

2009 Gran Reserva 904

La Rioja Alta S.A., Rioja Wine Region, Spain

Product details

Vintage:	2009	Drinking:	Now 2037
Producer:	La Rioja Alta S.A.	Alcohol:	
Region:	Rioja Wine Region	Variety:	
Country:	Spain		

Tasting notes

Rioja Alta's Gran Reserva 904 stands out for its remarkable complexity and outstanding ageing potential. It is a classic Rioja which is released in exceptional vintage. The 2009 reveals a bouquet of great aromatic complexity. Cassis and wild berry characters give way to delicate spices and sweet balsamic notes. The palate builds on the expansive aromas with concentrated sweet cherry flavours and notes of smoky tobacco and cedar spice balanced by refreshing acidity and silky smooth tannins. A blend of 90% Tempranillo with a seasoning of Graciano, this beautifully complex wine was matured in barrels for four years followed by a further three years in bottle. Although delicious for drinking now, it has the capacity to age for another twenty years or more.

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About the producer

LA RIOJA ALTA S.A. WINES

In 1895, five enterprising families in Rioja Alta came together to form a company which would take local Spanish winemaking to an altogether higher level. Responding to the phylloxera crisis in Bordeaux, the families realised that, by banding together, they could offer a commercially viable way of filling the gap in supply of complex, well-structured red wines, based at a bodega in Haro's Barrio de la Estación - the station quarter, which made export by rail fast and efficient.

Over the following decades, the Sociedad Vinícola de La Rioja Alta S.A. established and maintained the characteristics of what have become classic Riojas- particularly bright fruit and long oak ageing. Gradually, the company took control of every aspect of winemaking, not only controlling the winemaking and maturation, but also acquiring their own cooperage and bottling facility. By the 1970s, instead of buying the bulk of their grapes from small growers, they started vinifying their own fruit.

La Rioja Alta S.A. takes oak very seriously. At the beginning, the company acquired French oak, as thousands of barrels were sitting empty in Bordeaux, with no wine being produced to fill them. Nowadays, the La Rioja Alta S.A. winery imports American oak and dries it for two years before its craftsmen construct barrels by hand at the cooperage in Haro. Every six months, the wine is racked - again by hand, and under candlelight, in order to disturb the wine as little as possible.

Not that upholding standards and tradition means that La Rioja Alta S.A.'s philosophy is one of conservatism. From the start, the company was prepared to break conventions. Its first president was a woman - Doña Saturnina García Cid y Gárate - and its first cellar master a Frenchman, Albert Vigier. These days, in addition to Haro, there is also a state-of-the-art winery at Labastida, with a serious research and



development division - as you might expect when the chief winemaker, Julio Sáenz, originally qualified as a pharmaceutical chemist. The new winery doesn't have the history of the original bodega in the traditional heart of Rioja, but it is a beautiful stone building, with the fermentation tanks covered by a wooden floor, their steel lids poking out for inspection. Over 125-plus years, La Rioja Alta S.A. has evolved without losing its identity.

Indeed, the first wine produced by Vigier was the Reserva 1890, the predecessor of today's Rioja Gran Reserva 890. Another Reserva - the 1904, which celebrated the year when one of the investors, Daniel Alfredo Ardanza y Sánchez, merged his own Ardanza winery with the Sociedad - lives on in the Gran Reserva - La Rioja Alta S.A. 904. Both of these retain remarkably vigorous fruit despite (typically) five or six years in oak.

It is too simple to say that the Gran Reserva 890 contains Tempranillo, Mazuelo and Graciano. La Rioja Alta S.A. 904, Tempranillo and Graciano. The Rioja Alta region has such varied soil - some limestone, some clay, others iron-rich, still more stony and sparse. When this is added to the company's parcels in Rioja Baja and Alavesa, it means that Julio has a great palette to paint with. He can take grapes from Finca Las Cuevas in Rodezno (Alta), Finca La Cuesta in Cenicero (Alavesa) and La Pedriza in Tudelilla (Baja), which are each fermented separately, and apply his great skill, which is in blending.

In addition to La Rioja Alta S.A. Gran Reservas noting important dates in its history, La Rioja Alta S.A. also commemorates three of the founding families in Viña Ardanza, Viña Alberdi and Viña Arana. The most renowned is Viña Ardanza, a wine which is oak-aged long enough - the Tempranillo for 36 months, the Garnacha for 30, to retain freshness and aroma - to qualify as a Rioja Gran Reserva but for La Rioja Alta S.A.'s standards only qualifies as a Reserva (apart from in exceptional vintages such as 2001, when it becomes Especial).

La Rioja Alta S.A. has expanded beyond the bounds of its own province, and acquired wineries in other parts of Spain. In Rías Baixas, on the Galician coast, it owns Lagar de Cervera. The pretty winery on the banks of the Tamuxe river is a lovely, relaxed place to visit, and produces a fragrant Albariño with a fine balance of minerality and stone fruits. Along with La Rioja Alta S.A.'s Reservas and Gran Reservas, wines from Lagar de Cervera winery and two others owned by La Rioja Alta S.A. - Torre d'Oña in Rioja ([read more here](#)) and Aster in Ribera del Duero ([read more here](#)) are imported to the UK exclusively by Armit Wines.

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