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Spanish Wines Get their Moment In the Sun

## ABAT DOMENECH

### Their Moment in the Sun



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and keeps them from being too overwhelming. If the wine sounds like a meal in itself, well, yes, that's exactly right. Still, Priorats really need food and go well with game and roasted meats, like Grandma Dot's lamb.

#### Passion and Commitment

It was difficult to choose a best of tasting because so many had something special. These weren't just good but exciting, as though we could taste the winemaker's passion and commitment in every sip. They also have different tastes than most of us are used to, which we attribute to terroir and careful winemaking. In the long run, we decided our favorite was Scala Dei "Cartoixa Reserva," which took us someplace special with its earthy tastes and multiple, nuanced layers. It cost us \$33.39, a bargain. Although

### The Dow Jones Priorat Index

IN A BLIND TASTING OF RED PRIORAT WINES FROM SPAIN, these were our favorites. In addition, a name worth looking for is Alvaro Palacios, whose wines can be hard to find and expensive but are often quite exciting. These will get better with age, and are best served at cellar temperature (around 55 degrees). Serve them with game and rich, highly flavorful foods.

VINEYARD/VINTAGE	PRICE	RATING	TASTERS' COMMENTS
Scala Dei 'Cartoixa Reserva' 2000	\$33.39	Very Good	<b>Best of tasting.</b> Earthy and dry, with tightly wound fruit that, in the mouth, reveals layer upon layer of flavors like strong coffee, ripe raspberries and bittersweet chocolate. Serious, grown-up wine.
Solanes (Cims de Porrera) 2001	\$29.99*	Very Good	<b>Best value.</b> All of the great flavors—blueberries, blackberries, sweet raisins and earth—but in a lighter package than most, making it very easy to drink.
Clos Martinet (Mas Martinet) 2002	\$75.00*	Very Good	An intense experience. Chewy, deep-purple wine with some smells and tastes of ripe blueberries, lilacs and roasted fruit. Amazingly dry. Tannic. Challenging.
Doix (Celler Mas Doix) 2002	\$75.00	Very Good	Dark and rich, with eucalyptus and cinnamon on the nose. Layers of interesting flavors, with rustic, almost gamey tastes and hints of sage. Great with lamb.
Montsalvat (Cellers de la Cartoixa) 2000	\$55.99	Very Good	Tannic and intense, like very strong black tea. Rich yet light, deep and challenging. A wine to sip slowly and talk about.
Abat Domenech (Cesca Vicent) 2000	\$65.00*	Good/ Very Good	Spicy, with plenty of black pepper, nice lemony acids and some herbs, all on top of a core of cherry-berry fruit.
Embrulx de Vall Llach (Celler Vall Llach) 2002	\$29.95	Good/ Very Good	Lovely, ripe fruit. Softer than most, less challenging, and good with a wide range of food.
Rotllan Torra 'Amadis' 2000	\$57.95	Good/ Very Good	Nose of black soil and tar. Rich and dark, with a splash of lemon at the end that gives it a special spark. (The 1999 "Reserva," which costs less than \$20, is also good.)

NOTE: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious, and Delicious! These are the prices we paid at wine stores in California, Florida, New York, New Jersey and Texas. \*We paid \$22.99 for the Solanes, \$57.57 for the Clos Martinet and \$59.55 for the Abat Domenech, but these prices appear to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

this was from the 2000 vintage, it's still very young. It's 48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 47% Grenache and 5% Syrah.

It's impossible to know which Priorat you will see, but they are consistent. Overall, we found the wines at and above

\$30 more intense and impressive. Our advice is to start looking for one now and have it ready for your wine-loving friend or relative later in the year.

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