Reserva Alenza, 2006. 36 Euro. 14.5% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Noticeable soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Drink now up to 10-15 years. Very good wine.

Millenium Reserva, 2008. 65 Euro. 14% alcohol. 100% Tempranillo. Full body. Balanced. Complex. Elegant. Soft tannins. Desired bitterness at the end. Somewhat closed. Drink now up to 15-20 years. Very good to excellent wine.

A large wine producer (Alejandro Fernandez) produces very good wines in four wineries. The winery that we visited, Bodega Alejandro Fernandez, resides in Pesquera. Very nice tasting facilities. Great hospitality. Old fashion wine making. The wines from the current release were available for purchase. Visiting this winery (with appointment) is highly recommended.