



A well-equipped modern winery with a large number of stainless steel tanks.

create refreshing, fruity wines with medium levels of alcohol.

White wine production accounts for a very small proportion of the total output of the region and the wines tend to be made from Viura, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

### Cariñena and Calatayud

Cariñena and Calatayud are neighbouring DOs, located to the south of the Ebro. Overall both regions have warm continental climates and low rainfall. Garnacha is the main variety in both regions. Inexpensive wines are made in a fruity, early drinking style. Higher-quality wines tend to be made from old vine Garnacha and Cariñena and display greater flavour intensity and structure. Note that the grape variety Cariñena (Carignan, Mazuelo) is not the most widely planted variety in the DO with the same name.

### CATALUNYA

Catalunya occupies the north-east corner of Spain. The vast majority of the vineyards are concentrated in an area that lies to the south of Barcelona and comprises the coastal plain and the hills immediately to the west. Unlike any of the other Spanish administrative regions **Catalunya** has a generic DO for still wines that covers the entire region. It came into existence largely to enable the blending of wines from the various areas to provide the opportunity to create significant volumes of branded wine. Catalunya is also where nearly all Cava is made (see Chapter 42 *Sparkling Wines of the World*).

### Penedès

The vineyards of this large DO lie immediately to the south-west of Barcelona and stretch from the Mediterranean coast up into the hills. There are three distinct climatic zones. The hottest is on the coastal

plain where the climate is Mediterranean; inland, in the valleys, the climate is slightly cooler than that on the plain, but still warm; and further into the hills, where vines are grown up to 800 metres above sea level, the climate is moderate. As a result, a wide variety of wine styles can be made using a range of grape varieties. The most planted white grapes are those used for Cava production, but there are also significant plantings of international varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Gewurztraminer. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo (here called Ull de Llebre) and Pinot Noir are the most planted red varieties.

### Priorat

Priorat's vineyards lie within the hills inland from the city of Tarragona. Summers are long, hot and dry, and annual rainfall is very low. This is ideal for the old Garnacha and Cariñena vines found in the region, both being late

#### KEY

	2000 m+
	1000–2000 m
	500–1000 m
	200–500 m
	100–200 m
	0–100 m



A large barrel hall in Navarra. The use of oak *barriques* is very important in Spanish red winemaking.



ripening grape varieties. The best soils, known locally as *llicorella*, consist of layers of red slate with small particles of mica that sparkle in the sun. They help ripening by reflecting and conserving heat and, because of their depth, they are able to retain sufficient water throughout the growing season. Cool night-time temperatures provide some relief from the heat of the day.

Bush vines and steep slopes mean that mechanisation is almost impossible, and thus the vineyards are expensive and time consuming to manage. The low nutrient soils and age of the vines produce very small yields of grapes, which undoubtedly contribute to the complexity and intensity of Priorat. All these factors mean that Priorat's wines are never cheap.

Red Priorat is usually deeply coloured with high tannins, medium to high alcohol and concentrated black fruit often accompanied by toasty aromas from new French oak. Although Garnacha and Cariñena remain the core of many blends some producers add some international varieties, especially Cabernet Sauvignon. White and rosé Priorat can also be made, although they are rarely seen.

### THE DUERO VALLEY

The River Duero starts in the mountains south of Rioja and flows through Spain into Portugal where it is called the Douro.

#### Ribera del Duero

Ribera del Duero is cut off from any maritime influence by a ring of mountains. It has short, hot and dry summers and very cold winters. The vineyards of the Ribera del Duero are situated on the highest part of the Meseta Central, with some vineyards planted at over 850

metres. This altitude ensures the region experiences cool night-time temperatures throughout the year, which helps to retain acidity and fresh fruit flavours in the grapes.

Ribera del Duero is a DO for red and rosé wine only, although in reality the vast majority of production is red wine. Tempranillo is the dominant grape and is the only variety in most of the best red wines, which are typically dark in colour with a high level of tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Merlot are also permitted but rarely used. Some Garnacha is grown too and is mostly made into dry rosé.

Today, many winemakers are choosing to accentuate the concentrated fruit flavours and tannins in their grapes by undertaking long macerations and ageing the wines for a relatively short period of time in new oak barrels, which are increasingly made from French rather than American oak.

#### Toro

Toro DO has a similar climate to its neighbour Ribera del Duero. Predominately made from Tempranillo, the reds are full-bodied with intense fruit flavours and high alcohol, a result of the high daytime temperatures, sunny conditions and often low-yielding bush vines. In the *Joven* wines there is generally a proportion of Garnacha; *Reservas* and *Gran Reservas* can be exceptionally deeply coloured and tannic when young and have the ability to age well. Rosé and white wines are made in small quantities.

#### Rueda

Situated in-between Toro and Ribera del Duero, Rueda differs from these other two DOs as it focuses on white



wine production. The region's continental climate, with cool summer nights, is ideal for the Rueda's traditional grape variety, Verdejo. Sauvignon Blanc is the other important variety in this region. Both Sauvignon Blanc and Verdejo can be made and labelled as single varietal wines. Blended whites must contain at least 50 per cent Verdejo. Styles range from simple and fruity to richer, barrel-fermented versions.

### THE NORTH WEST

Due to the Atlantic influence, the north-west of Spain is cooler and wetter than the rest of Spain and as a result this is the home of many of Spain's best white wines. The most celebrated of them all are the Albariño wines from Rías Baixas DO.

### Rías Baixas

Situated on the Atlantic coast, Rías Baixas has a moderate, damp climate. The humid conditions mean that vine diseases such as mildew and rot are a common problem. For this reason, vines are trained on pergolas to encourage air circulation. Some producers are using other training and trellising systems that are easier to maintain.

Most Albariño is made in a refreshing unoaked style taking advantage of the grape's naturally high acidity and ripe stone fruit flavours. Some wines are made in a richer style, occasionally with a touch of oak or lees stirring. Red wine is permitted too although it remains a minority concern.

### Bierzo

This predominately red wine DO lies in the mountains that mark the boundary between Galicia and the Meseta Central. The climate is moderate and benefits from a cooling maritime influence. The key grape variety here is Mencía, which can produce elegant red wines with naturally high acidity and red fruit aromas. Many of the best wines come from old vines grown on the region's steep stony slopes. Some producers make unoaked wines to retain the perfumed red fruit of the grape variety, but many use new oak to add toasty aromas.

### THE LEVANTE

The Levante is the region on the Mediterranean coast south of Catalunya. Trade is centred round the port of Valencia which is the distribution hub for wines from the Levante and La Mancha.

### Valencia

Valencia is a large spread-out DO that is a source of value-for-money wines. A large number of different local and international grape varieties are planted here. Monastrell is the most planted red grape. White plantings are dominated by local grape variety Merseguera although there are also significant plantings of Muscat of Alexandria to produce the local Moscatel de Valencia, a sweet fortified wine.



### Jumilla and Yecla

Located further inland, Jumilla and Yecla have hot, arid climates, perfect for the dominant local grape variety, Monastrell. The majority of wines are youthful and fruity in style.

The rugged heartland of Priorat.

### CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

Almost half of Spain's total wine production comes from this vast central area of the Meseta Central that lies to the south of Madrid.

### La Mancha

This is the largest DO in Spain. The most widely planted grape variety is Airén, which is used to produce neutral, fresh white wines. Plantings of this variety are, however, in decline as the authorities have encouraged producers to plant Tempranillo, known locally as Cencibel, and other international grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and even Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Significant investment in technology and expertise has ensured that La Mancha is now an excellent source of inexpensive well-made reds and whites for the export market. La Mancha was also where

the trend for top-quality *pagos* wines began and it is still the home of the majority of the estates that have been awarded the appellation *Vinos de Pago*.

**Valdepeñas**

This DO lies immediately to the south of La Mancha. It experiences an identical climate to La Mancha but it has

built a reputation for quality that exceeds its larger neighbour. As in La Mancha, Airén is the most widely planted grape but here too Tempranillo (Cencibel) is the main grape variety for red wines, either as a varietal wine or blended with international grape varieties. The wines range from fruity to more concentrated and oak matured.