

# DRINK RIBERA. DRINK SPAIN.

## FACT SHEET



Ribera del Duero provides a benchmark for quality in the Spanish wine category. With an extreme climate perfectly suited for quality grape growing, Ribera del Duero wines represent the pinnacle of Spanish winemaking and the ultimate expression of Spain's most noble red grape: Tempranillo.

### GEOGRAPHY

Located in Spain's northern plateau approximately two hours directly north of Madrid, Ribera del Duero extends over parts of four provinces of Castilla y León: Burgos, Segovia, Soria and Valladolid. Ribera, which means "river bank," is defined in geographic and growing terms by the horizontal axis of the Duero River Valley; 71 miles (115 km) from east to west, and 22 miles (35 km) wide, the Ribera region flows from both sides of the Duero, and benefits from the great diversity of soils deposited by the river.

### HISTORY

Officially, the Denominación de Origen (D.O.) of Ribera del Duero was founded on July 21, 1982 by an organization of wine producers and growers who were determined to promote the quality of their wines and enforce regulatory standards. In practice, winemaking in Ribera dates 2,000 years to the Roman era, as evidenced by a recent find: a 217 foot (66 meter) mosaic of Bacchus, the god of wine, unearthed at Baños de Valdearados. In the Middle Ages, new plantings by monasteries such as the Cistercians in Valbuena de Duero (first to arrive in the 12th Century) and the Benedictines from Cluny in Burgundy spurred a revival in local winemaking. Ribera's earliest underground cellars, with distinctive chimneys, were built in the 13th Century in towns across the region, and still serve to protect wines from the extreme climate. Wine became an essential aspect of Ribera's cultural and economic development facilitating trade with other areas of Spain, resulting in the first quality regulations, the "Ordinances of Castilla y León," in the 15th Century. Ribera wines were highly regarded for export at the height of the Spanish Empire in the 17th and 18th Centuries, and in more recent times the founding of Bodega Vega Sicilia in 1864 heralded the quality credentials of the region prior to the formal establishment of the D.O.

Today, new technology and modern techniques, as well as a respect for tradition, have driven the quality of Ribera del Duero to its highest accomplishments in over two millennia of winemaking history. Ribera wines have received international acclaim and enjoy widespread distribution.

### CLIMATE

Mediterranean with Continental influences, the Ribera climate is characterized by extremes; the region has the highest average elevation in Europe for growing vines, with hot summers, cold winters, a short growing season, minimal rainfall and soil diversity. These conditions favor the highest quality winemaking.

On average, the vineyards of Ribera are planted between approximately 2,500 to 2,800 feet (760 to 850 meters) above sea level (with some vineyards as high as 3,100 feet or 945 meters). Summers are short and hot with temperatures ranging from 50 to 60 °F (10 to 15.5 °C) at night, to over 100 °F (38 °C) during the day. Rapid daily temperature changes during the growing season facilitate healthy ripening of the grapes by day, and promote balanced acidity and aromatic complexity by night. Moderate to low rainfall, with an average of approximately 16 inches (406 millimeters) per year, and extremely limited summer rainfall, contribute to a perfect, consistent ripening of the vine.

Soil conditions in Ribera are ideal with a great diversity of soils extending from the banks of the Duero to the steepest slopes. Closest to the river, soils are alluvial with sand and reddish clay. At higher elevations, alternating layers of limestone, marl and even chalk are notable features, with many outstanding plantings on limestone sites.

### TEMPRANILLO

The main grape variety of Ribera del Duero is Tempranillo, known locally as Tinto Fino or Tinta del País. Tempranillo, an early-ripening variety (from "temprano" meaning "early"), is ideally suited to Ribera's short growing season and extreme conditions.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### TEMPRANILLO, CTD.

Widely planted and cherished throughout Spain, Tempranillo produces red wines that are well-balanced in sweetness, color and acidity, and yields fresh and fruity characteristics with appealing aromas such as black plums, cherry, and licorice. In Ribera del Duero, Tempranillo is characterized by small berries, with loose clusters and tough skins, which allows greater skin-to-juice contact, creating a rich, blue-red color, and full-bodied powerful wines that boost the grape's renowned style. Ribera del Duero enjoys prominence worldwide as a result of the unique characteristics of power and elegance the region brings to the Tempranillo grape.

### CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM & QUALITY STANDARDS

D.O. Ribera del Duero adheres to and closely monitors strict quality controls. During harvest each winery is assigned a surveyor by the Consejo Regulador of D.O. Ribera del Duero, the governing body that oversees all aspects of the viticultural and winemaking process. The Consejo regulates where the grapes originate; the varieties used; the percentages allowed; vineyard practices, including pruning, density, and yields; winemaking procedures; alcohol levels; and labeling. The wineries of Ribera consistently outperform the high standards set by the Consejo.

There are several designations for wines that are produced in Ribera del Duero: Joven, Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva, and Rosado.

- **Joven:** "Joven" wines have no oak at all. "Joven Roble" and "Joven Barrica" are interchangeable terms that refer to wines aged for a short period of three to six months in oak, released soon after harvest. Wines with a Joven classification are fruity and vibrant and meant to be consumed young.
- **Crianza:** Aged two years, with a minimum of one year in oak barrels. Crianza wines can be released after the first of October, two years after the harvest. These wines have well balanced tannins with a full-bodied and velvety mouthfeel.
- **Reserva:** Aged three years, with a minimum of one year in oak barrels; Reserva wines can only be placed on the market after the first of October in the third year after the harvest. After a minimum of one year in oak barrels, Reserva wines are bottle-aged in winery cellars, producing wines that are ready to drink once they enter the market. Reserva wines are elegant and intense, with a rich, lingering finish.
- **Gran Reserva:** Wines of outstanding quality, made in select vintage years only. Gran Reserva wines are aged a minimum of five years, with a minimum of two years in oak barrels, followed by additional bottle aging. The first release is allowed after the first of October, five years after the harvest. Gran Reserva wines are complex and structured, with great balance and vitality.
- **Rosado:** Rosé wines are fermented with minimal skin-to-juice contact and are available shortly after the harvest. These wines are easy to enjoy with refreshing wild berry flavors.

The use of oak barrels is closely regulated by type and classification. On average, oak barrels are changed every four years.

Maximum yields are limited to 3.1 tons per acre (7,000 kilograms per hectare). In practice, average yields for the past twenty-two years have rarely exceeded 1.6 tons per acre (3,600 kilograms per hectare), as grape growers reduce quantity, in a pursuit of quality.

### VISITING THE REGION

Ribera del Duero is located north of Madrid, and easily reached by high speed train, bus or car. High speed train (AVE) connections between Madrid-Segovia and Madrid-Valladolid are 30 minutes and one hour, respectively, with regular connections. By car, the approximate driving time from Madrid is 1½ hours. Once in Ribera, car travel is recommended to visit wineries, the many historic sites, and picturesque villages in the region. Proximity to Madrid and the region's quality wines, food, and cultural offerings support a thriving tourism industry. Visitors are welcome at tasting rooms throughout the region, and many wineries also offer restaurants and accommodations.

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