



CHAPTER ELEVEN

SPAIN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, the candidate should be able to:

- Identify the general role and position of Spain in the global wine industry.
- Recall the physical location and general climate of Spain's major wine regions.
- Recognize the hierarchy of Spanish wine designations.
- Describe the grape varieties and wine styles of Rioja, Sherry, and Cava.
- Recall the wine regions and major grapes of Galicia, the Duero Valley, Navarra, and Catalonia.
- Discuss the differences between the fino and oloroso production methods and styles for Sherry.

Spain is another of the world's major wine countries. After enjoying a brief reign as the world's largest wine producer (by volume) in 2013, Spain has returned to its usual spot as the third largest wine producer in the world, after France and Italy.

Although its domestic wine consumption is substantial, it produces enough excess to be among the world's top three wine exporters. With over 2.5 million acres (1.01 million ha) under vine, Spain continues to have—by far—the largest grape acreage in the world.

Some of Spain's most famous wines include Rioja, Sherry, and Cava. The country is closely associated with the Tempranillo grape variety, which is the main grape of the Rioja region and the foundation of many other standout red wines from Spain.

Major Wine Regions of Spain

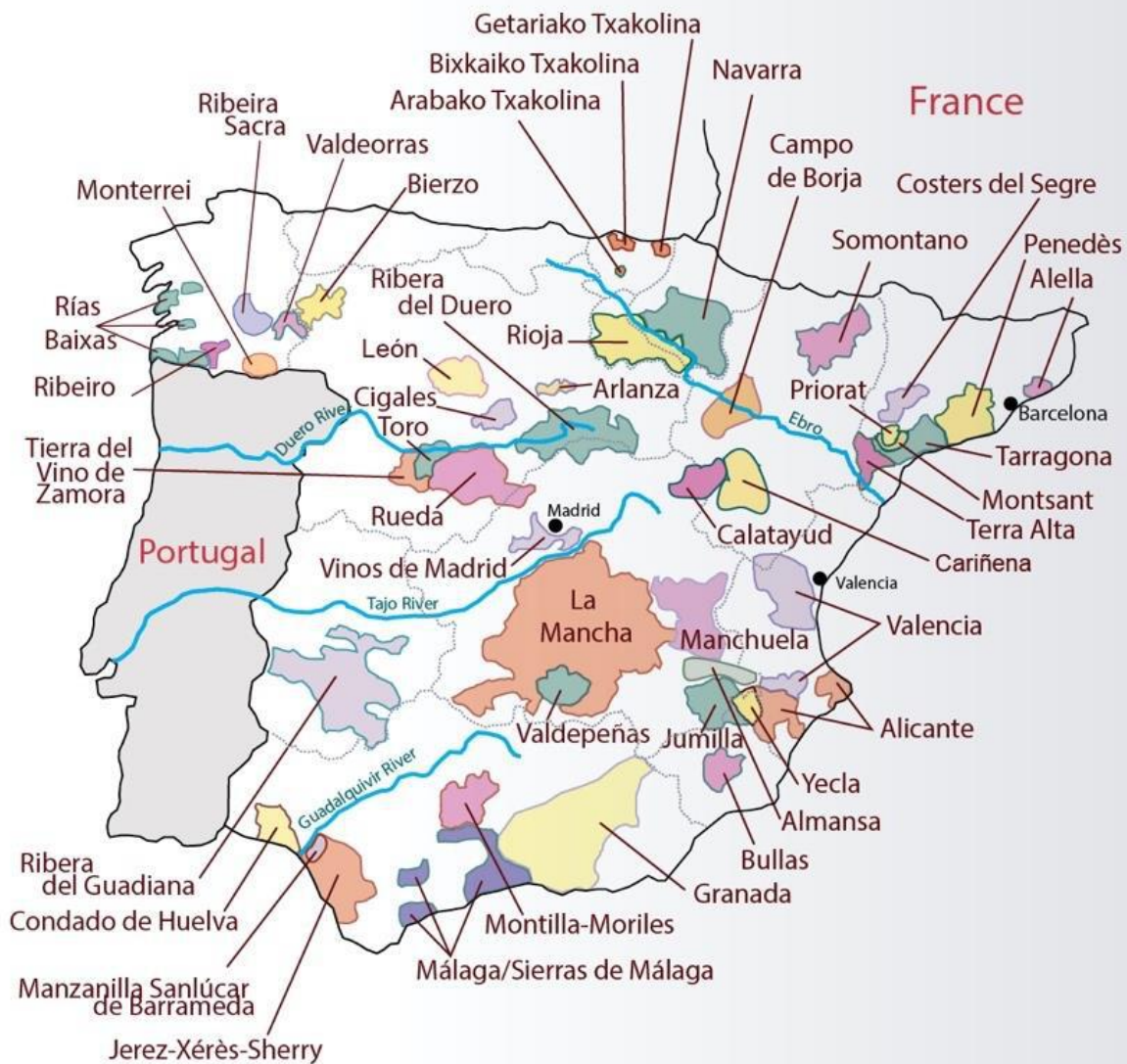


Figure 11–1: Spain’s wine regions

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Spain is a moderately large country in southwestern Europe where, along with Portugal, it makes up the Iberian Peninsula. The country is very mountainous, with most of the interior raised on a large plateau known as the Meseta. Almost 60% of Spain lies above 2,000

feet (610 m) in elevation.

To the north of Spain lie the Bay of Biscay off the Atlantic Ocean and, across the Pyrenees Mountain range, France. Its western boundary includes Portugal and a small section of Atlantic coastline. Spain's southern and eastern borders are situated along the Mediterranean Sea coastline. Spain's climate is mostly continental (hot summers, cold winters, rainfall fairly evenly spread throughout the year) despite the fact that the country is nearly surrounded by water. This is a result of the network of mountains that block much of the maritime influence. The Pyrenees Mountains and the *Cordillera Cantábrica* (Cantabrian Mountains) along the north coast are particularly important in that they shield the peninsula from many of the winter storms and colder influences coming from the north.

Only the relatively exposed northwest corner of the country is truly maritime in climate (mild summers, mild winters, considerable rainfall year-round), while the southwest and Mediterranean coastal areas have a classic Mediterranean climate (hot, dry, sunny summers and mild, wetter winters). The months of June, July, and August are quite dry everywhere in Spain.

There are 17 autonomous communities in Spain. Of these, fifteen are located on the Spanish mainland and two are island groups—the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands in the North Atlantic. The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla—exclaves located on the northern coast of Africa—are also part of the country of Spain.

Languages other than Spanish predominate in several of the northern regions of Spain, which introduces variations in terminology and pronunciation for wines from these areas. Galician (*Galego*) is spoken in Galicia, including Rías Baixas; Basque (*Euskara*) in the Basque Country (*Euskadi*) and Navarra; and Catalan (*Català*) in Catalonia (*Catalunya*), Valencia, and the surrounding areas.

SPANISH GRAPE VARIETIES

Spain's vast vineyard acreage is heavily oriented toward the country's indigenous grape varieties, including Tempranillo and Airén, which (combined) account for almost 42% of all plantings. In 2021, it was reported that Tempranillo—Spain's illustrious, indigenous red grape variety—had increased to the point where it now holds the number one spot as the most widely planted grape. Tempranillo is widely grown around the country—particularly in the northern part of the Meseta—and is known by many (often regionally-specific) different names. Tempranillo is known for producing age-worthy red wines with moderate acidity and aromas of spice, chalk, strawberries, and tobacco (often with an assist from contact with oak).

LEADING GRAPE VARIETIES OF SPAIN

Red Grapes	White Grapes
Tempranillo	Airén
Bobal	Cayetana Blanca
Garnacha Tinta	Albariño
Monastrell	Macabeo (Viura)
Mazuelo (Carignan)	Palomino
Mencía	Verdejo
Cabernet Sauvignon	Parellada
Syrah	Xarel-lo
Alicante Bouschet	Moscatel
Merlot	Pedro Ximénez
	Garnacha Blanca

Figure 11–2: Leading Grape Varieties of Spain

The country's second leading grape—Airén—is considered a somewhat neutral white variety used primarily for making brandy and blended wine (which may include a good deal of bulk wine). However, it is increasingly used in single-variety (often oak-aged) whites as well. Airén is believed to be native to Castilla-La Mancha and is widely grown in the central regions of Spain.

TEMPRANILLO SYNONYMS

Name — Region/Town

Tempranillo — Rioja

Tinta de Toro — Toro

Tinta del País — Ribera del Duero, Cigales

Tinto Fino — Ribera del Duero

Ull de Llebre — Catalonia

Cencibel — La Mancha, Valdepeñas

Aragonêz — Portugal

Tinta Roriz — Douro (Portugal)

Other well-respected varieties found in many parts of Spain include the red grapes Garnacha (Grenache), Bobal, and Monastrell (Mourvèdre). Leading white grapes include Cayetana Blanca and Macabeo (Viura).

Most other grape varieties tend to be regionally based, including the following:

- Palomino and Pedro Ximénez in Jerez
- Parellada and Xarel-lo in Penedés
- Albariño in Rías Baixas

SPANISH WINE LAWS

Like all EU member countries, Spain has a classification system for its wine divided along several tiers.

- Basic Spanish wine that does not warrant a geographical indication is designated as *vino de mesa* (literally, table wine).
- Spain currently has 42 areas with protected geographical indication (PGI) status; these are identified on wine labels as “*Vino de la Tierra de*” followed by the name of the region.

Wines with a protected designation of origin (PDO) are divided into several subcategories:

- *Vino de calidad con indicación geográfica* (VCIG): Established in 2005, this status is intended for up-and-coming regions that are expected to prove themselves worthy of DO status before too long. These wines are indicated on the label by the phrase “Vino de Calidad de,” followed by the region name. As of December 2022, there were seven regions that held this classification: Cangas, Valles de Benavente, Valtiendas, Sierra Salamanca, Las Islas Canarias, Cebreros, and Legrija.
- *Denominación de origen* (DO): These highly regarded wines are sourced from a demarcated zone whose production is prescribed with regard to grape varieties, crop yields, winemaking methods, and aging regimens. As of December 2022, Spain has 68 DOs; this number has remained relatively stable for several years, but it could change in the future. Each DO is supported by a *consejo regulador* (regulating council) that controls local production areas and practices.
- *Vino de pago*: Established in 2003, the vino de pago category is a government-granted protected designation of origin intended to recognize single-vineyard wines of distinction. Regional specificity and estate bottling are required.
- *Denominación de origen calificada* (DOCa): This status is reserved for wines that have demonstrated superior quality as a DO for at least ten years. So far, this classification has been awarded to only two wines: Rioja and Priorato (often written in Catalan as *Priorat DOQ*).



Figure 11–3: Spanish wine categories



Figure 11–4: Barrel aging at Bodegas Bilbainas in Rioja

AGING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Aging wine in oak barrels (*barricas*) is a common practice in Spain. Labeling terminology to indicate a wine's age is strictly regulated by Spanish wine law. There are two sets of terminology: one set that

both PGI and PDO wines can use, and another whose use is restricted to PDO wines.

PGI and PDO terms include the following:

- *Vino noble* (noble wine): wine that has spent a minimum of 18 months aging in barricas or in the bottle
- *Vino añejo* (aged wine): wine that has spent a minimum of 24 months aging in barricas or in the bottle
- *Vino viejo* (old wine): wine that has spent a minimum of 36 months aging in a strongly oxidative environment exposed to any combination of light, oxygen, and heat

PDO-Only Terms

Quality wines may use the terms *Crianza*, *Reserva*, or *Gran Reserva* on their labels to indicate a level of aging prior to release. The general minimum requirements for the use of these terms are shown in the table below. Several DOs and DOCa's have higher minimum aging times for their wines; however, many producers elect to age their wines even longer (sometimes much longer) than the stated minimums.

Joven (young) may be used for PDO wine released the year after it was made and, if oak-aged at all, aged for a shorter period than the legal minimum requirement for *Crianza*. As of 2018, some regions use the term *genérico* (generic) in place of the term *joven*.

Table 11–1: Spanish Wine Aging Designations

SPANISH WINE AGING DESIGNATIONS				
	RED WINES		WHITE WINES AND ROSÉS	
	Aging in Barrel (Months)	Total Aging (Months)	Aging in Barrel (Months)	Total Aging (Months)
Crianza	6	24	6	18
Reserva	12	36	6	24
Gran Reserva	18	60	6	48
* Note: Specific regions (notably the Rioja DOCa) may have additional aging requirements to accompany these terms.				

WINE REGIONS

GALICIA

Galicia is located in the northwest corner of Spain, part of the area often referred to as Green Spain. The area—being exposed to the Atlantic Ocean—is decidedly cooler and wetter than the rest of the country, and its wines are notable for their crisp flavors and high acidity.

Galicia contains five DO wine regions. The best-known of these include the following:

- Rías Baixas: Rías Baixas—a single DO, broken up into five noncontiguous subregions—produces dry, crisp white wines known for their fruity, floral aromas. Rías Baixas is made primarily from the Albariño grape variety, along with Loureira and Treixadura.
- Ribeiro: Located along the Miño (Minho) River just to the east of Rías Baixas, the Ribeiro DO is one of the oldest recognized wine regions in Spain. The area is best known for its crisp white wines based on Treixadura and other (mainly local) grapes, including Loureiro, Torrontés, Albariño, and Godello.
- Valdeorras: Valdeorras is located on the eastern (inland) edge of Galicia. It is known for white wines based on the Godello grape variety, as well as rich, fruity red produced from Mencía.



Figure 11–5: Vineyards in Ribeiro

CASTILLA Y LEÓN

On its way to northern Portugal, where it is called the Douro, the Duero River flows through the heart of Castilla y León and past the regions of Toro, Rueda, Cigales, and Ribera del Duero. This area lies on the high plains of the northern Meseta, where winters are very cold and summers can be quite hot. Because of the protection of the mountains to the north, these vineyard areas get much less rain than Green Spain, yet more than most of southern Spain. The leading wine regions of Castilla y León include the following:

- Toro: Named for the town of Toro, the Toro DO is primarily known for powerful red wines based on Tempranillo, locally known as *Tinta de Toro*. The area is also planted to small amounts of Garnacha (used in some red wines, but primarily vinified into rosé), and an even smaller percentage of white grapes, most notably Malvasia Blanca, Verdejo, and Albillo Real. The Toro DO is located on a high plateau between two mountain ranges, with most vineyards planted at altitudes of 2,000 to 2,800 feet (600–800 m) above sea level.

- Rueda: With its significant diurnal variation, it is not surprising that Rueda has long been prized for its white wines. The region's dry, aromatic white wines (Rueda Blanco) are typically based on the Verdejo grape, which takes up as much as 88% of the total vineyard area. Rueda Blanco may also be made with a majority of Sauvignon Blanc; limited amounts of Viura, Palomino Fino, Viognier, and/or Chardonnay are permitted as well. Red wines and rosados—based on Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Garnacha, and/or Merlot—comprise about 5% of Rueda's production.
- Bierzo: The Bierzo DO lies just to the east of the border between Castilla y León and Galicia. Accordingly, its climate can be described as somewhat transitional—between the cooler influences of Green Spain and the warmer, drier areas inland. Bierzo is best known for its flavorful red wines (and some rosado) produced from the Mencía grape variety.
- Cigales: Cigales produces mostly reds and rosados based on Tempranillo, here known as Tinta del País. The rosés are often blended with Garnacha.
- Ribera del Duero: Ribera del Duero is one of the stars of the Spanish wine industry, considered by many to be on par with Rioja for the quality of its wines. The area's climate can be a challenge, with extremes of both hot and cold. However, at around 2,500 feet (760 m), the region's vineyards are among the highest elevated in Spain, resulting in good diurnal shifts from day to night. Rich, flavorful red wines based on Tempranillo (locally known as *Tinta del País* or *Tinto Fino*) are the focus in Ribera del Duero; rosado and clarete (light reds) are also allowed. In 2020, the regulations were revised to allow the production of white wines—Ribera Blanco—using a minimum of 75% Albillo Mayor grapes.

NAVARRA

The autonomous region of Navarra lies between La Rioja and the French border to the northeast. Castles dotting the region recall

Navarra's heritage as a separate kingdom, which maintained its independence until it was subsumed by the Castilian Empire in 1512. While a small portion of the Rioja DOCa crosses over into southwestern Navarra, the rest of southern Navarra, which has a climate similar to Rioja's, falls mostly within the Navarra DO. This traditional region, historically famous for its rosé, has reinvented itself with international grape varieties. The area's principal grapes are Tempranillo and Garnacha, with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay growing in importance.

RIOJA

Rioja is considered the most famous red wine of Spain and is unquestionably one of its best. The wines of Rioja have been defined since (at least) 1787, when the *Real Junta de Cosecheros* (Royal Board of Winegrowers) was created with the objective to protect the region, promote the wines, and facilitate trade. Given this long history of quality production, it is no surprise that Rioja was the first region to be elevated to DOCa status (in 1991).

Geography and Climate

The Rioja DOCa is located in north-central Spain, inland from the Cantabrian Mountains. These mountains help to moderate the area's climate by blocking much of the cold influence that would otherwise flow inland from the Bay of Biscay/Atlantic Ocean. The region—located primarily in the *autonomía* of La Rioja, with some vineyards situated in Basque Country and Navarra—lies in the valley of the Ebro River. The combined influences of the Cantabrian Mountains, the Ebro River, and the Mediterranean Sea—located at the eastern edge of the Ebro Valley—help to provide warm summers and milder winters than those experienced in the open, exposed Meseta. The Rioja DOCa has three sub-appellations, referred to as zones:

- *Rioja Alta*: the high-altitude, hilly area covering most of the western half of the region
- *Rioja Alavesa*: essentially, the part of Rioja Alta north of the Ebro

- *Rioja Oriental*: the lower, flatter eastern portion of the Rioja DOCa (formerly known as the *Rioja Baja*)

The Rioja Oriental is the hottest and driest of the zones. In comparison, the Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa zones enjoy a relatively mild climate and produce much of the area's finest grapes. Rioja DOCa wines may be produced from the wines of a single zone and labeled as such; however, many wines contain a blend from two or all three of the zones.



Figure 11–6: Marqués de Riscal Hotel and Winery in Rioja

Zones of the Rioja DOCa



Copyright: The Society of Wine Educators 2019

Figure 11–7: Zones of the Rioja DOCa

Grape Varieties

Red varieties cover well over 90% of the vineyard area in Rioja, and Tempranillo comprises most of that. The other permitted red grapes include Garnacha, Mazuelo (also known as Cariñena or, outside of Spain, Carignan), and Graciano. Viura is by far the leading white grape. Other allowed white varieties include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Malvasia, Garnacha Blanca, Maturana Blanca, and Verdejo.

Rioja Wine Styles

Although Rioja also produces white and rosé, it is most famous for its red wine. Rioja's prominence is largely due to the jump-start provided by the Bordeaux winemakers who settled here for a brief

time in the late nineteenth century after phylloxera had destroyed their own vineyards in France. They brought extensive winemaking experience with them and set about making a Bordeaux-style wine from the indigenous grape varieties they had available. After phylloxera spread to the Spanish vineyards, many of the French departed, but they left behind radically improved vinification techniques, including the use of 225-liter oak barrels for aging.

Tempranillo is the backbone of the region's finest red wines. Traditional red Riojas are Tempranillo-based blends, aged for extended periods in oak barrels. American oak has been used almost exclusively, although some producers are beginning to introduce French oak. Rioja tends to be tannic and can improve in the bottle for decades. Traditionally, there has been less of a focus on fruit flavors and more of a focus on earthiness, minerality, and the distinctive "leathery" bouquet that can develop as the wine ages. However, as in many places, there is a new emphasis on making single-vineyard and single-variety wines, as well as wines that are more approachable at a younger age.

The Rioja DOCa has stricter aging requirements than many of the other wines of Spain. These include the following standards for red wines:

- Crianza: A minimum of 24 months total aging, to include at least 12 months in the barrel
- Reserva: A minimum of 36 months total aging, to include at least 12 months in the barrel and at least 6 months in the bottle
- Gran Reserva: A minimum of 60 months total aging, to include at least 24 months in the barrel and at least 24 months in the bottle

Viura is the principal grape used in the production of white Rioja. It is usually cold-fermented and released young, but some wineries still produce white Rioja in the traditional barrel-fermented, oak-aged style. Rosé Rioja is often produced using a majority of Garnacha blended with the other red grapes of the region. As of 2018,

traditional method sparkling wines—known as Vino Espumoso de Calidad de Rioja DOCa—are also allowed to be produced under the Rioja designation.

ARAGÓN

The former kingdom of Aragón, east of both Navarra and La Rioja, is now an autonomous region of the same name. The region can be very hot in summer and very cold in winter. To date, the Somontano DO in the foothills of the Pyrenees has developed the province's best reputation for modern wines, with a mix of indigenous and international varieties planted. Eight red varieties are grown, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Garnacha. Among the area's specialties are the bright, intensely hued rosados produced primarily from Garnacha. Seven different white grape varieties are grown, with Chardonnay and Macabeo being the most widely planted.

CATALONIA (CATALUNYA)

The province of Catalonia, known as Cataluña in Spanish and as Catalunya in Catalan, makes up the northeastern corner of Spain. The Mediterranean climate provides good growing conditions and presents fewer challenges to producing quality grapes than many other parts of Spain.

Within Catalonia, there are several DOs of distinction, including the following:

- Priorat DOQ (known as "Priorato DOCa" in Spanish): Promoted in 2009, Priorat is only the second of Spain's wine regions to be granted DOCa status. The DO was initially established in 1950, but it was the pioneers of the late 1980s who revolutionized the local wines and brought a renewed focus on quality to the region. Located in a mountainous region just inland from Barcelona, the area is only 18 miles (29 km) from the Mediterranean Sea, but mountains shield most of the region from the damp sea air and Ebro Valley winds. Priorat is known

for its llicorella soils of flat, easily breakable stones made of decomposed slate flecked with mica and other minerals. These famous soils impart a distinct herbal and mineral character to the powerful, deep red wines of the area. Garnacha is the primary grape of Priorat, but Cariñena is almost as prominent. Several other red grapes—including Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Syrah—are also among the allowed varieties. Some rosé (*rosat* in the Catalan language) is also produced in Priorat, as well as some white wine produced from Garnacha Blanca, Macabeo, Pedro Ximénez, and other approved white grapes of the region.

- Tarragona: One of the largest of Catalonia's DOs, Tarragona has a diverse mix of soils and climates, which permits it to produce a range of wines from young reds, rosés, and whites to Port-style fortified wines. However, nearly 75% of production is devoted to full-bodied, aromatic whites, although the younger red wines are starting to find their way to the market.
- Montsant: A relatively new DO (2001) created from Falset, a former subzone of the Tarragona DO adjacent to Priorat, Montsant features many mature vineyards of Garnacha and Cariñena, along with smaller but significant plantings of Ull de Llebre (Tempranillo), Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah.
- Costers del Segre: Consisting of several noncontiguous subzones where more than a dozen indigenous and international varieties are planted, Costers del Segre is another region that has seen sudden and dramatic improvements in quality with the introduction of capital, state-of-the-art equipment, and young, well-educated enologists with nontraditional outlooks on winemaking. Wines are typically blends of traditional grapes and international varieties.
- Penedès: The region that started the modern wine revolution in the 1970s, Penedès became the first area in Spain to use stainless steel equipment and temperature-controlled fermentation techniques. The Penedès DO focuses primarily on white wines. Although it encompasses the main production areas for Cava, most of the Penedès DO wines are still whites

made from the Xarel-lo, Macabeo, and Parellada grape varieties. The leading white grape is Xarel-lo. International varieties have a strong presence here as well, with Chardonnay being the next most common white grape. Red wines feature both indigenous and international varieties.

- DO Catalonia: The Catalonia (Cataluña) DO encompasses the land (and approved grape varieties) included in all of the other DOs of the autonomía; this allows for a wide range of wine types and styles to be labeled as Catalonia DO.



Figure 11–8: Garnacha vine in Priorat

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

Castilla–La Mancha, in the central Meseta, is a flat, hot, and dry area dotted by windmills reminiscent of the story of Don Quixote. This area is home to Spain’s vast acreage of Airén grapes, most of which make their way into Spanish brandy. The region’s La Mancha DO is, physically, Spain’s largest, although its output is comparatively low for such a large area, as vineyards tend to be very widely spaced with small vines. In addition to Airén and Cencibel (Tempranillo), international varieties are widely grown in the La Mancha DO. Valdepeñas (Valley of the Rocks) is a well-known DO nearly surrounded by the La Mancha DO. The Valdepeñas DO carries a somewhat better reputation due to variations in the soil that allow for better water retention—an important advantage in this arid environment. As of December 2022, Castilla-La Mancha is home to

12 vinos de pago; this is more than any other region of Spain.

MURCIA

Murcia is located in the southern portion of the Levant (eastern coast) of Spain. The vineyards of Murcia are located somewhat inland, and are thus influenced by the hot, arid climate of Spain's interior—just slightly moderated by the Mediterranean coast. Murcia contains three DOs: Jumilla, Yecla, and Bullas. All three of these regions produce a variety of wines, including red, white, rosé, and—in some cases—sparkling wines and vinos de licor (fortified wines). However, the majority of the output for all three of these regions consists of deep, concentrated reds and flavorful rosés based on the thick-skinned Monastrell (Mourvèdre) grape variety.



Figure 11–9: Cathedral of Jerez de la Frontera

JEREZ

Jerez, also known as Xérès, is the region of production for Sherry. Along with Port, Sherry (produced under the Jerez-Xérès-Sherry DO) is one of the two best-known fortified wines in the world. Though not as popular in modern times as it once was, Sherry is still exported widely, particularly to Britain and the Netherlands.

Geography and Climate

The Sherry region lies in the southwest of Spain, in Andalusia,

between Cádiz and Seville. The center of the industry is the so-called Sherry Triangle formed by the towns of Jerez de la Frontera, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, and El Puerto de Santa María.

Although Andalusia's climate is hot and dry, the climate of Jerez is somewhat cooler due to its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. Sanlúcar de Barrameda and El Puerto de Santa María are both seaports, and the vineyards closest to the water are markedly cooler than those slightly more inland. The summer months feature continually cloudless days with no rain at all.

Grape Varieties

The primary grape used in the production of Sherry is the indigenous Palomino, which is the sole or majority grape variety in most of the wines of the region. Pedro Ximénez—often shortened to *PX*—is grown in small amounts and used to produce an intensely sweet, dried-grape Sherry that often has a deep mahogany hue (sometimes likened to the appearance of molasses). Moscatel (Muscat of Alexandria)—also grown in small quantities—is used in the production of a very sweet, dried grape dessert wine, and may be used as a sweetening agent for various types of Sherry.

Soil Types

Each of the three grape varieties of Sherry has an affinity for one of the three soil types found in the Jerez region: Palomino prefers the brilliantly white *albariza* soil, composed of about 30% limestone-rich chalk along with some clay and sand; PX grows well on *barro*, a clay soil with iron oxide and a little chalk and sand; and Moscatel thrives on *arena*, a predominantly sandy soil.

Sherry Wine Styles

Sherry is produced in a wide range of styles from light and dry to rich and sweet, and is found in a wide range of colors from pale yellow, tan, and brown to nearly black. The majority of Sherry is based on the Palomino grape variety and is produced using a base wine that is fermented dry before it enters the aging and blending process. This process is used to create the two basic styles of

Sherry—*fino* and *oloroso*—with a wide range of styles available within each of these two main categories. In addition, a small amount of Sherry is produced using partially-dried Pedro Ximénez or Moscatel grapes; these wines are typically sweet.

- Fino-Style Sherry: As discussed in chapter 7, the base wines that will be made into Sherry are classified based on their style and quality. Those that are chosen for the production of fino Sherries are fortified to a low level of alcohol in order to permit the flor to flourish.
- Hybrid-Style Sherry: These styles of Sherry begin as a fino Sherry, aging under flor. However, during the aging process, the flor dies out, allowing the wines to age both biologically and oxidatively while in the solera.
- Oloroso-Style Sherry: Oloroso Sherries are those that are initially fortified to a higher alcoholic strength in order to prevent the development of flor at a later point. Without the protection of the film yeasts, the wine ages in the presence of oxygen, resulting in a rancio (oxidized) character and light-to-deep brown color.
- Dried Grape Sherry: Sweet Sherry, produced primarily from Pedro Ximénez or Moscatel grapes, is produced using grapes harvested at a high level of ripeness with the sugars further concentrated by drying the grapes, post-harvest, on straw mats in the hot sun. This process is known as *soleo*. After being dried, the grapes are pressed and partially fermented before being fortified and aged.

Descriptions of some of the better-known types of Sherry are found in table 11-2. Commercial Sherry is often marketed under a variety of names that are meant to evoke a unique style or character, including “East India,” “brown,” “golden,” “milk,” and “amoroso.” These styles are generally a variant or blend of the major styles described in table 11-2.

En Rama Sherry

These days, most dry Sherries are fined and filtered before bottling so that the wine has a high degree of clarity. However, historically, some of the best Sherry was unfiltered and unfined or, perhaps, just minimally filtered. This natural style of Sherry, while still somewhat rare these days, is enjoying a renaissance of sorts and is referred to as *en rama*.

Vintage Sherry

The solera system of fractional blending seems to rule out any single-vintage bottlings. However, throughout history, single-vintage (*añada*) Sherry bottlings were a regional tradition, carried out alongside solera aging. The tradition all but died out by the late 1800s; however, these days, single-vintage Sherry bottlings are becoming fashionable, and therefore more available, once again. These single-vintage, aged Sherries are typically quite expensive due to their rarity as well as the enhanced oxidation and evaporation experienced by these wines.

MONTILLA-MORILES

The Montilla-Moriles DO, located to the east of Jerez, is known for rich dessert wines that are often compared to the wines of Jerez. However, its position further inland provides a more continental climate, and Montilla-Moriles is, overall, warmer and drier than parts of the Sherry region. For this reason, the Pedro Ximénez grape variety, which accounts for over 70% of the overall plantings, thrives here. The intense summer heat often means that the grapes ripen to very high sugar levels, so much so that even the unfortified wines of Montilla-Moriles may reach alcoholic strengths of 14% to 16% (or even higher). Montilla-Moriles also produces a small amount of dry, still wines and dessert wines from very ripe Moscatel grapes.



Figure 11–10: Sherry tasting

CAVA

Cava is one of Spain's leading, high-quality sparkling wines. The term *Cava* refers to the process by which the wines are made, since these *método tradicional* sparkling wines are aged in a cellar or a cave. Cava may be produced as a white (blanco) or rosé (rosado) sparkling wine.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE CAVA DO

The geography of the Cava designation is unique in that it is scattered across the country. The majority of the vineyards (representing as much as 95% of the total Cava production) are located in Catalonia, within the Comtats de Barcelona Zone. This zone—considered to be the “spiritual heart” of the Cava designation—is centered around the municipality of San Sadurní de Noya (Sant Sadurní d'Anoia), where the first bottles of Cava were produced in 1872.

Three other zones—spread across Spain—are approved for the production of Cava DO. These include the Valle del Ebro (Ebro

Valley), the Altos de Levante (located in Valencia), and the Viñedos de Almendralejo (Almendralejo vineyards, located in Extremadura).

GRAPE VARIETIES

The three classic grape varieties for Cava are Macabeo, Xarel-lo, and Parellada, all of which are white. Other varieties have been added to the list of approved grapes, including Chardonnay, Malvasia (Subirat Parent), Pinot Noir, Garnacha, Monastrell, and Trepát (a red grape believed to be native to Catalonia).

Table 11–2: Styles of Sherry

Style	Type	Notes
Fino-Style Sherries	Fino	A pale, delicate, dry wine produced primarily from the Palomino grape under the influence of flor yeast and, thus, showing the unmistakable characteristics of the flor to both the nose and palate. At 15% abv or so, it is among the least alcoholic of the fortified wines. Unless deliberately sweetened, fino Sherries are dry on the palate.
	Puerto Fino	A fino Sherry from the coastal town of El Puerto de Santa María. The cool climate of the coast encourages a thick covering of flor, resulting in a light, crisp wine with a hint of saltiness.
	Manzanilla	A fino Sherry that is matured in the seaside town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, produced according to the Manzanilla Sanlúcar de Barrameda DO. It has a slightly different flavor than other finos, often described as <i>briny</i> due to the maritime humidity, which encourages a more vigorous flor yeast population.
	Pale Cream	A sweetened style of fino Sherry that originated in Bristol. Aside from the addition of a sweetening agent, no other color, aroma, or flavor is added.
Hybrid-Style Sherries	Amontillado	A Sherry that starts as a fino and is aged under a layer of flor but that loses its protective flor after a few years (naturally or through additional fortification). It is thereafter aged like an oloroso, in the presence of oxygen. Amontillado Sherries tend to have intense, nutty aromas.
	Palo Cortado	This unique Sherry is made from fino-quality base wine, but it never quite develops flor as initially expected. It then continues aging oxidatively, but it never quite develops into an oloroso. It has the nutty characteristics of an amontillado but without the flor aroma. Palo Cortado has the color and full body of an oloroso Sherry.
Oloroso-Style Sherry	Oloroso	A Palomino-based Sherry aged in partially filled barrels without flor and with considerable oxidation. Oloroso Sherry changes in color from its original shade of gold to light brown to deep brown as it ages, increasing in alcohol, body, and aroma.
	Cream Sherry	A sweetened Oloroso Sherry, typically produced using a blend of Sherries and often showing a distinctly darkened amber or brown color. Harvey's Bristol Cream Sherry—so named for its creamy texture—is one of the original commercial brands of cream Sherry.
Dried-Grape Sherry	Pedro Ximénez	A very dark, very sweet, almost syrupy Sherry produced using thin-skinned Pedro Ximénez grapes. Plantings of Pedro Ximénez grapes are quite limited in Jerez, so grapes from the nearby Montilla-Moriles DO are permitted for use in these wines.
	Moscatel	While many of the Moscatel grapes grown in the Jerez region are used as a sweetener for other styles of Sherry, a small amount of Moscatel-based Sherry is produced as well. These wines are made from grapes that are left to dry for a short time after harvest and are typically made into a sweet, golden wine with fruity and floral aromas.

CAVA DE GUARDA

In 2021, *Cava de Guarda*—a new tier of high-quality wines tied to

specific qualitative standards—was introduced. To qualify as a Cava de Guarda, a wine must be traceable from the vineyard to the bottle. To further qualify as a Cava de Guarda Superior, the wine must meet guidelines for maximum yield as well as the following standards: the vines must be at least 10 years of age, the grapes must be farmed organically (granted with a five-year period allowed for transition), and the wine must be vintage-dated.

CORPINNAT

Beginning in 2015, a group of mostly small-scale Cava producers decided to forgo the use of the Cava DO in favor of a new designation to be known as *Corpinnat*. Corpinnat is not a protected geographical indication; but is rather an EU-recognized brand name with its own set of standards—including a delimited area within the central Penedès region and the use of organic farming. Other requirements include hand-harvested grapes, minimum lees aging, and the use of at least 90% “historic” varieties (Xarel-lo, Macabeu, Parellada, and Malvasia for whites; Garnacha, Monastrell, Sumoll, and Xarel-lo Vermell for reds). Corpinnat producers can opt to include the Penedès DO designation on the label, provided the wine meets the standards of the appellation.

Table 11–3: Cava Production Requirements

CAVA PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS	
CAVA DESIGNATION	PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS
Cava	Minimum 9 months of lees aging
Cava de Guarda	Minimum 9 months of lees aging Additional production standards (see above)
Cava Reserva	Minimum 18 months of lees aging
Cava de Guarda Superior	Minimum 18 months of lees aging Additional production standards (see above)
Cava Gran Reserva	Minimum 30 months of lees aging Must be brut-level sweetness or drier
Cava de Paraje Calificado	Minimum 36 months of lees aging Must be sourced from a single, qualified location/ vineyard Must be brut-level sweetness or drier

Table 11–4: PDO Wines of Spain

Autonomous Community	PDO Wines
Andalusia (Andalucía)	Condado de Huelva DO Granada DO Jerez-Xérès-Sherry DO Lebrija VCIG Málaga DO Manzanilla Sanlúcar de Barrameda DO Montilla-Moriles DO Sierras de Málaga DO
Aragón	Calatayud DO Campo de Borja DO Cariñena DO Somontano DO Vino de Pago Aylés
Asturias	Cangas VCIG
Balearic Islands (Islas Baleares/Illes Balears)	Binissalem DO Pla i Llevant DO
Basque Country (País Vasco/Euskadi)	Arabako Txakolina / Chacolí de Álava DO Bizkaiko Txakolina/ Chacolí de Bizcaia DO Getariako Txakolina / Chacolí de Guetaria DO
Canary Islands (Islas Canarias)	Abona DO El Hierro DO Gran Canaria DO La Gomera DO La Palma DO Lanzarote DO Las Islas Canarias VGIC Tacoronte-Acentejo DO Valle de Güímar DO Valle de la Orotava DO Ycoden-Daute-Isora DO
Castilla y León	Arlanza DO Arribes DO Bierzo DO Cebreros VCIG Cigales DO León DO (formerly Tierra de León) Ribera del Duero DO Rueda DO Sierra de Salamanca VCIG Tierra del Vino de Zamora DO Toro DO Valles de Benavente VCIG Valtiendas VCIG Vino de Pago Abadía Retuerta Vino de Pago Dehesa Peñalba Vino de Pago Urueña
Castilla-La Mancha	Almansa DO La Mancha DO Manchuela DO Méntrida DO Mondéjar DO Ribera del Júcar DO Uclés DO Valdepeñas DO Vino de Pago Calzadilla

Table 11–4: PDO Wines of Spain, continued

Autonomous Community	PDO Wines
Castilla-La Mancha, <i>continued</i>	Vino de Pago Campo de la Guardia Vino de Pago Casa del Blanco Vino de Pago Los Cerrillos Vino de Pago Dehesa del Carrizal Vino de Pago Dominio de Valdepusa Vino de Pago Finca Élez Vino de Pago Florentino Vino de Pago Guijoso Vino de Pago La Jaraba Vino de Pago Vallegarcía Vino de Pago El Vicario
Catalonia (Catalunya/Cataluña)	Alella DO Cataluña DO Conca de Barberà DO Costers del Segre DO Empordà DO Montsant DO Penedès DO Priorato DOPa (Priorat DOQ) Pla de Bages DO Tarragona DO Terra Alta DO
Extremadura	Ribera del Guadiana DO
Galicia	Monterrei DO Rías Baixas DO Ribeira Sacra DO Ribeiro DO Valdeorras DO
La Rioja	Rioja DOPa*
Madrid	Vinos de Madrid DO
Murcia	Bullas DO Jumilla DO** Yecla DO
Navarra	Navarra DO Vino de Pago Arinzano Vino de Pago Bodegas Otazu Vino de Pago Bolandín Vino de Pago Prado de Irache
Valencia	Alicante DO Utiel-Requena DO Valencia DO Vino de Pago Chozas Carrascal Vino de Pago El Terrerazo Vino de Pago Los Balagüeses Vino de Pago Vera de Estenas
Multi-Regional	Cava DO
<p>*Portions of the Rioja DOPa are located in Basque Country and Navarra</p> <p>**A small portion of the Jumilla DO is located in Castilla-La Mancha</p> <p>Source: Government of Spain—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food (2022)</p>	