

TEMPRANILLO FTW



Wine #1: Bodegas Carlos Serres Rioja Brut Methode Tradicional

Variety: Viura, Chardonnay, Tempranillo Blanco

Appellation: Rioja, Spain

Wine Notes: This sparkler from Rioja has a steady mousse and aromas of Fuji apple, lemon zest and slivered almonds. It opens on the palate with Bartlett pear and white-peach flavors and notes of hazelnut, baking bread and honeysuckle that culminate in a bright, lemon-splashed finish.

My Thoughts: Wait a second... so we get to open Tempranillo night with SPARKLING?! What a great way to dive into the conversation. We get to chat about Rioja sparkling that has a beautiful blend of traditional Spanish grapes and an international variety that is synonomous with great sparkling wines (ahem, Champagne...). Make no mistake, this is a serious sparkling wine. Plenty of lees ageing and carrying a really great Wine Enthusiast score, this probably should be all orders tonight because this is going to be the wine that every guest in your home will be begging for more. Time to celebrate!

12 words or less: Spain isn't just known for Cava. Time for Rioja sparklers to shine.

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Wine #2: Finca San Martin Crianza

Variety: Tempranillo

Appellation: Rioja, Spain

Wine Notes: Intense ruby red color, medium-high intensity, clean and bright. Intense and complex nose with hints of red fruits (redcurrant, wild strawberries), forest floor notes and fresh pastry, chocolate, ground coffee and white pepper aromas. Smooth texture, balance and elegant freshness on the palate, with ripe red fruit and spicy nuances returning.

My Thoughts: This is why we came here tonight. Time to enjoy some true Tempranillo. This wine will kickoff the ageing portion of the conversation. Over the next 3 flights, you will have a wine that follows the Rioja red wine ageing requirements. We begin with Crianza. This wine is required to age for a minimum of 2 years with at least 1 of those years in barrel. There is no minimum requirement for bottle ageing but they gotta get to 2 years somehow. This particular wine spends 16 months in oak with a split between American and French oak. It has been in bottle for 3 years.

12 words or less: Young, fruit forward, this will be less oaky in our memory than in reality.

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Wine #3: Chapillon Aragon Tempranillo Paul & Remy

Variety: Tempranillo

Appellation: Calatayud, Aragon, Spain

Wine Notes: The wine shows a garnet red color. The seductive aroma of the wine is filled with hints of raspberries, red plums and cherries, complemented by slightly smoky nuances. The wine has a full, expressive, well-balanced taste with hints of black fruit, harmonious acidity, perfectly integrated tannins and a long, spicy finish. Wine perfectly complements the taste of cheeses, sausages and pasta.

My Thoughts: While one glass will take us through the ageing requirements of Rioja reds, our other glass will display Tempranillo outside of the most famous Tempranillo region in the world. We head just south of Rioja to Calatayud, a region more typically known for medium bodied Garnacha. This is going to be an easy drinking, affordable option that pairs with TONS of foods. We added this to the RC menu and haven't looked back. Not that wines of Rioja are always expensive but with its relative popularity, they can get a few bucks for their wines. Finding a Tempranillo from elsewhere in Spain can afford you an opportunity to enjoy this versatile grape at a slightly lower price point. Saving money is typically a good thing.

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Wine #4: CVNE Vina Real Rioja Reserva

Variety: Tempranillo (90%), Garnacha & Mazuelo y Graciano (10%)

Appellation: Rioja, Spain

Wine Notes: Deep ruby red in color, clean and bright. The nose shows intense notes of ripe red fruits and notes from barrel aging such as toast, spices and smoke. The palate reveals a well-structured wine with firm but polished, rounded tannins and notes of fruit compote and elegant oak. The long finish adds to the ability of the wine to age well for a considerable time in bottle.

My Notes: We move to one of the most prolific producers in Rioja - CVNE. With wines of all ages and price points, they are a fantastic producer to really understand the ageing requirements and impacts to wine. We are now moving to a Reserva that requires 3 years of ageing with at least 1 year in oak and 6 months in bottle. This wine spends 22 months in unused American oak. The oak will be substantial on this wine, noticeable from the first smell and the first sip. American oak is known to impart aromas of dill and vanilla along with coconut. Tempranillo receives these oak characteristics and wraps it with dark red fruit and black fruit along with

12 words or less: Serious Spanish wine, this is where you start thinking about cellaring.

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Wine #5: Bodegas y Vinedos Valderiz Ribera del Duero

Variety: Tinta del País (95%) aka Tempranillo, Albillo (5%)

Appellation: Ribera del Duero

Wine Notes: A bright garnet-red in the glass. Scents of red cherries, cloves and earth. Fresh and lively on the palate. Flavors of strawberry and licorice dominate. Great acidity and well-balanced tannins, leading to a crisp finish. Cherries all the way!

Try with guinea fowl with savoy cabbage, prunes and Madeira sauce, rabbit with mustard and cream or a slice of Camembert cheese.

My Thoughts: This time we head southwest of Rioja to one of the highest quality wine producing regions in all of Spain. We are due north of Madrid in a region that looks like a land locked archipelago of wine growing regions that make up Castilla y León. With cooling influences from the Duero river (hence the name of the region), the vineyards also experience a wide diurnal range coming from the high elevation. Hot days and cool nights give these wines a sense of restrained intensity and medium+ acidity. If there is a region that should be giving the Rioja Tempranillo's a run for their money, it's RdD. This wine sees at least 20 months of oak so this is going to match up really well to the CVNE in your other glass. Truly, they already are but due to the challenges of old world labeling, a lot of people don't realize they are drinking high quality Tempranillo when the label says Ribera del Duero. Even when they list the grape, they may do what this winery does and call it by its local name...

My Notes:

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Wine #6: CVNE Vina Real Rioja Gran Reserva

Variety: Tempranillo (95%), Graciano (5%)

Appellation: Rioja, Spain

Wine Notes: Maroon color with nuances of cherry. Very elegant and intense on nose with spicy notes, aromas of cocoa, vanilla and fine wood in which you'll find a nice touch of ripe fruit in the aftertaste. A very wide wine in the mouth with great structure and potential. It has noble and structured tannins. It is a complex, great wine, long in the mouth. It will evolve very positively in the bottle, having a long life ahead.

My Notes: The oakiest of the oaky, this is a Gran Reserva which requires 5 years of ageing, with 2 years minimum barrel age and 2 years in bottle. CVNE requires a minimum of 2 years in oak for their Gran Reserva which could vary (family secret) depending on the vintage but use the 3 years in bottle to round out the flavor and help settle and integrate some of the tannins. This wine will lay down in a cellar for a long time and in comparison to the Reserva, you will see how much oak influence comes through even if it's only a few months more.

15 words or less: At first sniff and sip, might remind you of a tree. Then it evolves...

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Wine #7: Coquerel Family Wine Estates Tempranillo

Terroir Calistoga

Variety: Tempranillo

Appellation: Calistoga, Napa, California

Wine Notes: Our Tempranillo has nice dark color. The nose has a note of earth and dry leaves with a hint of spiced vanilla. The palate is dense with soft tannin and a long finish of red cherry.

It will pair perfectly with cheese, meat dishes. While this wine drinks beautifully now it will continue to improve over the next decade.

My Thoughts: We've spent too much time in Spain so it's time to head to... NAPA! This small production winery makes about 125 cases of this wine in a given year focusing on quality over quantity. This is an intense red wine with almost 2 years of oak ageing and very Calistogan warmth to this wine. The closest intensity I can think of in Spain would be a Gran Reserva which is why we paired these two together. Although Spain is the top producing region and has the highest quality Tempranillo in the world (quality could be subjective), Tempranillo also has a good bit of plantings in Portugal, Argentina, France, and Australia and has started to find a home stateside in California, Washington, and Texas.

My Notes:
