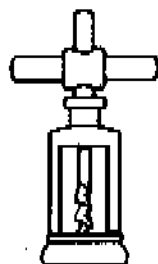


Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s



The WINE ADVOCATE®

The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine RATING SYSTEM

Robert Parker's rating system employs a 50-100 point quality scale. It is my belief that the various twenty (20) point rating systems do not provide enough flexibility and often result in compressed and inflated wine ratings. THE WINE ADVOCATE takes a hard, very critical look at wine, since I would prefer to underestimate the wine's quality than to overestimate it. The numerical ratings are utilized only to enhance and complement the thorough tasting notes, which are my primary means of communicating my judgments to you.

96-100

An **extraordinary** wine of profound and complex character displaying all the attributes expected of a classic wine of its variety. Wines of this caliber are worth a special effort to find, purchase, and consume.

90-95

An **outstanding** wine of exceptional complexity and character. In short, these are terrific wines.

80-89

A **barely above average to very good** wine displaying various degrees of finesse and flavor as well as character with no noticeable flaws.

70-79

An **average** wine with little distinction except that it is soundly made. In essence, a straightforward, innocuous wine.

60-69

A **below average** wine containing noticeable deficiencies, such as excessive acidity and/or tannin, an absence of flavor, or possibly dirty aromas or flavors.

50-59

A wine deemed to be unacceptable.

TASTING NOTES AND RATINGS

When possible all of my tastings are done in semi-group, single-blind conditions, (meaning that the same types of wines are tasted against each other and the producers names are not known). The ratings reflect an independent, critical look at the wines. Neither price nor the reputation of the producer grower affect the rating in any manner. I spend three months of every year tasting in vineyards. During the other nine months of the year, six and sometimes known-for wine events are devoted solely to tasting and writing. I do not participate in wine judging or trade tastings for many reasons, but principal among them are the following: (1) I prefer to taste from an entire bottle of wine. (2) I find it essential to have properly sized and cleaned professional tasting glasses, (3) the temperature of the wine must be correct, and (4) I prefer to determine the time allocated to the number of wines to be critiqued.

The numerical rating given is a guide to what I think of the wine vis à vis its peer group. Certainly, wines rated above 85 are very good to excellent, and any wine rated 50 or above will be outstanding for its particular type. While some have suggested that scoring is not well suited to a beverage that has been chemically oxidized for centuries, wine is no different from any consumer product. There are specific standards of quality that full-time wine professionals recognize, and there are benchmark wines against which others can be judged. I know of no one with three or four different glasses of wine in front of him or her, regardless of how good or bad the wines might be, who cannot say, "I prefer this one to that one." Scoring wine is simply taking a professional's opinion and applying some sort of numerical system to it on a consistent basis. Scoring permits rapid communication of information to expert and novice alike.

The score given for a specific wine reflects the quality of the wine at its best. I often tell people that evaluating a wine and assigning a score to a beverage that will change and evolve in many cases for up to 10 or more years is analogous to taking a photograph of a marathon runner. Much can be ascertained but, like a picture of a moving object, the wine will also evolve and change. Wines from obviously faulty corks or defective bottles are released, since a wine from a single bad bottle does not indicate an entirely spoiled batch. Many of the wines reviewed have been tasted many times, and the score represents a cumulative average of the wine's performance in tastings to date. Scores, however, do not reveal the important facets of a wine. The written commentary that accompanies the ratings is a better source of information regarding the wine's style and personality, its relative quality vis-à-vis its peers, and its value and aging potential than any score could ever indicate.

Here then is a general guide to interpreting the numerical ratings:

90-100 is equivalent to an A and is given only for an outstanding or special effort. Wines in this category are the very best produced of their type. There is a big difference between a B+ and an A, but both are top marks. As you will note through the text, there are few wines that actually make it into this top category because there are not many great wines.

80-89 is equivalent to a B in school and such a wine, particularly in the 85-89 range, is very, very good; many of the wines that fall into this range often are great values as well. I have many of these wines in my personal collection.

70-79 represents a C, or average mark, but obviously 78 is a much more desirable score than 70. Wines that receive scores between 75 and 79 are generally pleasant, straightforward wines that lack complexity, character, or depth. If inexpensive, they may be ideal for uncritical quaffing.

Below 70 is a D or F, depending on where you want to school. For wine, it is a sign of an imbalanced, flawed, or terribly dull or diluted product that will be of little interest to the discriminating consumer.

In terms of scoring points, my scoring system gives every wine a base of 50 points. The wine's general color and appearance merit up to 5 points. Since most wines today are well made, thanks to modern technology and the increased use of professional oenologists, they tend to average at least 4, often 5 points. The aroma and bouquet merit up to 15 points, depending on the intensity level and dimension of the aroma and bouquet as well as the cleanliness of the wine. The flavor and finish merit up to 20 points, and again, intensity of flavor, balance, cleanliness, and depth and length on the palate are all important considerations when giving out points. Finally, the overall quality level or potential for further evolution and improvement aging merits up to 10 points.

Scores are important for the reader to gauge a professional critic's overall qualitative placement of a wine vis-à-vis its peer group. However, it is also vital to consider the description of the wine's style, personality, and potential. No scoring system is perfect, but a system that provides for flexibility in scores, if applied by the same taster without prejudice, can quantify different levels of wine quality and provide the reader with one professional's judgment. However, there can never be any substitute for your own palate nor any better education than tasting the wine yourself.

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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SLEEPERS OF THE VINTAGE

(where price/quality ratios favor the consumer)

Domaine de l'A (Côtes de Castillon)	La Croix de Peyrolle (Lussac St.-Emilion)	Moulin Puy l'abrie (Canon-Fronsac)
d'Aiguilhe (Côtes de Castillon)	Destieux (St.-Emilion)	Pas de l'Arc (St.-Emilion)
d'Aurihac (Haut-Médoc)	d'Escurac (Médoc)	Petit Burg (St.-Estèphe)
Barrabaque (Canon-Fronsac)	La Fleur de Bouard (Irlande de Pomerol)	Peyfol (Côtes de Castillon)
Bel Air Perponcher (Bordeaux)	Fleur Cardinale (St. Emilion)	Phélan-Ségur (St.-Estèphe)
Boucaut Les Portes de l'Amc (Bordeaux Supérieur)	Fontenil (Fronsac)	Pibran (Pauillac)
Boyd Cantenac (Margaux)	Franç Mayne (St.-Emilion)	Potensac (Médoc)
Cap de Faugères (Côtes de Castillon)	Gaby (Fronsac)	Poujeaux (Moulis)
Charmail (Haut-Médoc)	Giolate (Bordeaux)	Rauzan Despagne (Bordeaux)
Chauvin (St.-Emilion)	Gloria (St.-Julien)	Rullian de By (Médoc)
Clos des Uncles (Côtes de Castillon)	Goulée (Médoc)	Rouget (Pomerol)
La Clothe (St.-Emilion)	Les Grands Maréchaux (Côtes de Blaye)	Sansonne (St.-Emilion)
La Conseiller (Bordeaux Supérieur)	Haut Carles (Fronsac)	Tour de Mirambeau (Bordeaux Supérieur)
Corbin (St.-Emilion)	Haut Gravel (St.-Emilion)	Tour Séran (Médoc)
Coufran (Haut-Médoc)	Haut Mazeris (Canon-Fronsac)	Valmognaux (Bordeaux Supérieur)
Le Crocq (St.-Estèphe)	Marsau (Côtes de France)	La Vieille Cure (Fronsac)
	Moulin Haut Laroque (Fronsac)	Vrai Canon Bouché (Canon-Fronsac)

WHAT'S HOT? ... SPAIN (Recommended New Releases)

If the wine world looks over its shoulder, it will see increasing quantities of great values as well as terrific wines emerging from virtually every region of Spain. This viticultural sleeping giant has begun to awaken, becoming more serious about making high quality wines over the last decade. Certainly the 2001 vintage has produced a bevy of extraordinary efforts that put Spain's wines on the world's center stage.

To their credit, Spain's innovative wine producers are not trapped by centuries of tradition, or as hung up on ancient hierarchies of quality that promote a stagnant status quo. The result is an explosion of creativity and energy that has resulted in many formidable wines. The most prestigious Spanish region remains Rioja, but the spectacular offerings emerging from Priorat, and to a lesser extent Ribera del Duero merit considerable acclaim, and to my palate, are more exciting than most Riojas. Moreover, there are abundant values, some of them superb wines, coming from such upstart areas as Toro and Navarra. Add to these the new favorites of creative importers looking for value, such regions as Jumilla, La Mancha, Yecla,

Monsant, and Calatayud (the 2001 Las Rocas de San Alejandro Gamacha Vinas Viejas, a \$10 wine reviewed in issue #147, and rated 93+, is undeniably the greatest value from Europe I have tasted in twenty-five years). Spain's tremendous potential for both bargain-priced and high quality wines has become the wine world's most fashionable subject. Spain is indeed hot, and I predict that in 2004, Spanish wines will increasingly become the darling of wine consumers throughout the civilized world.

The vintage of choice is 2001, a remarkable year that represents the pinnacle of Spanish winemaking and creativity ... to date.

One caveat as readers will note, virtually all of those recommended new releases come from a handful of Spanish wine importers who represent the finest Spain has to offer. When my tastings ventured outside of these importers, the quality ranged from mediocre to dreadful. Sadly, there remains an ocean of appallingly bad, low-priced Spanish wine in the marketplace. The lesson in my tastings was very evident ... stick to the finest importers and the rewards are undeniable.

BODEGAS 1 + 1 = 3	N.V.	CAVA BRUT	PEÑEDÈS	(\$12.00)	SPARKLING WHITE	89
BODEGAS 1 + 1 = 3	1998	DEFORA	PEÑEDÈS	(\$26.00)	RED	89
BODEGAS 1 + 1 = 3	1999	DOGA	PEÑEDÈS	(\$18.00)	RED	88
BODEGAS 1 + 1 = 3	2002	ROSE OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON	PEÑEDÈS	(\$13.00)	ROSE	89

An interestingly named estate, the Bodegas 1 + 1 = 3's sparkling non-vintage Cava Brut is a blend of 50% Xarel-lo, 28% Macabeu, and 24% Parellada (1,000 cases for the American marketplace). It was aged in bottle 16 months before disgorging. Loaded with fruit, it exhibits a lovely, full, crisp, wheat thin and tropical fruit-scented perfume. Tasty, dry, and hedonistic, it is a delicious, pure, inexpensive sparkler to enjoy over the next year. One of the finest rosés I have tasted recently is the 2002 Rosé of Cabernet Sauvignon. A gorgeous effort fashioned from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, it possesses a deep ruby color (darker than most rosés) as well as wonderful aromas of plums, cherries, and notions of spice box and herbs. Loaded with flavor, this dry rosé is best consumed over the next year. It is terrific! The reasonably priced 1999 Doga, a blend of 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot, and 25% Tempranillo,

was aged 9 months in a combination of French and American oak. Complex aromas of cedar wood, spice box, black currants, and sweet toasty oak precede a fleshy, fruit-filled, somewhat superficial, but lush, smooth red that should be drunk over the next 1-2 years. These three offerings all represent great value.

The 1998 Defora (a blend of 77% Grenache and 23% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 12 months in 100% new French oak) exhibits a dense purple color as well as a heady, kirsch liqueur-scented nose revealing notions of black currants and toast. Juicy, thick, ripe, and richly fruity, only a lack of complexity kept it from meriting an outstanding rating. Readers should consider it a modern version of a French southern Rhône, and enjoy it over the next 3-4 years. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413 0875

AALTO	2000	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$35.00)	RED	93
AALTO	2001 PS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$80.00)	RED	98+
AALTO	2000 PS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$80.00)	RED	96

Aalto is the creation of one of the great former winemakers of Vega Sicilia, the talented Mariano Garcia. The long awaited release of his first Ribera del Duero, the 2000, comes from 60+ year old Tempranillo vines. Aged in French casks, it is a terrific first effort. An inky/purple color is accompanied by sweet aromas of charcoal, camphor, crème de cassis, smoke, and melted licorice. With great intensity, medium to full body, and a long, heady, voluptuous finish, it should drink well for 10-12 years.

Garcia's 2000 PS (100% Tempranillo from 60-70 year vineyards, and aged in French oak) is spectacular. Unfortunately, production is small, with 40% of it (400 cases) making it to the United States. It boasts an inky/purple color as well as a beautiful perfume of smoke, graphite, black and blueberries, minerals, and flowers. This is a young, full-bodied yet

remarkably elegant, pure, impeccably well-balanced Spanish red with a finish that lasts for 50+ seconds. While accessible, it should not hit its peak for another 2-3 years, and will last for 12-15. Not surprisingly, in a vintage that afforded even greater raw materials, the 2001 PS is out of this world. Smoke, graphite, blackberry liqueur, blueberries, violets, and spicy oak jump from the glass of this inky/purple-colored 2001. Texturally and color-wise, it is reminiscent of dry vintage port. With terrific purity and a full-bodied, rich palate that offers multiple dimensions, there is a seamlessness to this wine even though it remains young and unopened. I would recommend another 1-2 years of cellaring (as hard as that may be), and consuming it over the following 10-12 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

ABADIA RETUERTA	1999	EL CAMPANARIO	SARDON DE DUERO	(\$57.00)	RED	91
ABADIA RETUERTA	1999	EL PALOMAR	SARDON DE DUERO	(\$51.00)	RED	88
ABADIA RETUERTA	1999	PAGO VALDEBELLON	SARDON DE DUERO	(\$128.00)	RED	93
This excellent winery has fashioned a blend of equal parts Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo, the dark ruby-colored, elegant 1999 El Palomar . It reveals good complexity in its Bordeaux-like personality offering notes of sweet cherries, cedar, spice box, and vanilla. This medium-bodied 1999 should be drunk over the next 6-10 years. By the way, the 1996 El Palomar is drinking beautifully, but appears to be on a fast evolutionary track, so owners should drink it up over the next 2-3 years. A 100% Tempranillo cuvée, the 1999 El Campanario is also elegant with more blue, red, and black fruits, a headier bouquet, medium body, a juicy attack, and an attractive, plush mid-palate, as well as finish. This outstanding effort is best consumed over the next 6-7 years. The biggest (and most expensive) offering, the 1999 Pago Valdebellon (100% Cabernet Sauvignon) boasts a deep ruby/purple color as well as a dense, concentrated, black current-scented nose offering notions of new oak, smoke, licorice, and earth. Medium to full-bodied, elegant, and pure, with a long finish, it should drink well for a decade. Importer: Jorge Ordóñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-6767						
ABRAZO	2002	GARNACHA	CARINENA	(\$7.00)	RED	86
A fine value for readers seeking a budget-priced, richly fruity, light to medium-bodied red, this dark ruby colored 2002 Garnacha is filled with black cherry and cranberry fruit. Pure and refreshing, it is ideal for drinking over the next 1-2 years. It could even be served chilled if desired. Importer: Fesser-Wines Ltd., St. Helena, CA; tel. (707) 963-1300						
AGREST DE GUITARD	2001	MERLOT/CABERNET SAUVIGNON	PENEDES	(\$8.00)	RED	87
Two other offerings from this winery did not create the same excitement as this equal part blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. A terrific value, it possesses a deep ruby color as well as elegant black current flavors wrapped around notes of tobacco leaves, licorice, and earth. Medium-bodied with soft tannin, and well-integrated acidity, it sees no oak, and is all the better for it. Drink it over the next 12-18 months. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7482						
ALBET I NOYA	2001	CABERNET SAUVIGNON COLLECCIO	PENEDES	(\$24.00)	RED	87
ALBET I NOYA	2002	LIGNUM BLANC	PENEDES	(\$13.00)	WHITE	86
ALBET I NOYA	2000	SYRAH COLLECCIO	PENEDES	(\$24.00)	RED	88
ALBET I NOYA	2003	TEMPRANILLO CLASSIQUE	PENEDES	(\$11.00)	RED	86
ALBET I NOYA	2000	TEMPRANILLO COLLECCIO	PENEDES	(\$22.00)	RED	87
An attractive as well as creative blend of nearly equal parts Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay that sees minimal exposure to oak, the 2002 Lignum blanc is a crisp, medium-bodied, fruit-driven effort with good minerality in addition to an easy-going style. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. The red cuvées are all elegant, medium bodied offerings with dry tannin and good acidity. The fruitiest and lightest is the 2003 Tempranillo Classique , a strawberry and cherry scented and flavored red to enjoy over the next year. The three Col.leccio offerings are more serious efforts. All three are aged 12 months in a combination of American and French oak, then lightly filtered prior to bottling. The dark ruby-colored 2000 Tempranillo Col.leccio exhibits pure briary, cherry, and strawberry fruit notes intermixed with loamy soil characteristics. Medium-bodied with light tannin in the finish, it will drink well for 2-3 years. The dense black ruby colored 2000 Syrah Col.leccio reveals classic aromas of blackberries, licorice, and asphalt. Medium-bodied and pure, with dry tannin as well as a certain austerity, it is authentically Syrah like in taste. Drink it over the next 2-3 years. Reminiscent of an Internationally styled Bordeaux, the 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon Col.leccio exhibits a dense ruby/purple color along with a chewy, cedar, spice box, vanilla, earth, and black current-scented bouquet. Firm, medium-bodied, angular, and well-made, it should drink well for 5-6 years. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800						
ALION	2000		RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$45.00)	RED	92
Produced by Vega Sicilia's owners, Alion's 2000 Ribera del Duero is a beautifully rich offering that was aged 13 months in French oak prior to bottling. A gorgeous perfume of espresso roast, smoked herbs, roasted meat, and black current liqueur is followed by rich, full bodied flavors, a velvety texture, and a long, luscious finish. Consume it now and over the next 10-12 years. Importer: a Christopher Cannon Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897						
FINCA ALLENDE	2000	ALLENDE	RIOJA	(\$20.00)	RED	89
FINCA ALLENDE	2000	AURUS	RIOJA	(\$152.00)	RED	92
FINCA ALLENDE	2001	CALVARIO	RIOJA	(\$50.00)	RED	95
A fine value, the 2000 Allende (100% Tempranillo aged 13 months in primarily French oak and bottled unfiltered) exhibits a dense garnet/ruby/purple-tinged color as well as a striking nose of lead pencil shavings, black currants, and cherries. Rich, elegant, and medium-bodied, with excellent purity as well as nicely integrated wood, acidity, and tannin, it should be enjoyed over the next 5-7 years. The blockbuster 2001 Calvario is a single vineyard Rioja produced from 90% Tempranillo, 8% Grenache, and 2% Graciano, all from vines planted in 1945. Aged in new French oak for 14 months, and bottled unfiltered, it is a sensational effort revealing an inky/purple color along with gorgeously complex aromas of cedar, blackberries, crème de cassis, scorched earth, minerals, and smoky new oak. This full-throated, seriously endowed effort costs the palate and nearly stains the teeth. Unevolved and rich, but impeccably balanced, even elegant given its total symmetry/harmony, it should hit its prime in 2-4 years, and age gracefully for the following 12-16. A serious effort, the limited production cuvée of 2000 Aurus was fashioned from 80-year old Tempranillo vines (95%) and 15% Graciano, and spent time in French oak before being bottled unfiltered. Rich and heady, with an inky/purple color as well as a big, chocolatey, roasted nose of black fruits, toasty oak, and earth, it is a medium to full-bodied, powerful, moderately tannic 2000 to drink between 2006-2014. Importer: Jorge Ordóñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-6767						
L'ALLEU	2001		MONSANT	(\$20.00)	RED	87
A blend of 75-year old Grenache (60%), 55-year old Carignan (20%), and 20-year old Cabernet Sauvignon (10%), as well as 10% Tempranillo, this 2001 reveals a loamy, dusty, earthy character that will not be enjoyed by everybody, but the color is a healthy ruby, and the bouquet offers kirsch, spice, and licorice aromas. Medium-bodied and spicy, it is best consumed over the next 4-5 years. I did not detect the Grenache component except in the aromatics. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875						
JOAN D'ANGUERA	2001	FINCA L'ARGATA	MONSANT	(\$25.00)	RED	90
JOAN D'ANGUERA	2001	EL BUGADER	MONSANT	(\$55.00)	RED	93
Given formal appellation approval in 2001, this sub-zone of Tarragona is a nearby neighbor of the more renowned region of Priorat. Most of the vineyards are planted at a relatively high altitude of 350-450 meters, with loamy soils over a base of limestone and granite. One of the finest wineries of the region is Joan d'Anguera. The 2001 Finca l'Argata is an unfiltered blend of 40% Syrah, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Carignan, and 15% Grenache aged in a combination of American and French oak. An excellent value, it reveals an inky/purple color as well as a powerful bouquet of blackberry and cassis liqueur intermixed with notions of licorice, pepper, and sweet vanilla saturated oak. Full bodied, with plump, fleshy flavors, adequate acidity, and a sumptuous finish, it should drink well for 5-6 years. Even better is the 2001 El Bugader , one of the finest Syrah-based offerings I have tasted from Spain. An 8,000-bottle blend of 95% Syrah and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged 18 months in new French oak, it possesses an inky/black/purple color in addition to a sumptuous perfume of spring flowers, crème de cassis, and blackberries. Heady and intense, with low acidity as well as a fleshy, full-bodied, powerful mouthfeel, it should be enjoyed during its first 7-8 years of life. Impressive! Importer: André Jagers, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933 4245						
ARDEVOL	2001	TERRA D'HOM	PRIORAT	(\$60.00)	RED	90
A complex Priorat from the sub-region of Porrera, this dense plum/garnet-colored 2001 boasts a big, sweet, earthy bouquet of plums, blackberries, currants, licorice, and smoky, toasty oak. It is a forward, supple-textured, fleshy, elegant, and surprisingly complex offering that should be drunk over the next 5-7 years. Importer: Boutique Wine Collection, New York; tel. (914) 964-6883						

ARTADI	2001	GRANDES ANADAS	RIOJA	(\$125.00)	RED	98+
ARTADI	2001	PAGOS VIEJOS	RIOJA	(\$80.00)	RED	97
ARTADI	2001	VINAS DE GAIN	RIOJA	(\$20.00)	RED	94
Now in bottle, these are great Riojas. The 2001 Vinas de Gain (100% Tempranillo) is a fabulous effort for the price (one of the <u>best buys</u> in the marketplace). Aged in French oak casks (about 40% new) for 12-14 months, it boasts a deep purple color to the rim as well as a perfume of raspberries, blackberries, crushed stones, and white flowers. With extraordinary precision, definition, and finesse, great elegance, wonderful sweetness, medium body, and a gorgeously textured finish, it caresses the palate, offering considerable personality and overall symmetry. It will drink beautifully for 7-8 years. A brilliant effort, it's a steal at \$20. Aged 18 months in 100% new French oak from 75-year old Tempranillo vines, the 2001 Pagos Viejos is one of Spain's greatest wines. A singular red of extraordinary stature and intensity, it exhibits an inky/ruby/purple color as well as a luxurious bouquet of lead pencil shavings, black and blue fruits,			espresso roast, and floral notes. This full-bodied, dense 2001 possesses layers of flavor, a sweet integration of tannin and wood, and a finish that lasts for nearly a minute. Drink this riveting Rioja between 2005-2015. The prodigious, inky/purple-colored 2001 Grandes Anadas marries elegance with tremendous power and flavor intensity. It represents Spain's version of Comte de Vogüé's Musigny ... in a top vintage. Aromas of spice box, violets, raspberries, blackberries, plums, cherries, and an undeniable minerality are found in this structured, ripe, phenomenally intense red. The finish exceeds one minute, yet it gives the impression that it is not close to being mature. While it offers plenty of enjoyment now, ideally it should be given 3-4 years of cellaring and consumed over the following two decades. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
ARTAZU	2001	SANTA CRUZ	NAVARRA	(\$30.00)	RED	92+
A single vineyard 100% Grenache from 80-year old vines planted in pure chalk at an elevation of 750 meters, this estate is the creation of Juan-Carlos Lopez de la Cal, who learned his craft at Artadi. It is a fabulously concentrated, complex, medium-bodied Spanish red that tastes like a grand cru from the Côte de Nuits. The combination of limestone soil and Grenache grown at a high elevation appears to have given the wine a			complex, elegant, raspberry, black cherry, and floral-scented nose with medium body, great fruit, tremendously vivid flavors, and amazing precision as well as finesse. This stunningly singular wine must be tasted to be believed. Remarkably airy and light for its intense flavors, it will provide immense pleasure over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
DOMINICO DE AATA	2000	VALDEGATILES	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$75.00)	RED	95
A spectacular 120-case cuvée produced from 155-year old vines aged in 100% new French Darnajou barrels, this is a super-expressive Spanish red offering a gorgeously deep purple color as well as a rich nose of creosote, espresso roast, graphite, blackberries, and <i>crème de cassis</i> . Rich, full-bodied, and unctuously textured, with fabulous flavor			intensity and overall balance as well as a long, concentrated, seamless personality, it can be enjoyed now and over the next 10-12 years. P.S. This new estate was established in 1999 by proprietor Miguel Sanchez. Can anyone imagine how stupendous the 2001 might be? Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 996-4484			
AVINYO	N.V.	CAVA BRUT	PENEDES	(\$13.00)	SPARKLING WHITE	89
AVINYO	N.V.	CAVA BRUT NATURE	PENEDES	(\$16.00)	SPARKLING WHITE	89
Two more <u>excellent values</u> in sparkling wine from Spain, the non-vintage Cava Brut (made from 80% free run juice and aged 18 months) is a tasty, light to medium-bodied, dry sparkler. Notes of bread dough, grapefruit, and other citrus as well as tiny pinpoint bubbles are offered in a refreshing, vigorous style. Enjoy this			Macabeu, Parellada, and Xarel-lo blend over the next year. More austere is the bone dry non-vintage Cava Brut Nature . Light-bodied, with great fruit, elegance, and precision offered in a zesty, refreshing style, it will drink well for 12-24 months. Importer: André Tamars, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245			
SENORIO DE AYLES	2001	MERLOT/TEMPRANILLO	CARINENA	(\$13.00)	RED	88
I had mixed tasting notes on this bodega, but I immensely enjoyed the equal part blend of 2001 Merlot/Tempranillo , which was aged 3 months in French oak prior to bottling. A <u>fine value</u> , it exhibits aromas of scorched earth, licorice, and dense, sweet black cherry fruit offered			in an opulent, medium-bodied, luscious, fruit-driven style. Enjoy it over the next 12-18 months. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
AZAGADOR	2002	PAGO DE LA JARABA	LA MANCHA	(\$8.00)	RED	85
I could have sworn this was an uncomplicated French southern Côtes du Rhône. Made from primarily Tempranillo with a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in the blend, this light ruby-hued, <u>value-priced</u> 2002			exhibits loads of peppery strawberry and cherry notes. Soft and easy-going, it can be served chilled if desired. Enjoy it over the next year. Importer: Peter Weygandt, Weygandt-Metzler, Unionville, PA; tel. (610) 486-0800			
BAJOZ	2003	JOVEN	TORO	(\$9.50)	RED	86
BAJOZ	2003	OVACION	RUEDA	(\$10.00)	WHITE	86
Several more expensive cuvées were dominated by too much American oak, but the stainless steel-fermented 2003 Ovacion (60% Verdejo and 40% Viura) is a crisp, floral, fresh, light-bodied white. Enjoy this vibrant, refreshing 2003, preferably with Spanish tapas, over the next 12 months. The 2003 Joven may be Spain's answer to a French Beaujolais. Made			from 100% Tinto de Toro, 5% was aged in barrel, and the balance in tank. This deep ruby-colored, fruity, soft, medium-bodied red exhibits loads of strawberry and cherry fruit, crisp acidity, and a lively personality. Consume it over the next 12-18 months, chilled if you prefer. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800			
CASTILLO DEL BARON	2001	CRIANZA	YECLA	(\$11.00)	RED	87
Another <u>good value</u> from this backwater, but interesting Spanish region, this excellent offering reveals sweet blue and black fruits, fine texture, little complexity, but loads of fruit, medium body, and no hard edges. Drink it			over the next 1-2 years. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897			
BIENVENIDA	2001	SITO DEL PALO	TORO	(\$30.00)	RED	92
The debut vintage for this boutique winery from Toro, this 2001 (made from old vine Tempranillo) was aged in French oak prior to bottling. It exhibits an inky/purple color as well as a tremendous nose of blackberries, chocolate, and espresso roast. Full-bodied, rich, and			dense, it offers a hedonistic mouthful of layered, opulent, heady juice. Impressively endowed with purity and palate presence, it should be enjoyed over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
BIURKO GORRI	2001	GRENACHE	RIOJA	(\$25.00)	RED	88
BIURKO GORRI	2002	TEMPRANILLO	RIOJA	(\$12.00)	RED	87
A <u>very good value</u> , the 2002 Tempranillo (100% Tempranillo) was aged 4 months in new American oak. This richly fruity, elegant red exhibits sexy black cherry and strawberry notes intertwined with notions of tobacco leaf and licorice. Medium-bodied and soft, it is best consumed over the next 2-3 years. Slightly better is the kirsch			liqueur/candied cherry-filled 2001 Grenache . Aged 12 months in American and French oak, and bottled unfiltered, it reveals medium body, a fine texture, and a hedonistic personality. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. Importer: André Tamars, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245			
BODEGAS BORSAO	2002	TRES PICOS (GARNACHA)	CAMPO DE BORJA	(\$11.00)	RED	88
Made from 100% old vine Grenache, this 2002 reveals classic aromas of kirsch liqueur, raspberries, licorice, and subtle pepper. Ripe and medium-bodied, with good underlying acidity as well as loads of fruit,			it will provide pleasure over the next 1-3 years. It is a <u>terrific value</u> . Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
JUAN-MANUEL BURGOS	2000	AVAN CEPAS CENTENARIAS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$100.00)	RED	92
JUAN-MANUEL BURGOS	2000	AVAN CONCENTRACION	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$57.00)	RED	90?
JUAN-MANUEL BURGOS	2001	AVAN NACIMIENTO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$29.00)	RED	91+
A 100% Tempranillo aged in French oak, the deep ruby/purple-colored 2001 Avan Nacimiento is the best value of this trio. Powerful notes of			espresso roast, roasted meats, sweet black currants, and creosote emerge from this primary, young, juicy 2001. With loads of character as well as an			

exuberant, flamboyant personality, it may merit an even higher score with additional bottle age. Enjoy it over the next 10-12 years. Although controversial, the slightly funky **2000 Avan Concentracion** is a wine of great intensity. Rich but closed, revealing animal fur and rubbery notes intermixed with impressive quantities of *crème de cassis* and blackberries, this full-bodied monster needs several years of bottle age. Hopefully, everything will come together in this big, impressive 2000 and its

distinctiveness will not turn out to be a negative. Forget it for 4-5 years, and keep your fingers crossed. The Rhône-like **2000 Avan Cepas Centenarias** is a limited cuvée produced from 100-120 year old Tempranillo vines. Tiny yields resulted in a big bouquet of beef blood, black currants, cherries, dried herbs, pepper, and spice box. Dense, chewy, and intense, this stunning Spanish red needs another 2-3 years of cellaring. It should drink well for 12-15 years. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

CAMPO ELISEO	2001		TORO	(unknown)	RED	92
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This is the first release from a partnership between Michel and Dany Rolland of Libourne, and the well-known family of Jacques and François Lurton of Graves (the name is Spanish for Champs Elysées). It is a 1,000-case cuvée of old vine Tinto de Toro aged in 100% new French oak for 16 months prior to being bottled unfiltered. The seductive, dense ruby/purple-

tinged 2001 offers a smoky bouquet with copious quantities of black cherry liqueur intermixed with black currants, licorice, smoke, and barbecue spice. Fleshy, medium to full-bodied, pure, long, and seamless, consumption over the next 5-7 years is suggested. Bravo! There is no specific importer as this wine is sold through Bordeaux *négociants* to multiple import firms.

CAMPOS REALES	2003		LA MANCHA	(\$8.50)	RED	86
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Another excellent value from 30-year old Tempranillo vines, this tank-fermented and aged, medium-bodied 2003 is all fruit. Reminiscent of Beaujolais, it reveals hints of bubble gum, Kool Aid, strawberries, and

cherries in a clean, fruity style. It could be served slightly chilled over the next 12-18 months. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

BODEGAS ANTONIO CANDELA	2000	BARAHONDA BARRICA	YECLA	(\$12.00)	RED	88
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Innovative Spanish importers are seeking out more and more value-priced, Mourvèdre-dominated wines from Yecla. This **2002 Barahonda Tinto** (100% tank-fermented and aged Mourvèdre) is a big, fruity, medium-bodied, elegant example that is best consumed over the next 1-2 years. While not complex, it is a satisfying, attractive, delicious red meant for uncritical quaffing. More serious is the **2000 Barahonda**

BODEGAS ANTONIO CANDELA	2002	BARAHONDA TINTO	YECLA	(\$9.00)	RED	86
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Barrica, a blend of 70% Mourvèdre (called Monastrell in Spain) and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon aged three months in French and American oak. It possesses a deeper ruby color as well as chocolatey, black currant, and blueberry notes. Elegant and medium-bodied, with surprising class for a wine in this price range, it will provide enjoyment over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

CAPCANES	2001	CABRIDA	MONSANT	(\$50.00)	RED	94
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CAPCANES	2002	MAS DONIS BARRICA	MONSANT	(\$10.00)	RED	90
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Made for the American market, the **2002 Mas Donis Barrica** is a blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah aged 10 months in a combination of American and French oak. There are 15,000 cases of this offering, which tastes like a baby Priorat. A dense purple color gives up scents of creosote, blackberries, kirsch liqueur, new saddle leather, and meat. Complex, rich, and nearly too serious for a wine in this price range, this is a concentrated, heady 2002 to enjoy over the next 2-3 years. It is a great value! Made from 100% Grenache (90-103 year old vines planted at 900 meters), the **2001 Cabrida** was cropped

CAPCANES	2002	MAS DONIS BARRICA	MONSANT	(\$10.00)	RED	90
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at 16 hectoliters per hectare, and spent 16 months in new French oak. There are 4,800 bottles of this sumptuous, inky/purple-colored offering. Rich aromas of briary fruit, raspberries, blackberries, crushed stone, and flowers emerge from a glass of this Spanish red. It boasts superb purity, tremendous intensity, and a full-bodied, long, flowing finish. I'm not sure how well it will evolve, but certainly for drinking over the next 5-7 years, it delivers tremendous complexity as well as intensity. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

CASA CASTILLO	2002		JUMILLA	(\$10.50)	RED	89
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CASA CASTILLO	2001	LAS GRAVAS	JUMILLA	(\$23.00)	RED	87
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CASA CASTILLO	2001	SYRAH VAL TOSCA	JUMILLA	(\$18.00)	RED	88
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A great value, the **2002 Casa Castillo** is a blend of 85% Monastrell (Mourvèdre) and 15% Syrah aged completely in French and American oak for four months before bottling. It offers loads of blue and blackberry fruit, a hint of licorice, medium body, and fine purity as well as density. This mouthfilling red should be consumed over the next 2-3 years. Although more expensive, the **2001 Las Gravas** (a blend of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 50% Mourvèdre, and 10% Syrah) is more linear and structured, displaying more wood and less fruit. It

exhibits a deep ruby color, good earthiness, and a spicy finish. Lastly, the **2001 Syrah Val Tosca** is also a good value. This fruit-driven offering could be called the poor person's Finca Sandoval (one of the finest Syrahs I have tasted from Spain). This dense ruby/purple-colored 2001 exhibits monolithic, but chunky, fleshy, chocolatey, blackberry flavors as well as a pure, seamless personality. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

CASA DE LA ERMITA	2001	CRianza	JUMILLA	(\$15.00)	RED	87
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CASA DE LA ERMITA	2001	MONESTERIO DE SANTA ANA	MONASTRELL	JUMILLA	(\$9.00)	RED	87
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CASA DE LA ERMITA	2001	PETIT VERDOT	JUMILLA	(\$32.00)	RED	88+
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Another terrific value from 70-90-year old Mourvèdre vines, aged three months in American barrels, is the **2001 Monasterio de Santa Ana Monastrell**. It displays an excellent deep ruby/purple-tinged color as well as a big, spicy, earthy nose revealing notions of blue and black fruits. Although hardly a model of finesse, it possesses good substance, a chewy texture, and a robust, heady finish (13.5% alcohol). Consume it over the next several years. More polished and elegant, with a slightly elevated oak component is the **2001 Crianza**, a blend of old vine Mourvèdre and younger vine Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon (aged 10 months in both French and American

wood, with the latter more aggressive at present). This dense ruby/purple-colored 2001 exhibits medium body, good elegance, and an attractive personality. Enjoy it over the next 3-4 years. Perhaps the biggest surprise in this portfolio is the 100% **Petit Verdot**. The **2001**, aged one year in French and American oak, boasts a dense ruby/purple color as well as a bouquet of white flowers intermixed with black currants, blackberries, new saddle leather, and a hint of tree bark. Medium to full-bodied and concentrated, with no harshness or astringency, it can be drunk now and over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800

CASTANO	2002	HECULA	YECLA	(\$10.00)	RED	90
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CASTANO	2002	SOLANERA	YECLA	(\$14.00)	RED	90
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These are two more great values from importer Eric Solomon, one of the first American importers to recognize the potential of the old vine, non-irrigated Monastrell (Mourvèdre) from high altitude vineyards in Yecla. The **2002 Hecula**, a custom cuvée made for the American market, is a 100% Mourvèdre (grown in pure limestone at an altitude of 800 meters) aged in equal parts tank and French oak. There are 12,000 cases of this deep ruby/purple-colored, dense effort. It offers big, substantial blackberry, earthy, currant flavors with hints of cherry and licorice in the background. Surprisingly intense and pure, it represents a terrific bargain. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. There are 20,000 cases of the **2002 Solanera**, a formidably endowed, chunky, rich,

chocolatey, melted licorice, blackberry and black currant-scented wine. A deep ruby/purple color is followed by a medium to full-bodied red with loads of texture, and a luscious mid-palate revealing notions of scorched earth and black fruits. It is a sizeable effort with extremely ripe tannin, something only old vine, late harvested Mourvèdre can achieve. It, too, is a custom cuvée created only for the American marketplace, so bottles sold in Europe and in the grey market will be completely different. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years, although my instincts suggest it will last longer. However, these are the types of wines that are valued for their exuberance, flamboyance, and rich fruit. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

BODEGAS CASTEJON	2002	CRianza	MADRID	(\$10.00)	RED	87
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BODEGAS CASTEJON	2002	NOBUL-TEMPRANILLO	MADRID	(\$7.00)	RED	86
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BODEGAS CASTEJON	2002	VINA REY-70 BARRICAS	MADRID	(\$8.00)	RED	86
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A fourth wine I tasted from Bodegas Castejon, their 2002 Vina Rey Tinto Joven, merited an 84 point rating (not quite high enough to be included in this report), but at \$6.00, it might well be worth trying by

those looking for something beyond Two Buck Chuck. This trio of more serious reds, all of them outstanding values, includes the **2002 Nobul**, a 100% Tempranillo cuvée aged for a few months in American

oak. It possesses good fruit, medium body, and no hard edges. Also made from 100% Tempranillo, the **2002 Vina Rey** was aged six months in American oak. It reveals heady plum, currant, and cherry fruit flavors in a fleshy, uncomplicated, medium-bodied style. The

delicious, surprisingly complex, medium-bodied **2002 Crianza** (100% Tempranillo) is long and rich with lovely fruit as well as fine purity. Neither structured nor big, it is loaded with fruit. Enjoy it over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

CASTRO VENTOSA	2001	TINTO MENCIA	BIERZO	(\$25.00)	RED	87?
CASTRO VENTOSA	2003	TINTO MENCIA	BIERZO	(\$10.00)	RED	86
From the indigenous Mencia grape, the value-priced 2003 Tinto Mencia exhibits a deep ruby color along with a bouquet of red and black fruits intermixed with a hint of flowers. Soft, round, and elegant, this medium-bodied, cold climate offering will drink well for 2-3 years. The 2001 Tinto Mencia (sporting a nearly impossible to read label)			possesses a similar medium to dark ruby color as well as a complex nose of raspberries, cherries, currants, flowers, and earth. It is an elegant, medium-bodied effort that promises enjoyable drinking for another 3-4 years. Importer: Boutique Wine Collection, New York; tel. (914) 954-8583			
CAVAS EL CEP	1999	MARQUES DE GELIDA BRUT	PENEDES	(\$9.50)	SPARKLING WHITE	88
Another terrific value in sparkling wine from Spain, this blend of Macabeu, Xarel-Lo, Parellada, and Chardonnay is a crisp, elegant, estate-bottled effort offering notes of honeysuckle, a dry taste, and			excellent freshness as well as liveliness. Drink it over the next year. It is a superb value. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
CELLER DEL ROURE	2001	MADURESSA	VALENCIA	(\$25.00)	RED	88
Made from the region's indigenous varietal, Mando, and aged in French oak for 12 months, this distinctive 2001 exhibits a deep ruby/purple color along with a big nose of damp earth, characteristic, new saddle leather,			and berry fruit. Meaty and robust, with abundant fruit as well as serious structure, it should be consumed over the next 7-8 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
CELLER VALL LLACH	2001	EMBRUIX	PRIORAT	(\$28.00)	RED	94
CELLER VALL LLACH	2001	IDUS	PRIORAT	(\$28.00)	RED	92
CELLER VALL LLACH	2001	VALL LLACH	PRIORAT	(\$80.00)	RED	96
Run by Catalan folk singer Luis Llach, Celler Vall Llach has produced three impressive efforts. The elegant, pretty 2001 Idus , a blend of 40% Carignan, 20% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Syrah, and 10% Grenache aged 18 months in French oak, offers up aromas of raspberries, cherries, and that striking liquid minerality typical of this appellation. Medium-bodied with copious quantities of sweet fruit as well as undeniable complexity and character, it will drink well for 5-7 years. Sumptuous, complex, and drinking beautifully at present is the 2001 Embriux , a blend of 50% Grenache, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, and tiny quantities of Merlot, Syrah, and Carignan. It displays a deep ruby/purple color along with glorious aromas of			smoke, scorched earth, sweet raspberry and black currant fruit, a rich, intense palate, tremendous purity, and silky tannin. It tastes like a Pomerol from Priorat. Enjoy it over the next 10-12 years. The flagship cuvee, the 2001 Vall Llach , was fashioned from 65-year old Carignan vines (50%), Merlot (35%), and Cabernet Sauvignon (15%). It spent 17 months in new French oak prior to bottling. This deep ruby/purple colored offering exhibits great intensity, a beautifully textured mid-palate, and a 45-second finish. Pure notes of minerals, raspberries, flowers, and black fruits cascade over the palate in this multidimensional 2001. Drink it over the next 12 years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
CELLERS FUENTES	2001	EL PUIG	PRIORAT	(\$29.00)	RED	91+
CELLERS FUENTES	2000	EL PUIG	PRIORAT	(\$29.00)	RED	87
CELLERS FUENTES	2001	GRAN CLOS	PRIORAT	(\$55.00)	RED	93
The medium-bodied 2000 El Puig is an elegant, understated, restrained effort displaying mineral, flower, blueberry, and raspberry fruit characteristics. It needs to be drunk over the next 4-5 years. The compelling 2001 El Puig (a blend of 40% Grenache, 38% Carignan, 18% Cabernet Sauvignon, and the rest Syrah and Merlot) boasts far greater richness, aromatic complexity, and stature. Blue, red, and black fruits along with notions of liquid minerals, flowers, and toasty oak dominate this rich, impressively built 2001. Give it 2-4 more years of cellaring. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2014. The biggest offering is			the 2001 Gran Clos , a blend of 50% Grenache, 40% Carignan, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. An inky/purple color accompanies sweet aromas of blueberries, blackberries, crushed stones, and flowers. It possesses a velvety texture, a juicy mid-palate, and a long, concentrated, full-bodied, tannic finish. Give it 2-3 years of cellaring, and enjoy it over the following 12-15. Importer: a Christopher Cannon Selection, various American importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-8897			
CELLERS RIPOLL SANS CLOSA BATLLET-GRATLLOPS	2001		PRIORAT	(\$35.00)	RED	95
Believe it or not, this wine smelled like a hypothetical blend of the famed Pomerol, Le Pin, and the two distinctive Cabernet Sauvignons from Napa Valley, Colgin and Bryant. Truly great stuff, it boasts an inky/purple color as well as a gorgeous nose of blueberry liqueur intermixed with violets, licorice, toast, and crushed stones. It exhibits massive layers of			fruit and body, tremendous purity and palate presence, and a sumptuous finish. Exotic, rich, and distinctive, this is only the second vintage for this producer. Bottled unfiltered after aging in French and American oak for 14 months, it is also fairly priced for a wine this compelling. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
DES CENDIENTES DE JOSE PALACIOS	2001	CORULLON	BIERZO	(\$45.00)	RED	89+
DES CENDIENTES DE JOSE PALACIOS	2001	LA FARONA	BIERZO	(\$135.00)	RED	92
DES CENDIENTES DE JOSE PALACIOS	2001	LAS LAMAS	BIERZO	(\$110.00)	RED	90+
DES CENDIENTES DE JOSE PALACIOS	2001	MONCERBAL	BIERZO	(\$95.00)	RED	91
DES CENDIENTES DE JOSE PALACIOS	2001	SAN MARTIN	BIERZO	(\$80.00)	RED	91

This long-forgotten appellation situated on steep slopes of decomposed slate planted with a virtually unknown varietal called Mencia is being rediscovered by innovative viticulturists, producers, and importers. With ancient vines (this estate's are 60-100 years old) as well as a cool growing climate (the area is located between the coastal Galicia region and the continental Castille Leon), Alvaro Palacio, along with his partner Ricardo Perez, established this estate in 1998. The first few vintages were interesting, but not exciting enough to recommend. That all changed with the 2001 vintage, which enjoyed a virtually perfect growing season.

All of these offerings will appeal to those who love Pinot Noir, particularly French red Burgundy. They are the products of cool climate, bio-dynamic viticulture, grown in severe conditions, harvested by hand with minuscule yields, and bottled with neither fining nor filtration. All from single vineyards, they are aged in French barrels, of which 80% is new. The five cuvees range in production from an abundant 3,000 cases of Corullon, to a mere 45 cases (two barrels) of La Farona. What stands out about all five is their vivid aromatics. These are all relatively high elevation vineyards (planted between 400 and 900 meters above sea level). The **2001 Corullon** exhibits a deep ruby/purple-tinged color as well as a subtle, restrained, intellectually satisfying bouquet of crushed stones, white flowers, and blue as well as black fruits. Lightly-knit, with crisp acidity, hints of licorice and blueberries, medium body, and a crisp, vigorous yet refreshing finish, it appears to require another 2-3 years of cellaring, but

since I have no experience with the varietal or the aging potential of these wines, it is better to be conservative and consume it over the next 7-8 years. There are 160 cases of the **2001 San Martin** (a south-facing vineyard planted in both chalk and schist). It is a singular style of wine displaying a dark ruby/purple color as well as aromas of blueberries along with a crushed stone liqueur-like character. Fragrant and medium-bodied, with great precision/delineation, it is youthful and unevolved, but extremely promising. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2015. Limestone, chalk, and slate compose the vineyards from which the **2001 Moncerbal** (185 cases) emerges. It exhibits a deep ruby/purple color, great finesse, and a striking note of minerality along with touches of blueberry, licorice, and earth. Medium-bodied, with crisp acidity and sweet tannin, it should drink well for 10-12 years. The **2001 Las Lamas** reveals a creamier texture along with additional earth notes and broader flavors offering hints of melted licorice, a sleeky blueberry/raspberry fruit profile, moderate tannin, and good zesty acidity providing uplift and vibrancy. Long and persistent, it may turn out to be the fleshiest of these five cuvees. Anticipated maturity: now-2012. As mentioned, there are only 45 cases of the **2001 La Farona**, a southeast-facing vineyard planted at 855 meters in both sandstone and schist. It boasts tremendous density along with a Pinot Noir-like bouquet of red and black fruits intermixed with mineral and floral notes, good acidity, ripe tannin, and a structured, zesty mouthfeel. Anticipated maturity: now-2012.

All of these offerings possess wonderful freshness, beautiful integration of wood, tremendous purity, and medium-bodied, high-strung personalities. It should be fascinating to follow their evolutions. While they

are expensive as well as unproven, they are undeniably singularly styled wines that merit attention. Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 998-4404

CIMS DE PORRERA	2001	CLASSIC	PRIORAT	(\$55.00)	RED	94+
CIMS DE PORRERA	2001	SOLANES	PRIORAT	(\$25.00)	RED	96

The straightforward **2001 Solanes** is a blend of 55% Carignan and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, Syrah, and Merlot. It is an earthy, straightforward, austere, medium-bodied offering with a nice perfume, but a dry, raspy palate. Drink it over the next 3-4 years. More interesting is the **2001 Classic**, a blend of 85% Carignan (from 60-100 year old vines) and 15% Grenache. Notes of bay leaves, thyme, spice box,

graphite, black currants, and cherries are present in this vibrant, cooler climate-styled Priorat. With medium to full body, excellent density, and firm tannin, it should be at its apogee between 2007-2014. It is a stunning wine. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American Importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

CLOS ERASMUS	2001		PRIORAT	(\$100.00)	RED	98
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A wine of great intensity, this 415 case blend of 73% Grenache, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Syrah aged in 100% new French oak casks, reveals an inky/purple color as well as a light but promising bouquet of acacia flowers, raspberries, blackberries, and hints of blueberries, smoke, and the essence of minerality. With extraordinary richness, good underlying acidity, firm tannin, and a multilayered

mouthfeel, this spectacularly concentrated 2001 is only hinting at its ultimate potential. Patience will be rewarded as this is a *tour de force* in winemaking, marrying the elegance and complexity of Priorat with the extraordinary concentration and intensity that comes from low yields and ripe fruit. Anticipated maturity: 2008-2020+. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

CLOS FIGUERAS	2001	CLOS FIGUERAS	PRIORAT	(\$55.00)	RED	96
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CLOS FIGUERAS	2001	FONT DE LA FIGUERAS	PRIORAT	(\$23.00)	RED	88
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Well worth checking out, this tiny estate is owned by French wine broker Christopher Cannan, and the wines are fashioned by René Barbier of Clos Mogador. Their second wine, the **2001 Font de la Figueras** is a blend of 40% Grenache, 40% Carignan, 10% Syrah, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. A deep ruby/purple color as well as a rich perfume of crushed minerals, violets, and black currants are followed by a medium-bodied, refreshing, vigorous red to enjoy over the next 7-8 years. The flagship offering is the limited production cuvee of **2001 Clos Figueras**, a blend of 30% Grenache, 30% Carignan, 20% Merlot, 10% Syrah, and 10%

Cabernet Sauvignon. Sadly, there are only 168 cases produced. It exhibits an inky purple color, great richness, and tremendously intense, provocative aromas of black fruits, crushed stones, and flowers. Full-bodied, with fabulous richness, an expansive texture, and a long, firm, structured, well-delineated finish, it will be at its finest between 2008-2020. Bravo to Christopher Cannan, one of the great gentlemen in the wine business. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

CLOS DELS LIOPS	2000		PRIORAT	(\$50.00)	RED	91
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There are 800-cases of this blend of 30-50 year old Carignan (about 80%) and 20% young vine Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, and Syrah. It is aged in 100% new French oak prior to being bottled without fining or filtration. The **2000 Clos dels Liops**, from a vineyard called Clos Manyetes, possesses a deep ruby/purple color in addition

to a bouquet of cranberry and raspberry liqueur intertwined with liquid stone-like characteristics. Medium-bodied, elegant, and rich with beautiful sweetness as well as overall harmony, it should drink well for 10-15 years. The winemaker at this estate is René Barbier. Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 998-4484

CLOS MANYETES	2001		PRIORAT	(\$60.00)	RED	93+
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A stunning effort made by René Barbier, this 2001 exhibits tremendous flavor intensity along with complex notes of black fruits, spice, earth, and cedar in a vivid display of fruit and *terroir*. Long, expansive, and

beautifully balanced, it can be consumed now and over the next 10+ years. Importer: Boulique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA; tel. (814) 954-6583

CLOS MOGADOR	2001		PRIORAT	(\$65.00)	RED	98
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Simply sensational, this inky/purple-colored 2001 boasts gorgeous blueberry and raspberry liqueur characteristics intertwined with crushed stone, lilac, and subtle background espresso/toasty new oak notes. Powerful, concentrated, and multilayered, with tremendous purity and intensity, this prodigious effort is one of the candidates for wine of the

vintage in Priorat. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2020. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	1996	ALENZA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$50.00-60.00)	RED	91
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BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	1995	ALENZA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$50.00-60.00)	RED	91+
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BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	2000	RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	89
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BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	1999	RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	91
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BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	2001	TINTO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	91
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BODEGAS CONDADO DE HAZA	2000	TINTO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	89
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The large estate of Condado de Haza encompasses over 500 hillside acres of Tempranillo vines that proprietor Alejandro Fernandez began planting in 1989. The **2001 Tinto**, which is aged 15 months in American oak (most of it new), exhibits a deep ruby/purple color in addition to a rich perfume of graphite intermixed with blackberries, black currants, and flowers. Full-bodied, elegant, rich, and pure, with loads of fruit, abundant glycerol, and a long, concentrated finish, it is still unevolved and primary, but reveals tremendous potential. The **2000 Tinto** exhibits a similar color, medium to full body, excellent ripeness as well as sweetness, and abundant amounts of black cherry and currant flavors. Its aging in American oak is apparent in the mocha, espresso, coconut, and licorice characteristics. There are about 25,000 cases of the Tinto, and 2,000 cases of the Reservas. The **2000 Reserva** offers up aromas of lead pencil shavings intermixed with spicy new oak and sweet black cherries, medium to full body, a seamless integration of acidity and tannin, and an opulent, fruit-driven finish. Enjoy it over the next 7-8 years. Even better is the

1999 Reserva. It reveals scents of graphite, earth, melted licorice, road tar, sweet espresso, black cherries, and licorice-infused raspberry and currant flavors. This concentrated, medium to full-bodied, long, impressive 1999 should drink well for a decade.

There are 2,000 cases of the Alenza, named after both Alejandro and his wife, Esperanza. Aged 30 months in primarily new American oak, it is, as Alejandro said, "a wine for traditionalists." A sensational effort, the **1995 Alenza** reveals a youthfulness that belies its age. A deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by scents of damp earth, melted licorice, black currants, and spicy wood. Full bodied and rich with substantial tannin, it is just beginning to hit its apogee, and should drink well for another decade. The huge **1996 Alenza** boasts a big, smoky, dried herb, black currant-scented bouquet with loads of truffle, black cherry, currant, and raspberry liqueur-like notes. Substantial in the mouth, with full body, firm tannin, and a long, heady finish, it should be at its finest between 2006-2016. Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257-7225

BODEGAS J. C. CONDE	2001	NEO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$51.00)	RED	95
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BODEGAS J. C. CONDE	2000	NEO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$48.00)	RED	92
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BODEGAS J. C. CONDE	2001	NEO PUNTA ESENCIA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$85.00)	RED	95+
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Proprietor Isaac Fernandez, who continues to work at the nearby Maum estate, and whose uncle is no other than Vega Sicilia's former winemaker, Mariano Garcia, has fashioned a beauty from yields of 21 hectoliters per hectare. After a long maceration of three weeks, the **2000 Neo** was aged in 75% new American oak barrels and 25% new French, where melolactic took place, and was bottled unfiltered. An opaque purple color accompanies a gorgeous perfume of cresson, truffles, new saddle leather, roasted meats, graphite, and *crème de cassis*. This luscious, full-

bodied, concentrated red possesses moderate tannin, but it is well integrated into the richly extracted, multilayered personality of this beautifully proportioned Ribera del Duero. It will drink well for 10-12 years. Even more prodigious is the **2001 Neo**, which spent 15 months in equal parts new French oak and one-year old American barrels. Its opaque purple color is followed by sensual aromas of espresso roast, white chocolate, *crème de cassis*, graphite, and tobacco. Dense, full-bodied, and layered, with superb concentration, terrific purity, and a long, opulent

finish, it needs 1-2 years of cellaring, and should evolve beautifully for 10-15 years.

A brilliant effort from 80-year old Tempranillo vines, aged 20 months in new French oak, and bottled without filtration, Fernandez has hit the bull's eye with the impressively endowed **2001 Neo Punta Esencia**. More similar to a Bordeaux first or second-growth than a Spanish Ribera del

Duero, it boasts an inky/ruby/purple color as well as a sensational perfume of espresso roast, graphite, black currant liqueur, and *pain grillé*. Full-bodied and youthful, tasting more like a barrel sample than a finished wine, it is loaded with potential and built for the long haul. My instincts suggest cellaring it for 2-3 years, and drinking it over the following 10-15. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

CONFERIA DE SCALA DEI 2003 LES BRUGUERES

CONFERIA DE SCALA DEI 2000 IUGITER

This is one of the more reasonably priced wineries from the fashionable Priorat appellation. The question mark affixed to the score of the **2003 Les Brugueres** is basically a warning. This is an intriguing (I loved it) wine with a murky light gold color. The color should alert tasters that something is going on here ... and a lot is. Made from 100+ year old vines of white Grenache, it exhibits a remote similarity to a top-flight white Châteauneuf du Pape. Very kinky, it reveals aromas of linseed oil, melted wax, ripe fruits (particularly peach and lychee), and underlying minerality. Dry, full-bodied, and powerful, with the intensity of a substantial red in its flavor profile, it is one of those "love it or leave it" dry whites. Although unusual, to my tastes,

PRIORAT	(\$25.00)	WHITE	92?
PRIORAT	(\$25.00)	RED	89

it is brilliant. My instincts suggest it should be drunk over the next 6-12 months because I can't imagine it holding together longer. But, who knows? It is hard to find a top quality red Priorat for under \$50, but the **2000 Iugiter** is a beautiful blend of 87% Grenache (75 year old vines), 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 3% Carignan. A sexy hussy, it boasts a dark ruby/purple color in addition to plentiful cranberry, berry, and blueberry fruit with pepper, licorice, and minerality in the background. Textured and round, but not as complex, structured, or intense as many of its peers, it is a delicious Priorat to drink over the next 3-4 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

OLIVER CONTI 1999 TINTO

This distinctive, artisanal, hand-crafted Tinto was aged 12 months in French oak and three years in bottle prior to release. A blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 10% Cabernet Franc, it boasts a dense opaque purple color as well as aromas of blueberry liqueur, crushed stones, acacia flowers, and a hint of wood. It is an impeccably

COSTA BRAVA (\$45.00) RED 90+

made, tightly knit, medium-bodied red that comes across as a hybrid version of a Bordeaux and a mountain-styled California Cabernet Sauvignon. Savory and rich, but playing it close to the vest, it will benefit from 2-3 years of cellaring, and should age for 10-15. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800

COOP DEL ROSARIO 2002 CARRIL DE COTOS TINTO

COOP DEL ROSARIO 2001 CARRIL DE COTOS CRIANZA

Two terrific values, the **2002 Carril de Cotos Tinto**, a 100% Tempranillo made and aged in tank, is a succulent, juicy, explosively fruity effort fashioned from nearly 100-year old vines. Revealing succulent licorice and berry fruit characteristics, it may be Spain's answer to a high class California Zinfandel. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. The oak-aged **2001 Carril de**

LA MANCHA (\$8.00) RED 88

LA MANCHA (\$14.00) RED 88

Cotos Crianza spent 9 months in French and American oak, and is not the least bit better for it. While firmer, with additional cedar and spice box notes, it does not have the exuberance and pure, fleshy fruit of its less expensive and less pretentious sibling. Nevertheless, it is still a fine wine. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

CORONILLA 2001 CRIANZA

A very good value from a backwater area of Spain, this 2001, made from the indigenous Bobal grape, reveals a medium deep ruby color, a supple texture, an easy-going personality, and a style that begs for

UTIEL-REQUENA (\$15.00) RED 86

consumption over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Tasman Imports, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 296-2700

COSTERS DEL SIURANA 2001 CLOS DE L'OBAC

This unfiltered blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, Syrah, Merlot, and Carignan, aged for 14 months in new French oak, and bottled unfiltered, boasts a deep purple color along with a pure bouquet of raspberries, blueberries, wet stones, and toasty, subtle

PRIORAT (\$55.00) RED 91

vanillin. Medium-bodied with outstanding concentration, impressive elegance, and a nice texture, this tight but promising 2001 should hit its prime in 2-4 years, and last for 12-15. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

DEHESA LA GRANJA 2001

DEHESA LA GRANJA 2000

DEHESA LA GRANJA 1999

DEHESA LA GRANJA 1998

This large production of 25,000 cases is aged in American oak. The estate was purchased by Alejandro Fernandez in 1998. Located in the province of Zamora, the ungrafted Tempranillo vines have been augmented with 525 acres of Tempranillo planted by late 2000. The first vintage was the **1998**, which was fermented in new oak and aged two years in barrel prior to bottling. A plump, concentrated effort, it possesses a saturated deep ruby color as well as an enticing bouquet of brown sugar, black cherries, currants, and licorice. Ripe, medium to full-bodied, and accessible, it should drink well for another two years. The dense ruby/purple-colored **1999** exhibits more rustic tannin along with aromas of espresso intermixed with black chocolate, currants, and

ZAMORA (\$20.00) RED (88-90)

ZAMORA (\$20.00) RED 87

ZAMORA (\$20.00) RED 88

ZAMORA (\$20.00) RED 89

sweet cherries. While more firmly structured than the 1998, I would still opt for drinking it over the next 3-4 years. Soft, elegant, and more restrained, the deep ruby/purple-colored, medium-bodied **2000** possesses a spicy, leathery finish. Anticipated maturity: now. The finest vintage to date appears to be the elegant, dense ruby/purple-colored **2001**. Sumptuous aromas of blackberries, black cherries, mocha, and chocolate are followed by an impressively constructed, rich, flavorful, medium to full-bodied wine with well-integrated, supple tannin. Long and rich, it should drink well for 5-6 years. These four offerings are all excellent values. Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257-7225

DO FERREIRO 2002 ALBARINO

DO FERREIRO 2002 ALBARINO CEPAS VELLAS

One-fifth of this organically run 12.5-acre vineyard is composed of 200-year old Albarino vines from which they fashion the Cepas Vellas (old vines). The fruity **2002 Albarino**, which is completely fermented with natural yeasts and aged in stainless steel, displays notes of lemon blossoms, candied limes, and honeysuckle in its medium-bodied, crisp, clean, refreshing personality. Enjoy it over the next 12-18 months.

RIAS BAIXAS (\$18.00) WHITE 89

RIAS BAIXAS (\$30.00) WHITE 90

Possessing more intensity, texture and depth as well as additional candied orange/lemon characteristics is the medium-bodied, aromatic **2002 Albarino Cepas Vellas**. Aged 12 months on its lees, and fermented and aged completely in steel, there are 2,000 bottles of this beauty. Drink it over the next two years. Importer: André Tamars, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245

DOS VICTORIAS 2001 CRIANZA ELIAS MORA

DOS VICTORIAS 2000 CRIANZA ELIAS MORA

DOS VICTORIAS 2000 GRAN ELIAS MORA

DOS VICTORIAS 2002 VERDEJO JOSE PARIENTE

A rare occurrence in Spain, Dos Victorias is run by two women, Victoria Pariente and Victoria Benavides. The delicious **2002 Verdejo José Pariente** is not only a good buy, but a fine introduction to the modern style of light-bodied, crisp yet fruit-driven Spanish whites. Underlying citrus and mineral characteristics provide an appealing character. Enjoy it over the next year, preferably with seafood and shell fish.

The **Crianza Elias Mora** is aged 5 months in both American and French oak, is put through an egg white fining, and bottled without filtration. The deep ruby/purple-colored **2000** is an oaky, spicy effort possessing chunky fruit as well as an attractive mouthfeel. Anticipated maturity: now. The real buy is the **2001**, which exhibits more fruit and volume without losing its elegance and purity. A deep ruby/purple color

TORO (\$20.00) RED 89

TORO (\$29.00) RED 88

TORO (\$55.00) RED 92

RUEDA (\$14.00) WHITE 87

is followed by sweet black cherry and currant aromas as well as surprisingly density. This is a lovely, supple-textured wine to drink over the next 2-3 years.

A juiced up cuvée is the spectacular **2000 Gran Elias Mora** (100 cases for the USA) fashioned from 40-year old Tinta de Toro vines, and aged 12 months in 100% new French oak. This unfiltered red exhibits an opaque purple color along with a big, sweet nose of blackberry and cherry liqueur intermixed with hints of road tar, licorice, and pepper. Loads of depth, great ripeness, tremendous purity, and a multilayered texture result in a substantial yet elegant, well-balanced red to drink over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

DURATON	2000	CASTILLA LEON	(\$21.00)	RED	89
An excellent value, this blend of 55% Tempranillo, 25% Syrah, and the rest Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon offers a deep ruby/purple color along with a lovely bouquet of black cherry and currant fruit, excellent purity, medium		to full body, and a style not unlike a plump, fleshy Bordeaux. Drink it over the next 3-4 years. It spent 13 months in French oak. Importer: Jorge Ontorio, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (701) 461-5767			
EL REGAJAL	2002 SELECCION ESPECIAL VINO DE MADRID		(\$18.00)	RED	90
An excellent value, this enticing, modern styled, Bordeaux-like effort is a blend of 45% Tempranillo, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Syrah, and 10% Merlot aged 14 months in new French oak exhibits a dense ruby/purple color as well as a big, sweet nose of melted chocolate, licorice, black currants, and tobacco leaves. The heady bouquet is		followed by equally fleshy, medium to full-bodied, nicely textured flavors with excellent purity, ripeness, and rich fruit. I suspect more complex aromatics will evolve over the next several years, but this is clearly a wine to drink in its exuberant youth ... over the next 3-4 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
EL VINCULO	2001 CRIANZA	CASTILLA LA MANCHA	(\$38.00)	RED	(88-91)
EL VINCULO	2000 CRIANZA	CASTILLA LA MANCHA	(\$38.00)	RED	87
EL VINCULO	1999 RESERVA	CASTILLA LA MANCHA	(\$38.00)	RED	90
Produced from old, head-pruned, organically cultivated Tempranillo vines, the 2001 El Vinculo Crianza is impressive. Still in the barrel, it may ultimately turn out to be the finest wine of this trio as it possesses the most saturated purple color in addition to sweet black cherry and berry fruit, medium to full body, terrific purity, and well-integrated wood, acidity, and alcohol. It will last for 7-8 years. The 15,000 case cuvée of 2000 El Vinculo Crianza exhibits attractive chocolatey, earthy, berry fruit notes, medium body, less concentration and expansiveness than the 2001 or the 1999 Reserva, but sweet fruit on the attack, and a style that begs to be drunk during its first 5-6 years		of life. The limited production (20,000 bottles) of 1999 El Vinculo Reserva boasts a dense ruby/purple color followed by a big, sweet nose of American oak (coconut and vanilla) interwoven with black cherry and cassis fruit. A sexy, opulently-textured, medium-bodied offering with adequate acidity as well as sweet, well-integrated tannin, it is a delicious Spanish red to drink now and over the next 7-8 years. Readers should know that this estate is relatively new, having been acquired by Alejandro Fernandez (of Pesquera fame). Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257-7225			
JOSEF FORASTER	2003 ULL DE LLEBRE COLLITA	CONCA DE BARBERA	(\$10.00)	RED	85
JOSEF FORASTER	2001 ULL DE LLEBRE CRANCA	CONCA DE BARBERA	(\$15.00)	RED	86
The medium ruby-colored 2003 Ull de Llebre Collita offers primary notes of ripe jammy cherries, flowers, and earth in its Pinot Noir-like aromatics. Medium-bodied, with background wood as well as a short finish, it will drink well for 1-2 years. The 2001 Ull de Llebre Cranca reveals a similar color with a hint of lightning at the edge. Aromas of		plums, cherries, earth, spice box, and new oak are found in this monolithic, attractive, well-made offering. It, too, should be consumed over the next 1-2 years. Both of these wines are good values. Importer: Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA; tel. (914) 954-6583			
BARBARA FORES	2000 COMA D'EN POU	TERRA ALTA	(\$45.00)	RED	92
BARBARA FORES	1999 COMA D'EN POU	TERRA ALTA	(\$45.00)	RED	91
This blend of 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Grenache, 28% Syrah, and the rest Merlot is aged 18 months in French oak. The 1999 Coma d'En Pou offers up aromas of plum liqueur, crème de cassis, licorice, and espresso roast. Full-bodied, with a terrific texture, gorgeous purity, and a long, opulent finish, drink this hedonistic 1999 over the next 7-8		years. Made from an identical blend, but aged 16 months in French oak (70% new), the 2000 Coma d'En Pou is even richer with more power, volume, and a longer finish. It does a brilliant job of concealing its 14.5% alcohol. Consume it between 2006-2015. Importer: Aurelio Cabebrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
FRA FULÇO	2001 VILELLA ALTA	PRIORAT	(\$65.00)	RED	89+?
Old vine Carignan dominates this blend, which includes 30% Grenache and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. It exhibits a dense, deep ruby/purple color, a monolithic personality, and loads of potential. Austere tannin may prove worrisome in the future, but it possesses a		striking minerality intermixed with blue and black fruits galore. Give it 1-2 years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 10-12 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
BODEGAS SILVANO GARCIA	2001 MONASTRELL	JUMILLA	(\$21.00; 500 ml)	RED DESSERT	93
BODEGAS SILVANO GARCIA	2001 MOSCATEL	JUMILLA	(\$21.00; 500 ml)	WHITE DESSERT	90
BODEGAS SILVANO GARCIA	2002 VIÑA HONDA	JUMILLA	(\$12.00)	RED	87
BODEGAS SILVANO GARCIA	2001 VIÑA HONDA ALLIER FINESE	JUMILLA	(\$15.00)	RED	87
Two bargain-price offerings, the 2002 Viña Honda, a tank-fermented and aged blend of 85% Monastrell and 15% Tempranillo, exhibits aromas of allspice, plums, and cherries in its dark ruby-colored, medium-bodied personality. The elegant aromatics and complexity are Pinot Noir-like. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. The 2001 Viña Honda Allier Finesse was aged six months in new French and American oak. It is a fleshy, nicely textured, more structured effort offering a spicy espresso, chocolatey, black cherry, and cola-scented bouquet. Drink this seductive red over the next 2-3 years.		similar to a southern French Beaumes de Venise. A light gold color is accompanied by a blast of exotic fruits, an unctuous texture, and enough acidity to provide vigor and freshness. This moderately sweet 2001 is best consumed over the next 1-2 years. More serious is the Amarone-styled 2001 Monastrell, a dense purple-colored effort displaying notes of barbecue spice intermixed with melted road tar, licorice, and blackberry liqueur. This full-bodied, sweet, thick 2001 boasts tremendous intensity and purity as well as that wonderful taste of chocolate-covered figs. Drink it over the next 4-5 years, although I suspect it will last longer. Importer: Aurelio Cabebrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
GRAMONA	2000 CAVA "SUITE"	PENEDES	(\$15.00)	SPARKLING WHITE	89
GRAMONA	2003 GESSAMI	PENEDES	(\$25.00)	WHITE	89
A great value in sparkling wine from Spain, the 2000 Cava "Suite," an attractive blend of Chardonnay, Xarello, and Macabeu, is from a family owned winery with total control over their vineyard sources. A serious effort, it reveals excellent broad dough and grapefruit characteristics in a light to medium bodied, surprisingly flavorful format with well-defined pinpoint bubbles as well as a crisp finish. It should drink well over the next year. Also		an excellent value, the flamboyant, floral (lychees, peaches, apricots, etc.), richly fruity, dry, medium bodied, fleshy 2003 Gessami is impressively well made. It is reminiscent of an Albarino from Spain's northwest sector of Galicia. The blend is 80% Muscat Alexandria, 30% Sauvignon Blanc, and 10% Muscat Frontignan. Drink it over the next year. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
GUELBENZU	2001 EVO	RIBERA DEL QUEILES	(\$30.00)	RED	88
This intriguing blend of 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, and 10% Tempranillo possesses a dense ruby/purple color as well as a big, spicy, earthy nose revealing aromas of plums, forest floor, and		sweet cherries. Drink this supple-textured, delicious, seductive 2001 over the next 3-4 years. Importer: Classical Wines from Spain, Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 6713			
HACIENDAS	1999 MASIA MONISTROL	ANDALUSIA	(\$13.00)	RED	87
A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, this value tastes like a lower level Bordeaux. A nice texture, medium body, and plenty of black currant fruit intermixed with cedar, spice box, and weedy		tobacco are found in this appealing effort. Drink it over the next 2-3 years. No known American importer.			
HEREDAD GUZMAN ALDAZABAL	1999 GUZMAN ALDAZABAL	RIOJA	(\$24.00)	RED	89
HEREDAD GUZMAN ALDAZABAL	2001 GUZMAN ALDAZABAL EXALTACION	RIOJA	(\$90.00)	RED	93
The 1999 Guzman Aldazabal, a blend of 88% Tempranillo, 7% Mazuelo, and 5% Graciano, was aged in 80% new French oak and 40% American oak for 13 months. Complex aromas of plums, figs, tobacco, and sweet		cherries is followed by a medium to full-bodied, dense, rich yet elegant, complex, evolved Rioja to drink over the next 5-7 years. The extraordinary 2001 Guzman Aldazabal Exaltacion is a blend of 95%			

Tempranillo and 5% Graciano fashioned from 95-year old vines. Yields were a mere 11 hectoliters per hectare. It was aged 10 months in new French and Russian oak, and bottled unfiltered. A beauty, it boasts a dark ruby/purple color in addition to a rich bouquet of scorched earth, black

and red fruits, figs, tobacco, and graphite. Medium to full-bodied, remarkably elegant, and already complex, it should provide immense pleasure over the next 10-15 years. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

LAN	2000	RIOJA LIMITED EDITION	RIOJA	(\$45.00)	RED	90
Packaged in an extremely heavy (and I mean weighty) bottle, this Limited Edition Rioja possesses superb concentration, but it is hard to tell whether it is a Napa Cabernet or an extracted, high test effort from Rioja. Nevertheless, technically, it deserves high marks as it is pure, with			nicely integrated wood, concentration, and exuberance. It would be nice to see more personality and soul, but there is a lot going on here, and perhaps it is just a matter of time before that all emerges. Importer: Classical Wines from Spain, Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713			
LO GIVOT	2001	VILELLA BAIXA	PRIORAT	(\$50.00)	RED	95
A blend of equal parts Grenache, Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, and a dollop of Syrah, this impressive offering is the creation of Professor Nadal, who teaches oenology at the University of Taragona. Its dense ruby/purple color is accompanied by a sweet nose of crushed rocks intermixed with raspberries, blueberries, and mountain fruits. Full-			bodied with an intensity and richness that build incrementally as well as subtlety, this beautiful effort is already accessible, but it should hit its peak in 2-3 years, and last for 10-15+. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565			
LOS ASTRALES	2001	ASTRALES	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$48.00)	RED	93
This offering should not be confused with the great old vine Shiraz Astralis from Clarendon Hills in McLaren Vale, Australia. Los Astrales's 2001 Astrales , made from 20-70 year old Tinto Fino (Tempranillo), was aged in primarily new French oak, and bottled without filtration. Young and unevolved, with enormous upside potential, its dense purple color is followed			by aromas of scorched earth as well as sweet, ripe <i>crème de cassis</i> , plum, and fig-like fruit. Full-bodied with a layered mouthfeel, and a big, blockbuster finish displaying serious tannin, it requires 2-3 years of cellaring, and should be consumed over the following 12-15. Impressive! Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
LUSCO DO MINO	2002	ALBARINO	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$20.00)	WHITE	88
An elegant tank-fermented and aged Albarino, this 2002 offers up aromas of tropical fruits along with good underlying acidity, and a refreshing, lively style. It should be enjoyed over the next year. A <u>fine</u>			<u>value</u> . Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257-7225			
FINCA LUZON	2002		JUMILLA	(\$9.00)	RED	87
Another <u>value</u> from importer Jorge Ordoñez, the 2002 Finca Luzon, a blend of 85% Merlot and 15% Mourvèdre, exhibits a deep ruby color along with a medium-bodied bouquet of cola and berry fruit, a supple			texture, and a spicy, easy-going finish. Drink it over the next year. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
MARQUES DE LA CONCORDIA	1999	DOMINICO DE SUSAR ENARDIS	RIOJA	(\$45.00)	RED	89
MARQUES DE LA CONCORDIA	2001	HACIENDA CONCORDIA DE SUSAR	RIOJA	(\$50.00)	RED	92
Marques de la Concordia is part of the huge Bodegas Unidas operation. The 1999 Dominico de Susar Enardis reveals a Bordeaux-like personality with notes of smoke, earth, dried herbs, graphite, new oak, and red as well as black fruits. Medium to full-bodied and soft, it is ideal for drinking over the next 5-7 years. The star of this duo is the 2001 Hacienda Concordia de Susar , an unusual blend of equal parts			Tempranillo and Syrah aged in 100% new French oak for nearly two years. An inky/purple color is followed by beautiful aromas of black fruits, graphite, melted licorice, creosote, and spice box. Dense, full-bodied, young and promising, this is a textured, long, intense 2001 to enjoy over the next decade. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports, Greenwich, CT; tel. (203) 531-3740			
MARQUES DE MURRIETA YGAY	1978	CASTILLO YGAY GRAN RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$75.00)	RED	88
MARQUES DE MURRIETA YGAY	2001	MAZUELO	RIOJA	(\$55.00-65.00)	RED	91+
Sadly, there are only limited quantities of the exceptional 2001 Mazuelo (from a 25-year old vineyard). This dense ruby-colored offering boasts a sweet bouquet of forest floor intermixed with black plums, berries, and spice box. In the mouth, it is rich, medium to full-bodied, elegant, and beautifully balanced with a long finish. Although accessible, it is still primary, and should hit its peak in 2-3 years, and last for 10-12. A limited selection, the 1978 Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva reveals a			medium ruby color with lightening at the edge, along with a perfume of fresh mushrooms intertwined with cedar, spice cake, red currants, and sweet cherries. Medium-bodied and elegant, with light tannin, noticeable acidity (a hint of volatile acid), and loads of character, it is not nearly as deep as its younger sibling, but it is a pretty, distinguished effort. Drink it over the next 5-7 years. Importer: William Grant & Sons, Edison, NJ; tel. (732) 225-9000			
MARQUES DE VARGAS	1999	RIOJA	RIOJA	(\$35.00)	RED	89
MARQUES DE VARGAS	1999	RIOJA HACIENDA PRADOLAGAR	RIOJA	(\$154.00)	RED	92
MARQUES DE VARGAS	2000	RIOJA RESERVA PRIVADA	RIOJA	(\$76.00)	RED	90
MARQUES DE VARGAS	1999	RIOJA RESERVA PRIVADA	RIOJA	(\$70.00)	RED	90
With the exception of the luxury priced Hacienda Pradolagar, all of these wines are aged in primarily Russian oak. The least expensive offering, the 1999 Rioja , exhibits spicy, cedary, sweet cherry, new leather, and dried herb characteristics in its fruit-driven, fleshy personality. A blend of 75% Tempranillo and the rest Grenache and Manzuolo, it spent 23 months in a combination of Russian, French, and American oak. Drink it over the next 5-7 years. The drier 1999 Rioja Reserva Privada does not offer the fruit kick of its less expensive sibling. An elegant, Graves-like earthy, mineral character is accompanied by notes of dried herbs, cherries, and red currants. It is best drunk over the next 5-7 years. The 2000 Rioja Reserva			Privada offers up pure, sweet black currant and cherry fruit, nicely integrated toasty new oak, and hints of smoke, licorice, and Provencal herbs in a spicy, medium-bodied, stylish format. This modern-styled Rioja should drink well for 7-10 years. The 1999 Rioja Hacienda Pradolagar is a selection of the finest barrels in the cellar. Its deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by a dense, slightly international bouquet revealing plenty of new oak, loads of black fruits, graphite, espresso roast, and dried herbs. Great fruit on the attack leads to a beautiful mid-palate, medium to full body, and a long, heady finish. Consume it over the next decade. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462			
PEDRO-LUIS MARTINEZ	2002	ALTENO	JUMILLA	(\$12.00)	RED	87
This blend of 75% Monastrell (Mourvèdre), 15% Syrah, and 10% Tempranillo was completely tank-fermented and aged. Soft for a wine with this much Mourvèdre, it reveals a deep ruby color in addition to sweet berry,			tree bark, and earth aromas. Lush and fruity, this elegant, bargain-priced 2002 will drink well for 1-2 years. It represents a <u>great value</u> . Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
MARTINEZ LA ORDEN	2001	LA ORBE	RIOJA	(\$18.00)	RED	89
A complex, sexy concoction of tobacco smoke and ripe strawberry and cherry fruit emerges from this medium-bodied, nicely textured, elegant 2001. Drink this seductive, disarming Rioja over the next 5-6			years. An <u>excellent value</u> , it spent six months in 70% French and 30% American oak prior to bottling. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875			
MAS COMTAL	2000	PETREA	PENEDES	(\$50.00)	RED	90
One of the finest Spanish Merlots I have ever tasted, the 2000 Petrea offers up aromas of caramel, toffee, dried herbs, smoke, and cherry liqueur in a sweet, dense, medium to full-bodied, opulent style. Drink it over the			next 4-5 years. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897			
MAS DOIX	2001	DOIX COSTERS DE VINYES VELLES	PRIORAT	(\$80.00)	RED	98+
MAS DOIX	2001	SALANQUES	PRIORAT	(\$35.00)	RED	89
The 2001 Salanques is a reasonably priced offering from Priorat. A blend of 60% Grenache, 20% Carignan, and the rest Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah, it is a medium-bodied, elegant red with plenty of			red and black fruits as well as notions of minerals and smoke. It is best drunk over the next 5-6 years. A prodigious effort, the 2001 Doix Costers de Vinyes Velles is a blend of 55% Grenache (from 90+ year old vines)			

and 45% Carignan (from 100+ year old vines). There are about 300 cases for the USA market. An inky/purple color is followed by sumptuous aromas of scorched earth, *arôme de cassis*, graphite, licorice, and a hint of balsamic vinegar. Rich, unctuously textured, and full-bodied, but

tremendously layered and nuanced, I was surprised to learn it was aged in 100% new French oak. The finish lasts for 50+ seconds. It should evolve nicely for 12-15 years, possibly longer. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

MAS IGNEUS 2003 BARRANC DELS CLOSOS

It is rare to see white wine emerging from Priorat, a region better known for classic reds. However, Mas Igneus has hit the bull's eye with two of the finest dry whites I have tasted from this appellation. The 2003 *Barranc dels Closos* is a distinctive blend of 50% Macabeu, 30% Grenache Blanc, 15% Pedro Ximenes, and 5% Muscat aged three months in French oak. A fragrant, flamboyant perfume of tropical fruits and honey jumps from the glass of this medium-bodied, crisp, refreshing white. With loads of body,

PRIORAT (\$17.00) WHITE 90

fruit, and character, it will drink well for 12-18 months. The 2003 *F A 104* (100% Grenache Blanc) was produced from 50-/0-year old vines, and aged four months in French oak. The excellent minerality that is so much a part of this appellation's red wines comes through in the crushed stone and floral notes. Tasty, medium-bodied, and slightly austere, it represents a Spanish version of a French Chablis. Enjoy this intriguing white over the next several years. Importer: Langdon Silverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800

MAS MARTINET 2001 CLOS MARTINET

Two brilliant efforts from this top quality Priorat producer, the 2001 *Martinet Bru* is a great value for its stature. A blend of 40% Merlot, 30% Grenache, and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, its deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by aromas of black cherries, currants, plums, melted licorice, toasty oak, and spring flowers. Full-bodied and opulently textured, it is already drinking beautifully, yet should continue to evolve for 7-8 years. The flagship offering, the inky/purple-colored 2001 *Clos Martinet*, is a blend of 38% Grenache, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Carignan, 12%

PRIORAT (\$60.00) RED 96

Syrah, and the rest Merlot. With great density and fabulously explosive aromatics (jacaranda flowers, crushed blackberries, blueberry liqueur, and wet stones), this full-bodied, compellingly rich, multilayered, awesome wine is a great example of what makes the Priorat appellation so special. Still young and unevolved, it needs 2-1 more years of cellaring, and should last for 15+ years. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American Importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

MAS QUE VINOS 2001 LA PLAZUELA

Made from Grenache and the indigenous Concibel grape, this spectacularly rich, concentrated Spanish red was aged one year in both French and American oak barrels. An impressive effort, it boasts a dense ruby/purple color in addition to a complex bouquet of smoke, cedar wood, blackberries, black currants, high quality toast, and spice

VINOS DE LA TIERRA (\$60.00) RED 94

box. It possesses a Bordeaux-like elegance and complexity, but the generosity and texture of a southern Rhône. Stunningly pure, rich, and broad in the mouth, but not heavy, this superb offering should be enjoyed over the next 7-8 years. Importer: Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA; tel. (914) 954-6583

BODEGAS MASIA SERRA N.V. INO

This medium amber-colored dessert wine is made from a Solera cuvée that purportedly dates back to 1860. Its 16% alcohol as well as considerable sweetness are balanced by striking acidity that results in a high quality Vin Santo likeness. This is a stunningly perfumed (roasted hazel nuts, caramel, fig, molasses, brown sugar, and sweet kirsch), full-bodied, heady wine with a dry finish (because of good acidity). I have

EMPORDA-COSTA BRAVA (\$80.00; 500 ml) RED DESSERT 96

never tasted anything quite like it, but it is very distinctive, and may be controversial. Interestingly, like some of these treasures from France's Languedoc-Roussillon, it is made from 100% Grenache. These wines will not change much once in bottle, but they possess unlimited aging potential. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

MAURO 2001

Located just outside Ribera del Duero in an area known as Tudela de Duero, these are some of the most exciting wines of the region. A knock-out effort, the intense, dense purple-colored 2000 offers sweet

CASTILLA Y LEON (\$35.00) RED 93

MAURO 2000

arôme de cassis characteristics intermixed with camphor, vanilla, and roasted meats. This full-bodied, opulent 2000 should be consumed over the next 7-8 years. The unevolved, still primary 2001 (90% Tempranillo, 8% Syrah, and 2% Grenache) reveals an inky/purple color as well as gorgeous aromas of kirsch liqueur, black currants, melted licorice, and smoky oak. This full-bodied, impressive red needs:

CASTILLA Y LEON (\$35.00) RED 92

another 1-3 years of cellaring; it should evolve for 12-15+ years. Made from 100% Tempranillo, the saturated purple-colored 1999 *Vendimia Seleccionada* boasts awesome concentration, and gorgeously layered flavors of toast, licorice, truffle-infused *crème de cassis*, blackberry liqueur, and meat. Full-bodied and dense, this large-scaled 1999 will benefit from another 1-2 years of cellaring, and last for 12-15 years. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American Importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

HACIENDA MONASTERIO 2000 CRIANZA

The poor man's Pingus? Winemaker Peter Sisseck, the creator of Pingus, is also responsible for this complex, sexy Crianza. A dense plum color is accompanied by aromas of licorice, seaweed, black cherries, currants, melted licorice, and smoky oak that cascade from

RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$35.00) RED 90

the glass. Generous and medium to full-bodied with excellent purity as well as length, it should be enjoyed over the next 5-8 years, although it should keep longer in a cool cellar. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

CASTILLO DE MONESMA 1999 CABERNET SAUVIGNON CRIANZA

A reasonably good value in Cabernet, the 1999 *Cabernet Sauvignon Crianza* possesses a dark ruby/purple color in addition to an intriguing nose of spice box, cedar, prunes, plums, and a hint of overripe black currants. It reveals a good texture, but not a great deal of complexity. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. The deep ruby/purple-colored 1999

SOMONTANO (\$20.00) RED 88

Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva offers notes of graphite, licorice, and black currants in its classic aromas. Richer and fuller than its sibling, medium-bodied, and spicy, with none of the prune characteristics found in the Crianza, it should drink well for 5-6 years. Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA; tel. (914) 954-6583

BODEGAS ABEL MENDOZA 2001 SELECCION PERSONAL

I also tasted Mendoza's 2000 *Jamarté*, but it was a bit earthy, dry, and lean. There was no such problem with the 2001 *Selección Personal*. Its deep ruby/purple color is followed by a sweet bouquet of ripe red and black fruits intertwined with touches of earth, licorice, spice box,

RIOJA (\$40.00) RED 91

and road tar. This is a full-bodied, concentrated Rioja with outstanding balance as well as potential. Drink it over the next decade. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

ENRIQUE MENDOZA 2001 SHIRAZ

It is interesting to see another top notch Shiraz emerge from this lowly regarded viticultural region (see my notes on Fincas Sandoval, the Syrah of Spanish journalist Victor de la Serna). Enrique Mendoza's 2001 Shiraz (100% Syrah aged 14 months in French barrels) exhibits a big, blackberry,

ALICANTE (\$25.00) RED 90

peppery nose with hints of saddle leather, creosote, and a touch of graphite. Medium to full-bodied and heady, with soft tannin as well as excellent concentration, this beauty should be drunk over the next 7-8 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

MONTEBACO 2000 CRIANZA

The dense ruby/purple colored 2000 *Crianza* exhibits notes of black currant liqueur intermixed with smoke, licorice, and roasted meats. With excellent texture, loads of fruit, and medium to full body, it should be drunk over the next 5-8 years. The concentrated, full-bodied 2001 *Selección Especial* possesses great fruit along with melted licorice, creosote, blackberry, and currant scents with underlying notions of

RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$22.00) RED 90

RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$45.00) RED 92

lead pencil shavings and minerals. Well-structured, deep, and full-bodied, this is another terrific effort from the 2001 vintage. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2016. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American Importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

ADEGAS MORGADIO	2002	ALBARINO	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$18.00)	WHITE	89
A good value , this fruit-driven, fleshy Albarino exhibits considerable quantities of apricot, pineapple, and honeysuckle characteristics in a medium-bodied, pure, exuberant style. Drink it over the next year.			Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257-7225			
BODEGAS EMILIO MORO	2000	MALLEOLUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$53.00)	RED	88
BODEGAS EMILIO MORO	1999	MALLEOLUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	90
BODEGAS EMILIO MORO	2001	MALLEOLUS DE VALDERRAMIRO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$140.00)	RED	92+
The 1999 Malleolus was aged 18 months in French oak. It exhibits aromas of cassis, plums, cherries, licorice, new saddle leather, and roasted meats. Opulent, complex, elegant, and medium-bodied, it should be consumed over the next 7-8 years. While not as intense or as long in the mouth, the 2000 Malleolus is still a good effort. Revealing noticeable new oak along with black currant and cherry fruit, underbrush, weedy tobacco, and leather characteristics, it should drink well for 5-6 years.			Lastly, there are only 100 cases of the big, bulked up 2001 Malleolus de Valderramiro, which spent 18 months in new French oak. Revealing copious oak at present, it possesses extravagant richness, medium to full body, a dense ruby/purple color, and plenty of black currant fruit intermixed with smoke, cedar, and espresso. Powerful, with well integrated acidity, this young, primary 2001 will be drinkable between 2005-2014. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
BODEGAS MUGA	2000	ARO	RIOJA	(\$120.00)	RED	93+
BODEGAS MUGA	1998	SELECCIÓN ESPECIAL	RIOJA	(\$31.00)	RED	90
The 1998 Selección Especial, an unfiltered blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Grenache, and the rest Manzanillo and Graciano, is first aged in large wood foudres, then moved into small French and American oak casks where it remains for 24 months. Made in a traditional style, it exhibits a medium ruby color along with scents of lead pencil shavings, earth, strawberries, black cherries, tobacco leaves, and cedar. Richer and more intense than the modest ruby color suggests, with a long finish, it may add additional weight in the bottle. It should drink well for a minimum of 10-12 years. A more modern-styled effort is the 2000 Aro,			an unfiltered blend of 70% Tempranillo and 30% Graciano produced from 60 year old vines and aged 18 months in 100% new French oak. An inky/purple color is followed by a superb bouquet of lead pencil shavings, black currant liqueur, cherries, new saddle leather, and earthy/soil undertones. It possesses super richness, a beautiful, full-bodied, vivacity mouthfeel, admirable purity, and a long, concentrated finish with the tannin, acidity, and wood all smoothly integrated. Drink it over the next 12-15+ years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
BODEGAS MUSTIGUILLO	2001	FINCA TERRERAZO	VALENCIA	(\$35.00)	RED	91+
BODEGAS MUSTIGUILLO	2002	MESTIZAJE	VALENCIA	(\$15.00)	RED	88
BODEGAS MUSTIGUILLO	2001	QUINCHA CORRAL	VALENCIA	(\$70.00)	RED	95
These are very distinctive offerings produced from an indigenous varietal called Bobal. In the Finca Terrerazo, the Bobal is blended with 35% Tempranillo and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. The Quincha Corral is 98% Bobal and 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. Both cuvées are aged primarily in French oak, although about 30% of the Finca Terrerazo spends time in older American oak barrels. The winemaker, Sara Perez, comes from the well-known Priorat estate of Mas Martinet. The dense purple-colored 2001 Finca Terrerazo exhibits an intense bouquet of cranberries, raspberries, and cherries in an elegant, fresh yet dense, nicely layered, medium-bodied style with ripe tannin as well as considerable complexity. Drink it over the next 10-12 years. The 2001 Quincha Corral (aged in 100% new French oak) is a limited cuvée of 500 cases. A spectacular offering, it tastes like a hypothetical blend of a great classified growth Bordeaux and a top northern Rhône			from Hermitage. I know nothing about the aging potential of Bobal, but this wine boasts an inky/purple color along with tremendous intensity, impressive purity, and plenty of black fruits intermixed with notes of flowers, spice box, and toasty barmque. A marvelous wine, it's hard to predict how it will age, but it appears to have 10-12 years of longevity. These are fascinating wines for the adventurous.			
NAIA	2002		RUEDA	(\$10.00)	WHITE	88
Perhaps the finest blend of Verdejo (85%) and Viura (15%) I have ever tasted, this light-bodied, dry white is loaded with fruit. It offers an intense bouquet of orange marmalade, honeyed grapefruit, and other citrus in a			fruit-driven, refreshing style with good underlying acidity. A great value, it will require consumption over the next 6-8 months. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
BODEGAS NEKEAS	2002	VEGA SINDOA CHARDONNAY BARREL FERMENTED	NAVARRA	(\$10.50)	WHITE	86
BODEGAS NEKEAS	2002	VEGA SINDOA CHARDONNAY CUVÉE ALLIER	NAVARRA	(\$13.00)	WHITE	87
BODEGAS NEKEAS	2001	VEGA SINDOA EL CHAPARRAL	NAVARRA	(\$11.00)	RED	90
The 2002 Vega Sindoa Chardonnay Barrel Fermented exhibits aromas and flavors of caramel, white peaches, and honey. Medium-bodied, with the fruit component easily dominating a subtle wood note, it should be consumed over the next year. The 2002 Vega Sindoa Chardonnay Cuvée Allier did not have as impressive raw materials to work with as the 2001, but it possesses elegant, ripe peach and pear notes, medium body, a hint of <i>pain grillé</i> , and good crispness as well as freshness. It, too, should be drunk over the next years.			yields of 1.25 tons per acre, and aged in a combination of French and American wood casks, the delicious peppery, medium to dark ruby-colored 2001 Vega Sindoa El Chaparral reveals a southern Rhône-like character in its kirsch liqueur, licorice, and pepper-scented bouquet. Medium-bodied with impressive fruit, tremendous freshness, and lively acidity, this is a tasty Spanish red to drink now and over the next 3-4 years. All three of these offerings are terrific bargains. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
NORA	2002	ALBARINO	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$13.00)	WHITE	89
A tank-fermented and aged, inexpensive Albarino (something that is very difficult to find), this lovely, crisp, medium-bodied effort offers loads of peach and tropical fruits. Fresh and lively, it is ideal for			drinking with seafood, or as an aperitif over the next year. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			
NUMANTHIA	2001		TORO	(\$45.00)	RED	95+
NUMANTHIA	2001	TERMANTHIA	TORO	(\$175.00)	RED	96+
NUMANTHIA	2000	TERMES	TORO	(\$21.00)	RED	90
The personal project of importer/broker Jorge Ordoñez, the 2000 Termes represents a budget-priced introduction to the Toro appellation. Made from 100% Uinta de Toro (Tempranillo), it exhibits rich, concentrated, jammy black currant and blackberry fruit intermixed with notions of licorice, smoke, and earth. A big fruit bomb without a great deal of complexity, it will provide undeniably seductive, luscious drinking if consumed over the next 2-4 years. It was aged 20 months in French oak, a fact I would not have suspected. The flagship offering, the 2001 Numanthia, is fashioned from a 70-100 year old Uinta de Toro vineyard planted at a 2300 foot elevation. After a 28 day maceration, the wine undergoes malolactic in barrel, is aged 18 months in new French oak, and is bottled without fining or filtration. The spectacular, opaque purple-			colored 2001 offers an explosive nose of melted licorice, barbecue smoke, blackberries, <i>crème de cassis</i> , camphor, and graphite. Full-bodied with gorgeously rich, concentrated fruit, a layered texture, and tremendous purity, it can be drunk young, but should hit its prime in 1-2 years, and last for 10-15. Produced from a small 11-acre plot planted on sandy soil, with lily yields, and ungrafted vines planted in the second half of the 19th century, the 2001 Termanthia boasts an inky/ruby/purple color as well as an explosive perfume of blackberries, raspberries, vanilla, smoke, licorice, and coffee. Full-bodied, with great purity, intensity, and a multilayered mouthfeel, this young, primary Spanish red should age beautifully for 10-12 years, at the minimum. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767			

BODEGAS OLIVARES	2001	MONASTRELL ALTOS DE LA HOYA	JUMILLA	(\$11.00)	RED	91
BODEGAS OLIVARES	2000	MONASTRELL DOLCE	JUMILLA	(\$25.00; 500 ml)	RED DESSERT	93
One of the great values in the marketplace is the 5,000 cases of Bodegas Olivares' 2001 Monastrell Altos de la Hoya. Produced from ungrafted Mourvèdre vines, some planted in 1872 (the average age is 30-40 years), this blend of 92% Mourvèdre and 8% Grenache was aged 100% in small barrels, of which 40% were new. A deep ruby/purple color accompanies the rich, concentrated perfume of new saddle leather, blackberries, blueberries, and spice. Layered and rich with a substantial flavor profile, it retains an elegance in spite of its						
power. Kudos to the importer for fermenting out such a stupendous bargain! It should drink well for 4-5 years, although I suspect it is capable of lasting longer. Readers with a sweet tooth should check out the 2000 Monastrell Dolce, an Amaroni-styled, heady, rich cuvée offering loads of black fruits, licorice, tar, and earthy undertones. It would be ideal to enjoy with cheese at the end of the meal. It will last for a decade. Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 996-4484						
BODEGAS OSTATU	2001	CRIANZA	RIOJA	(\$16.00)	RED	91
BODEGAS OSTATU	2001	GLORIA DE OSTATU	RIOJA	(\$80.00)	RED	94
BODEGAS OSTATU	2000	GLORIA DE OSTATU	RIOJA	(\$60.00)	RED	92
Aged in 100% new French Demajou barrels, this wine is fashioned with the help of consultant Hubert de Boüard, the young, energetic proprietor of St. Emilion's Angelus. The 2000 Gloria de Ostatu is a 400-case, complex, rich, intense blend of 90% Tempranillo and 10% Graciano. A deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by a sumptuous bouquet of wood smoke intermixed with espresso roast, chocolate, and black currant liqueur. Medium to full-bodied, elegant, pure, and intense, it should drink well for 7-10 years. Readers looking for a great buy should check out the 2001 Crianza, a blend of 95% Tempranillo and the remainder Grenache, Mazuelo, and Graciano. Aged primarily in French oak and a touch of American wood, this deep ruby/purple-colored, 3,000-case cuvée is a wine of great intensity with loads of blackberry and currant fruit intermixed with licorice, tobacco leaf, spice box, and a hint of sweet wood. Textured,						
medium to full-bodied, and seamless, this is an incredible, value-priced red to enjoy over the next 3-4 years. Even better than the 2000, the 2001 Gloria de Ostatu (95% Tempranillo from 60-70 year old vines and 5% Graciano) was aged 18 months in new French oak, and bottled unfiltered. A fabulous effort, it offers a saturated ruby/purple color as well as gorgeous aromas of cigar tobacco, smoke, black currants, blackberries, and cedar. Deep, full-bodied, and opulent, with a voluptuous mid-section, great intensity, and fine purity, this is a superb offering. Sadly, only 500 cases were produced. Drink it over the next 10-15 years.						
This is clearly a winery of which to take note, and the influence of the brilliant Hubert de Boüard can not be discounted. Importers: André Tamara, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-1245 and The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 996-4484						
OTAZU	2002	CHARDONNAY	NAVARRA	(\$14.00)	WHITE	88
OTAZU	2000	CRIANZA	NAVARRA	(\$16.00)	RED	89
OTAZU	1999	RESERVA	NAVARRA	(\$25.00)	RED	88
OTAZU	1999	RESERVA ESPECIAL	NAVARRA	(\$50.00)	RED	91
Navarra is one of Spain's up and coming appellations as more and more producers are finding it a hospitable environment for not only Bordeaux varietals (Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot), but also Tempranillo and Chardonnay. A great value , Otazu's Macon-Villages-like 2002 Chardonnay exhibits copious amounts of orange, citrus, and lemon-like fruit in a medium-bodied, delicious, dry, fruity, exuberant style. It appears this wine saw no exposure to oak, and it is all the better for it. Enjoy it over the next year.						
Also an excellent value , the 2000 Crianza is a blend of 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 15% Tempranillo aged 12 months in French oak. Its deep ruby color is followed by sweet aromas of juicy, chunky blackberries and cherries, medium body, excellent texture, and						
a soft finish. It will drink well for 2-3 years. The more serious 1999 Reserva (50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 10% Tempranillo aged 14 months in new French oak) possesses more complexity without the exuberance and rich fruit of the Crianza. Elegant and spicy, but not as hedonistic as its sibling, it will drink well for 3-4 years. The outstanding 1999 Reserva Especial (1,000 cases produced) was aged 14 months in French oak. It boasts a deep ruby/purple color in addition to a Bordeaux-like perfume of lead pencil shavings intermixed with black currants, tobacco leaves, and spice box. Medium-bodied, elegant, well-balanced, and impressively endowed, it will provide pleasure over the next 7-8 years. Importer: André Tamara, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-1245						
PAGO DEL AMA	2001	SYRAH	CASTILLO	(\$50.00)	RED	94
Considered by some to be the greatest Syrah made in Spain, the proprietor of one of that country's finest restaurants, Adolfo Muñoz, of the restaurant Adolfo in Toledo, produces this extraordinarily rich, intense effort. A black/purple color is accompanied by tantalizing aromas						
of lead pencil shavings, <i>crème de cassis</i> , pepper, white chocolate, and blackberries. This heady, intoxicating Syrah boasts abundant quantities of flavor as well as body. Drink it over the next 7-10 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565						
PAGO DE CARRAQUEJAS	1998	RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$30.00)	RED	92
PAGO DE CARRAQUEJAS	1999	VENDIMIA SELECCIONADA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$50.00)	RED	91+
This winery's less expensive bottlings have consistently made it into my value reports. I'm not sure their more expensive cuvées are that much better, although they are certainly top-flight. The 1998 Reserva (75% Tempranillo and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon) exhibits a perfume of toasty new oak, beef blood, roasted meats, black cherry liqueur, and licorice. Full-bodied, exotic, and exuberant, it is a total turn-on. Enjoy it over the						
next 10-12 years. More structured, backward, and unevolved is the deep ruby/purple-colored 1999 Vendimia Seleccionada. Still primary, it offers up scents of melted road tar, licorice, black currants, leather, and spicy new oak. This full-bodied, moderately tannic 1999 needs another 2-3 years of cellaring; it should keep for 12-15 years. Importer: Kyselá Pérez el Filis, Winchester, VA; tel. (540) 722-9228						
PAISAJES Y VINEDOS	2000	RIOJA	RIOJA	(\$30.00)	RED	91
This Rioja, made from 100% Grenache from 70-year old vines planted in gravelly soil, is aged for 12 months in French oak prior to bottling. Unfortunately, production is small (only 4,000 bottles). This deep ruby/purple-colored, Burgundian-like Rioja offers a superb bouquet of black						
raspberries, cherries, and flowers. The great aromatics, medium body, and tremendous elegance as well as purity can be confused with a top-flight Volnay from the Côte de Beaune. Drink it over the next 7-8 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565						
ALVARO PALACIOS	2001	L'ERMITA	PRIORAT	(\$275.00)	RED	96+
ALVARO PALACIOS	2001	FINCA DOFI	PRIORAT	(\$70.00)	RED	93
ALVARO PALACIOS	2001	LES TERRASSES	PRIORAT	(\$28.00)	RED	89
Established in 1989 by proprietor and winemaker Alvaro Palacios, this has become one of the reference point wineries for the exciting Priorat appellation. The least expensive cuvée, Les Terrasses, is fashioned from both estate fruit and purchased lots of Grenache and Carignan. It is an 18,000-case blend of 30% Grenache, 50-60% Carignan, and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon aged 12 months in used French and American barrels. The 2001 Les Terrasses exhibits a deep ruby color along with a bouquet offering notes of kirsch liqueur, wet steel, crushed stone, cherry liqueur, currants, and spice. Fruit-driven, open-knit, and concentrated as well as complex and elegant, this fine effort should merit an outstanding score after bottling. The estate-grown 2001 Finca Dofi, fashioned from tiny yields of 20 hectoliters per hectare, was aged in 100% new French oak. A blend of 61% Grenache, and the rest Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Merlot, it appears to be the finest vintage of this cuvée I have yet tasted. Inky/purple to the rim with a sweet nose of <i>crème de cassis</i> ,						
blackberries, minerals, and a hint of acacia flowers, this intense, opulent, full-bodied, seamless 2001 is already accessible. It can be drunk young, or cellared for 12-13 years. The flagship offering, the 2001 l'Ermita, is produced from 60 year old, head-pruned Grenache (85% vines and 15% old vine Carignan) and younger vine Cabernet Sauvignon. Yields were a meager 15 hectoliters per hectare in 2001. This 500-case cuvée, aged in 100% new French oak, represents the essence of Priorat as well as this particular vineyard source. Alvaro Palacios practices malolactic fermentation in barrel, and bottling after an egg white fining and no filtration. The black/purple-colored 2001 boasts an extraordinary aromatic profile of charcoal, blackberries, raspberries, kirsch, melted licorice, and espresso. Full-bodied and unctuously-textured, with sweet tannin and abundant quantities of fruit as well as glycerin, this is a remarkably well-balanced wine of great intensity and formidable aging potential. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2020. Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 996-4484						

BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO	2001	RIOJA CRIANZA LA MONTESA	RIOJA	(\$16.00)	RED	89
BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO	2000	RIOJA CRIANZA LA MONTESA	RIOJA	(\$16.00)	RED	85
BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO	2002	RIOJA PLACET	RIOJA	(\$17.00)	WHITE	88
BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO	2001	RIOJA TINTO PROPIEDAD	RIOJA	(\$26.00)	RED	90+
BODEGAS PALACIOS REMONDO	2002	RIOJA TINTO VENDIMIA	RIOJA	(\$12.00)	RED	87

Starting in 2001, this bodegas, owned by the Palacios family since 1942, was taken over by Alvaro Palacios, who has done so much to bring attention to the high quality wines of Priorat (his l'Ermita is superb). It has been many years since I was this enthusiastic about a dry white wine from Rioja, but this **2002 Rioja Placet** (100% Viura aged in French oak) is a surprisingly perfumed, elegant effort offering notes of white peaches and flowers. Medium-bodied and crisp, it is an interesting white to drink over the next 1-2 years. At \$17 a bottle, it is a good value.

Readers looking for a delicious, inexpensive bistro red should check out the **2002 Rioja Tinto Vendimia**, a blend of 70% Tempranillo, 20% Grenache, and the rest Graciano and Mazuelo. This soft, fruity, earthy, medium-bodied, easy-to-drink Spanish red can even be served chilled. Enjoy it over the next 1-3 years. When tasting the two vintages of Crianza, the 2000 and 2001 Rioja La Montesa, the high quality of the 2001 vintage is clearly evident when contrasted with the 2000. The **2000 Crianza Rioja La Montesa** is a pleasant, dark plum/ruby-colored red with good fruit, but

PARES BALTA	2000	ABSIS	PENEDES	(\$100.00)	RED	90
PARES BALTA	1996	DOMINIO CUSINE 1790	PENEDES	(not yet released)	RED	90

Two impressive efforts from this Penedes winery (also extremely expensive), the **1996 Dominio Cusiné 1790** (a blend of Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah) boasts a deep, saturated ruby/purple color to the rim, a big, sweet, complex perfume of black fruits, chocolate, and espresso, and a richly textured, medium to full-bodied, pure mouthfeel. Supple tannin in addition to well-integrated

PEREZ PASCUAS	2001	CEPA GAVILAN	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$16.00)	RED	87
PEREZ PASCUAS	2001	CRIANZA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$28.00)	RED	87
PEREZ PASCUAS	1996	PEREZ PASCUAS GRAN RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$200.00)	RED	90+
PEREZ PASCUAS	1996	VINA PEDROSA GRAN RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$85.00)	RED	90
PEREZ PASCUAS	1999	VINA PEDROSA RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$45.00)	RED	89

A value-priced, 100% Tempranillo, the **2001 Cepa Gavilan** is a big, fruit, vanillin-infused, medium-bodied, supple-textured effort that is ideal for uncritical quaffing over the next 1-2 years. I liked it just as much as the **2001 Crianza**, a dense ruby/purple-colored example offering notes of oak, coconut, licorice, earth, and red as well as black currant fruit in a medium-bodied, woody style. It should drink well for 6-7 years. Denser and sweeter with abundant quantities of new oak is the **1999 Vina Pedrosa Reserva**. There is plenty of sweet fruit on the attack in addition to hints of licorice, black currants, creosote, and vanillin. Medium-bodied, with moderate tannin, this excellent 1999 should be consumed over the next 7-8 years.

The outstanding, impeccably made **1996 Vina Pedrosa Gran Reserva** boasts a deep plum/ruby color as well as a superb bouquet of black fruits,

PAZO SAN MAURO	2002	ALBARINO	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$24.00)	WHITE	88
PAZO SAN MAURO	2001	ALBARINO SAN AMARO	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$48.00)	WHITE	90

Two delicious dry whites from Galicia, the **2002 Albarino** exhibits white peach and apricot characteristics, fresh acidity, and a heady finish. The spectacular **2001 Albarino San Amaro** boasts aromas of lquid minerals intermixed with tropical fruit and honeysuckle offered

PAZO DE SENORANS	2000	ALBARINO SELECCION DE ANADA	RIAS BAIXAS	(\$25.00)	WHITE	92
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Only made in great vintages, this limited production, tank-fermented and aged **2000 Albarino** is sensational. One of the finest efforts I have tasted from the Rias Baixas appellation, it exhibits intense aromas of petroleum, honeysuckle, flowers, and buttered citrus.

DOMINICO DE LA PESETA	2001	CRIANZA	ALICANTE	(\$14.00)	RED	88
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This substantial, mouthfilling, robust, muscular Spanish red exhibits a dense purple color as well as a big, sweet nose of scorched earth, coffee, black fruits, and pepper. Heady, with surprisingly good acidity, and a dry, tannic finish, it is mouth-staining material that sells for a song.

PESQUERA	1995	JANUS GRAN RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$150.00)	RED	94
PESQUERA	1999	RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$40.00)	RED	93
PESQUERA	2001	TINTO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$25.00)	RED	(91-94)
PESQUERA	2000	TINTO	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$23.00)	RED	89

Alejandro Fernandez, who has done so much to resurrect the image of Ribera del Duero's wines, believes his greatest vintages to date are 1982, 1986, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Pesquera's Tinto is aged a minimum of 18 months in French, American, and Spanish wood, and the Reserva and Gran Reserva spend 24 months or more in wood. A whopper in the making, the **2001 Tinto** possesses extraordinarily sweet fruit, purity, and richness. A deep ruby/purple color is followed by loads of chocolate, black currant, cherry, raspberry, and licorice characteristics, full body, good acidity, and a long, layered finish. It should drink well for 10-15 years. More mature and forward, but not as massive or rich is the **2000 Tinto**. Hints of coconut, black chocolate, saffras, and ripe black cherry and currant fruit are accompanied by a

a short finish. The deep ruby-colored **2001 Crianza Rioja La Montesa** exhibits a gorgeous perfume of sweet cherries, spice box, and blueberries. With beautiful purity, medium body, and abundant fruit, this elegant 2001 is an excellent bargain, as are its two aforementioned siblings. Drink it over the next 3-5 years.

The flagship offering in this portfolio, the **2001 Rioja Tinto Propiedad** spent 12 months in 100% new French oak casks prior to being bottled without fining or filtration. A steal at \$26, it is a blend of 40% Grenache, 45% Tempranillo, and the rest Graciano and Mazuelo, made from yields of 25 hectoliters per hectare. This stylish, elegant, medium-bodied, deep ruby/purple-colored Rioja offers up notes of graphite, black currants, cherries, and tobacco leaves. The new oak component is well-concealed beneath the abundant fruit and *terroir* characteristics. Pretty as well as flavorful, it does an admirable job of marrying finesse and elegance with flavor authority. Drink it over the next 8-10 years. Importer: The Rare Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 996-4484

wood and acidity result in an impressive wine, one of the finest I have yet tasted from Penedes. More internationally styled, the saturated purple-colored **2000 Absis** possesses abundant quantities of new oak, smoke, and licorice. Full-bodied and rich, it may lack a bit of soul/personality, but it offers a substantial mouthful. Importer: Boutique Wine Collection, New York; tel. (914) 954-6583

earth, licorice, toast, and *crème de cassis*. Sweet on the attack (from high glycerin/ripeness, not sugar) with moderate tannin in the long finish, it should be at its finest between 2006-2014. The super-expensive **1996 Perez Pascuas Gran Reserva** (only made in 1996 and 2001) is a selection of the finest barrels. Still exhibiting considerable amounts of new oak, it is a deep purple-colored, full-bodied red with a sweet mid-section and a long, concentrated, heady finish with plenty of *crème de cassis*, licorice, smoke, and new barrique smells. Give it 2-3 years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 10-12. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

in a medium-bodied, well-delineated, crisp, complex style. My experience suggests Albarino should be drunk young, so enjoy both of these cuvées over the next 12 months. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

Importer Eric Solomon describes it as "a hybrid blend of Riesling and Sancerre." It possesses more body than either of those wines as well as surprising length. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

While it does not reveal much finesse, it is filled with flavor intensity. A blend of Mourvèdre, Tempranillo, and Syrah aged 10 months in a combination of French and American oak, it will drink well for 2-3 years. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6800

medium-bodied, earthy, attractive, supple-textured 2000. Drink it over the next 5-7 years.

The opaque ruby/purple-colored **1999 Reserva** boasts lovely aromas of damp earth/forestry floor intermixed with black currants, cherries, licorice, and new saddle leather. A big, structured, chewy red, it reveals notions of roasted meats in its full-throttle, concentrated, impressively endowed personality. Give it 1-2 more years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 12-15. The full-bodied **1995 Janus Gran Reserva** (a cuvée only produced previously in 1994, 1991, 1986, and 1982) is remarkably young and vibrant despite the fact that it has been aged for 3 years in oak casks. Sadly, there are only 1,000+ cases of this wine. It exhibits a deep ruby/purple color along with a bouquet of barbecue spices, creamy oak,

melted licorice, and copious quantities of black currant and cherry fruit. This opulent, viscous, full-bodied, lusty 1995 reveals substantial tannin that is largely concealed by the wealth of fruit and extract. The heady

finish lasts over 40 seconds. This big, solid Ribera del Duero should age effortlessly for another 15 years. Importer: Classical Wines from Spain Ltd., Seattle, WA; tel. (206) 297-6713 and (800) 257 7225

PINGUS	2001	FLOR DE PINGUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$45.00)	RED	90
PINGUS	2000	FLOR DE PINGUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$45.00)	RED	90
PINGUS	2001	PINGUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$350.00)	RED	95
PINGUS	2000	PINGUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$350.00)	RED	96

This remains one of the most riveting wines of Ribera del Duero thanks to the perfectionist proprietor, Peter Sisecek. I recently had a bottle of the 1995, the debut vintage, and it is unquestionably a mid-ninety point, young yet incredibly complex effort. There are 500 cases of the 2001 Pingus (there will be no 2002 as it was completely declassified) and 3,500 cases of the 2000 Flor de Pingus (there will be the same quantity of 2001 produced). 2000 was a great vintage at Pingus, largely because of a freak hailstorm that hit the estate resulting in the lowest yields in their brief history. The 2000 Flor de Pingus exhibits a deep ruby/purple color, a masked meat/craquelé-scented nose, and big, meaty, herb-linged flavors that are both substantial and opulent. Fleshy and chewy, it is a hedonistic as well as intellectual fun to enjoy over the next 7-8 years. A freak, the 2000 Pingus is an exaggerated, extravagantly rich effort boasting an inky/purple color along with a sumptuous perfume of beef blood, lavender, Provençal herbs, ground pepper, melted licorice, and oodles of blackberry and *crème de cassis*-like fruit. Full-bodied, powerful, rich, and smoky, with great intensity, and an unctuously-textured, full-throated finish, it should drink well for 15-20 years. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2025.

produced much more wine for both the Flor de Pingus and the Pingus. The deep, smoky, unevolved but richly fruity 2001 Flor de Pingus reveals black cherry, berry, and earthy notes along with notions of barbecue spices and cigar smoke. Medium to full-bodied and opulent, it is best consumed during its first decade of life. The opaque ruby/purple-colored, firmly-structured 2001 Pingus is more closed and backward than the extravagantly rich, flamboyant 2000. It offers great fruit on the attack along with huge body, and notes of grilled meats intermixed with Provençal herbs, pepper, spice box, cigar smoke, and copious quantities of barbecue smoke-infused blackberry and cassis flavors. The finish lasts for nearly a minute. Anticipated maturity: 2010-2028.

P.S. For statisticians, these wines are made from 100% Tempranillo, with the yields for the Pingus ranging from a measly 7 hectoliters per hectare in 2000, to under 20 hectoliters per hectare in more abundant years. It is aged 18 months in 100% new French Damanjou barrels, raked only once, and bottled with neither fining nor filtration. In addition, a barrel sample of the 2003 tasted in late March in Bordeaux was out of this world, with the potential to be the finest Pingus to date. Importer: The Run Wine Co., Sonoma, CA; tel. (707) 998-4404

Another top year with an ideal growing season, the 2001 vintage has

PINTIA	2001		TORO (release date 5/04)		RED	95
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There are 80,000 bottles of this wine, a project of Vega Sicilia's owners. The spectacular 2001 boasts an inky/purple color in addition to wonderful aromas of *crème de cassis*, melted licorice, truffles, and smoky, toasty oak. Intensely concentrated but not overdone, this voluptuously thick, rich red possesses fine acidity as well as well-

integrated, sweet tannin. It will offer a sumptuous mouthful of wine over the next 7-8 years. Importer: a Christopher Cariani Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 877-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9887

GESAR PRINCIPE	2000	CIGALES	TIERRA DE CASTILLA	(\$25.00)	RED	94
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Wow, what a spectacular wine! Made just outside the Ribera del Duero appellation by Mariano Garcia and his sons (Garcia was formerly the winemaker at Vega Sicilia), this primarily old Tempranillo *cuvée* was aged in small casks (mostly French). It boasts a deep ruby/purple color as well as a rich bouquet of *crème de cassis*, melted

licorice, acacia flowers, and toasty new oak. Full-bodied, fleshy, and succulent, with a striking minerality underlying all the fruit, this extraordinarily powerful yet elegant, long, rich, heady 2000 is best drunk during its exuberant youth ... over the next 5-7 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

QUINTA SARDONIA	2002		SARDON DEL DUERO	(\$45.00)	RED	90
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From a new bio-dynamically run vineyard just outside the limits of Ribera del Duero (and a neighbor of the more famous Abadía Retuerta), this 2002 is a blend of Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Cabernet Franc. Aromas of blueberries, melted licorice, cedar, smoke, and vanilla soar from the

glass of this dense ruby/purple-colored offering. Medium to full-bodied and elegant, with a Bordeaux-like textural profile, beautiful purity, and abundant quantities of fruit as well as spice, it will drink well for 7-8 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

CASTELL DEL REMEI	2002	GOTIM BRU	COSTERS DEL SEGRE	(\$12.00)	RED	89
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CASTELL DEL REMEI	2001	"1780"	COSTERS DEL SEGRE	(\$40.00)	RED	89+
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One of the great values in the marketplace, even with the frightfully weak American dollar, is the 2002 Gotim Bru, a blend of 65% Tempranillo, 20% Merlot, and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 11 months in one-year old French and American oak barrels. Even better news is that there are 25,000 cases in the American market. This is a custom *cuvée* selected and blended by importer Eric Solomon (the European Cellars name will be on the back label), so European subscribers will be confronted with a completely different wine. A dense plum/ruby color is accompanied by aromas of melted chocolate, roasted coffee beans, and plenty of sweet black cherry fruit. This dense, copulent, earthy red possesses rich fruit, medium body, not a great deal of complexity, but a mouthfilling

generosity. It will provide a lot of pleasure over the next 2-3 years. The top *cuvée*, the 2001 "1780", is more closed and tannic. While I suspect in 3-4 years it will be far superior to its less expensive sibling, at present it is not easy to evaluate. A blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Tempranillo, and 10% Grenache aged 14 months in new American oak, it, surprisingly, reminded me of a lower level Bordeaux Puyferrat. Aromas of cedar, spice box, black currants, and a hint of white chocolate jump from the glass of this moderately tannic, medium-bodied, elegant, structured 2001. Give it 1-3 years of cellaring and drink it over the following 7-8. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

BODEGAS REMIREZ	1999	REMIREZ DE LA PISCINA	RIOJA	(\$12.00)	RED	87
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Readers looking for a complex, evolved, traditionally-styled Rioja filled with fruit should check out this elegant, flavorful, light to medium-bodied 1999. Made from 100% Tempranillo aged one year in American oak, it offers a fragrant perfume of cedar, sandalwood, tobacco leaf, and sweet

berry, strawberry, and cherry fruit. Elegant and round, with medium body as well as loads of finesse, it should be enjoyed over the next 2-3 years. An excellent value. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

BODEGAS FERNANDO REMIREZ DE GANUZA	2000	RIOJA RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$65.00)	RED	87
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BODEGAS FERNANDO REMIREZ DE GANUZA	2001	RIOJA RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$85.00)	RED	94
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This various Rioja producer fashions elegant, well-structured reds. The elegant 2000 Rioja Reserva is lighter (no doubt because of the vintage), but possesses complex aromas of cedar, lead pencil, cherries, and spice box, medium body, and a clean finish. Consume it over the next 3-4 years. A completely different animal, the dense ruby/purple-colored 2001 Rioja Reserva exhibits a sweet, intense nose of melted licorice, road tar, truffles, black currants, cherries, and hints of smoky, toasty oak. Dense and medium to full-bodied, with

moderately high tannin, it should be cellared for 1-2 years, and drunk over the following decade.

This large 72-acre estate's youngest vines are 33 years old, followed by a parcel of 45-year old vines, and two large parcels of 73 and 96-year old vines. The wine is kept one year in tank and then moved to small barrels where it spends another two years before being bottled unfined and unfiltered. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

LA RIOJA ALTA	1989	GRAN RESERVA 890	RIOJA	(\$110.00)	RED	91
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LA RIOJA ALTA	1994	GRAN RESERVA 904	RIOJA	(\$39.00)	RED	89
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LA RIOJA ALTA	1999	VINA ALBERDI RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$17.00)	RED	87
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LA RIOJA ALTA	1998	VINA ALBERDI RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$17.00)	RED	87
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LA RIOJA ALTA	1998	VINA ARDANZA RESERVA	RIOJA	(\$28.00)	RED	87
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These are the antithesis of modern-styled reds. Aged by the winery long before they are released so they are already complex, their feeble

ruby/garnet hues will not impress those looking for deeply saturated purple colors. However, they are among the most Burgundian-like

wines made in Rioja. Let's hope this traditional producer never changes its game plan. The **1998 Vina Ardanza Reserva** exhibits a light garnet-ruby color with orange at the rim. Sweet, fragrant notes of tobacco smoke, dried herbs, plums, and currants are followed by a Pinot Noir-like finesse and generosity, and medium-bodied, easy-going flavors. Enjoy it over the next 3-4 years. Even lighter, but with more fruit are the **1998 and 1999 Vina Alberdi Reservas**. These classic Riojas possess notes of cigar tobacco intermixed with scorched earth, minerals, strawberries, cherries, figs, cedar, and smoke. Both are soft and attractive, with a delicate sweetness as well as tremendous finesse in their light to medium-bodied personalities. Two excellent values, they will both drink well for 5-6 years.

FRANCESCA VICENTA ROBERT 2000 ABAT DOMENECH
FRANCESCA VICENTA ROBERT 2000 LO PIOT

Two impressive offerings from Priorat, the **2000 Lo Piot** is a 1,308-case blend of 90% Grenache and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon that spent 10 months in French oak. It displays a complex aromatic profile of crushed stones, rose petals, and sweet black cherries as well as blueberries. Refreshing, elegant, and ethereal with a character not unlike a racy grand cru red Burgundy, this deep ruby/purple-colored, refreshing, vigorous 2000 should be consumed over the next 7-10 years. More

BODEGAS RODA 2001 CIRSION
BODEGAS RODA 2000 CIRSION
BODEGAS RODA 1999 CIRSION
BODEGAS RODA 1999 RODA II

One of the more progressive Rioja estates, Bodegas Roda practices aging in French oak, early bottling, and the use of primarily Tempranillo and Grenache, most of it from vines averaging 70+ years. Their **1999 Roda II** is a blend of 75% Tempranillo and 25% Grenache aged 16 months in French oak. An excellent dark ruby/purple-colored effort, it reveals plenty of finesse and elegance in its Burgundy-like personality. Medium-bodied with abundant quantities of red and black fruits intermixed with tobacco leaf, spice box, and licorice characteristics, it will drink well for 7-8 years. In the finest vintages, Cirsion, a cuvée selected from the top vineyard sites and barrels, and aged in 100% new French oak, is produced. It is one-hundred percent Tempranillo from yields averaging 14-18 hectoliters per hectare. The three most recent vintages in which it was made are 1999, 2000, and 2001. The weakest of this trio is the **2000 Cirsion**. Although it is a fine effort, it does not have the voluminous impact on the palate or intense fragrance of the 1999 and 2001. It should drink well for 7-8 years. Since it possesses a character similar to its much less

TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 ALTOS LANZAGA
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2002 "G" DEHESA GAGO
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 "G" GAGO
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 "G" PAGO LA JARA
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 LANZAGA
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2002 LZ
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 MALLANA RIBERA DEL DUERO
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2001 MOLINO REAL MALAGA
TELMO RODRIGUEZ 2002 MR MALAGA

Readers who love the fragrance of great Pinot Noir or Nebbiolo will appreciate the style of Telmo Rodriguez's wines. His Tempranillos, while not massive, possess considerable aromatics as well as elegance. His value pick, the **2002 LZ**, is fashioned from 100% Tempranillo aged 6 months in tank. It offers a wonderful perfume of spice and cedar wood in a medium-bodied, soft style with sweet cherry as well as sandalwood notes. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. Also perfumed and charming is the **2001 Lanzaga**. Aged 14 months in French oak and larger foudres, it is an elegant, Pinot Noir-like effort revealing notes of forest floor, sweet and sour cherries, and spice box in a medium-bodied, attractive style. A juiced up version of this wine, the **2001 Altos Lanzaga**, is an unfiltered, unfiltered cuvée aged 18 months in French oak with minimal intervention. It will remind many tasters of the Remelluri Rioja style when Telmo Rodriguez was making their wines. It offers up complex aromas of cedar wood, spice box, black cherries, currants, vanillin, and smoke. Medium to full-bodied, with wonderful density, weight, purity, and overall harmony, it has some tannin to shed, so give it 1-2 years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 10-12 years. It is a candidate for an outstanding rating. The luxury priced Ribera del Duero, the **2001 Matallana**, is a 100% Tinta del Pais that was fashioned from low yields and aged 18 months in new French oak. Tightly-knit, full-bodied, and dense, it reveals notions of creamy toasty oak intermixed with black cherry liqueur and cassis. This impressive but young and unevolved 2001 will be at its finest between 2006-2012.

Two of my favorite reds from Telmo Rodriguez emerge from Toro, an

BODEGAS ROJO 2001 RICARDANA CRIANZA
BODEGAS ROJO 2001 RICARDANA ROBLE

From a new winery founded in 2001, these are both 100% Tempranillo offerings. The medium dark ruby-colored, soft **2001 Ricardana Crianza** exhibits alluring aromatics of wood, red as well as black fruits,

The top cuvées are archetypal Riojas. The **1994 Gran Reserva 904** reveals a light ruby/garnet color with considerable pink and amber at the edge. Aromas of scorched earth, soy, mushrooms, smoke, plums, and figs emerge from this Graves-like, medium-bodied, elegant yet flavorful 1994. While not overly powerful or rich, there is a lot going on in this offering. Even better is the extraordinarily complex, ethereal **1989 Gran Reserva 890**. Medium-bodied, with a sweet attack, it offers aromas of tobacco, strawberries, cherries, and currants in its smooth, silky, perfumed, tasty personality. Enjoy it over the next 5-7 years. Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skurnik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9897

PRIORAT (\$67.00) RED 93+
PRIORAT (\$40.00) RED 90

beefed up, with loads of raspberry and blueberry fruit along with a striking minerality, the **2000 Abat Domenech** is a blend of old vine Grenache and Carignan, and young vine Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, aged 12 months in French oak. Dense, rich, and elegant, with great purity as well as ripeness, medium to full body, and a layered palate feel with surprising lightness for its intensity. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2015. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

RIOJA (\$185.00) RED 97+
RIOJA (\$185.00) RED 88
RIOJA (\$185.00) RED 95
RIOJA (\$35.00) RED 89

expensive sibling, the Roda II, it appears the latter wine is the one consumers should be seeking out. The superb **1999 Cirsion** is one of the greatest Riojas I have tasted. A deep ruby/purple color precedes a smoky, barbecue spice-scented nose revealing aromas of licorice, black as well as red fruits, earth, and charcoal. This dense, rich yet remarkably harmonious and elegant 1999 exhibits sweet tannin, beautiful integration of wood, acidity, and alcohol, and a long, seamless finish. It should drink well for 10-12 years. However, the compelling 1999 has to take a back seat to the 2001! The prodigious **2001 Cirsion** appears to be a legend in the making. Aromas of espresso roast, new saddle leather, *crème de cassis*, cherries, and raspberries soar from the glass of this aromatic Spanish red. Full-bodied with that extra layer of concentration and extract that great vintages seem to provide, it exhibits nearly perfect integration of acidity, wood, tannin, and alcohol. It's an incredible effort in a great vintage for Rioja. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2017+. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

RIOJA (\$65.00) RED 89+
TORO (\$11.00) RED 86
TORO (\$22.00) RED 91
TORO (\$48.00) RED 93
RIOJA (\$22.00) RED 87
RIOJA (\$11.00) RED 86
RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$103.00) RED 90
MALAGA (\$48.00) WHITE DESSERT 91
MALAGA (\$18.00) WHITE DESSERT 90

appellation being increasingly exploited by top quality producers. Six hundred cases of the **2001 "G" Gago** made it to America. Made from 100% Tinta de Toro (a clone of Tempranillo), and aged 14 months in 60% new French oak barrels and 40% foudres, it possesses a dark plum/ruby color as well as an explosive bouquet of black cherry liqueur, raspberries, currants, smoke, and licorice. Exotic and flamboyant, with smoky, meaty notes, loads of fruit, and a round, supple texture, this is a sumptuous, moderately-priced Spanish red to drink over the next 4-5 years. A beefed up version, the **2001 "G" Pago la Jara** was aged 17 months in 100% new French oak (which it has totally soaked up). Full-bodied and sumptuous, with abundant quantities of licorice and smoke-infused black currant fruit, a supple texture, and a heady, hedonistic finish, it will drink well for 5-6 years. The least expensive offering is the tank-fermented and aged, tutti-fruity (bubble gum intermixed with strawberries and cherries), medium-bodied, soft, fruit-driven **2002 "G" Dehesa Gago**. From a lighter vintage, this pleasant red can be served chilled if desired over the next 12 months.

Telmo Rodriguez has fashioned two pure, white dessert cuvées with good underlying acidity as well as loads of fruit. The value-priced **2002 MR** (100% Moscatel) resembles an elegant Beaumes de Venise from southern France. The honeysuckle and Grand Mamier-like **2001 Molina Real** is also produced from 100% Moscatel, but the grapes are left to dry for 15 days prior to being vinified. Both offerings are moderately sweet with sumptuous bouquets, intense flavors, and impressive purity. Both are meant to be drunk young. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$32.00) RED 87
RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$20.00) RED 89

underbrush, earth, and forest floor. It is ideal for drinking over the next 3-4 years. I actually preferred the less expensive **2001 Ricardana Roble**, which offers a deep, more saturated ruby/purple color in

addition to notes of sweet American oak, blackberries, and cherries. Medium-bodied, supple-textured, expansive as well as a firm value, this delicious Spanish red should be consumed over the next 3-4 years. It seems to me that the Crianza's 15 months spent in new American oak

(versus 5 months for the Roble) has muted it, hence my preference for the less expensive bottling. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

EMILIO ROJO	2002		RIBEIRO	(\$35.00)	WHITE	89
Although this is a steep price for a dry white wine from Spain, it is a fascinating offering made from a blend dominated by Treixadura (55%), and including Loureiro (15%), Lado (10%), Albarino (10%), and Torrontes (10%). Completely fermented in stainless steel and bottled unfiltered, it reveals vivid aromas of orange blossoms, quince,						
BENJAMIN ROMEO	2001	CONTADOR	RIOJA	(\$318.00)	RED	98
BENJAMIN ROMEO	2001	LA CUEVA DEL CONTADOR	RIOJA	(\$88.00)	RED	90?
BENJAMIN ROMEO	2001	LA VINA DE ANDRES ROMEO	RIOJA	(\$139.00)	RED	96
There is no doubt that Benjamin Romeo is a perfectionist when it comes to winemaking. He worked at Artadi between 1985 and 2000, and now has his own small project where he makes limited quantities of super-expensive, but also high quality, limited production Rioja. The 2001 La Cueva del Contador (100% Tempranillo) was aged in French oak prior to being bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Its deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by a rich perfume of berry fruit, spice box, new saddle leather, cigar smoke, and earth. Medium to full-bodied, rich, and concentrated, it may be slightly too muscular and extracted for its own good, but it is impressively pure, rich, and, hopefully, loaded with potential. The tannin needs to become better integrated, so give it 2-3 more years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 10-12 years. Truly compelling, the 2001 La Vina de Andres Romeo emerges from a single vineyard called La Lienda. It boasts an inky/ruby/purple color in addition						
ROQUERS DE PORRERA	2001		PRIORAT	(\$45.00)	RED	93
Planted in pure slate at an altitude of 900 meters, this vineyard has produced an impressive blend of 60% Grenache, 25% Carignan, and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Aged in 100% French oak, it exhibits a vivid, well-defined bouquet of blueberries, black currants, minerals, and background sweet oak. Full-bodied yet elegant, with						
ROTLLAN TORRA	2001	AMADIS	PRIORAT	(\$50.00)	RED	(93-95)
ROTLLAN TORRA	1998	ARIANE	PRIORAT	(\$125.00)	RED	90
ROTLLAN TORRA	2000	BALANDRA	PRIORAT	(\$35.00)	RED	81
ROTLLAN TORRA	N.V.	MOSCATEL	PRIORAT	(\$20.00)	WHITE DESSERT	90
ROTLLAN TORRA	2001	TIRANT	PRIORAT	(\$75.00)	RED	(96-98)
Jordi Rotllan Torra was one of the pioneers of Priorat having founded this small estate in 1984, long before this now fashionable wine region became world renowned. The 2000 Balandra is a blend of 50% Grenache and 25% Carignan from 50-60 year old vines, and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 10 months in both French and American oak, and bottled unfiltered. There are 40,000 bottles of this exceptional as well as realistically priced 2000. Full-bodied, with an inky/purple color and sweet, pure aromas of ripe raspberries intermixed with blueberries, crushed stones, new saddle leather, and melted licorice, this is an impressively endowed wine to enjoy over the next 5-8 years. Tasted just before it was bottled, there will be 4,800 bottles of the 2001 Amadis (a blend of 45% Grenache and 20% Carignan from 90-100 year old vines, and the rest younger vine Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Merlot). A sensational bouquet of blackberry liqueur, acacia flowers, crushed stones, and sweet oak emerges from a wine of great purity, layers of flavor, an opulent texture, and a sweet finish. This beauty should drink well young yet age effortlessly for 10-15 years. A prodigious effort, the 2001 Tirant is a 9,000 bottle cuvee made from 30% Grenache (90-100 years old), 25% Carignan (90-100 years old), 25% young vine Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Syrah, and 10% Merlot. Fermented in large oak foudres and aged 12 months in new French oak, it will be bottled with neither fining nor filtration. Inky/purple-colored to the rim, it boasts a spectacular bouquet of blueberries, blackberries, and the region's						
SAN VICENTE	2000		RIOJA	(\$45.00)	RED	91
One of the sexiest, Pomerol like efforts I taste each year from Spain, the 2000 is no exception. It is fashioned from 100% Tempranillo, spends 20 months in new American and French wood, and is bottled unfiltered. The deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by aromas of spice box, ripe black						
FINCA SANDOVAL	2002		MANCHUELA	(\$35.00)	RED	92
This is the second vintage of this 93% Syrah and 7% Mourvedre blend made by the well-known Spanish journalist and <i>bon vivant</i> , Victor de la Serna. Given the fact that la Serna is a highly respected wine taster and writer, one would expect impeccable attention to detail. The 2001 debut vintage was a revelation for a wine from such young vines, and the 2002 holds impressively on that release. There are 500 cases for the USA market. This deep, impressively saturated ruby/purple-colored 2002 smells like a top classified Bordeaux 2000. While still young, it offers						
HERMANOS SASTRE	2001	CRIANZA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$30.00)	RED	(90-92)
HERMANOS SASTRE	2001	PESUS	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$395.00)	RED	(93-95+)
HERMANOS SASTRE	2001	REGINA VIDES	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$175.00)	RED	(91-93+)
HERMANOS SASTRE	2000	RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$50.00)	RED	90
and passion fruit in an incredibly perfumed, exotic bouquet. Medium-bodied, dry yet exceptionally intense as well as nuanced, this distinctive Spanish white should be consumed over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Andre Tamara, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245						
to a huge nose of graphite, black currants, cherry liqueur, licorice, cedar, and spice box. Powerful, rich, full-bodied, impeccably pure, elegant flavors reveal nicely integrated wood, acidity, and tannin. The finish lasts for nearly a minute. This compelling 2001 should fit its prime in 3-4 years, and last for 15 or more. Romeo's flagship cuvee (only 200 bottles for the USA) is the fabulous 2001 Contador. Along with some of the Artadi offerings, it is as great a Rioja as one could ever hope to taste. Fashioned from three parcels of 80-year old, 70-year old, and 65-year old vines, it spends 12 months in new French oak prior to being bottled without fining or filtration. It boasts a dense purple color along with a sumptuous nose of melted chocolate, espresso roast, <i>creme de cassis</i> , cherries, and flowers. Dense and full bodied as well as impeccably seamless, pure, and balanced, this is a beauty! Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767						
admirable purity, a multilayered texture, and sweet tannin, this is a fairly priced beauty from the highly fashionable appellation of Priorat. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2016. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565						
classic crushed stone minerality. This full-throttle yet remarkably elegant 2001 possesses tremendous intensity and texture as well as layers of flavor, but comes across as not over the top, overripe, or overly heavy. The 60-second finish reveals more noticeable tannin than the other cuvees. Give it 1-2 years of cellaring and drink it over the following 10-15. The 2001 Tirant is indeed a special wine.						
The Arianic, a selection of the finest parcels, is aged in oak and bottle for several years prior to release. The 1998, a blend of equal parts Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, and Syrah, offers a kinky, provocative aromatic display of tree bark, barbecue spices, and seaweed (non). Perhaps it's a vintage character, but it does not reveal the richness or intensity of the 2000 and 2001. Nevertheless, it is a fine effort with good purity, outstanding balance, and lovely flavors that unfold incrementally on the palate. Drink it over the next 5-8 years.						
Lastly, given the increasingly high value of Priorat wines as well as vineyard land, it is surprising to see a sweet wine emerge from that appellation. The non-vintage Moscatel reminded me of a high class Beaumes de Venise from France's southern Rhône Valley. Scents of orange marmalade intermixed with an assortment of tropical fruits cascade from the glass of this medium-bodied, sweet, fragrant, refreshing, value-priced Moscatel. It is meant to be drunk over the near term. Importer: Andre Tamara, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245						
currant and cherry fruit intermixed with hints of espresso and white chocolate. Plump and seductive on the palate, with no hard edges, it tastes like a Pomerol on steroids. Drink it over the next 5-7 years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767						
impressive notes of white chocolate, <i>creme de cassis</i> , blackberries, and hints of vanilla and lead pencil shavings. In the mouth, one gets the feel of naturalness in this fleshy, full-bodied red that is both powerful and elegant. Beautiful integration of sweet tannin, acidity, and wood give it accessibility, but it will be even better in 2-3 years. It should evolve for 12+ years. Hopefully, this is a harbinger of what is possible from the appellation of Manchuela. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767						

This winery in the heart of Ribera del Duero was run by two brothers, Pedro and Jesus Astre, until the tragic death of Pedro in 2002. While the luxury cuvées are frightfully expensive, they are impressive. The Peusis offering is the first bottling from Europe I have seen with a temperature seal on the back label, something most high quality producers have resisted even though it would be welcomed by consumers.

The least expensive offering, and a good value is the **2002 Roble**, a 100% tempranillo cuvée aged nine months in both French and American oak. Fruity and elegant, it offers up aromas of cherries, earth, asphalt, and a hint of spice box. Drink this delicious, round Spanish red over the next 2-3 years. A barrel sample of the **2001 Crianza** looks outstanding. A powerful, dense, ruby/purple-colored wine, it exhibits notes of melted licorice, black currants, blackberries, and tar. Medium to full-bodied and opulent, with a gorgeous texture, it should drink well for 8-10 years. Interestingly, the **2000 Reserva** did not seem as powerful as the 2001 Crianza, probably because 2001 is a better vintage. Nevertheless, the 2000 Reserva is a heady, ripe effort revealing open-knit fruit, and an elegant, medium-bodied style, but neither the power nor density exhibited

by the 2001 Crianza. Drink the 2000 Reserva over the next 5-6 years as this vintage appears to be on a fast evolutionary track for Ribera del Duero.

The two luxury cuvées are top-flight efforts. The **2001 Regina Vides** is a 100% Tempranillo (82-year old vines) aged 24 months in new French oak, and bottled unfiltered and unfined. Its dense purple color is followed by a big, sweet nose of acacia flowers, black currants, licorice, earth, and spice. The aromas are reminiscent of a top-class classified growth from Bordeaux's Margaux appellation. Medium to full-bodied, layered, pure, and dense, this 1,000-case cuvée should drink well for 12-14 years. There are 100 cases of the **2001 Peusis**, a blend of old vine Tempranillo and small quantities of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Merlot fashioned from a meager 7-9 hectoliters per hectare. It spent 24 months in new French oak before being bottled unfiltered and unfined. While one could argue it is over priced, it is a beautiful wine, and, with the aforementioned temperature seal, a revolutionary bottle at that. Deep, full-bodied, and rich, it offers notes of black currants, flowers, spicy sweet oak, and a hint of graphite in a beautifully textured, pure format. Importer: André Tamars, De Maison Selections, Inc., Chapel Hill, NC; tel. (919) 933-4245

BODEGAS SIERRA CANTABRIA 1999 CRIANZA	RIOJA (\$13.00)	RED 89
BODEGAS SIERRA CANTABRIA 2001 EL BOSQUE	RIOJA (\$115.00)	RED 93+
BODEGAS SIERRA CANTABRIA 2001 RIOJA	RIOJA (\$9.00)	RED 87
BODEGAS SIERRA CANTABRIA 2001 RIOJA COLECCIÓN PRIVADA	RIOJA (\$38.00)	RED 92
BODEGAS SIERRA CANTABRIA 1998 RIOJA RESERVA	RIOJA (\$18.00)	RED 88

This winery consistently makes the pages of this publication's best buy section regardless of vintage. The **2001 Rioja** (100% Tempranillo aged 6 months in American oak barrels) is a light to medium-bodied, richly fruity effort displaying notes of tobacco smoke, cherries, and leamy soil. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. Even better is the more serious **1999 Crianza**, which spends 14 months in both French and American oak. A deep ruby/garnet color is accompanied by lovely aromas of cigar smoke, red currants, strawberry jam, spice box, and graphite. Elegant and medium-bodied, with rich fruit as well as a luscious texture, it should drink well for 2-3 years. Both the above mentioned Rioja and Crianza are excellent values.

Aged 19 months in a combination of French and American oak barrels prior to being bottled unfiltered, the prodigious **2001 Rioja Colección Privada** (100% tempranillo from 50 year old vines) boasts a dense ruby/garnet color, and a beautiful nose of sweet red and black currant jam intermixed with cedar wood, spice box, licorice, and toasty new oak. Full-bodied with an opulent texture, admirable purity, and a

long finish, it can be enjoyed now and over the next decade.

The newest releases continue the successful consistency of style and quality offered by this bodega. The excellent, deep ruby-colored, value-priced **1998 Rioja Reserva** (aged 18 months in American and French oak) offers loads of complex aromas as well as flavors (lobaxox, spice box, cedar, sweet cherries and currants). A quasi-modern styled Rioja, it requires consumption over the next 2-3 years. The debut release of the 100% Tempranillo cuvée from a 3.66 acre vineyard planted in 1973, the **2001 El Bosque** is spectacular. It spent 18 months in new French oak, and was bottled unfiltered. Sadly, there are only 50 cases for the USA. An opaque purple color is accompanied by a gorgeous bouquet of graphite, black currants, licorice, espresso, and chocolate. This full bodied, dense, concentrated red requires another 2-3 years of cellaring because of its elevated tannin, but it should last for 10-15 years. It is very impressive. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

BODEGAS SIERRA SALINAS 2001 MIRA	YECLA (\$35.00)	RED 92
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A brilliant effort aged completely in French oak, this is a blend of 75% Mourvèdre (Monastrell) and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Dense purple to the rim, it offers a lovely bouquet of crème de cassis, blackberries, melted licorice, chocolate, and smoky oak. This huge, intense red

reveals terrific palate saturation, impressive purity, and a long, layered finish with noticeable tannin. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2014. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

SOT LEFRIC 2001	PENEDES (\$65.00)	RED 93
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It has been a long time since I tasted a red wine of this quality from this bio-dynamically run vineyard in Penedes. A blend of 50% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% Carignan, it possesses a dense purple color as well as a sumptuous bouquet of blackberry and cherry

liqueur intermixed with smoke, vanilla, licorice, and caramel. Full-bodied with tremendous intensity, beautiful purity, and an opulent finish, it should be consumed over the next 7-8 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

TILENUS 2000 PAGOS DE POSADA	BIERZO (\$45.00)	RED 90+
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An elegant, vibrant wine made from 100% Mencía (the varietal indigenous to Bierzo) grown in a steep vineyard planted in decomposed slate (75-100 year old vines), this is a Burgundian-styled red offering notes of blackberries, raspberries, graphite, and minerals.

Elegant, precise, and fragrant with medium body as well as beautifully pure fruit, it was aged completely in French oak casks, of which 70% were new. It should drink well for a decade or more. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

BODEGAS TINTORALBA 2002 HIGUERUELA	ALMANSA (\$10.00)	RED 88
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A terrific bargain, this 2002, made from destemmed 100% Grenache (60-70 year old vines), was completely tank fermented and aged. A Spanish fruit bomb, it reveals a dense purple color as well as loads of sweet kirsch

liqueur, black currant, and berry fruit, medium body, terrific purity, and a Zinfandel-like spiciness. Enjoy it over the next 1-2 years. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

TRESANTOS 2002	ZAMORA (\$12.00)	RED 88
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Two excellent values, the **2002 Tresantos** is 100% Tinta de Toro (50-year old vines) aged in both French and American oak for four months. It possesses good density, a chunky, robust personality, medium body, and excellent earthy black cherry and black currant fruit. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. Although the **2000 Vendimia Seleccionada** exhibits

more oak, muscle, and chunky fruit, it is a foursquare, deep, rich offering. I'd personally opt for the \$12 bottling, which is a terrific bargain. The **2000 Vendimia Seleccionada** should outlive its less expensive sibling by 2-3 years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

BOD. UVAGUILERA AGUILERA 2001 PALOMERO	RIBERA DEL DUERO (not yet released)	RED (94-96)
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BOD. UVAGUILERA AGUILERA 2000 PALOMERO	RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$85.00)	RED 83
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BOD. UVAGUILERA AGUILERA 1999 PALOMERO	RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$75.00)	RED 93
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BOD. UVAGUILERA AGUILERA 1999 PALOMERO VENDIMIA SELECCIONADA	RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$95.00)	RED 95
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These offerings are made under the guidance of Isaac Fernandez, the oenologist for Bodegas Emilio Moro, from 70-80 year old tempranillo vines planted with an ideal southeast exposure. These wines, which are aged over two years in new French oak, suck up the wood as if it was never even there. That is evident in the **2000 Palomero**, a sensational effort possessing an inky/purple color as well as a sweet nose of coffee, chocolate, new saddle leather, melted licorice, and plenty of black currant as well as blackberry fruit. It is a full-bodied, opulently styled red to drink over the next 10-15 years. The brilliant, similarly-styled **1999 Palomero** reveals the same aromatic profile as the 2000, along with wonderful

sweetness, expansiveness, uplift, and length. Despite being a year older, it appears less evolved than the 2000. Only 40 cases of the **1999 Palomero Vendimia Seleccionada** were produced. A selection of the finest barrels, it has everything found in the regular Palomero cuvée, just more of it. Consume it over the next 12-15 years.

A barrel sample of the **2001 Palomero** exhibits prodigious potential, but I'll say no more until it is in the bottle. This is a relatively new producer (1999 was his first vintage), but based on what I tasted, it is one of the serious superstars of Ribera del Duero. Importer: Aurilino Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

DOMINICO DE VALDEPUÑA	2001 CABERNET SAUVIGNON	TOLEDO	(\$40.00)	RED	90
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DOMINICO DE VALDEPUÑA	2000 SYRAH	TOLEDO	(\$40.00)	RED	90
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While I did not care for Valdepusa's 2001 Petit Verdot, this venture, the brainchild of Spain's Carlos Falcó, has fashioned two impressive reds from French varietals. The serious, full-bodied, impressive **2001 Cabernet Sauvignon** reveals classic Cabernet aromas of cedar wood, tobacco smoke, dried herbs, and black currants. It possesses tremendous intensity, sweet fruit, ripe tannin, and admirable texture

as well as length. How it will evolve remains to be seen. Enjoy it over the next 6-7 years, and keep your fingers crossed. The **2000 Syrah** exhibits a deep ruby/purple color, peppery blackberry aromas, fleshy, medium to full-bodied flavors, and excellent purity and length. It should be consumed over the next 4-5 years. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports, Greenwich, CT; tel. (203) 531-3740

VALLE DA SALINAS	2001 CRIANZA	YECLA	(\$13.00)	RED	89
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A great buy, this dense purple-colored Crianza offers up scents of blackberry liqueur, cassis, cherries, scorched earth, hot rocks, and asphalt. Medium-bodied with loads of fruit, a big texture as well as chewiness, and a surprisingly soft, heady finish, it is a blend of 40%

Mourvèdre, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Syrah. It should drink well for several years, but its value is its exuberance and youthful freshness and robustness. Importer: Langdon Shiverick, Cleveland, OH; tel. (216) 861-6900

FINCA VALLEGARCÍA	2001 SYRAH	TIERRA DE CASTILLA	(\$35.00)	RED	88
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FINCA VALLEGARCÍA	2001 VIOGNIER	TIERRA DE CASTILLA	(\$30.00)	WHITE	90
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Possibly the first Spanish Viognier I have ever tasted, Finca Vallegarcía's **2001 Viognier** emerges from a vineyard south of Toledo. Its tremendous precision and minerality are reminiscent of a top-flight French Condrieu. Aged 75% in tank and 25% in new oak, it exhibits floral and honeysuckle characteristics intermixed with peach, orange marmalade, and mineral notes. Clean, precise, pure, and medium to full-bodied, it should be

enjoyed over the next year. This is a very impressive achievement. The dense ruby/purple-colored **2001 Syrah**, which was aged in both barrel and foudre, reveals a big, monolithic but enticing nose of chocolate, blackberries, and melted licorice. Elegant but full bodied, it is not yet displaying much complexity. Drink it over the next 5-7 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

BODEGAS VALSACRO	2000 CRIANZA	RIOJA	(\$33.00)	RED	89
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BODEGAS VALSACRO	2001 DIORO SELECCION	RIOJA	(\$37.00)	RED	96
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This impressive winery has a moderate production of 3,000 cases. The **2000 Crianza** is a nicely textured, deep ruby-colored effort displaying notes of saddle leather, tobacco, cherries, cola, and graphite. Medium-bodied and elegant, it is best drunk over the next 5-6 years. The prodigious **2001 Dioro Selección** is a 200-case cuvée packaged in a heavy bottle. Aged completely in French oak, this

loaded 2001 boasts a deep purple color as well as a sweet perfume of lead pencil shavings, white chocolate, tobacco leaves, *crème de cassis*, cherries, cola, and smoky new oak. Full bodied and ripe, with superb purity and a multilayered texture, this exceptional red should hit its peak in 2-4 years, and last for 15+. Importer: Kysela Père et Fils, Winchester, VA; tel. (540) 722-8228

VEGA SICILIA	1991 UNICO RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$250.00+)	RED	95+
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VEGA SICILIA	N.V. UNICO RESERVA ESPECIAL	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$300.00+)	RED	85
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VEGA SICILIA	1999 VALBUENA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$75.00)	RED	91
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A strong effort for **Valbuena**, the tight but elegant **1999** reveals crisp underlying acidity as well as firm tannin, medium body, and pure black currant fruit, kirsch, new saddle leather, and sweet vanilla notes. Patience will be required. Anticipated maturity: 2007-2017. The current release of Vega Sicilia's flagship offering, the **1991 Unico Reserva**, will have to satisfy lovers of this great Spanish red until the 1994 is released in 2005. The 1991 is a gorgeous, deep ruby/purple-colored, remarkably youthful effort offering sweet vanilla notes intertwined with black currants, cherry liqueur, flowers, spice box, and tobacco leaves. Full-bodied and intense, with sweet tannin, outstanding density as well as purity, and a layered mouthfeel, this unevolved 1991 needs another 3-4

years of cellaring; it should last for 20-25 years. It's a wine of great elegance as opposed to power. Lastly, the non-vintage **Unico Reserva Especial** (a 14,536 bottle blend of the 1985, 1990 and 1991 vintages with lot # 019/04) is spectacular, as this cuvée always tends to be. Made in the full-throttle Unico style, but aromatically more complex as well as slightly more evolved, this titan will drink well young yet age gracefully for another 20-25 years. It is similar in weight, texture, and personality to the 1991 Unico, but more evolved. Good luck trying to find any of it! Importer: a Christopher Cannan Selection, various American importers including Michael Skumik, Syosset, NY; tel. (516) 677-9300 and Diamond Wine Merchants, Oakland, CA; tel. (510) 567-9097

VENUS	2001 LA UNIVERSAL	MONSANT	(\$35.00)	RED	90+
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This 350-case blend of equal parts Carignan and Syrah from vineyards planted in decomposed granite and slate was aged in Burgundy barrels for 14 months prior to being bottled unfiltered. This estate is owned by Sara Pérez, the well-known winemaker of the Pírcal estates of Cims de Porrera, Val Llach, and Clos Martinet. The dense purple-colored 2001 La

Universal offers up a sumptuous perfume of new saddle leather, animal fur, beef blood, and *crème de cassis*. Rustic, with tremendous density as well as hearty fruit flavors revealing both heat and high, sharp tannin, it is a spicy, rich, mouthfilling effort to drink over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

FINCA VILLACRECES	2000	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$24.00)	RED	91
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One of the best kept secrets of Ribera del Duero, Finca Villacreces produces a sexy red from 75% Tempranillo and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Aged 14 months in new and one-year old French casks, this 2,000-case cuvée exhibits a deep ruby/purple color along with a bouquet of smoky hickory wood, barbecue spices,

vanilla, black currants, cherries, melted asphalt, and licorice. The complex aromatics are followed by a delicious, fruit-driven, opulent, medium to full bodied offering with no hard edges. Drink it over the next 5-7 years. Importer: Eric Solomon, European Cellars, Charlotte, NC; tel. (704) 358-1565

VINA ALARBA	2002 OLD VINES	CALATAYUD	(\$7.00)	RED	85
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VINA ALARBA	2001 OLD VINES PAGO SAN MIGUEL	CALATAYUD	(\$17.00)	RED	89
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Bodegas y Vinedos del Jalon's Vina Alarba has become synonymous with good value. The **2002 Old Vines** may not have the pure stuffing of several of the better vintages in the past, but it merits a recommendation. Light-bodied, with a light to medium ruby color, crisp acidity, and loads of strawberry and cherry fruit, this wine (made from 50-year old Grenache vines) could be served chilled if desired. Enjoy it over the next year. More serious is the **2001 Old Vines Pago San Miguel**. From a vineyard

planted in 1921, it is a blend of 85% Grenache and 15% Syrah aged in French oak for 6 months. A deep ruby/purple color is followed by sweet aromas of kirsch liqueur, blackberries, licorice, and spice. There is super fruit on the attack, medium body, a heady, supple mid-palate, and surprising depth and richness in the finish. Consume this excellent 2001 over the next 2-3 years. Importer: Jorge Ordoñez, Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA; tel. (781) 461-5767

VINA SOLORCA	1999 BARÓN DEL VALLE RESERVA	RIBERA DEL DUERO	(\$30.00)	RED	89
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A lush, fruit-driven offering, this 1999, aged 18 months in both French and American oak, displays excellent ripeness along with a perfume of melted licorice, smoke, dried herbs, roasted meats, and black

currants. Medium to full-bodied and supple-textured, it is best drunk over the next 5-6 years. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

VINEDOS Y CRIANZAS	2001 FINCA LA ESTACADA SELECCION VARIETAL	CASTILLA	(\$20.00)	RED	90
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VINEDOS Y CRIANZAS	2001 FINCA LA ESTACADA SIX MONTHS	CASTILLA	(\$12.00)	RED	88
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VINEDOS Y CRIANZAS	2001 FINCA LA ESTACADA TWELVE MONTHS	CASTILLA	(\$16.00)	RED	87
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The excellent 2001 Finca La Estacada Six Months, primarily Tempranillo, offers up scents of melted chocolate, mocha, and sweet cherries in a spicy, fleshy, chunky style with great purity as well as palate presence. It should be consumed over the next 12-18 months. The **2001 Finca La Estacada Twelve Months** is 100% Tempranillo. A sexy,

attractive, medium-bodied, elegant effort, it reveals a more international style because of its blatant creamy oak. It will drink well for 1-2 years. The real star is the blend of 45% Tempranillo, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 15% Syrah, and 5% Manzuelo, the **2001 Finca La Estacada Selección Varietal**. A modern-styled, beautifully made effort aged 18

months in French and American oak, it exhibits a deep ruby/purple color along with a rich bouquet of red and black fruits intertwined with licorice and toasty new oak. Medium to full-bodied, with loads of fruit, a supple

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS MAUROS 2001 SAN ROMAN

Another stunning offering from Toro, San Roman is the product of Bodegas Mauro, and that producer's typical high quality comes through in this wine. Made from 100% Tinta de Toro cropped at 15-25 hectoliters per hectare, aged 22 months in both new French and American oak, and bottled without filtration, it boasts a dense purple

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS PUJANZA 2001 PUJAZA

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS PUJANZA 1999 PUJAZA

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS PUJANZA 2001 PUJAZA NORTE

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS PUJANZA 1999 PUJAZA NORTE

BODEGAS Y VINEDOS PUJANZA 2001 QERTOS

The **2001 Qertos**, which is a carbonic-macerated Rioja, is an excellent bargain for a wine from this prestigious appellation. Soft and fruity, offering hints of tobacco, dried herbs, and earth, this plum/ruby-colored effort is medium-bodied, elegant, and fresh. Drink it over the next 1-2 years. The deep ruby-colored, stylish, spicy **1999 Pujanza** reveals notions of tobacco, wood smoke, earth, strawberries, and cherries along with excellent texture, medium body, and a classy, elegant personality. It was bottled unfiltered after 15 months aging in new French oak. Like its 1999 sibling, the **2001 Pujanza** is a blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Graciano. It reveals the strength of the 2001 vintage, offering more of everything (color, aromatics, fruit, body, and length). Layered and dense with wonderful suppleness, it was aged 17 months in 100% new French oak, a component that is remarkably well concealed by the wealth of fruit. This attractive Rioja represents a reasonable value for its quality.

VINOS PINOL 2000 L'AVI ARRUFU

VINOS PINOL 1999 FILL DES TEMPS CRIANZA

VINOS PINOL 2000 FILL DES TEMPS GRAN SELECCION

VINOS PINOL N.V. MATHER TERESINA

VINOS PINOL 2001 NUESTRA SENORA DEL PORTAL

VINOS PINOL 2001 VALL DE BERRVS

These interestingly named offerings tend to be blends dominated primarily by Grenache and Carignan, but some Tempranillo, Syrah, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon is added. The most unusual is the **non-vintage Mather Teresina** (actually a blend of the 1996, 1998, and 1999 vintages). An outstanding effort, it exhibits a deep purple color, medium to full body, toasty new oak notes (it was aged in cask), and a long, concentrated finish. I do not like the idea of a non-vintage designation, but this is a serious red that should continue to age well for 7-8 years. A blend of Grenache, Tempranillo, and Cabernet Sauvignon, the tightly closed **2000 L'Avi Arrufi** reveals plenty of new oak (16 months in French and American wood will cause that). Medium-bodied, with good purity, abundant fruit, and a tannic structure, it requires another 1-2 years of cellaring. Drink it over the following 7-8 years.

The **2001 Nuestra Senora del Portal** spent only 3 months in French oak, it is a blend of 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 10% Syrah, 10% Tempranillo, and 20% Grenache. A dense ruby/purple color is

BODEGAS VIZCARRA RAMOS 2001 CELIA

BODEGAS VIZCARRA RAMOS 2000 CRIANZA

A good value, the **2000 Crianza** is a 2,500-case cuvée made from 100% Tempranillo and aged 14 months in French and American oak. It reveals a deep ruby/purple color along with sweet black cherry and cola-infused fruit, smoke, toast, and coffee characteristics. Dense, chewy, and succulent, it is best drunk over the next 4-5 years. The expensive **2001 Celia** is a 100%

ZUMAYA 1999 RESERVA PAGOS VIEJOS

Tobacco leaf, dried Provençal herbs, red as well as black fruits, and loamy soil characteristics comprise this 1999's complex aromatics. Medium-

texture, and a long finish, this elegant 2001 will drink well for 5-6 years. All three of these Spanish reds are good values. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

TORO (\$54.00) RED 91

color as well as a rich bouquet of black cherries, berries, vanilla, and spice box. Textured and medium to full-bodied with some tannin to shed, it is an explosively rich, impressively endowed red that should drink well for a decade. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

RIOJA (\$28.00) RED 90

RIOJA (\$28.00) RED 87

RIOJA (\$75.00) RED 91+

RIOJA (\$68.00) RED 90

RIOJA (\$11.00) RED 86

The two more expensive offerings include the **1999 Pujanza Norte**, a selection made both in the vineyard and cellars. Aged 10 months in new French oak, and bottled with neither fining nor filtering, it exhibits a deep ruby/purple color as well as sumptuous, spicy tobacco-like aromas intermixed with herbs, smoke, and sweet cherry and strawberry fruit. Medium-bodied with crisp acidity and fine spice, it is a finesse-styled Rioja for drinking over the next 7-8 years. The brilliant **2001 Pujanza Norte** has much more to it. A dense opaque ruby/purple color is followed by a big nose of black cherry liqueur, graphite, smoke, and licorice with a hint of tobacco in the background. This medium to full-bodied, rich, concentrated Rioja possesses both power and finesse. Give it another 1-2 years of cellaring, and drink it over the following 10-12. Importer: Aurelio Cabestrero, Grapes of Spain, Washington, DC; tel. (202) 413-3875

TERRA ALTA (\$37.00) RED 88+

TERRA ALTA (\$15.00) RED 87

TERRA ALTA (\$20.00) RED 88

TERRA ALTA (\$48.00) RED 90

TERRA ALTA (\$18.00) RED 88

TERRA ALTA (\$40.00) RED 91

followed by exuberant notes of red as well as black fruit, and a touch of oak. While not complex, it offers loads of plump fruit, good glycerin, and a heady finish. It should be consumed over the next 3-4 years. A good bistro-styled red, the **1999 Fill des Temps Crianza** is a blend of equal parts Grenache and Carignan. Surprisingly chocolatey, but soft with medium-bodied cherry and currant flavors, this elegant, fruit-driven 1999 is best drunk over the next several years. The elegant **2000 Fill des Temps Gran Seleccion** is similar to the Vall de Berrvs, but lighter and more spicy, with more noticeable tannin. It does not possess the depth of fruit or richness of the Vall de Berrvs. It should be drunk over the next 4-5 years. These three wines present good values.

Lastly, a blend of 50% Grenache, 40% Carignan, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, the **2001 Vall de Berrvs** boasts a dense purple color as well as a heady perfume of kirsch liqueur and licorice. Layered, full-bodied, pure, and already accessible, it will last another 7-8 years. It reminded me of a modern-styled southern French Côtes du Rhône. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

RIOJA (\$110.00) RED 91

RIOJA (\$20.00) RED 88

Tempranillo cuvée aged 21 months in new French oak. A deep plum/purple color is followed by aromas of melted licorice, figs, black currants, and smoke. This heady, full-bodied, concentrated Rioja exhibits impressive extract, sweet tannin, and well-integrated acidity. Consume it over the next 10-12 years. Importer: Olé Imports, New York, NY; tel. (917) 335-7462

RIBERA DEL DUERO (\$25.00) RED 87

bodied, elegant, and cleanly made, it should be consumed over the next 4-5 years. Importer: Esser-Wines Ltd., St. Helena, CA; tel. (707) 963-1300

CENTRAL ITALY - RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

By Daniel Thomases

Central Italy is an indefinite term, describing as it does a very wide swath of territory which stretches from Romagna (to the north of the Apennines but with a climate and a grape, Sangiovese, which link it to regions further to the south) through Tuscany, Umbria, the Marches, and Lazio (the Latium of ancient Rome) to Abruzzo and Molise. Any sort of generalization about recent vintages in so large an area, with a viticulture which uses a significant number of different varietals – Sangiovese and, increasingly, Cabernet and Merlot in Romagna, Tuscany, and Umbria, Montepulciano in the Marches and Abruzzo – is likely to be of dubious utility, so the most sensible course would be to simply list the overall results of the individual regions in recent vintages:

Tuscany: 1999 and 2001 are superior vintages for all of the major varieties. 2000 suffered through a wave of unusual heat - even for this part of the Mediterranean - which arrived out of the blue in mid-August, lingered for three and a half weeks, and caused significant vine stress and problems in fully ripening the grapes. Results are uneven, with Cabernet generally giving the best wines. Little is to be expected from the rain-plagued 2002 vintage, though serious houses which made a good selection of the grapes are offering some pleasant wines intended for early drinking, and nothing more can be expected of the year.

Romagna: more irregular than Tuscany, with some houses preferring their 1999s, others their 2000s, though the former