

WSPANISH REGIONAL WINE LUNCHEON

**to be held on
Wednesday 25th June 2025
at 12:30pm**

The wines and cuisine of Northern Spain

Presenters: Dr Jonathan Punt - Professor Charles Watkins.

Chaired by: Professor Frank Larkin.



La Ruta del Vino de Valdeorras.

MENU & WINES

Aperitif

Zárate, “*Tras da Viña*”, Rías Baixas, 2021, ABV 12.5%

First Course

Salad of Jamón Serrano and soft ewe’s milk cheese

[Dry-cured ham, green leaves, cherry tomatoes, sun-dried tomatoes, hazelnut and honey dressing]

Bodegas Rafael Palacios, “*Louro Do Bolo*”, 2023,
Valdeorras, ABV 14%

Bodegas Itsasmendi “*Leioa Paradisuak*”, Txakol de Bizkaia,
DO Jatorri-Izena, 2020, ABV 13.5%

Second Course

Cordero al Chilindrón

[Lamb and bell pepper white wine stew, with sweet paprika]

Descendientes de J. Palacios, “*Pétalos*”, Viñas Viejas,
DO Bierzo, 2022, ABV 13.5%

Adega Ponte da Boga, “*Capricho de Merenzao*”,
DO Ribeira Sacra, 2018, ABV 14.5%

Dessert

Tarta de Santiago

[Almond tart with sultanas macerated in sherry]

MdO “*Moscato de Ochoa*”, 2022,
DO Navarra, ABV 5.5%

Coffee, Tea, Chocolates

SPANISH WINE REGIONS

Major Wine Regions of Spain



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<u>Included in Luncheon</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Grape</u>
White wines	DO Rías Baixas	Albariño
	DO Valdeorras	Godello
	Bizkaia, DO Jatorri-Izena	Hondarrabi Zuri
Red wines	DO Bierzo	Mencía
	DO Ribeira Sacra	Merenzao
Sparkling wine	DO Navarra	Muscat

WINE FACTS

Spain's wine classification system.

Denominación de Origen (DO): guarantees a wine's origin and its production standards.

Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa): is a higher class that is reserved for specific regions, such as Rioja and Priorat, and requires stricter criteria.

Vino de Pago: recognises single-estate wines of exceptional quality.

Indicaciones Geográficas Protegidas (IGP): refers to wines that reflect specific regional characteristics.

A turbulent history.



Phoenician amphorae

Sant Jaume, Catalunya, 700 - 600BCE.

The last 3,000 years have been ones of distinctly and frequently violent fluctuations in fortune for the population of Iberia that have inevitably had effects on the viticulture and the

viniculture. Phoenicians trading around the Mediterranean probably entered Spain around 800BCE and introduced both wine in amphorae and local winemaking in the regions around Jerez, Cadiz, and Málaga. These early processes were probably improved by the Carthaginians. Subsequently, more progress was made when the Carthaginians were supplanted by the Romans who spread more widely across the peninsula, taking viticulture and viniculture further North to Tarragona, Navarra, Ribera del Duero, and Galicia. Iberia did not avoid invasion by Northern invaders such as Vandals and Visigoths. From the 8th Century CE there was occupation by the Moors who did not prohibit absolutely some winemaking. The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragón and Isabella of Castile in 1469 led to a single Kingdom of Aragón, Castile, and Catalunya and to the final ousting of the Moors from Iberia in 1492. Winemaking flourished and new methodology was introduced in the form of wood casks that replaced amphorae. Religious orders, such as Cistercians and Cluniac monks, introduced new grape varieties and also new technology, such as cellarage and organised propagation of vineyards, with the effect that wine production thrived.

The late 18th Century saw the creation of *La Real Sociedad Económica de Cosecheros de Rioja* [the Royal Economic Society of Harvesters of Rioja], which aligned winemaking activity within the region.



***La Real Sociedad Económica de Cosecheros de Rioja,
1790.***

Motto: "You will prosper extracting".

Connections between winemakers in Rioja and Bordeaux were established notably by Manuel Quintana y Quintana, who observed Bordelais wine and its association with French cooperage. Despite demonstrating that wine shipped to Cuba in oak barrels was better conditioned, Quintana y Quintana failed to persuade the *Real Sociedad* that his higher prices were justified. The Carlist Wars (1833 to 1876) were disruptive, but brought some benefit in that Luciano de Murrieta, later *Marqués de Murrieta*, took refuge in Bordeaux where he observed the winemaking, and, upon returning to the Rioja, he made his wine in Bordeaux oak casks. Similarly, the *Marqués de Riscal* imported Bordeaux vines and an oenology consultant. The effect was a substantial Rioja boom. Phylloxera reached the Rioja later than it had arisen in France, and although there were substantial viticultural casualties, personal hardship, and social disruption, the region was in a better position to take advantage of the discovery of the protective effect of grafting onto American stocks.

The Spanish Civil War (1936 to 1939) was highly disruptive, and in Rioja there was much slaughter, as evidenced by mass graves outside Logroño and Lardero, "*La Barranca*". The years immediately following the Civil War were not favourable to quality winemaking, and it may not be totally irrelevant that General Franco (1892 to 1975) shared a commitment to alcohol abstentionism, as well as Fascism, with Adolf Hitler. The installation of democracy following Franco's death, Spain's entry into the European Union in 1986, and thriving tourism, have been major drivers of a healthy wine industry which is creating many quality wines from diverse grape varieties and *terroirs*, and that has been taken forward by notable luminary pioneers such as Miguel A. Torres (born 1941). *La Familia Torres* has been making wine since the 16th Century and founded its winery in Vilafranca del Penedès in 1870.

The Spanish wine industry faces a number of current problematic issues. Firstly, Spain exports 57% of its wine in bulk, some of which goes to France where it is bottled and sold on at a profit to the French processor, but not to the Spanish

vigneron. A solution may lie through increasing international recognition of the quality of wines now emerging from lesser known appellations and grape varieties. The second problem is climate change in Southern Europe, where measurable adverse effects of heat and drought have included reduced production by as much as 50% in some regions since 2023. Miguel Torres has observed a 1°C rise in average temperature over 40 years in Penedès where the family has more than 1,000ha of vineyards. The measures taken by the Torres estate have included establishing vineyards in cooler and higher regions such as Tremp in the Catalan Pre-Pyrenees, (at 950m a.s.l.); proactively acquiring plots in the Aragonese Pyrenees, (at 1,100m a.s.l.); and extending its vinous activities to Chile and California. A third, more recent, threat is that of President Trump's potential import tariffs.



La Familia Torres.

FEATURED GRAPES

Albariño.



Albariño.

Arguably originating in the region of Monção in Portugal, where it is called *Alvarinho*, the *Albariño* vine flourishes in Galicia, North-West Spain, where vines aged up to 300 years may be found. The thick skins of the *Albariño* grape are resistant to infection with moulds and fungi in the particularly damp, rainy, sea-swept climate in the coastal region of Rías Baixas, where it is the dominant variety, producing one of the first Spanish wines to bear the name of its varietal grape on the label. In DO Rías Baixas wines, the grapes are most usually vinified in stainless steel, and the better examples spend substantial time on their lees, as in the **Zárata**, “**Tras da Viña**”, **Rías Baixas**, [*vide infra*]. Primary flavours include citrus elements (lemon zest, grapefruit, nectarine), floral tones (peach, honeysuckle), and bracing salinity. The best examples strike a balance between acidity, alcohol, and fruity floral flavours.

Godello.

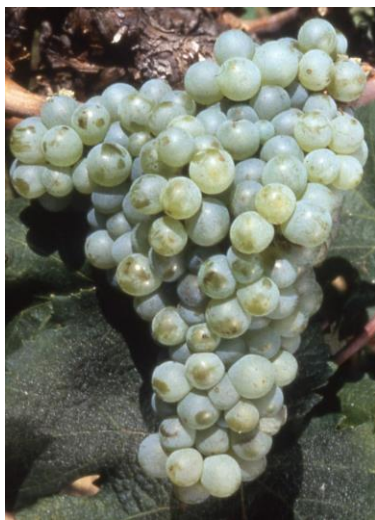


Godello.

Godello has its probable origins along the Río Sil in Galicia, although its earliest mention, in 1531, was in the Douro, where it is called *Gouveio*. The varietal was saved from near extinction in the 1970s. Whereas some is still grown in the Douro and in Dão (where it is called *Verdelho*), *Godello* now maintains its homeland in Galicia, notably in DO Valdeorras,

where its recovery proceeds afoot, encouraged by the appearance of the first monovarietal *Godello* wine in the 1980s. The small, compact berries ripen early, have succulent flesh and high sugar levels, balanced by moderate to high acidity. It can benefit from time on its lees and some contact with oak, as in the **Bodegas Rafael Palacios, “Louro Do Bolo”, Valdeorras**, [*vide infra*].

Hondarrabi Zuri.



Crouchen.



Courbu Blanc.



Noah.

Hondarrabi Zuri, [aka *Hondarribi Zuri* aka *Ondaria Zuria*], is a synonym for any of three grape varieties of *Vitis vinifera* found in the sub-region of the autonomous Basque region of Spain called Txakoli. The varieties include *Crouchen*, *Courbu Blanc*, and the American hybrid, *Noah*. The resulting nomenclature is confusing: “*Hondarribia*” being the word that indicates the Spanish area from which emanate the white grape varieties that comprise the Txakoli DOs: “*Zuri*” being the Basque word for “*white*”. The characteristics of the wines produced speak for themselves, as in the **Bodegas Itsasmendi “Leioa Paradisuak”, Txakol de Bizkaia, DO Jatorri-Izena**, [*vide infra*].

Mencía



Mencía on the vine in Bierzo.

Most probably originating from Salamanca in the autonomous community of Castile and León, *Mencía* is thought to be a natural cross between *Alfrocheiro*, a vine from North-Eastern Iberia, and the obscure Portuguese varietal, *Patorra*. In the Middle Ages, Cistercian Monks arriving from France had identified Bierzo, right in the heart of the *Camino de Santiago*, as a special place for wine, and had identified *Mencía* as the variety best suited to its slate/schist soils. More recently, *Mencía* has come to prominence as the star grape of the Bierzo region, covering nearly two-thirds of the local vineyards. Budding early and ripening by mid-September, *Mencía* is well suited to the regional maritime climate and Autumn rains. The medium-sized berries were previously associated with aromatic fruity red and *rosé* wines. More recent revival of old low-yielding vines, on high elevation slopes of deep, mineral-rich schist, has led to production of concentrated, powerful styles with an exotic earthiness and smooth tannins that truly reflect the Bierzo *terroir*. *Mencía* is capable of making excellent wine on its own, but interesting and successful blending with small percentages of local red and white grapes

can be achieved. *Mencía* is not treated kindly by toasty oak, but, deployed prudently, use of some old oak can work well, as demonstrated by the “***Pétalos***”, ***Viñas Viejas***, **DO Bierzo** vinified by Ricardo Pérez at Descendientes de J. Palacios, [*vide infra*].

Merenzao.



Merenzao.

Called *Merenzao* in Bierzo and Ribera Sacra, *Maria Ordoña* in Orense, *Maturana Tinta* in La Rioja, and *Bastardo* in the Douro

and the Dão, *Merenzao* is probably more familiarly known as *Trousseau*, the name used for it in the Eastern French region of Jura, where the varietal was first mentioned in 1732, and called *Troussot*. Genetic studies indicate that *Merenzao* is a sibling to *Chenin Blanc* and to *Sauvignon Blanc* and has a parent-offspring relationship with Savagnin, making it improbable that ***Merenzao*** had its origins in Iberia, as opposed to North-East France/South-West Germany.

Merenzao requires well-exposed sites to mature fully. It is early budding and ripening, but vulnerable to botrytis bunch rot, making it difficult to grow. The berries are thick-skinned, medium-sized, forming small compact bunches, and have the potential to produce high sugar levels, and ability to age. Capable of producing fragrant wines with delicate aromas of roses, cherry and raspberry, as displayed in **Adega Ponte da Boga**, “***Capricho de Merenzao***”, **DO Ribeira Sacra**, [*vide infra*].

Moscatel de Grano Menudo.



Moscatel de Grano Menudo.

The label “*Muscat*” is the umbrella term for more than 200 distinct and often unrelated vines and their grapes. It is especially crucial to distinguish the fine *Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains* [known in Spain as *Moscatel de Grano Menudo*], from *Muscat of Alexandria* [known in Spain variously as *Moscatel de Alejandria*, *Moscatel de Grano Gardo*, *Moscatel de Chipiona*, amongst other names]. Whereas the majority share the unusual feature of a distinctive flavour of grape, wines from the *Muscat of Alexandria* grapes give a less subtle, but sweeter, flavour than the *Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains*. By further example, one might also contrast the complex concentration of spice, green fruits, and floral tones delivered by *Malvasia de Sitges* as in the Mas Vilella Blanc 2019 shown at a former Catalunya Wine Luncheon, [see Archive of Wine Event Booklets: “*Catalan Wine Luncheon*” Athenaeum Website, Members’ Area].

Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains is the oldest and the finest variety of Muscat, with mentions in Italy going back to 1304. Probably originating in Greece, brought to Italy by Greeks, and then distributed around the Mediterranean by Romans *via* Narbonne.

Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains berries are smaller than those from other Muscats. The varietal is early budding, mid ripening, and prone to infestation by a range of pests. It is less frequently grown in Spain than *Moscatel de Alejandria*, save for outcrops in Catalunya, [*vide supra*]; in Navarra, where a botrytized wine has found success; and the present unusual semi-sweet, low alcohol, sparkling wine, **MdO “*Moscato de Ochoa*”, DO Navarra**, [*vide infra*].

THE VINEYARDS AND THE WINEMAKERS

Zárate.



Zárate - old Albariño vines trained on emparrados.

The Zárate tradition began in 1707 with Diego Zárate y Murga, First Marquis of Montesacro by decree of Philip V.

The estate is a family property located in Meaño, in the Val do Salnés Valley, within the DO Rías Baixas.

In the 1950s, Ernesto Zárate was an early pioneer of *Albariño*. Together with Bernardino Quintanilla Álvarez, he was the founder of the *Festa do Viño Albariño*, inaugurated on 28 August 1953, coinciding with the feast of the *Virgen de la Pastora*, patron saint of Cambados.

Since 2000, the winemaker has been Euologio Pomares, who, with his wife, Rebecca Zárate, manages 11 vineyards across 10ha all at 50m a.s.l. All the vines are trellis trained on granite “*emparrados*” [Gallego meaning “*pergolas*”]. All but one vineyard have soil that is granitic with “*xabre*” [Gallego meaning “*sand*”].

The vineyards have permanent natural cover and no herbicides or chemically synthesized fertilizers are used.

Four *cuvées* are vinified from 100% *Albariño* grapes from vines ageing from 30 years, 50 years, 60 years, and 150 years respectively. The last of these, “*El Palomar*”, is derived from the oldest *Albariño* vines in Rías Baixas.

Zárate is one of only 26 bodegas in Rías Baixas working with red varieties, notwithstanding the discrepancy in yields as between *Albariño* and red varieties: 12,000kg/ha versus 4,000kg/ha. Native red varieties that had been forgotten in the Val do Salnés for more than a century have also been recovered, and monovarietal *cuvées* are vinified from *Caiño Tinto*, *Loureiro Tinto*, and *Espadeiro* grapes derived from 60 year old vines. A rosé is vinified from a blend of *Caiño Tinto*, *Espadeiro*, and *Albariño* grapes from 15 year old vines grown on soil that contains a small proportion of “*Castel*” [Gallego meaning “*red clay*”]. Zárate also produce a range of spirits distilled from *Albariño* pomace [“*orujo*”], including one with herbs and spices and another in which the pomace has been toasted.

Website: <https://www.zarate.es>

Bodegas Rafael Palacios.



Rafael (“Rafa”) Palacios.

In 2004, Rafael Palacios (*“Rafa”*), the youngest son of José Palacios Remondo [*vide infra*], moved from the family business in Rioja to Valdeorras, where he gradually acquired small *sortes* [Gallego meaning *“plots”*, traditionally inherited by lottery] of neglected vineyards planted to native *Godello* vines by older winegrowers. His current holding amounts to 32 parcels spread over 24.5ha on the right bank of the Rio Bibei in the West of the Valdeorras DO.

The vines are planted on steep hills at 620m to 740 m a.s.l. turned into terraces buttressed by stones: magnificent ancient structures whose fragility Rafa has preserved by deployment of light tilling machinery and even traditional tillage with animal traction. The soil is acidic and sandy derived from natural degradation of granitic rock and including quartz schists.

Rafa personally controls the viticulture and the viniculture, employing ecologically-based treatments with biodynamic agriculture for the older *sortes*.

Five different cuvées are produced from *Godello* from vines aged from 25 to 105 years, two of which are single vineyard wines. In occasional years a single vineyard Late Harvest

sweet wine is vinified. All involve contact with oak to stabilise and clarify the wines in a more natural way.

The combination of extreme orography, the low productivity of soils with poor fertility, phylloxera, and the depression of the 1920s, had led to the almost total abandonment of the older vineyards, and it is a remarkable testament to Rafa's efforts that he has not only contributed to the salvation of *Godello*, but has also proved himself to be the producer of one of Spain's finest white wines.

Website: [https:// www.rafaelpalacios.com](https://www.rafaelpalacios.com)

Bodegas Itsasmendi.



Ana Martín Onzain, oenologist.

This winery overlooking the Bay of Biscay was founded in 1994 by a collaboration of winegrowers with the intention of vinifying a Txakoli demonstrating quality and individuality. The enterprise takes its name from the Basque phrase for “*Sea and Mountain*”. Between 1995 and 1999 the founder members took the benefit of being joined by Ana Martín Onzain who acquired fame for her Txakoli.

The initial 3ha has grown to 40ha holding 18 plots displaying a range of soils and aspects. The diversity of Atlantic climate, geology, and microclimate results in at least three different weeks of grape ripening. The plots benefit from the biodiversity associated with their siting adjacent to the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve.

Nine wines are vinified. The white wine cuvées include a monovarietal Hondarrabi Zuri, “**Leioa Paradisuak**”, **Txakol de Bizkaia, DO Jatorri-Izena**, [*vide infra*], a blend of Hondarrabi Zuri with Hondarrabi Zerratie, and a blend of Hondarrabi Zuri with Hondarrabi Zuri Zerratie and some Riesling. There are also a red wine blend of Hondarrabi Beltza and Pinot Noir, a *rosé* Pinot Noir, and a sweet white wine.

This pioneering venture has received acclaim for its integration with nature, preservation of the terroir, quality winemaking, and fine white wines.

Website: [https:// bodegasitsasmendi.com](https://bodegasitsasmendi.com)

Descendientes de J. Palacios.



Winery Corullón, El Bierzo, (Architect Rafael Moneo).

The Palacios family of gifted winemakers has its origins in Northern Spain with the foundation, in 1945, of Palacios Remondo in Alfaro, Rioja, by José Palacios Remondo. The estate in Corullón was founded in 1998, as a collaboration between Álvaro Palacios, the seventh son of José Palacios Remondo, and his nephew Ricardo Pérez. In the previous decade Álvaro Palacios had played a major rôle in bringing Priorat to international attention with his *Finca Dofí* and *L'Ermita* cuvées of *Garnacha*.

Bierzo is a hilly region, and the Palacios vineyards are located on steep hillsides with old, low-yielding bush vines, mostly schist sites mixed with about 30% clay. There are also rented plots at lower elevations in and around the village of Corullón. In 2017 an impressive new winery designed by the Spanish Pritzker Prize winning architect Rafael Moneo was opened, [<https://rafaelmoneo.com/c/proyectos/seleccion/>].

Álvaro Palacios is regarded as one of Spain's leading oenologists, and Ricardo Pérez is Spain's foremost expert on

Biodynamics: together they are pre-eminent in the viticulture and vinification of *Mencía*, from which six *cuvées* are currently produced:

Pétalos del Bierzo (ca. 350,000 bottles) a field blend of 85% *Mencía*, 10% white varietals and 5% red varietals, [*vide infra*].

Corullón (ca. 30,000 bottles) from 200 plots of 89% *Mencía* and some other red varietals plus 9% white varietals.

Las Lamas (ca. 6,000 bottles) with *Mencía* from a single 1.73ha vineyard at 800m a.s.l..

Moncerbal (ca. 6,000 bottles) with *Mencía* from a single 1.51ha vineyard.

La Faraona (ca. 1,000 bottles) with *Mencía* from a single 0.55ha vineyard with volcanic soils, worked and vinified solely by Ricardo Pérez.

Al Chelo first made in 2023 with *Mencía* from a single 0.5ha vineyard (ca. 1,000 bottles).

Adega Ponte da Boga.



Riverside vineyard slope - Adega Ponte da Boga.

Founded in 1898 by the family of Pascasio Fernández, the Adega Ponte da Boga is one of the oldest wine estates in Ribeira Sacra, and remained active until the 1960s. Following a revival by local growers in 1999, the estate was purchased by Hijos de Rivera, brewers of Estrella Galicia beer, and the vineyard has been revitalised.

The estate comprises 33ha of vineyards in three sites along the rivers Miño, Sil, and Edo, each with its own distinct soils, aspects and microclimates: *Parada de Sil* (North-facing granite at 300 to 350m a.s.l.), *San Vittorio de Ribas de Miño* (West-facing black slate at 370 to 480m a.s.l.), and *Alais* (East-facing shale at 400 to 550m a.s.l.), [*vide infra*]. All are on steep slopes.

The vineyards are planted with varieties traditional to Ribeira Sacra: *Mencía*, *Merenzao*, *Sousón*, and *Brancellao* by way of red, and *Godello*, *Albariño*, *Branco Lexítimo*, *Treixadura*, *Torrontés*, and *Loureiro* by way of white. The grapes are vinified in styles to bring out the characteristics of their respective *terroirs* under the guidance of consulting winemakers and oenologists Dominique Roujou de Boubée and his wife Laura Montero.



Laura Montero.



Dominique Roujou de Boubée.

Website: <https://pontedaboga.es/en/>

Ochoa Viñedos y Bodegas.



Beatrix Ochoa (CEO) and Adriana Ochoa (Winemaker and Technical Director).

Bodegas Ochoa is a family winery founded in 1845. In modern times, winemaking was developed by Javier Ochoa, a former director of Navarra's oenology and viticultural research centre ("*EVENA*"), who took charge of the winery in 1965 following the death of his father, Adriano Ochoa. Exports were promoted and more land was acquired, notably by the 1990s.

The current 143ha of vineyards are spread across several sites, each with its own characteristics in terms of soil, exposure, landscape and, accordingly, various varietal vines including *Garnacha*, *Tempranillo*, *Viura*, *Viognier*, *Chardonnay*, *Merlot*, and, notably, *Moscatel de Grano Menudo*.

The *Moscatel de Grano Menudo* is vinified as a dry wine (“OXOA”), a Late Harvest sweet wine (Moscatel Vendimia Tardía), and most importantly as a semi-sweet, low alcohol sparkling wine, inspired by *Moscato d’Asti*, namely **MdO** “**Moscato de Ochoa**”, **DO Navarra**, [*vide infra*].

The Bodega’s success has led Ochoa to be synonymous with the wines of Navarra. 8A logo is a clever play on the number “8”, being an abbreviation of “*ocho-a2*”.

Website: <https://bodegasochoa.com>

**Zárate, “Tras da Viña”, Rías Baixas, 2021, ABV
12.5%.**



Euologio Pomares and Rebecca Zárate

- Grapes:** 100% Albariño from vines aged 60 years. replanted in 1965 by grafting buds onto existing rootstocks.
- Soil:** Granitic with “*xabre*” [Galician word meaning “*sand*”]. Deep soil rich in organic matter.
- Viticulture:** Propagation is by *sélection massale*. Pago Tras da Viña is a South-facing plot of 0.6 ha at 50m a.s.l. 1,500 vines/ha grown on trellises. It is a high-yield plot.
- Viniculture:** Manual harvest of grapes selected in the plot. Spontaneous fermentation in steel tanks.

Maturation: Following racking off its coarse lees, the wine remains on fine lees for 24 months without *batonnage* and without malolactic fermentation

Character: Granite on the nose. Complex, rich flavours derived from ageing on the fine lees. Mineral acidity.

Food pairing: Brined olives, seaweed snacks, all seafood, but especially shellfish and white fish.

Ageing potential: The graduation of malic acid allows the wine to mature in the bottle, reaching its full potential in 5 years and lasting for several years thereafter.

Website: <https://www.zarate.es>

**Bodegas Rafael Palacios, “*Louro Do Bolo*”, 2023,
DO Valdeorras, ABV 14%.**



Rafael Palacios’ terraced vineyards, Val do Bibei.

Grapes:	100% Godello from vines of average age 25 years.
Soil:	Terraced soils of sandy decomposed granite with clay deposits.
Viticulture:	Small parcels in the municipality of O Bolo above 600m a.s.l.
Viniculture:	Fermentation in 35 hl French oak foudres.
Maturation:	Aged on its lees for 4 months until bottling in May 2024. 215,000 bottles produced.
Character:	Straw coloured with green edges. Intense nose with citrus zest, ripe white peach, pear, floral notes of acacia and chamomile, flinty minerality. Elegant but powerful vibrant saline minerality. Fruit flavours of

green apple, lemon curd, with tropical hints. Long, stony, slightly smoky finish.

Food pairing: Cured meats, Manchego cheeses, grilled sea bass or octopus, mushroom risotto.

Ageing potential: Still evolving but drinking now until 2034.

Website: <https://www.rafaelpalacios.com>

Bodegas Itsasmendi “*Leioa Paradisuak*”, Txakol de Bizkaia, DO Jatorri-Izena 2020, ABV 13.5%.



“Aldapa” vineyard in Peruri area of Leioa.

- Grapes:** 100% Hondarrabi Zuri from vineyard established in 2003.
- Soil:** Sandy, clay loam on 33% slope. Deep soil of up to 1.20m to the bedrock, formed by loamy limestone, sandstone and shale. Limestone slab at a depth of 80cm.
- Viticulture:** Unique single vineyard. Around 40m a.s.l.
- Viniculture:** Grapes are harvested during the first week of full maturation.
- Maturation:** 15 months on fine lees in 17hL concrete eggs. 2,380 bottles.
- Character:** Pale green and sparkling. Aromas of white flowers, with tones of nutmeg spice and flint. A stony, mineral core provides substantial power, breadth and persistent length.

Food pairing: Seafood, fish and traditional Basque cuisine.

Ageing potential: Ready from 2024 but will drink well to 2029 and even beyond.

Website: [https:// bodegasitsasmendi.com](https://bodegasitsasmendi.com)

Descendientes de J. Palacios, “*Pétalos*”, Viñas Viejas, DO Bierzo, 2022, ABV 13.5%.



Álvaro Palacios [left] and Ricardo Pérez [right].

- Grapes:** From vines aged 50 to 110 years.
85% Mencía.
10% Jerez, Valenciana.
5% Alicante Bouschet, Gran negro, Pan y Carne, Negreda.
- Soil:** Schist with 30% clay on very steep hillsides at high elevation. Several vineyards from villages within the region: Corullón, Villafranca del Bierzo, Viariz, Hornija, Valtuille de Abajo and Otero.
- Viticulture:** Biodynamic. Old bush vines. Grapes from over 90ha, 20% owned by them and the rest from 180 families.
- Viniculture:** Grapes are harvested by hand into small bins and brought into the highest point in the hillside winery. Partially destemmed

before pressing. Fermentation in a mix of large old oak casks and stainless steel using native yeasts. Maceration for 28 days.

Maturation: The juice is sent by gravity flow to age for 10 months in various larger sizes of used French oak. Production of 271,000 bottles plus 3,000 magnums.

Character: Instantly accessible fresh berry fruit showing aromas of strawberry, redcurrant and plum followed by evolving complex tones such as spice of liquorice, and pepper smoke. Intense velvety elegance on the palate with fruit balanced by fresh acidity.

Food pairing: Iberico pork, grilled red meats, lamb stewed in wine.

Ageing potential: Certainly good to 2035.

**Adega Ponte da Boga, “*Capricho de Merenzao*”,
DO Ribeira Sacra, 2018, ABV 14.5%.**



Alais vineyard above Rio Edo: stone wall terraces.

- Grapes:** 100% Merenzao.
- Soil:** Unique shale. South-East facing. 400 to 550m a.s.l. Atlantic climate with continental influence.
- Viticulture:** The *Merenzao* vines share a 4ha plot within the Alais vineyard with *Mencía* vines planted on stone wall terraces more than two metres high built more than 100 years ago.



Merenzao vines trained in Double Cordon de Royat.

Viniculture:	Grapes destemmed and crushed. fermentation for about 10 days with gentle pumping, followed by a maceration during 8 to 10 days.
Maturation:	After malolactic fermentation, the wine is aged in previously used old French oak for 10 months.
Character:	Intense flavours of rose, raspberry, and cherry on the nose and the palate.
Food pairing:	Versatile companion to white and red meat, octopus, squid, and blue fish.
Ageing potential:	Optimal at around 7 years.
Website:	https://pontedaboga.es/en/

MdO “Moscato de Ochoa”, 2022, DO Navarra, ABV 5.5%.



Plant cover to prevent erosion – Ochoa’s Altos de Traibuenas estate.

- Grapes:** 100% Moscatel de Grano Menudo.
- Soil:** "Finca el Bosque" parcel on the Ochoa vineyards in Altos de Traibuenas estate.
- Viticulture:** Poor soil on sloping site that requires plant cover to prevent erosion.
- Viniculture:** After destemming, the grapes are lightly crushed and gently pressed. The must ferments naturally to 5.5% alcohol, where the fermentation is stopped by cooling.
- Maturation:** The fine bubbles form naturally during fermentation in closed tanks (*cuve close*).
- Character:** Pale golden hue with fine, delicate, discreet bubbles. Semi-sweet. On the nose there are aromas of white roses, ripe mirabelle plums, with citrus notes. To the

palate, elegant, fresh, fine, discreet effervescence with mature citrus fruit flavours.

Food pairing: As an aperitif. paired with foie gras, chocolate, or fruit-based desserts.

Ageing potential: Drinking window of 3 to 5 years.

Website: <https://bodegasocha.com>

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