

**Tasting Notes**  
**May 2023 Pick-up**  
**Spanish Wines**



Welcome to your May 2023 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is wine from the country of Spain, one of my favorite places in the world.

For such a relatively small country, Spain produces a lot of wine. Depending on the year, it is 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in the world for wine production. There are wine-growing regions ranging across the country, each with unique climate and characteristics. We'll be trying wines from: Rias Baixas in far northwestern Galicia; the famed Ribera del Duero as well as Bierzo in central Spain; Calatayud in mountainous northeastern Aragon; as well as Jumilla and Murcia in the Southeast.

You'll enjoy the following wines in this tote:

- **2021 Bodegas Emilio Moro, Polvorete, DO Bierzo** – This wine estate was founded by Emilio Moro three generations ago, and is still family-owned. The current winemakers are two brothers who create modern wines with personality. They have recently started crafting whites from the little-known grape Godello which grows in the small sub-region of Bierzo. This wine is aged on its lees and fermented in stainless steel only. The wine is bright and fresh with lovely floral and white fruit notes, followed by very well-balanced acidity.  
Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: This is a lovely summer white for a hot day, perfect with fresh seafood, charcuterie items, or a dinner salad like a Cobb or Niçoise.

- **2021 Santiago Ruiz Rias Baixas Blanco** – For me, it's hard to find a Rias Baixas white wine that I DON'T enjoy. Albariño is one of my favorite grapes and I love the wines it produces. This particular winery is special, though. Santiago Ruiz was known in Spain and in the wine world as the "inventor" of Albariño wines and the ambassador for the Rias Baixas region. In the early 1980s, he retired from wine-making at the age of 72 and devoted himself to promoting awareness that Albariño wines could be some of the best white wines in the world, particularly for pairing with food. This bottle is a lovely white blend, of course featuring Albariño as the main grape. It has an intense bouquet of apple, pear, apricot, lemon verbena, plus (my fave) notes of minerality or "wet stone".  
Reg retail: \$26 Smart price: \$23

Pairing: Albariño has a good acidity so it pairs well with richer "white wine foods", such as salmon, or other seafoods in a butter or cream sauce. You can even go as heavy as duck breast or pork belly. If you love burrata cheese, try composing a salad of spring greens, fresh peas, pesto and burrata to enjoy with this wine.

- **2020 Altovinum Evodia Garnacha, Calatayud** – This wine is grown in a beautiful rural region of Spain where you can see Garnacha vineyards, olive trees, and cherry orchards in every direction. I love Garnacha (*aka* Grenache) as a delicious, light and fruity red wine for lighter foods and warmer weather. This bottle is a great value and has repeatedly been scored 90+ points by Wine Advocate over the years. You'll enjoy raspberry, black cherry and currant flavors as well as cedar and spice. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: A simple but excellent summer pairing for Garnacha is BBQ chicken. It also tends to go nicely with Asian flavors that aren't too spicy (think Chinese five-spice or garam masala).

- **2019 Bodegas Castaño Old Vines Tinto "Alcaria"** – This lovely red is a blend of Garnacha, Syrah, and Monastrell (or "GSM" which is a typical blend from the Côtes du Rhône region of France). The name Alcaria (and the tile pattern on the label) references and honors the traditional rural hamlets in southern Spain where the "alcaria" was a large central home or building featuring wine and olive presses and often, artisanal lace or silk weaving. The wine has lovely rich blackberry, plum, and anise notes with a pleasant delicate sweetness and elegant tannins. Very easy-drinking. Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13

Pairing: Classic Mediterranean flavors such as rosemary, thyme, garlic, and olives will enhance this wine. Simple roasted or grilled chicken or pork loin rubbed with garlic and herbs would be perfect.

- **2017 Finca Bacara "Time Waits For No One" Monastrell, Jumilla** – This wine is 100% Monastrell, also known in France as Mourvèdre. This grape is more typically blended with Syrah and Garnacha/Grenache, so it's fun to see it on its own. Don't be fooled by the kitschy label, this vintage received a score of 95 points from Decanter. This region of Spain suffers from extreme drought and hot temperatures, and the wine label is meant to convey the intensity of that environment and the resilience of the Monastrell grape. The wine is a beautiful garnet-violet hue with intense ripe fruit flavors, hints of oak, and well-balanced savoriness. Reg retail: \$17 Smart price: \$15

Pairing: Monastrell is a bold wine and pairs with bold flavors. In colder months, it is perfect with rich stews and braises. Now that we've finally arrived at warmer weather, think bold, smoky, grilled items like beef brisket or lamb merguez sausage.

- **2019 Pago Del Cielo Ribera del Duero Crianza "Celeste"** – You'll immediately notice the lovely label featuring stars in the night sky. The vineyard where these 100% Tempranillo grapes grow is at almost 3,000 ft above sea level, so the wine was named Celeste in honor of the beauty of the high-altitude vines growing under a starry night. This grape is most typical of Spain and the region of Ribera del Duero. There are many regulated levels of aging for Tempranillo in Spain, and this is a youthful Crianza, meaning it was aged a minimum of one year in barrels. It has unique aromas of blueberry jam, figs, and graphite, with velvety flavors of cocoa and coffee. Reg retail: \$25 Smart price: \$22

Pairing: While the classic pairing would be Manchego cheese, olives, and aged Chorizo, this will work with a wide variety of foods. It is lovely with tomato-based dishes, so a good choice for pasta and pizza.