



BONNER
PRIVATE WINE
PARTNERSHIP

Your Spanish Collection

from the Bonner
Private Wine Partnership

America's Most Unique Wine Club

Dedicated to searching the world for astounding
wines from little-known winemakers

Dear Member,

In the north of Spain, rain blown in from the Bay of Biscay collects in the jagged peaks of the Cantabrian Mountains. From there, two rivers issue, ambling past crumbling dungeon keeps, small fortified towns, stone churches with terracotta tile roofs, and old vines planted one hundred years ago.

Nowhere else in Europe do the echoes of the ancient and medieval ages still reverberate so clearly.

Follow the Ebro River, to the southeast, and you come for a vast plain, punctuated by soft, sloping hills, and sudden promontories. It was on these plains, under vast blue skies, that gold-seeking Phoenicians battled Iberian tribes (and planted the first tempranillo vines) 3,000 years ago... where two generations of Carthaginian generals, first Hamilcar, then his son Hannibal, faced off against the might of Rome in the 2nd century BC... where Christian armies battled Arab invaders during the Dark Ages... where the International Brigades shattered against the dictator Franco and his Nazi allies in the last great offensive of the Spanish Civil War...

As they hand-prune their peculiarly contorted vines, described by one critic as “gnarled in agony,” vignerons of Alta and Alavesa, of Rioja, of Ribera Del Duero, need only look up towards the old stone strongholds that often loom above them to be reminded of how they have struggled against oblivion be it in the form of cannon, mortar shell, or razor-sharp scimitars.

In the opposite direction, the Sil river cuts through a series of narrow valleys past old monasteries growing grapes on steep terraced slopes to a region known as “Celtic Spain.” Legend has it that the Irish originated here, a claim to which the large numbers of red-haired, fair-skinned women appears to lend some credence, as do the Celtic shanties played in village taverns all across the region, where locals dine on swordfish sautéed in butter paired with a “mysterious” yet ancient wine known as *godello*.



In this box, you will find six bottles:

- ① LAN Limitada 2013
- ② Protos Crianza 2015
- ③ Ladera Sagrada Castelo do Papa Godello 2018
- ④ Gomez Cruzado Honorable 2015
- ⑤ El Sacramento 2014
- ⑥ Bodegas Manzanos Gran Reserva 2008

We believe these six wines, some of which are not available anywhere else in the US, from vines up to 50 years old and hand-picked grapes, aged in old cellars sometimes hundreds of years old, fully represent the old tradition of Spanish wine. Our advice is to let each bottle speak to you on its own terms. Each has a story to tell.

To your health,

Will Bonner

A Quick Note on Wine Tasting

On the next few pages, we've included tasting notes from our resident "sommelier" French winemaker Julien Miquel. Here's a quick tip on how to approach them.

What makes a wine expert is not just depth of knowledge – which anyone can achieve – but a sensitivity to taste and smell. A great wine expert will find a hundred little aromas that most will never be able to detect.

Now, if you don't get the same flavors, does that mean you're wrong?

No. Tasting is subjective. Besides which, wines are always evolving in the bottle. That hint of cherry from a few months ago might present itself differently now. So, if you detect a flavor or aroma you don't see on the tasting sheet, add it. See what your friends say. Better yet, if you have a tasting that differs markedly from what's written here, send us your notes. We'd love to compare them!

2013 LAN Limitada (Rioja Alta)



Winemaker: Maria Barúa
94 pts (Wine Spectator)
Hand-made 'Natural' Wine
Tempranillo (85%),
Graciano, Mazuelo

One thousand and three hundred years ago, Charlemagne, King of Franks, crossed the Ebro river via the Mantible Bridge on his way to conquering Europe. The ruins of the bridge remain today, just downstream from a small mountain known as El Rincon, where the Ebro loops around a vineyard known as LAN.

Despite the proximity to the water, winemaker Maria Barúa keeps her 45-year-old vines high and dry in a rocky pebble soil.

But the privation is worth it - producing a bright, dry berry flavor and warm, velvety mouthfeel while allowing Maria to forego any chemical herbicides.

The asceticism continues in the bodega, where the winemaking is done by hand with zero nutrient-stripping filtration or clarification. 8 months in new French oak followed by a twist of 5 months in new oak from the Caucuses. The result is a wine with a complex, battle-hardened nose of dark cherry and cacao, bright and spicy on the palate, and warm in the mouth.

Drink 2020-2028



2015 Protos Crianza (Ribera del Duero)



Founded: 1927 (cellars from the 1500s)

90 pts (Wine Enthusiast)

Manual Harvest and Selection

Tempranillo

South of Rioja, the Duero river flows towards Portugal, feeding the high elevation vineyards of Ribera del Duero, Spain's most extreme *denominación de origen* (the Spanish 'AOC') where 100-degree summers give way to minus 20 degree winters and the vines take on the peculiar look of having sprung forth from the earth writhing in agony.

Wine connoisseurs may recognize Ribera as the home of Pingus, the 1995 vintage of which has been called one of the greatest wines of all time. But ask a local, and he may well tell you to head to the village next door, where the castle of Peñafiel (built-in 947 to guard against Arab invaders), looms over a vineyard called Protos.

The name Protos may not be familiar; it is new. Yet the cellars alone, cut into the rock beneath the castle, and running over a mile long, date back to the 1500s. Why the name change? Because Protos was once called Ribera del Duero; it literally *was* the region before volunteering the name to create the official *denominación*.

Protos carefully selects each grape by hand. After that it's stainless steel (for a fresh purply tint), 14 months in *barricas* (the tell-tale charcoal/burnt oak aromas in the nose), and finally 14 months in bottle to mellow out. In the mouth, fruit takes over before a sharp tanniny edge kicks in.

Drink 2020-2029.



2018 Ladera Sagrada Castelo do Papa Godello (Valdeorras)



Founded: 1920
Winemaker: Luis Sharon
Organic, Natural Yeast
Godello

You could swear you had been somehow transported to Ireland the first time you set foot in “Celtic Spain.”

There, in a misty valley called Valdeorras, where red-haired women serve local seafood in small village taverns, a rare grape called *godello* is making a comeback after nearly going extinct.

The New York Times calls *godello* “a case study in the character of wine.” Critic Jancis Robinson remarks “the more I taste this...the more I love it.” The Boston Globe describes it, simply, as “stellar.”

Partly what makes *godello*’s rebirth so exciting is the lack of rules about what it’s supposed to be. Ladera Sagrada’s take begins with a whiff of lemon and pear, then apple on the palate before a gingery spice takes over for a lingering, dusty finish.

From organic, carefully selected grapes (Ladera only uses the top 20%), enjoy this wine with some fish sautéed in butter or, perhaps, a pasta with clam sauce.

Drink now (why wait?).



2015 Gomez Cruzado Honorable (Rioja Alta)



Founded: 1886

**Winemakers: David Gonzalez,
Juan Antonio Leza**

**91 pts (Parker) 94 pts (Atkins)
91 pts (Suckling)**

**Tempranillo, Garnacha,
Graciano, Mazuelo, Viura**

From a winery founded in 1886, and grapes from their oldest vineyard in the foothills of the Cantabrian mountains, this wine was fermented in a concrete egg before sitting for over a year in thin French *barricas* in a dark cellar.

Open a bottle and experience the dark aroma of pure African cacao (likely due to the *graciano* grape, which is also known as *bastardo negro*, or 'black bastard'). The darkness continues once on the palate, but with a touch of spice as if to suggest that this wine has a lot more personality than it's willing to show you. After all, there's *mazuelo* (brought in by Phoenician invaders 3,000 years ago) and *viura* in this blend.

Sure enough: let it linger a moment to discover a burst of red fruit, roasted hazelnut (thank you *viura*), and even more spice.

If you can be patient for a decade, this is going to become one of the best wines in your cellar. Or enjoy right away with a meal of lamb chops and white asparagus.

Drink 2020-2035.



2014 El Sacramento (Rioja Alavesa)



Winemaker: Jesus Velilla
Planted in 1986
Manual Harvest
Tempranillo, Graciano

Alavesa is the most rustic of Rioja's regions, yet its chalky clay and limestone vineyards are widely known to produce Rioja's best grapes.

Increasingly the name whispered by critics and connoisseurs is El Sacramento, with critic Tim Atkins calling the winery a "revelation." Built on a promontory overlooking the Rioja plain, legend has it the original founders were members of the Blessed Sacrament brotherhood in the 17th century. The current owner is said to be the President of the Basque government in exile.

Their latest vintage buzzes with a youthful vibration despite its six years of age. Aromas of blackberry drift up from the glass, but wait before taking a sip and you'll find black pepper, coffee, and bourbon as it opens up. Did we mention this is a complex wine? It is. Yet, every note and flavor rings pure, like a crisp note expertly played on a finely tuned piano.

The bonus is an earthiness, an expression of the clay soil perhaps, hidden in the harmonics.

Drink 2020-2030.



2008 Bodegas Manzanos Gran Reserva (Rioja)



Founded: 1890

Winemaker: Borja Ripa

90 pts (Suckling), Gold Medal (Mundus Vini)

Tempranillo (50%), Garnacha (30%), Mazuelo (20%)

Rioja is known for its dark, moldy cellars where wines often age for years – decades even – before release. The wines with the longest aging periods are known as Gran Reservas. Not many bodegas produce them as they require upwards of 8 years in cellar. As such, this bottle of Manzanos Gran Reserva was exceedingly hard to find (the only sources in the US up until now were the WSJ and Laithwaite clubs).

Yet, the effort was well worth it. Now in its fifth generation as a family-owned bodega, Manzanos has produced a dark, brooding Gran Reserva with notes of nutmeg, cloves, dark-roasted cacao. There's oak too, but after 12 years, you'll find it pleasantly toasted – an effect no “oak extract” can mimic.

The tannins have softened but remain in control. You're in good hands here. A profound, fascinating wine. For the best of what traditional Rioja has to offer, look no further.

Drink whenever the next special occasion presents itself.





Our Mission

At the Bonner Private Wine Partnership, our mission is to bring you unique bottles from all over the world. We seek wines that are bursting with life and character – wines with an adventure in every bottle.

Your Next Quarterly Shipment

As you read this, we are already selecting and arranging to import wines for next quarter's shipment. We will be in touch to share what we've found with you when we get closer to the shipping date. Until then, enjoy your wine! (And let us know what you think!)

Problem with Your Shipment?

Please call our customer service, 9-5 Monday through Friday. We want everyone to get the most out of this club and these wines. So if there's a problem, we'll do our best to make it right.

...Can We Ask A Small Favor?

Can we “compare notes” with you on these wines?

Maybe you picked up on aromas that we didn't. Maybe you just fell in love with a particular bottle. Or maybe the exact opposite. Whatever the case, we want to hear from you. Because you're part of this. And we can only keep this mission going if you're onboard.

Shoot us an email at feedback@bonnerprivatewines.com