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# Chapter 30

## Spain



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## Climate and Grape Growing

3 climatic zones:

1. N/NW coast of Spain = **moderate maritime** (Atlantic = high rainfall)
2. E coast Catalunya → N of Levante = **warm Mediterranean climate** (sea/altitude cooling influences)
3. Meseta Central (central Spain) = **hot continental** (summer = very hot/low rainfall → winter = freezing night time temp)

Challenges

- Heat/lack of water = stress on wine. Vines bush-trained low density - maximising water/shading fruit. Some wire training being introduced for mechanisation.

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## Grape Varieties and Wine Styles

### Black grapes

#### Tempranillo

- Thick skin, medium acid, strawberry
- Needs diurnal swing to moderate acidity (or areas with moderating influences)
- “Joven” = fermented as single varietal - semi-CB, early-drinking strawberry wines
- Blends = age-worthy (Garnacha, Graciano, Cariñena, Mazuelo, Cab Sauv)

#### Garnacha Tinta (Garnacha)

- High alcohol - usually matures early
- Used in ‘Rosados’
- Priorat = low yielding, old vines - complex reds

#### Monastrell (Mouvedre)

- Thick-skinned
- Hot conditions to ripen fully = *Jumilla/Yecla*
- Deep colour/full body/high tannin + alcohol/low-med acid/ripe blackberry

#### Graciano

- Difficult to grow

- Used in *Rioja* blend - adds black fruit/acid/tannin

### **Cariñena/Mazuelo** (Carignan/Mazuelo = Rioja name)

- High in acid/tannin/colour
- Blended with Tempranillo in *Rioja* (or) with Garnacha in *Priorat*

### **Mencia**

- Enjoys moderate climates
- Fresh fruit/med-high acid/herbaceous

### White grapes

### **Verdejo**

- Very susceptible to oxidation (was used to make Sherry-like wines)
- Light body/high acid/melon/peach (sim to/blended with SB)
- Fuller/richer with skin contact + barrel fermentation

### **Albariño**

- NW Spain (fashionable)
- Thick-skinned = can resist fungal disease
- High acid/citrus/stone fruit → can be fuller-bodied/richer

### **Airen**

- Vast plantings - *La Mancha* (Central Spain), can tolerate heat/drought
- Brandy de Jerez main use

### **Jerez/Parella/Xarel-lo/Macabeo**

- Catalunya - Cava production

### **Viura** (Macabeo)

- Viura = *Rioja* name
- Can be unoaked, subtle herb, spice
- Used in white *Rioja* → heavily oaked

International varieties; Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/Sauvignon Blanc/Chardonnay

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## **Regions and Wines**

6 main regions: Upper Ebro/Catalunya/Duero Valley/North West/Levante/Castilla-La Mancha

Vino de la Tierra production - extensive Castilla Y Leon region

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## **The Upper Ebro**

### **Rioja**

3 main subregions around Logroño:

1. **Rioja Alavesa** (W of Logroño/foothills of Cantabrian mountains) - lightest Rioja/most finesse
2. **Rioja Alto** (W of Logroño/S of Ebro River) - 500-800m altitude/moderating Atlantic
3. **Rioja Baja** (E of Logroño/S of Ebro River) - less maritime/hotter summers/drought

- *Tempranillo* - adds red fruit/medium tannins
- *Garnacha* (grows best in Rioja Baja) - adds body + alcohol
- Winemaking:
  - Early drinking reds = Semi CB maceration - vibrant fruit/low tannin
  - Long term = destemmed/crushed - traditional fermentation - vigorous cap management + extended maceration = deep colour/full of fruit
  - Oak maturation is common. Formerly American → move towards subtler French oak (spicy/subtle)
- White Rioja
  - *Viura*/8 varieties
    - Formerly deliberately oxidised/aged in oak (golden/nutty) → now white Rioja has min oak contact to preserve fruit flavours. Some barrel fermentation (less oxidative).

## Navarra

- Climate: Similar to Rioja (cooler/wetter)
- *Tempranillo* - blended with Rioja varieties or international varieties; Joven → Gran Reserva
- *Garnacha* - picked early (high acid/low sugar) - fruity rosé (med levels of alcohol)
- Little white wine production (*Viura/Chard/SB*)

## Cariñena and Calatuyud

- Neighbouring DOs (S of Ebro)
- Climate: **warm continental** (low rainfall)
- *Garnacha* (main variety)
  - Fruity, early-drinking (or) expensive wines with old vine *Garnacha* and *Cariñena* - more flavour/structure

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## Catalunya

NE Spain - vineyards on the coastal plain

“Catalunya” = generic DO (still wines) entire region

Nearly all Cava produced here

## Penedés

- 3 climatic zones
  - Mediterranean - coastal plain

- Cooler - inland
- Moderate - hills (vineyards up to 800m)
- Cava white grapes = most planted
- Reds; *Tempranillo* (*Ull de Llebre*)/PN/Merlot/Cab Sauv
- Whites; *Chard/SB/Gewurztraminer*

## Priorat

- Inland from Tarragona
  - Long, hot, dry summer = low rainfall
  - Old *Garnacha/Cariñena* vines = late ripening
  - **Llicorella (best soil)** = layers of red slate with small particulates of mica (sparkly) = reflect and retain heat, retain water (some cool temp night)
  - Bush vines/steep slopes = no mechanisation so expensive. Low yields too.
  - Red Priorat = deep colour/high tannin/med-high alcohol/black fruit/toast (french oak)
  - Some international Cab Sauv
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# The Duero Valley

## Ribera Del Duero

- No maritime influence (hills). Short, hot, dry summers + cold winters. The highest part of Meseta Central (+850m) - cold nights/acidity + fruit retained.
- DO for red (some rosé)
  - *Tempranillo* dominant - dark colour
  - *Cab Sauv/Merlot/Malbec* - permitted - not used
  - *Garnacha* - dry rosé
- Winemaking
  - Concentrating fruit/tannin = long maceration + short new oak aging (French)

## Toro

- Climate: sim to Ribera del Duoro
  - High day temp, sunny
- Low yielding bush vines = *Tempranillo* is full-body/high alcohol/concentrated fruit
  - Joven = portion of *Garnacha*
  - Reserva/Gran Reserva = deep colour/tannic (young) - can age
- Rosé/white in small quantities

## Rueda

- Climate: **continental** (cool summer nights)
  - White wine production
    - *Verdejo* - cooled at night
    - *Sauvignon Blanc*
    - Single or blended (if blended - 50% *Verdejo*)
    - Simply fruity → rich/barrel ferm
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# The North West

## Rias Baixas

- Climate: **moderate**/damp (Atlantic coast)
- Humidity can cause rot/mildew
- *Albariño* = high acid/stone fruit
  - Richer styles: lees/oak

## Bierzo

- Climate: **maritime** (cooling)
  - Between Galicia + Meseta Central = red wine DO
  - *Mencia* - elegant reds/high acid/red fruit
    - Best = old vines, steep, stony slopes
    - Can be unoaked (fruity) or oaked (toasty)
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# The Levante

## Valencia

- Large DO - high vol/inexpensive
- Main red grape = *Monastrell*
- Main white grape - *Merseguera*
  - Also *Muscat of Alexandra* (for local fortified sweet wine = *Moscatel de Valencia*)

## Jumilla and Yecla

- Climate: hot and dry
  - Main grape: *Monastrell*
    - Youthful/fruity style
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# Castilla-La Mancha

½ of Spain's total wine prod. Meseta Central - S of Madrid

## La Mancha

- Largest DO in Spain
- *Airen* = neutral/fruity wines. Declining - authorities encouraging other varieties
  - *Tempranillo (Cencibel)*/ *Merlot*/*Cab Sauv*/*Syrah*/*Chard*/*SB*
- Good tech investment = La Mancha makes good reds/whites for export
- Pagos wine trend (high quality) = estates awarded 'Vinos de Pagos' status

## Valdepeñas

- DO south of La Mancha (same climate)
  - *Airen* = most planted
  - *Tempranillo (Cencibel)* = main red - single or blended (international varieties)
  - Fruity → oaked/concentrated
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# Spanish Wine Laws

## PDO Wines (Denominacion de Origen Protegida - PDO)

- **DO - Denominacion de Origen** (min specs/grapes)
- **DOCa - Denominacion de Origen Calificada** (DOs of 10 years can apply - only *Rioja/Priorat*. *Priorat* uses **DOQ - Denominacion d'Origen Qualificada**).

**Vinos de Pago (VP)** = Small no of single estates with high rep. Only own grapes.

## PGI wines - **Vino de la Tierra (VdIT)**

Aging:

	Red wines		White/Rosé wines	
Designation	Min total ageing	Min time spent in barrel	Min total ageing	Min time spent in barrel
Joven	0	0	0	0
Crianza	24	6	18	6
Reserva	36	12	24	6
Gran Reserva*	60	18	48	6

\*only made in exceptional vintages

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## Multiple Choice Practice Questions

1) Which grape variety is commonly associated with the production of Rioja wines?

- a) Tempranillo
- b) Garnacha
- c) Monastrell
- d) Verdejo

2) Which Spanish wine region is known for producing high-quality Albariño wines?

- a) Rioja
- b) Ribera del Duero
- c) Rías Baixas
- d) Priorat

3) What aging designation indicates the longest period of aging for Rioja wines?

- a) Crianza
- b) Reserva
- c) Joven
- d) Gran Reserva

4) How much time must a red Crianza wine spend aging in total?

- a) 0 months
- b) 24 months
- c) 36 months
- d) 60 months

5) Which Spanish wine region is known for producing rich, full-bodied red wines primarily from the Monastrell grape variety?

- a) Priorat
- b) Jerez
- c) Bierzo
- d) Jumilla

## Answers

**1. a) Tempranillo**

**2. c) Rías Baixas**

**3. d) Gran Reserva**

**4. b) 24 months**

**5. d) Jumilla**