

La Mancha: The Land of Wonders and Wine by Collin Williams



We have all heard the name of La Mancha. Whether it was the fabled story of a deranged man and his sidekick or simply the fact that it is the largest area planted to grape vines in the world, La Mancha's reputation has a special connotation for wine lovers and Spanish history buffs alike.

Located in the Southeastern area of the country, DO La Mancha encompasses a huge amount of land that allows for an incredible variety of microclimates and grape varieties to be grown. I have traveled to this part of Spain many times and am consistently impressed and overwhelmed by the landscape and different nuances of the area. Sleepy little towns tucked away resemble the Spain of old while larger cities like Toledo drive tourists with its monuments and structures of Spain's historic past.

I won't beat around the bush, La Mancha can get hot! But, it is due to this heat as well as the sheer size of the land that grape growers must use specific methods to produce fruit of quality to make wine. Bush vine training is the common method seen in La Mancha and a person traveling to this region can witness vast open landscapes of rolling hills spotted with vines as far as the eye can see.

Unlike many parts of Spain, grape varieties grown in La Mancha have more of an international origin versus the indigenous Spanish grapes used in Rioja and Ribera del Duero. Winemakers here can produce stunning examples of varietal wine like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc. It is due to their low prices and good quality representation of these known varieties that La Mancha wines are becoming more prevalent on the retail shelves and on restaurant wine lists. Customers who enjoy the flavors of these types of wines but are not willing to spend the "Napa Prices" may opt to try one of these wines as their weekday wine pick.

But that's not all La Mancha has to offer. There are other grapes that are grown in this area that showcase the true sense of Spain. Grape varieties like Cencibel (Tempranillo) and Garnacha can be seen in some of the spicy, full bodied red wines and Macabeo produces an easy drinking, flavorful white wine from La Mancha.

Also, to truly appreciate the region of La Mancha you must understand that this place is not one homogenous area, but rather a smorgasbord of many different and distinct wine growing regions within its borders. Sure, you will often see the La Mancha Consejo Regulador label on many of the wines on our shelves that come from this area. However, I have enjoyed tasting and buying wines from the smaller more specific regions within La Mancha. DO's like Almansa, Valdepenas, and Manchuela can produce some outstanding wines that showcase a cornucopia of flavors ranging from the fruity and flavorful examples from Almansa to the robust and lip-smacking wines from Manchuela.

I highly encourage you to try some of the wines from La Mancha during your next visit to your neighborhood Spec's store. Ask for them by name from one of the wine stewards. I'm sure that your selection will over-deliver as well as lead you down the path of discovery for the wonderful wines from La Mancha.

Here are a few to get you started:

Mureda – DO Valdepenas (La Mancha)

*We found these wines last year while looking for new wines at the Miami International Wine Fair. What caught my attention first was the interesting label which seemed to resemble the old aqueducts of this part of Spain. These could fit the part of that easy going, everyday wine that you would not feel guilty about opening on a Wednesday night! Enjoy as there is a whole range of flavors and styles that we have from this winery.

Chardonnay – \$8.99

100% Chardonnay. Fermented in oak barrels. Golden pale in color. Pleasant tropical fruit aromas with mineral notes. Fresh, persistent, unctuous and very fruity. Ideal to accompany fish and poultry.

Merlot - \$8.99

100% Merlot. Aged 2 months in oak. This wine shows purple red color with blue hues, pleasant red fruit, blackberries and plum aromas with black pepper notes. Balanced, soft and elegant; ideal to accompany red meats.



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Sauvignon Blanc - \$8.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Golden color with greenish hues. Pleasant, fruity aromas (mainly pineapple and peach) and fresh flowers notes. Fresh, rounded, fruit aftertaste. Ideal with an appetizer, with soups, seafood and fish.

Tempranillo - \$8.99

100% Tempranillo. Aged 2 months in oak. Cherry red color with maroon hues. Pleasant, fruity aroma with notes of red fruit and a balsamic touch. Balanced, with sweet and round tannins, full bodied and a long aftertaste. Ideal to accompany red and white meat, cheeses and game.

Senda de Don Quixote – La Mancha

*The “Buy One Get the Second for 5 Cents” sale is back! We enjoyed bringing this sale to you earlier this year and it looks like you did too! The wines from Senda de Don Quixote are wonderful for parties and social events (tailgating?), or simply a great value for your everyday consumption. In fact, these wines were so well received when we last presented them that we sold over 500 cases in the first 30 days!!

Cabernet Sauvignon – reg. \$12.99 (On sale! Buy one at regular price get the 2nd for 5 cents!!)

This wine is made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon grapes from the Castilla-La Mancha region of Spain. Intense dark red color followed by aromas of black and red fruits and a hint of green pepper. Fruity and vegetal characteristics, this elegant and full bodied wine has good tannin and structure and a long balanced finish.

Tempranillo – reg. \$12.99 (On sale! Buy one at regular price get the 2nd for 5 cents!!)

This wine is made from 100% Tempranillo grapes from the Castilla-La Mancha region of Spain. Showing deep red color with purple tones followed by aromas of red and black berries with a hint of violet. Concentrated black fruit flavors with a perfect balance of fruit and tannins and a touch of toasted oak.

Chardonnay – reg. \$12.99 (On sale! Buy one at regular price get the 2nd for 5 cents!!)

This wine is made from 100% Chardonnay grapes grown in the Castilla-La Mancha region of Spain. Pale yellow color with golden reflections, followed by intense aromas of apple, peach, fennel and tropical fruits. Soft on the palate with hints of stone fruit and a clean, fresh and sweet finish. 🍷



Please email me at collinwilliams@specsonline.com with feedback.