

2014 Torre de Oña Martelo Reserva

La Rioja Alta Alavesa, Rioja Wine Region, Spain

Product details

Vintage:	2014	Drinking:	Now
Producer:	La Rioja Alta Alavesa	Alcohol:	
Region:	Rioja Wine Region	Variety:	
Country:	Spain		

Tasting notes

A vivid mid-ruby, dried rose petal and balsamic scented reserva, still showing vibrant raspberry fruit and fresh acid. Chocolate-coated cherry character with hints of vanilla, but in a far more restrained way than in classic Rioja wines. Superb structure with ripe, fine-grained tannins and a tar-like grip towards the end of the long finish.

Armit Wines

About the producer

In 1985, a Cuban businessman with a passion for wine decided to build his own winery in Rioja Alavesa. Initially, Don Leandro Vázquez acquired 15 hectares of vineyards at Párganos in Laguardia. Over the next decade, he expanded to 45 hectares. The philosophy of Torre de Oña was to be summed up in five words: "Terroño. Serenidad. Elegancia. Singularidad. Intemporalidad." - terroir, serenity, elegance, individuality, timelessness. More specifically, Don Leandro set out to produce high-quality modern wine that expressed the exclusive characteristics of a prestigious Rioja Alavesa estate.

By 1995, he decided that the best way to take that vision into the future was to sell to an organisation which would honour his philosophy and maintain the winery he had built with such dedication. He turned to La Rioja Alta S.A.

A century earlier, five enterprising families in Rioja Alta came together to form a company which would take local Spanish winemaking to an altogether higher level - filling the gap in supply of complex, well-structured red wines left by the phylloxera crisis in Bordeaux. From the beginning in 1895, 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. La Rioja Alta S.A. evolved without losing its identity, taking control of every aspect of winemaking, acquiring their own cooperage and bottling facility and investing in state-of-the-art equipment, as well as in research and development.

In the first 10 years under La Rioja Alta S.A., Torre de Oña's vineyards expanded by a further 20 hectares. Then, in 2005, chief winemaker Julio Sáenz, originally qualified as a pharmaceutical chemist and took over the technical management of the winery. He initiated an in-depth study of the plots that make up the estate - soil, microclimate, rate of maturation and many more facets - as well as installing a meteorological station to give advance warning of vine diseases. He also opened a research building for the winery, looking to improve the wines constantly. As a result of this research, Sáenz introduced barrel malolactic fermentation and ageing in oak barrels from the Caucasus, in addition to French and American oak. Progress is always being made - 2016 saw a huge remodelling of the production process, with hi-tech installations to improve quality further - a pivoting destemmer, which prevents the grapes from breaking; an optical sorter which digitally scans every berry; a new press with a softer, smoother operation for more controlled cycles and less oxidation; and many more innovations.



Torre de Oña's vineyards are located at 630m - the highest possible growing altitude for Tempranillo and Mazuelo grapes in this climate, which is warmer than it would be were it not for the Cantabrian Mountains shielding the location from cold Atlantic winds. The result is grapes of concentration and freshness, which continues into the vinification. Julio Sáenz's analysis of the vineyards has led to identifying three different types of terroir to suit Torre de Oña's different wines.

The dark-cherry red Torre de Oña Reserva is clean and bright, with the intense aromas typical of Rioja Alavesa terroir. It is made from 95% Tempranillo with the remainder Mazuelo. The berry notes are dark, ripe and jammy, with elements of spice (clove, aniseed), mocha and smoky wisps of incense and tobacco. With medium body and good structure, it is well-balanced with sweet tannins and a silky finish.

More of an everyday wine, the 100% Tempranillo Finca San Martín Crianza shares a certain amount of aromatic intensity, with bright, ripe strawberries and redcurrants against a balsamic, aniseed, liquorice and cedar background from the oaking. It has fine tannins leading to a fresh finish and a lovely aftertaste of ripe fruit and liquorice.

The most recent addition to the range is Martelo, made from a certain selection of plots with vines over 60 years old, and only in years when Julio Sáenz's high standards - fresh vintages, with pleasing tannins and long, unhurried, well-balanced ripening - are met. It is mostly Tempranillo, complemented by other grape varieties - Mazuelo, Garnacha, Viura, depending on the vintage. Martelo is an elegant reserva Rioja. It has that wonderful Alavesa freshness and enveloping bouquet of cherry and subtle spice, with a hint of lavender. But it is fine-grained and supple - almost like a good Burgundy - and has an incredibly long finish, with bright fruits kept aloft by supportive minerality. It will age well but is already perfect for drinking when released.

Like all of the wines in La Rioja Alta S.A.'s group, these three have all been exclusively imported to the UK by Armit Wines since 2010.