

# Wines/DOs from Northern Spain:

Basque Country, Navarra, Campo de Borja, and Toro

*Notes by John Redwood    October 2022*

# Places/DOs

- Basque Country: Getaria
- Navarra: Ribera Baja
- Campo de Borja
- Toro

# Basque Country: Getaria

- In Gipuzkoa province, between Bilbao and San Sebastian.
- Nearly all the land between Gerate Mountain (278 meters) and the coast is covered in vineyards due to its favorable microclimate.
- Principal sources of income: fishing, tourism, viticulture of Txakoli.
- Txakoli (Charoli in Spanish) is a slightly sparkling dry white wine with high acidity and low alcohol.
- Mainly produced in Atlantic regions of the Basque Country with high rainfall (between 1000 and 1600 mm/year) but also in Cantabria, northern Burgos in Spain; Chile is a minor producer.

# Navarra

- Located along the northeastern boundary of Rioja and historically in competition with it.
- Traditionally dedicated mainly to production of Garnacha, but more recently Tempranillo has predominated in total area planted with Cabernet Sauvignon coming in third.
- The area is no more homogeneous than Rioja there being great difference between the hot, dry, flat Ribera Baja and Ribera Alta subzones in the south and the less-planted cooler climate and more varied soils in the north.

# Navarra: Ribera Baja

- Ribera Baja is less hot and exposed to the influence of the Mediterranean than Ribera Alta but is protected by the Sierra Moncayo to the South.
- The Ribera Baja subzone is located on the banks of the Ebro River which due to its aridity requires irrigation.
- The best Garnachas in Ribera Baja come from Fitero because its poor Chateaneuf-like soils are more open to Mediterranean warmth.

# Campo de Borja I

- A **comarca** consisting of 16 municipalities in the northwest of Zaragoza province in a transition zone between the plains of the Ebro River and the mountains dominated by Moncayo, which gives its wines a special character.
- Ancient Romans introduced wine growing in the region and It was recognized as a DO in 1980.
- The climate is continental with Atlantic influences during the winter (i.e., a cold, dry wind from the northwest) and a Mediterranean influence in the summer with temperature varying significantly on a daily and seasonal basis.

# Campo de Borja II

- Annual rainfall is low (350-450 mm) with vineyards planted on high plateaus ranging between 350 and 750 meters above sea level.
- Soils are mainly dark lime-bearing ones of average rockiness, good drainage, average level of organic matter and rich in nutrients; closer to the Moncayo the clay and iron content and rockiness increase.
- There are currently around 6,300 ha under vines which produce between 20 and 25 million kg of grapes and are cultivated both as low bushes and on trellises.
- Authorized red wine grape varieties are Garnacha, Tempranillo, Mazuela, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah.

# Toro I

- A predominantly red wine producing area in Castilla y Leon, situated in Zamora province west of Rueda and Ribera del Duero appellations; granted DO status in 1933, the first Spanish region to do so.
- It is becoming increasingly well known for its powerful, full-bodied wines made from Tinto de Toro, which shares the same genotype as Tempranillo.
- Due to its altitude (600-750 meters), the region's growers can count on cool nights to "fix" color and flavor in the grapes ripened during torrid summer days in its various red clay and sandy soils.
- Its climate is continental – hot, dry summers, followed by cold, harsh winters, and deprived of significant maritime influence by the Cordillera Cantabrica, which separates the region from the coast.

# Toro II

- In 2019, there were 5,642 hectares of registered vineyards, around 1,200 of which are old bush vines of at least 50 years of age.
- While grapes account for only 350 ha and Tinto de Toro is by far the predominant grape variety.
- The average age of the vines is relatively high with most being grown as individual bush-wines spaces as far as 3 meters apart, a record low density imposed by Toro's near desert conditions – under 400 mm of rain a year.
- Tinto de Toro has a longer vegetative cycle which helps it to cope with the warm conditions and producing wines that are deeper colored and more tannic than most Rioja and Ribera del Duero ones.
- The great majority is aged in oak, in the case of the Reservas for at least 12 months.

# Our Wines

- Txomin Etxanix 2021 (Getaria, Basque Country) –Txakoli
- Vina Rubican 2021 (Baja Ribera, Navarra) – 100% Tempranillo
- Borsao Tres Picos 2019 (Campo de Borja) – 100% Garnacha
- Uro Toro 2016 (Toro) –100% Tinto de Toro

# Txomin Etranix -- 2021

- Winery owned by Txeuka family, which has been producing wine near Getaria since 1649 when the town was founded.
- It works exclusively with indigenous varieties of *Hondarrabi Zuria* and *Hindarrabi Beltza* planted between 1915 and 2000 on pergolas and terraced trellises on very steep slopes, located near the Atlantic.
- *Txakoli* from Getaria was the first variety to receive DO certification in 1989 with the cultivated area increasing from 60 to 177 ha since certification. Some 900,000 liters are produced annually.
- According to Wine.com, it is “greenish yellow, bright with fine natural bubble. Citrus and fresh apple aromas, and mineral notes. In the mouth it is fresh and fruity with characteristic acidity and light carbon.” Its alcohol content is 11%.

# Vina Rubican -- 2021

- Produced in the municipality of Corella in the Ribera Baja subregion in southwest Navarra bordering on La Rioja to the west.
- Bottled by Bodegas Correllanas, which has been in operation since 1900, the Vina Rubican label was introduced in 1940.
- The winery has the capacity to produce 650,000 liters annually and the vineyards are spread around 60 ha whose “soil, unique microclimate and optimum rainfall” reportedly make the region “perfect” for vine cultivation.
- According to one description Vina Rubican has “fresh fruit with ripe tannins made from partially pressed 100% Tempranillo grapes. Aged in American oaks for 3 months, the result is an easy drinking, well-rounded wine with a complex nose, and a soft mouthfeel.” It also has a “cherry, spice” taste and is “medium-bodied” with an alcohol content of 14.2”

# Borsao Tres Picos -- 2019

- The winery is situated in Borja in the Moncayo region in northwest of Zaragoza and the wine is the “origin” of the Campo de Borja DO.
- Bodegas Borsao originated in 1958 when the Borja cooperative was founded with the mission of establishing the benchmark for premium Garnacha wines. It consists of some 350 growers stretching over some 2,260 ha with altitudes ranging from 350-800 meters. Harvest is manual. Wine aged for 5-6 months in French oak.
- Tres Picos is the “flagship” of the winery and was the first 100% Garnacha produced in Spain starting in 2000 with 150,000 bottles produced annually.
- According to one description, it is a “rich, flavorful Grenache that won’t break the Bank” having “flavors of raspberry with complex herbal spice blend punctuating the finish.” It is also described as “medium-bodied” but of “intense” style with alcohol content of 15%.

# Uro Toro -- 2016

- Tinto de Toro is a strand of Tempranillo that dates back to Roman times around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. This strong, dark-skinned grape grown in compact bunches of medium-sized berries. The vines grow low to the ground and the fruit is “full of flavor and character.”
- The Uro grapes come from the pre-phylloxera Finca La Coscojosa vineyard which is more than 90 years old with the vines planted in bush growing 100% Tinto de Toro grapes. The wine is made in the traditional way and aged for 12 to 20 months in French oak.
- Rated 94 points by James Suckling – there is also a less expensive 92-point version aged for 18 rather than 20 months.
- The wine is described as “full-bodied, mildly acidic, and has an intense ruby color.” Its aroma consists of berries and the taste resembles dark fruit, black cherry, cassis, smoke and black pepper. Its “powerful tannic flavor” comes from the dark skin of the grapes. Also described as a “serious, powerful and full-bodied red wine with lots of fruit and a juicy palate that nicely balances the abundant, fine-grained, chalky tannins, it ends very tasty, with a supple, almost salty note.” Its alcohol content is 14.5%