

ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST WINES

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Spain's most famous red has reaped repeated success over the centuries. The Rioja success story is based on a great varietal, Tempranillo; but it also owes much to tradition, history and adaptability – and do not let us forget the resourceful marketing which helped Rioja thrive in export. Architecture and strategic planning of the region have already opened a window to the future.

*René Gabriel:
„I would always drink
Rioja again“*

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As the first appellation in Spain the Denominación de Origen Rioja was honoured in 1991 with the supplementary title of Calificada. This made it at last official: what was long regarded as Spain's most prestigious wine region now stood perched at the top of the ladder in the wine sector's quality league. From then on, no Rioja wine could be bottled outside the designated region and quality controls reached a new peak.

The Rioja success story is based on a great varietal, Tempranillo; but it also owes much to tradition, history and adaptability - and do not let us forget the resourceful marketing which helped Rioja thrive in export, particularly in the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States. Spain's most famous red has reaped repeated success over the centuries. Since this local wine from the Ebro Valley was first mentioned more than 1,000 years ago in one of the early documents from Castile it has adorned the finest tables of this world. World fame came early in the Middle Ages as the Christian pilgrimage route to St. James of Compostella took travellers right through the vineyards, a countryside rich not only in Rioja but also in Roman and Gothic architecture as well as picturesque medieval villages.

With the blossoming of the Spanish global empire wine from the Upper Ebro gradually found its way overseas. A couple of centuries later it experienced an unexpected boon when French wine production was hit by phylloxera and the fruits from the Ebro were brought in to

THE HISTORY OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS' SUCCESS



fill the void. A further boost came when those same buyers, consultants and winemakers from neighbouring Bordeaux initiated a general overhaul of the antiquated wine making techniques in the region and in doing so laid the foundations for a spectacular rebirth: the victory march of barrel-aged Rioja came to



the stage at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1928 the first comprehensive regulations for wine production on both sides of the Ebro were adopted, but it was another 40 years before the three famous quality rungs for barrel-aged wine were finally defined: Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva. Today Rioja

is the most successful Denominación on the domestic market. Despite several international wine crises, the region regularly turns out production and sales figures which leave other famous international appellations lost in dreams. There were, for instance, 273 million litres harvested as certified Rioja in 2005; sales for that year reached 250 million litres.

Behind the high standard of the wine grown in this charming countryside is a geographically unique region. There are 60,000 hectares of Rioja vineyards, making it about half the size of its 300 kilometre distant cousin in Bordeaux. The Rioja vineyards stretch to the south and west of two mountain ranges that at times top 2,000 metres. The grapes grown here are predominantly red. The river Ebro, the artery of life for the region, flows eastwards through an expansive valley towards the Mediterranean. In the shadow of these mighty ranges, well-sheltered from the raw winds of the southern central Spanish plateau and the storms brewing off of the Bay of Biscay, thrives one of the finest red wine

grapes in the world, the Tempranillo. The vines flourish on softly undulating hills and picturesque hillside slopes.

Unique quality control system

Contrary to the often publicised opinion that Spanish reds are heavy, with high alcohol content, these finest tintos from the Rioja region captivate the wine lover's palate with refinement, elegance and a dazzling fruit presence. In the traditional wines, Tempranillo, so named (in Spanish temprano means early) because it ripens very early, is supplemented by other native red varieties including the autochthonous Graciano which provides acidity and fruit, the red Garnacha offering richness and the Mazuelo, internationally known as Carignan, adding tannin and extract to the blend; but many of the finest modern Rioja crushed today are made only from Tempranillo, the queen of the Spanish red wine varieties.

Although a substantial amount of young, fruity red wine is produced, the speciality of Rioja is the tinto that is traditionally matured in small oak barrels. The unique quality control system of the

*above: Ysios imitates
Sierra Cantabria's
silhouette
middle: looking out
from Baigorri*

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region guides the aging process in wood and bottle through four levels: young wine, Crianza, Reserva and the king's class, Gran Reserva. To qualify for the latter title, for instance, the red wine must mature for 24 months in the barrel followed by 36 in the bottle before release. This means that it can only be marketed in its sixth year, at which is just approaching the beginning of its drinkability.

However, a new quality standard has arisen beside Gran Reserva at the tip of the pyramid, the single vineyard vino de pago. Although it will be some time before this emerging quality standard is properly defined by and integrated into the regulations, it has already enjoyed enormous success on the market.

Beside fruit-driven Rosados the region also produces white wines. Although some traditional brands demonstrate astonishing ageing capacity, most are produced for immediate consumption or, less often, to create robust, longer lived qualities through barrel fermentation.

Rioja grows in three sub-regions, with the largest and probably most well-known being the Rioja Alta, which lies on the Ebro's southern bank. This is where most of the large producers and nearly all of the well-established bodegas with their famous old cellars are situated. Soils here are a mix of chalk and clay.

Outstanding conditions for Tempranillo

However, in the west the valley narrows with steeper slopes and poorer soils. On the opposite side of the river lies the fine Rioja Alavesa, the smallest sub-region. Vineyards here are smaller with only a few well-known family businesses producing excellent qualities. On the north bank of the river only a small enclave around the community of San Vicente de la Sonsierra is considered part of the Rioja Alta.

South facing, with chalky soil interspersed with gravel from the Sierra Cantabria and cool winds blowing through the vineyards, this region offers outstanding conditions for Tempranillo, which accounts for 95% of all the vines planted. In fact, the high-

her vineyards actually climb steeply into the range's foothills. Only where the valley widens south of Logoño, with deeper soils and substantially higher average temperatures, do we move into Rioja Baja. Once, this area tended to produce grapes with higher alcohols that were primarily used to blend with the lighter wines from the west. Just a few years ago this area had few important growers other than the local cooperatives. Times have changed, though. Today a number of top producers have moved into the region, finding excellent conditions on the stony, gravel rich soils – and it is in this sub-region that are found the greatest concentrations of Garnacha plantings, producing rich, aromatic young wines in the warm, flat vineyards.





A great wine region is not the least characterised by the variety of styles to which it gives birth. 150 years ago the modern era began for Rioja. It was then that destalking of harvested grapes, fermentation in large oak vats and maturation in small oak barrels - the French way - became firmly established. This first generation of modern winemakers began to fine-tune a style which was to make their wines, and especially the reds, world famous.

Traditional Rioja: elegance, harmony and longevity

Northern Spain along with the Basque region is traditionally one of the most important wine consuming markets on the Iberian Peninsula. Not surprisingly, this thirst is paired with culinary expertise. It is thus understandable that wines are preferred which pamper the gourmet with their elegance. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the classic Riojas, which are still produced in a not to be underestimated number of traditional bodegas, captivate the

THE MANY DIFFERENT FACES OF RIOJA

palates of their admirers through their delicate fruit, elegant body and lively, but still detectable acidity.

The ascendancy of barrel maturation highlighted another trump for the region as Rioja's estates discovered the ageing potential of their wine. The most experienced vintners insist that the legendary longevity of classic Rioja depends on the blending of three or four grape varieties, pairing acidity, fruit and tannin; but this construct rests firmly on the pedestal of the main variety, Tempranillo, and its beneficial trait of oxidising very slowly. Traditional red Riojas are finely woven wines of a not too deep ruby red colour, moderate alcohol content and subtle vanilla notes with a sweet fruit presence highlighted by red currant. They can have a svelte, but still concentrated character.

Modern Rioja: fruit, ripeness and body

Many producers reoriented their wine making philosophies under the influence of the nouvelle vogue from Bordeaux



*above left: Vina Real, CVNE's new winery
above right: 75,000 barriques at Alcorta
below: Gehry's design for Riscal's „Ciudad del vino“*

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- a style marked by highly concentrated, fruit-driven wines - as well as similarly conceived wines from the New World. The reds became more concentrated, their colour darker. Although the maturation period in barrel was reduced, the use of new wood was increased - and a higher proportion of French rather than traditional American oak became the standard. The great winner in this development was the sweet fruit and velvety softness of Tempranillo. Those characteristics were accentuated, giving more concentration and glamour to the young wines than ever before. Selections from vineyards with old vines and lower yields brought Reservas of a previously unknown density and structure. Sorting belts became part of the standard equipment, cold maceration was introduced and extraction time lengthened. The resultant so called Super Reservas or Vinos de alta expresión characterised the 1990s, once again establishing the world class status of the wines from Rioja!

The influence of terroir

Famous classic labels such as Viña Tondonia, Viña Albina or Viña Real hint that many Riojas once came from a particular vineyard site or lie of land. Later,

the large producers moved onwards to blend grapes or wines from other plots, even sub-regions and used the original names as brands. The latest development could be described as the "Renaissance des Terroirs". An ever increasing number of trendsetting winemakers now create their finest quality wines in a way which reflects the characteristics of the land and soil which nurtured the vines. The interplay of microclimate and soil brought a new expression of excellent Rioja wine types. Over the past few years a small group of estates have specialised in the maturation of something akin to first growths from particular single vineyard sites where concentration and ripeness play an important role. With these wines, a more elegant and finer type of Rioja is now emerging from the symbiosis of minerals, structure and individual character.

Never before were the top Rioja wines so elegant, clear and intellectual, reflecting the strengths of their respective vineyard sites and optimising the influence of fruit, freshness, elegance, finesse, structure and longevity. Soon, vintners will be able to use the term vino de pago to market the wine thus classified.

Even though its picturesque countryside, unique ancient villages and old wineries create some of the most beautiful wine landscapes in the world, there's no doubt that Rioja has been, rather unfairly, long overlooked as a tourist destination. The region is no longer being ignored, however, and within just a few years has become a Mecca for lovers of modern architecture. With this development Rioja has shown not only that good taste and high culture are at home here, but also that wine has a lot to do with both. Together, they encourage wine lovers to tour the region and take advantage of the greatly improved tourist opportunities.

Tradition meets the modern world

With the winery Ysios near Laguardia Domecq Bodegas, once part of the Allied Domecq Group, set new standards. Santiago Calatrava, the world-renowned engineer and architect, gave the elongated building a wavy facade imitating the Sierra Cantabria's stunning silhouette so that wine production and landscape melt into an architectural unity. With that, though, the Group was not satisfied. Near Logroño a plateau was excavated and the largest barrel cellar in Spain built. Bodegas Juan Alcorta was designed by Ignacio Quemada, a student of the star architect Rafael Moneo, who also worked on the details of this titanic project. Pharaonic wooden doors link gigantic subterranean halls. When one enters the cellar in darkness a gigantic panorama window is opened at the touch of a button. Treading a catwalk, 75,000 barrels are revealed below. Juan Alcorta placed great importance on the perfect integration into the surrounding countryside. Only the upper storey rises out of the mountain embedded in a manicured vineyard.





BEAUTIFUL ARCHI- TECTURE BOOSTS OENO- TOURISM

Even gravity seems to have been designed into the new Bodega Baigorri. An almost empty, completely glazed hall is enthroned upon a concrete cube which descends to the south in a line of halls forming twelve steps. The Basque architect Iñaki Aspiazu kept the cellar technology in the foreground and thus created a futuristic jewel of modern architecture.

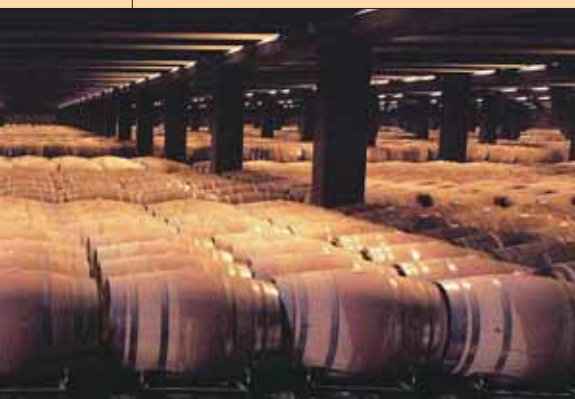
Another gigantic monument was created by CVNE in their new Bodega Viña Real. Situated between Laguardia and Logroño it features a structure modelled as a gigantic oak fermentation vat enthroned at natural elevation. Two colossal, 120 metre long tunnels pierce the base below the building and form the cellar. With this work the architect Philippe Mazieres ennobled the ageing of wine in wood as symbol of the whole region.

Alongside the spectacular new buildings other projects are emerging that, without compromise, merge tradition and modernity. There's hardly a bodega that can better claim to protect the ultra-traditional Rioja style than that of López

de Heredia. Here, the contrast between the producer's magnificent art nouveau tower and the new extension by Iraqi star architect Zaha Hadid is all the more captivating. The airy, light steel and glass structure appears as a futuristic showcase.

Even more adventurous is the project of the Marqués de Riscal's heirs. On the lands of Ciudad del Vino, as this spectacular development is called, past and present entwine. The ensemble centre was designed by Frank O. Gehry who, in modified Guggenheim style, merges a futuristic hotel with his trademark of corrugated titanium plate. A wine spa and gourmet restaurant managed by the only chef in Rioja with a Michelin star, Francis Paniego, complete the complex.

There's no doubt that Rioja will in many areas continue to extend its leading position among the world's finest wine production regions. Even now, precise plans on how this development should proceed through to 2020 are already on the table.



*above left: Alcorta,
designed by Ignacio
Quemada
Aging cellars at Viña
Real (above right) and
Alcorta (below)*

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Experts from all over the world describe their relationship to Rioja Experts from all over the world describe their relationship to Rioja Experts from all over the world describe their relationship to Rioja Experts from all over the world describe their relationship to Rioja

“I WOULD ALWAYS DRINK IT AGAIN!”



Carlos Delgado is one of the most well-known Spanish wine critics and, among other things, publisher of Vinum in Spain as well as Mi vino

This is an ode to Rioja, the greatest of traditional growths. A wine that survives unimpressed by fashions and a drink that established the fame of wine in Spain. There was a threat that it might be cast aside by modern blends, the dark muscular show-offs that earn the highest marks at tastings. Did we, the critics and spit masters, perhaps lose sight of the ingenious consumer – those who only want to enjoy their wines – only because we wanted to encourage them to drink more, to drink better? I am sure that the time has

now come to reintroduce this hedonistic value, the essence of every great wine, time to search for wines that one wants to drink to the very last drop.

This story has a happy ending. I take a red Rioja with an extremely classical composition, but crushed with sufficient craftsmanship to avoid revealing the fault of a misunderstood typicity. It is a 1996 Viña Pomal, a demonstration of finesse enveloping its solid structure, a perfect example of harmony in aromatic composition, velvety on the palate, with an agreeable length that only appears to be superficial, but in reality leaves behind a lingering taste of tender fruit. Pure pleasure! In Haro, in the barrio de la estación, a few wineries of the highest quality and prestige have grouped together, firms which have made history for and added splendour to Rioja: CVNE, Bodegas Bilbaínas, López de Heredia-Viña Tondonia, Rioja Alta, Muga. The wines they've made for more than 100 years have become the examples that all of Spain tries to copy. In the cellars of these bodegas lie Riojas that enjoy the privilege of immortality, wines such as

the Imperial Gran Reserva from 1958 which still shows a surprising liveliness, an unbelievably mellowness on the palate and a concerto of noble woods and spices. Just as indescribable is the Prado Enea 1969: I am fascinated by the tenderness of its touch, moved by the absolute depth of balance of this wine that still whispers the magic tale its long maturation.

What has made Rioja so famous and also so enjoyable to drink is the finesse, the elegance, the subtlety, the nerve, the lightness: all these are attributes that I should never want to miss. However, the passage of time has also brought a more natural taste, a sensuous presence of fruit, a discreet wooden tone, wine with “well-turned ankles”. This is the keyboard on which one has to play to make our classics modern – as currently found in the railway station quarter of Haro and other locations. The weariness with which ever more wine friends regard overly concentrated drinks; the wines that impress, but do not wholly convince, much less please; they are so similar because they try too hard to be different. It is a golden opportunity that classic Rioja must not miss.

Nothing special, I thought, when I tasted the Centenario in Spain. Carlos Martinez-Bujanda proudly handed it to me at a tasting, as a bonus, so to speak. No chance against his younger vintages, I thought, and certainly not against his best wine so far, the already almost legendary 1985 Martinez-Bujanda of which I still have two magnums lying at home. It is Rioja 1968 Reserva that he had held back to create, in minutely pre-determined strategy, a jubilee wine called Centenario for the bodega's 100th anniversary. Arriving back home, I laid it in the miscellaneous section of my cellar where lie forlorn those single bottles not entered in my inventory. They lie there trembling, realising that most of them land in the cooking pot. Only a third are given a tiny reprieve when I open the bottle and sniff. Seldom do I go on to taste, much less take a second sip.

As my winter flu was on the wane I decided to try something from the odd bin's heap as a substitute for tea, so to speak, or as oenological medicine towards a good night's sleep. I won't describe the 1968 Rioja Gran Reserva Centenario from Conde de Valdemar. I was not up to par at the time; but it did put me in the mood to rattle out this story on the keyboard. It reminded me of when I started to enjoy wine, when more than half of my cellar was full of Rioja, wines that were already softly oxidized when they came onto the market.

When I take a week's holiday I prefer the Canary Isles. There we rent a bungalow, with siesta being our main pastime. In every restaurant there's a respectable and always inexpensively priced Spanish wine to drink, all simultaneously fiery and yet mature. When we simply take such a wine with lunch at work then our choice often falls on Rioja. A lot of wine

for little money would be a fair assertion.

Don Sebastian is the best-selling wine from Mövenpick. Behind this label, though, lies a reliable and enjoyable Rioja, one of the best value-for-money deals in the world! For the 1989 Don Sebastian Reserva - tasted together with Enrique Forner in his bodega in Spain - I went weak in the knees. This wine, nurtured for more than six years at the bodega, only to hit the market for the same price as miserable Bordeaux. One opens the bottle, waits a little, takes a first enjoyable sip and completes the experience a few hours later. Don't ask about ruby or garnet, about tile-red shimmer or even ripening brown tones. Just breathe in the bouquet - not crouched over like a nervous starter for the 100 metres, but relaxed, revelling in the sweetness and soft, velvety, tannin. So good is a fine bottle of Rioja!

Rioja? I would always drink it again! At home, in Spain, at noon, in the evening, or just simply with the sort of wine friends who, for little money, want to experience unadulterated oenological relaxation and are still in a position to do so! One thing I know already, I will continue to buy a few cases of Reserva and Gran Reserva for my private cellar each year and lay them down. Then, when pensioned, I shall tell my guests that there was a vintage of the century in Spain, too, and that such a wine, even though less deeply coloured and not so laced in tannin in its youth, ages just as well and spreads as much pleasure as much more expensive Bordeaux!

P.S. The above story also applies also to many other Riojas that have given me much joy including, not in any particular order, 1990 Faustino V., 1986 Campo Viejo, 1970 Tondonia, 1970 Faustino I., 1968 La Rioja Alta and so on.



Knut-Espen Misje is the owner of Terroir Wines in Stavanger, a leading importer of spanish wines in Norway

I like Rioja because of the diversity of wine styles it has to offer. I love the traditional, elegant and complex wines of Lopez de Heredia. They prove that heavy extraction and new oak is not the only way to go. At the same time modern wineries such as Artadi demonstrate that state of the art techniques can, if the fruit is of sufficient quality, also emphasise the unique terroir of Rioja. For me, the strengths of Rioja are the selection of great grape varieties from which it is blended and its naturally low yields which provide depth and character. However, large quantities of sub-standard wine bottled under the appellation could undermine the long term reputation of Rioja. Opportunities for the regions include continued focus on their individual single vineyards combined with marketing the wines through the well-established styles of the appellation. The greatest threat to the Riojas is global warming, that over time could change the unique character of the wines.



René Gabriel is the most well-known Swiss wine journalist and the publisher of "Weinwisser"

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Steve Tanzer
is publisher of "International Wine Seller", one of the most widely acclaimed newsletters in the United States.



Charles Metcalfe,
England
is one of the most well-known, spontaneous and amusing wine critics in Britain.



Valentim Duarte, Moreno,
Germany
Moreno in Cologne is one of the largest German importers of Spanish wine and food.

The red wines of Rioja are a perfect choice for wine-loving carnivores in an age of instant gratification. The best classic Riojas are fragrant, mellow wines that are easier on the head and stomach than most of the world's other serious reds, with more flavor and complexity than would seem possible from wines carrying a moderate 12 to 12.5 percent of alcohol. Of course, today's new wave Riojas, deeper in colour, riper, higher in alcohol, generally cleaner, and more likely to be made in new French barriques than old American casks, are another story entirely. They can compete with large-scaled reds from elsewhere; but can they match the traditional Rioja style for elegance and sheer food-friendliness?

Rioja combines several factors that can make its wines unique: a mild climate, capable of ripening the major grapes grown there appropriately in most years; enough rain, but not too much; a healthy interplay between traditional and modern attitudes to winemaking; and a pride in being one of the Spanish regions that has had a reputation for good wine for centuries. Its strength certainly lies in barrel-aged red wines rather than whites - and it is one of the two regions where the Tempranillo grape really plays above its normal game.

The uniqueness of Rioja begins with the fact that it can always be identified in a wine tasting. Rioja brings to fruition the Tempranillo grape's potential. Even today, history and tradition are not neglected. It was Spain's first D.O.Ca. The control of this wine guarantees quality and genuineness from the first bottle to the last. Rioja is one of the world's great regions because we are in the presence of a wine with the potential for ageing. For me that is the sign of quality and pedigree. A Rioja with 20 years of age can be a great pleasure, such as the Conde de los Andes 1982 that we import. The future of Rioja lies in the continuity between past and future. Rioja must - and will - remain unique, even though there are modern Riojas that open new frontiers for the region: unusual fruit accents, colour and body - perhaps atypical, but still interesting wines.

Rioja for me is special because the best producers these days are able to blend the region's magnificent past with the best of modern-day winemaking, developing techniques to create a unique taste that is both full-bodied and well-balanced.



Don St. Pierre JR,
China
is the president of ASC, one of the leading importers in China.

The Rioja Wine Interprofessional Organization, assisted by Bearing Piont Consulting and Fernando Gómez-Bezares from Deusto University, drafted the "Strategic Plan 2005-2020" for the Denominación de Origin Calificada Rioja. Its purpose is to foster the development of the local wine sector over the next 15 years. To this end it has established a strategic vision for the region: "to consolidate its leadership on the Spanish market and to become a reference point for quality wine markets worldwide".

The president of the organization, Víctor Pascual Artacho, is convinced that „this ambitious project for the future of our wines will allow us to coordinate the efforts of all members of the organization as they embark upon a process of innovation.“ The board of directors of the organization has approved the essential lines of the plan, which will provide a framework for action and an orientation for the future of the region over the coming years.

The plan's mission is to define a philosophy that will guide present and future actions in Rioja, worded as follows: „to make and sell quality, consumer focused wines, continuously adapting to markets and creating a joint brand with its own identity that will generate value and profits and contribute to the development of the region based on the collaboration and cooperation between the players interacting in the industry.“

Based on a survey of market requirements and the current situation in the region the plan proposes actions to obtain a better position for the wines of Rioja, particularly on international markets. Drafted at a time when things are going well, the plan focuses its goals on improving the status quo. This is quite different from plans conceived in a time of crisis. One of the conclusions of the survey on

THE STRATEGIC PLAN TO STABILIZE LEADERSHIP

the competitive position of different segments in the domestic market is that sales of Rioja have grown over the past few years proportionally to the increase in sales of wines from other Denominacións. Rioja's market share has remained the same, giving this wine region a dominant position in practically all market segments, both in terms of price and of quality.

The survey confirms that aged red wines have been the main driver of the region's growth. The considerable investments made in renovating both bodegas and vineyards by incorporating the latest technologies have allowed Rioja to build a strong position, both in terms of the quantity and the quality of its assets.

There is no doubt that Rioja's current challenge is to improve its position within a very competitive market. During the last decade, production and sales have doubled, while the number of bodegas has trebled. Major investments have been made and the sales of wines with greater added value have risen significantly. In view of a general market trend toward greater consumption of quality wines, one of the pil-

lars of the plan focuses on continuous quality improvement. Rioja must continue to offer products adapted to the tastes and demands of consumers and ensure that these products become a reference in the quality wine segment worldwide.

With respect to sales, and in view of market forecasts by the analysts, the plan sets a production objective of 290 million litres a year by 2009. This requires a consolidation of the region's leadership in the domestic market and serious marketing and promotional efforts on foreign markets with the highest potential for growth.

To achieve this, the Plan includes seven strategic goals.

1. A precondition is that Rioja wines be oriented to consumer taste and demand.
2. Balanced production guarantees quality and market conformity. This includes yield control and quality mechanisms.
3. It is important that priorities be set according to the innate potential of the different markets.
4. The plan formulates the need to increase resources for marketing and communication.
5. Among the key proposals of the plan is the need to foster and improve cooperation between public players - the regional and national public administrations- and the private sector.
6. Rioja, as the leading region in the Spanish wine sector, has to become a national and international reference in viticulture and oenology.
7. In addition, the plan underscores the importance of wine tourism as a tool for communication.

The strategic challenges arising from an analysis of the current situation of the wine market have been covered by the Rioja Wine Strategic Plan, which provides outlines and a tactical course of action to guide the future of the D.O.Ca. Rioja until 2020.

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TWIN-TRACK MANAGEMENT

With the founding of the Organización Interprofesional del Vino de Rioja in 2003 the wine growing region on the Upper Ebro became the first appellation in Spain to be managed by a twin track executive. Until then all decisions were made exclusively by the Consejo Regulador. The new organisation has 32 representatives from the six most important producer consortiums, from nine wine grower's associations and the three regional bodies. Seat distribution is based on the volume of wine marketed by the respective organisations and the number of hectares each association cultivates. The two organisations function in parallel and allow for a clear division of tasks with a control council involved in the practical implementation of interprofessional regulations. Concentrating on day-to-day business allows more independence, objectivity and quality control.

The Organización Interprofesional oversees Rioja's strategy, promotion and marketing and is a decision-making and negotiating council in one, using a consensus between marketing and production. Where a 50% agreement must be achieved within the marketing or wine producers' groups, a majority of 75% is required for council decisions.

The representatives of the interprofession are directly elected by the 15 respective associations. Following the last control council's legislative period, the new Consejo Regulador will be replaced by the 32 Organización Interprofesional del Vino de Rioja representatives so that the boards of directors of both organs are identical. President of both councils is Don Victor Pascual Artacho, managing director of the winery group Domecq Bodegas.



*Victor Pascual
Artacho,
Managing Director
of Bodegas Domecq*

INTERVIEW: DON VICTOR PASCUAL ARTACHO

—*Wine Business*: Are there an existing model for the Interprofessional Organisation?

—*Artacho*: Such bodies in Spain are subject to a legal regime which also satisfies the needs of the interprofessional organisation in Rioja to fulfil its obligations. Possibly on this point the similarities with any other organisation of this type end. Our model creates a range of objectives which over the years have become specific to the sector. One would have to conclude that our body forms an individual and exclusive model which, nonetheless, does not entail a break from the past, but rather the arrival in a direction in which it has gradually been progressing over the years.

—*Wine Business*: What are the reasons for establishing two entities - advisory and interprofessional - with the same members?

—*Artacho*: The interprofessional organisation is a private association. Its members come from the fifteen groups with interests in the sector and they together adopt decisions which appertain to the future of the Rioja denomination, its strategy both medium and long term. Their vision - with additional components as guarantor of the denomination carried out by the regulatory council and short term work involved in the annual execution of measures which are necessary to attain the set objectives - allow a much greater review of certain aspects of our business. These include some outside the sphere of a public body such as those of the regulatory council whose dictates are directed towards all those interested in the use of the denomination, both growers and wineries, so that they voluntarily assume and satisfactorily adhere to the necessary obligations - and make them worthy of it.

—*Wine Business*: Which are the four public administrations that have authority over Rioja? Do they exercise any control over the interprofessional?

—*Artacho*: The zone of production for the denomination of Rioja is demarcated by nature and extends into parts of 3 autonomous communities: La Rioja, País Vasco, in this case into part of the Álava territory, and Navarra, to a lesser extent due to the inclusion of 8 of its municipal within our boundaries. The public nature of some functions carried out by the regulatory council and its autonomous character imply that the authority over it, especially over certain actions, is exercised by the central administration, which is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.



WINE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL DOSSIER
WITH THE HELP OF THE CONSEJO REGULADOR OF THE D.O.C.A. RIOJA
TEXT: JÜRGEN MATHÄSS, DAVID SCHWARZWÄLDER
LAYOUT: MARKO RÖTHLINGSHÖFER, DIRECT_WERBUNG