

# Spanish Wines for Summer

BY JON GENDERSON

As I contemplate restocking a few empty shelves in my home wine cellar, I am drawn to wines that work well in the heat of summer. I think of bright, fruity whites and soft, flavorful reds that are enjoyable by themselves on a hot day and will also go with summer fare. I find myself picking up an excellent Verdelho from Riuda, an Albarino from Rias Baixas and an old vine Grenache from Campo de Borja. It is at this point that I realize that all my choices are Spanish. I like the theme and continue selecting some Mencia from Bierzo, Spain's answer to Burgundy, and a full-bodied Toro for grilled chicken. My, wouldn't a sparkling Cava make a great aperitif? In less than a minute I had a great, reasonably priced case put together.

I'm not sure why so many Spanish wines are good for summer drinking, but their versatility makes them perfect for Washington's torrid summers. I have selected some of my favorites to recommend, by region.

## Monterei

The Monterey region is located in Galicia in Northwest Spain. It is an area of steep hills, terraced vineyards and maritime climate. The best white wines in the appellation are made from the aromatic white grape Godello. The most widely planted red grape is Mencia, also the grape of Bierzo.

### Alma de Blanco Godello 2008 (\$14)

Here is a white wine with character and flavor. Quite fruit forward with peach and apricot aromas, very good body and mouthfeel with no oak, and fresh, lively acidity. This lovely wine is perfect for summer sipping and excellent with fish.

### Alma de Tinto Mencia 2007 (\$14)

This is a light, refreshing red with excellent acidity beautifully balanced by cherry and wild strawberry fruit that is remarkably refreshing. Racy and graceful, its lingering minerality makes it perfect for warm weather drinking.

## Rueda

Rueda is located in northwestern Spain, in the Castilla y León region just below Ribera Del Duero. Like Bordeaux and Chateaufort-du-Pape, the "soils" are mostly covered by rocks which generate stored heat back into the vines at night. Here, the white grape Verdejo is king and produces outstanding wines of exceptional fruit and character.

### Cuatro Rayas Verdejo 2009 (\$14)

This is a longtime favorite of mine with intense lime and mineral aromas lifted by white flowers. It possesses excellent balance with citrus and apple flavors leading to the crisp finish.

### Azumbre Verdejo 2008 (\$17)

The Azumbre Verdejo comes from 65-year-old vines, bush pruned, and possesses citrus, pear and yellow plum aromas enlivened by zesty minerals and anise. Energetic and concentrated, with powerful fruit flavors braced by citrus zest. Delicious!

## Rias Baixas

In the northwest corner of Spain, the Rias Baixas (low rivers) is located in the region of Galicia, just above Portugal. The star wines from Rias Baixas are made with the Albariño grape. Albariño is likened to Riesling and Viognier, Riesling for its mineral character and Viognier for its bouquet of peaches and apricots.

### Orballo Albariño 2008 (\$20)

Orballo is light-gold colored with a fragrant perfume of mineral, flowers and lemon. Medium-bodied, it has a succulent creamy texture, ripe, slightly tropical flavors and a lengthy finish. This Albariño is estate bottled, a relative rarity in Rias Baixas.

### Veiga da Princesa Albariño Vineyard A 2008 (\$20)

Vivid lime and grapefruit on the nose, with spicy mineral and lemon. The clinging finishing flavors of lime and orange peel are intense and strikingly pure. This is delicious.

## Cava

Cava is a sparkling wine, made in the true Champagne method, produced in six regions of Spain. Ninety percent comes from the Catalan region of Penedes near Barcelona. It is traditionally light and fresh with apple, pear and yeast aromas and flavors.

### Gran Gesta Reserva Brut (\$14)

Very clean, crisp and balanced with butterscotch, apple and yeast aromas leading to apple, pineapple, toast and white-raisin flavors. It's big, smooth and eminently enjoyable.

### Mont Ferrant Brut Blanc Nature (\$22)

This is a rich, very dry and crisp Cava with toasty and yeasty pome fruit flavors. It is very well made with complexity and length. Excellent!

### Canals Canals Gran Reserva Rosato Cava (\$17)

Rose's from Cava are made from traditional red grapes from Penedes and the Canals is quite special. Strawberry and raspberry flavors combine with yeast and smoked herbs to produce a lovely sparkler for warm evenings on the porch.

## Sangria

Sangria is not a region but almost a way of life in Spain. I offer you a bottled version and a very good recipe.

### Vinito Sangria (\$7)

It tastes like wine and fruit and costs \$7; no, the base wine is not Lafite.

### Good (there is no great) Sangria Recipe

Ingredients:

1 bottle red (use a good inexpensive Spanish red like Spada Toro)

1 lemon (cut into wedges)

1 lime (cut into wedges)

1 orange (cut into wedges)

1 apple (cut into wedges)

3/4 cup raspberries (fresh or frozen)

2/3 cup Agave nectar (can use sugar but the agave is better for you)

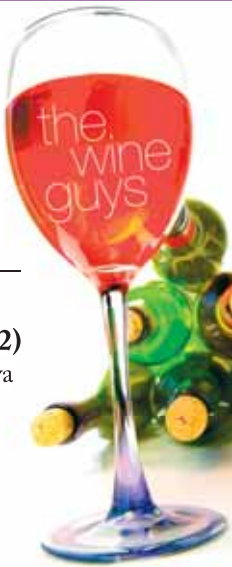
2 cups sparkling water

1/2 cup brandy (optional)

Mix everything together except the sparkling water and place in fridge for 24 hours. Add sparkling water, some ice and serve.

*Read the August Hill Rag for the Spanish regions of Rioja, Toro, Ribera Del Duero, Campo de Borja and Mencia.*

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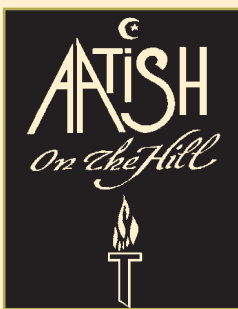
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