

Tasting Notes August 2019 Pick-up Wines of Spain



Welcome to the August 2019 Smart Wine Club pickup. We are returning to the theme of Spanish wines after several years, and they are always some of my favorites. I lived in Spain for a semester in college and always feel very content just relaxing and opening a bottle of Spanish vino!

Spain is the 3rd largest producer of wine in the world, after Italy and France. The terrain and climates of the different wine-producing regions vary so greatly, so there is a huge variety of types and styles to choose from. The country is probably most well-known for their reds but I also love their whites. For this pickup, we'll try two lovely whites and four reds.

Don't forget, you can always return your wine club red bags to the store when you come in to pickup. We are happy to re-use them and reduce waste!

- **2017 Bodegas Pedro Escudero "Valdelagunde" Verdejo, Rueda** – Pedro Escudero has long been an authority in natural winegrowing, but only recently began bottling under his own name. This classic 100% Verdejo is known for its aromatic intensity and freshness. Complex notes of citrus and anise, with a lovely, long finish. Reg retail: \$10 Smart price: \$9

Pairing: If you're new to Verdejo, it can be a handy wine to have around if you enjoy eating healthy. Because it is so citrusy, it is one of the few wines that can stand up to acidic foods like vinaigrettes, tomatoes, and feta cheese. It also pairs really nicely with grilled seafood. So, try this with your favorite end-of-summer salad such as a big Greek salad, perhaps with a nice piece of grilled fish or shellfish.

- **2018 Morgadío Albariño, Rías Baixas, Galicia** – One of my personal favorites. The Albariño grape has an incredibly interesting history and the Morgadío vineyard has played an important part. Prior to the late 1980s, Albariños were scarce and inconsistent, often adulterated due to high demand and low crop yield. However, in 1988 the Rías Baixas D.O. region was established to help recuperate the grape and ensure authenticity. The Morgadío vineyard was planted during that time, and the winery's facilities were modernized. After several decades, the result is this tasty wine. You'll notice intense white fruit and floral notes on the nose, followed by a delicious well-balanced flavors and minerality. Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: I really enjoy serving Albariño at my regular chilled white wine temp, but then experiencing the changes it undergoes as it warms. It can be very exciting to taste as it changes! If you find some padrón peppers at the market, sauté them lightly in olive oil, sprinkle with good salt and a splash of lemon, and open this wine. They come from a nearby region and pair nicely.

- **2018 Álvaro Palacios “Camins del Priorat”, Priorat** – This delightful blend of Cariñena (Carignan), Garnacha (Grenache), Syrah and others is the entry-level Priorat from the well-known and critically-acclaimed winemaker Álvaro Palacios. Priorat is a small winegrowing region just south of Barcelona. You’ll enjoy flavors of raspberry, slate minerality and tea within a bold, well-layered red. Good to drink immediately or put away for a bit (if you do that sort of thing). Reg retail: \$25 Smart price: \$22

Pairing: Priorat wines are bold and rustic, so they pair nicely with rustic boldly-flavored foods. I’d try this with grilled lamb or venison, or maybe a lentil stew with some sausages and greens.

- **2015 Álvarez de Toledo “Roble” Mencía, El Bierzo** – This excellent value has been named a “Best Buy” for many years. The 100% Mencía grapes are hand-harvested from the family vineyards in the section of El Bierzo known for the best soil and terrain in the region. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and then aged 10 months in French and American oak. The nose has aromas of ripe berries and toasted oak, with elegant, well-structured flavors of red fruits, spice and herbs. Reg retail: \$10 Smart price: \$9

Pairing: Mencía is known for pairing well with foods that are peppery and flavorful. I wouldn’t hesitate to open this up next time you bring home a pizza, honestly. Great with charcuterie, and would be a nice match to Spanish cheese such as Idiazabal or Manchego.

- **2012 Marqués de Legarda Reserva, Rioja** – This 100% Tempranillo Reserva is estate-grown from a winery established in 1367, the oldest in Rioja and one of the oldest in the world. In Rioja, “reserva” is the middle classification level and signifies that the wine must be aged at least 3 years, and at least 1 of those years in oak. This wine is aged in oak for 27 months and is a wonderful example of the traditional style of Tempranillo, with classic leather, tobacco and herb aromas and hints of cherry and plum peeking out behind. Well-structured and very tasty. Reg retail: \$19 Smart price: \$17

Pairing: Classic tempranillos pair well with smoky-flavored foods. You could try this one with ribs or smoked brisket. I think it would also be great with some carne asada tacos!

- **2017 Arzuaga “La Planta” Tempranillo, Ribera del Duero** – This second bottle, also 100% Tempranillo, but from the Ribera del Duero region, is made in a much more modern style. This wine is big, bold, fruit-forward, with tons of red fruits and blueberries plus a touch of caramel from barrel-aging. It is fun to compare and contrast these two very different versions of Tempranillo, the classic red grape of Spain. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: Call me crazy, but I think this one would be really delicious with a spicy Indian lamb curry dish. In Spain, there is also a dish called “Cazuela de Garbanzo y Chorizo” (chickpea and chorizo stew) that would be really tasty with this.

A link to a stew recipe of this type is here: <https://www.spainatm.com/cazuela-de-garbanzo-y-chorizo-spanish-garbanzo-chorizo-stew/>