

# 21 DAYS TO WINE: DAY 15

## HOW TO TASTE WINE STEP BY STEP

21 DAYS TO  
WINE

WINE: R. López de Heredia Viña Cubillo Crianza 2010

SCENTS: Cinnamon, Dried cherries, Cherries

SUPPLIES: A white napkin or piece of white paper (to observe)

### REVIEW

Starting with DAY 1, we have covered a lot of the wine tasting process. If you haven't yet, take a moment to watch the episodes you missed or reread the notes on:

- How to smell
- Visual evaluation of wine (color, opacity, viscosity, effervescence)
- Olfactory evaluation (complexity, intensity, specific notes)
- Gustatory evaluation (acidity, tannin, finish, body)

### WINE TASTING FROM START TO FINISH

Today we put it all together! If you have a Rioja (Tempranillo) like this one, great, but I encourage you to go through the process with whatever wine you choose, and to let me know in the video comment section how it goes.

#### STEP 1: LOOK

- Remember to look at your wine with a white background.
- What color is it? Violet, ruby, or brick red?
- Is the color intense and opaque, or pale and translucent?
- Do you see green or purple tints around the edges or is there a clear or rusty-colored ring?
- How does the wine move inside the glass? Are there bubbles?

**Rioja Crianza 2010:** This wine is nine years old and is definitely showing that brick red or transparency around the edges of aging red wines.

#### STEP 2: SMELL

- Give your glass a gentle swirl.
- What do you smell? How many individual notes can you identify?
- Is the nose complex? How intense are the aromas?

**Rioja Crianza 2010:** This wine is not super bold on the nose. It's earthier and evolved and pretty complex. It has some red berries, cherries, and a little spiciness- both from the Garnacha grape and the oak aging.

#### STEP 3: TASTE

- Is your wine crisp and bright with a lot of acidity or tight on the sides of your cheeks with tannins?
- How does it feel on your tongue? Light and zingy or silky and smooth?
- Is it light, medium or full-bodied?
- How long do the flavors and feelings last after you swallow?

**Rioja Crianza 2010:** This Crianza is a nice balance of crispness and spiciness on the palate (Altitude= cool/acidity). It has a medium finish with some cinnamon spice, and is even a bit juicy.

#### STEP 4: DISCUSS/CONVERSE

This is why we are here! What is a conversation? It means asking questions, presenting facts and observations, and expanding the subject matter for a more profound experience. It is an intellectual exercise that happens to taste great.

#### *Some questions you might ask:*

- Have you had a wine like this before?
- Does it remind you of anything? Some people like Tempranillo to Cabernet Sauvignon for its tannins and aging potential. Some people find similarities between the cherry notes in Tempranillo and Pinot Noir.
- What would you eat with it? What do Spaniards eat with it, and why does that make sense?
- Do you like it?

# TEMPRANILLO AND RIOJA

**PRONUNCIATION:** *Tem-Prah-Nee-Yo // Ree-Oh-Hah*

*Indigenous to Spain, Tempranillo is the dominant black (red)-skinned grape used in Rioja wines. While the majority of production of Tempranillo remains in Spain, you can also find it solo or in a blend in the USA, Australia, Argentina, and Italy.*

Tempranillo also grows in Portugal, where it is one of the main grape varieties used for Port, and is referred to as Tinta Roriz.

The name likely derives from *temprano*, Spanish for 'early,' as the grape buds and ripens early in the season.

Interesting fact, Tempranillo is one of few *vitis vinifera* grape species that turns colors in autumn! Tempranillo has thick, dark skins and produces deep ruby color and tannins.

It is known for bright red cherry notes and prickly acidity in its youth. After aging, especially in oak barrels, the wine develops complex notes of cinnamon, licorice, coffee, leather, coconut, cocoa powder, and vanilla.

## RIOJA DO

Rioja is not a grape. It is a DO, a designated wine growing and producing area in Spain, and an appellation, a wine named for a specific region, and historically produced in the same way.

It is traditionally made with a blend of Tempranillo and Garnacha, with the occasional Mazuelo and Graciano thrown in there.

## RIOJA GROWING AREA

The Rioja area lies along the Ebro River valleys of Northern Spain, where it thrives in the drier climate and clay and calcium-rich soils. The main regions are: La Rioja, Navarre, and a portion of Basque region, Álava.

The DO is further subdivided into three areas:

- Rioja Alta (Northernmost)
- Rioja Alavesa (Central)
- Rioja Baja (Southern)

Plenty of Rioja is made from a blend of grapes throughout the specified growing regions and you will rarely find these indications on the bottle. Rioja Alta and Alavesa are very generally considered higher quality and more suitable for aging due to altitude and soil type, but depending on the particular position and altitude, Rioja Baja wines can also be extraordinary.

## RIOJA STYLES

What you will find on the label is an indication of the quality and aging of the wine. This will tell you what to expect in your glass.

## RIOJA

Rioja is the basic, entry level. There is little to no aging in oak or the bottle. Max 2 years. This is usually lighter-bodied with young, fresh fruit.

## RIOJA CRIANZA

Crianza is aged for at least one year in oak barrels and up to a year in the bottle. These are your bright balanced Riojas. They still have some fresh fruit and some complex, spice notes from the wood.

## RESERVA

Reserva is made from a finer selection of grapes. That usually means a select vineyard where the vines have been pruned to produce fewer grapes so the grapes that remain are plump, ripe and not fighting each other to suck up the most nutrients.

## GRAN RESERVA

Gran Reserva is only made in exceptionally good harvest years with the absolute best quality grapes. These wines age for a minimum of 2 years in oak and three in the bottle. They are rare, expensive, and bursting with a complex nose of earthy, fruity, and spicy aromas and a never-ending finish.

R. LÓPEZ  
DE HEREDIA  
VIÑA CUBILLO  
CRIANZA  
2010

# TASTING NOTES

**LOOK:** Garnet-tinted red with transparent edges. We can see the age.

**SMELL:** There is still some spicy fruit, despite a decade of aging, also some mature red fruit and earthiness. A touch of spice and licorice.

**TASTE:** The wine is still quite crisp with a medium spicy fruit finish.

## DISCUSS

This a great introduction to the possibilities of Rioja as well as a good example of high altitude, cooler climate effects on the wine. Try it with salty, fatty Manchego cheese or chorizo for balance and to taste a little more of that lingering fruit.

*Cheers!*  
**ANNIE**

## WINE NOTES

### WINERY

Nearly 150 years ago, founder, Don Rafael López de Heredia y Landeta discovered the area, located in Haro, a capital city of the Rioja Alta growing region. He fell in the love with the potential to make great wine and began building what would become an expansive and respected winery. They produce wines from four vineyards in Rioja Alta. Tondania was the first and later most famous acquisition. They also produce wines from “Viña Cubillo”, “Viña Bosconia” and “Viña Zaconia.” Each one has distinctive traits.

### WINEMAKING

The wine is harvested from Viña Cubillo and made from all four Rioja grape varieties: Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano, and Manzuelo. It is aged in large oak barrels for three years and the remainder of time it ages in the bottle.

