

COLLIN'S COLUMN



RIOJA, SPAIN

Rioja: Classic vs. New World Style

by Collin Williams

Rioja's rich history in winemaking has brought about some amazing wines, inspiring and innovative ideas, and established the wines from Spain on the world map. The wines made here have a definite unique character and flavor profile that is distinguishable amongst every other wine in the world. More interesting though, nowadays you can see a whole new generation of wine – lovers enjoying these wines for their simplicity and complexity all at the same time. Plus, the older generation who still remembers these wines from decades past is in for a real treat as the young Rioja winemakers are turning out fabulous examples year after year. Now, the argument on the table for those first experiencing Rioja is: "Classic Rioja vs. New World Style?"

Below, I will detail a list of what many consider "Classic Rioja" and "New World Style" Rioja. Each is fantastic unto its' own respects. However certain people seem to take a fondness to one or the other. But first, let's define what constitutes "Classic" and "New World".

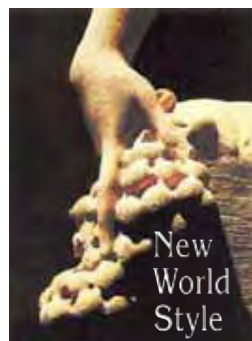


Classic
Rioja

This is more of a definition of a Bodega who has made wines in Rioja for many years and has remained consistent in their style throughout time rather than a blanket definition. Many of the winemakers and Bodegas that fall into this category have made impacts on the wines made in Rioja through innovative practices, styles, or overall influence for the marketability of these wines. However, many have

characteristics and flavors that a person would deem "Classic".

They typically display old leather nuances, ripe cherry skins, orange peel, and light clove on the finish. Sometimes seemy thinner on the palate than their counterparts, what they lack in body they make up for in longevity. Due to the naturally high acids, they will stand up to years and years of cellaring only improving as they age. Many experts would suggest that you view old world or classic Rioja like that of a good Burgundy.



New
World
Style

Today, there are many more Bodegas dotting the landscape of Rioja than that of the past. And, with all of these new entrants there are new perspectives on the winemaking. Traditionally, wines in this part of the world were meant to be consumed locally and there was no need to make an "international style" of wine. Whatever was made locally was usually the only wine that was drunk. However, now these businesses are thinking on a global scale and are pushing hard to deliver consistent products that can foster repeat purchasing.

The wines being made from the new Bodegas often resemble the styles that helped to launch California and Australia into popularity. That is, fruit – forward styles with generous tannins, good length on the finish, and expresses a very pronounced nose. These wines are more muscular than their ancient cousins, but deliver that instant "no muss, no fuss" flavor that the neo-wine consumer can fall in love with.

See the following examples below and compare for yourself:

Classic Style

Lopez de Heredia Vina Tondonia El Cubillo Crianza 2002

\$26.96 cash

CW – "3.5 of 5"; WW - Gracious

This Bodega has gained prestige and a firm reputation over the past 132 years for their traditional style of wines that encompass both the juice inside the bottle as well as the design of bottle itself. 2002 is the current vintage for this Crianza which is showing beautifully now. Usually a blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano, and Mazuelo, this wine showcases those lovely orange peel aromas matched with licorice and subtle vanilla notes from the oak. Firm tannins with a solid finish of chocolate, spice, and nutmeg. Gracious is a good word to describe these wines.

Marques de Murrieta Gran Reserva "Ygay" 2000

\$48.99 cash

CW – "3 of 5"; WW/LD(2 years) - A staple for great Rioja!

Although a traditionalist at heart, Bodegas Marques de Murrieta has been leaning more towards an international style in recent years. However, I feel this vintage of "Ygay" is still classic. 87% Tempranillo and 13% Mazuelo aged for 34 months in American oak barriques, the 2000 highlights more berry fruit on the nose and palate than other examples its age. Earthy components are also present with its firm and concentrated tannins still maintaining an influence in the overall mouthfeel.

Bodegas La Rioja Alta Reserva "Alberdi" 2002

\$23.99 cash

CW – "4 of 5"; EVD -
Fantastic and complex.

I really enjoy these types of Rioja wines. My palate adheres to the almost orange/cherry Kool Aid –like flavors that the wine brings out. 100% Tempranillo. Plenty of acidity makes this wine sing with beautiful berry and wild cherry flavors on the palate. On the finish, you can envision biting into a decadent chocolate covered cherry with its juices oozing out with each bite. Perfect now! Fantastic and complex. This particular line of wines from La Rioja Alta has gone more "colorful" in recent years.

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Classic vs New World Style continued from page 5

New World Style

Marques de la Concordia Crianza 2005

\$11.40 cash

CW – “3.5 of 5”; EVD -

One of the best selling wines at Specs!

*Have reviewed previously (2004) with similar notes on the current vintage.

One of the best selling wines at Specs! The 2005 Crianza from Marques de la Concordia displays lots of beautiful oak followed by ripe strawberry, black cherry, and spicy cola nuances. Smooth and intense on the palate, this wine constantly over delivers for the price. True “New World” style from Rioja.

Bodegas Palacio Glorioso Crianza 2005

\$9.88 cash

CW – “2.5 of 5” EVD -

Great introduction to the wines from Rioja

Always considered a great buy for the price, this lighthearted wine made from 100% Tempranillo is fresh and juicy. Plenty of up-front red cherry and strawberry fruit on the nose and palate with balanced acidity and a cooking spice (cinnamon) note on the finish. Medium bodied, this is a great introduction into the wines from Rioja as the flavors will fit most palates.

Marqués de Cáceres Reserva 2002

\$21.99 cash

CW – “3 of 5”;

EVD – Nice and Easy

Caceres has grown into a house name throughout the world rivaling the “Mondavis” or the “Gallos”. As one of the most largely distributed Spanish wines (albeit wine in general), these examples from Rioja remain consistent from year to year with a truly international flavor appeal. This Reserva –style made from 85% Tempranillo and 15% of Garnacha Tinta and Graciano highlights the strong oak on the forefront. Vanilla and dark fruit are concentrated around a spicy palate with cocoa and chocolate on the finish. Nice and easy. 🍷



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He’s in town for Texas Bass Master event this weekend. Jason Quinn is a 37-year old Lake Wylie, SC native. He started fishing at the age of seven on Lake Wylie and has become one of today’s premiere anglers. Jason’s pro career started five years ago. The 2007 Bassmaster Classic marked his fourth appearance at the premiere event with his personal best 6th place Classic finish in 2004. This season Jason will finish the 2009 Bassmaster Elite Series and will also fish in the 2010 Bassmaster Classic.



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