



Spain: history in a wine glass

Spanish wines have gained a reputation in the hospitality and catering industry for their high quality and value for money, a popularity that has gained traction in the retail market as well. In Asia, Hong Kong's import of varietals from Spain saw an over 50 percent increase in 2007 alone. In line with consumer demand, Spanish wine makers are continuing to expand their presence in the Greater China market with aromatic, dry whites and, earthy red wines.

With the largest vineyard surface in the world – nearly 1.2 million hectares under vine – and as the third major producer in the EU, Spain is a mosaic of very diverse terrain and climate conditions with over 600 varieties of grapes.

Tempranillo

This high-quality grape grows best in cooler regions and is famous for its distinct fruity flavours, along with low acid and low tannins. The result is a smooth wine with a subtle, leathery feel.

Spanish winemaking places great emphasis on ageing wine in oak and in the spirit of the history and tradition of Spanish wine, the duration is written on the bottle. Crianza means the wine have been aged for at least two years, of which at least six months were in an oak barrel; Reserva three years in total, of which one year was in an oak barrel; and the strongest of the three, Gran Reserva, aged at least five years, of which two years were in an oak barrel.

Rias Baixas

Rias Baixas is a winemaking region located in northwest Spain, where grapes such as Albariño, Godello and Treixadura make white wines that have become a brilliant success as a result of their dry,

sharp, floral and intensely fruity overtones.

The mono-variety "Albariño" wines are straw yellow in colour, with golden and green nuances. Fresh and mild, full-bodied with balanced acidity, these wines are easy to drink with an everyday meal, and complex enough for a fine dining experience.

Rioja

In the mid-19th century, arable pest troubles in the Bordeaux region of France caused heavy losses in the winemaking business, forcing many winemakers and vine growers to move to the nearby Rioja region of Spain, starting lives and giving rise to a winemaking culture steeped in history and great European traditions.

Rioja red wines are rich in colour with an equally pungent aroma. They are bold yet light on the tongue with medium alcohol content. Rioja whites tend to be marked by their pale colour, fine aromas and low alcohol content, while the region's rosés are bright pink with a strong fragrance, yet light and refreshing when consumed.

Perfect for Asia

With varietals that are pleasantly light and smooth, Spanish wines are a perfect compliment to the climate in Asia, which can be hot and humid much of the year. While Spanish reds like Tempranillos and Riojas tend to get all the attention, white and rosé bottles offer a refreshing and light option.

Paired with Chinese food – from the simple cooking styles of Canton to the hot and spicy region of Sichuan – Spanish wine makes an excellent complement to flavours subtle or strong, light or full-bodied. **AHCT**