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# WINE ENTHUSIAST

 THE WORLD IN YOUR GLASS

JUNE 2015

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spanish summer school:

# Spanish Wine Grapes 101



Remember how exciting summer vacation was back when you were in school? Long sunny days and cooled-down nights were perfect for spending time with your family and friends while doing the things you loved most. Summer fun doesn't have to end when we're grown up, and neither does our love of learning. Before you bring the gang together for a summer barbecue or picnic, take a little time to learn your Spanish grapes and then wow your guests with your pitch-perfect pairings. Whether you are throwing steaks on the grill or sautéing just-caught fish there is a wine from Spain that is a sure-fire match for your summer fiesta.



## Tempranillo

Tempranillo is definitely the most popular and probably the best-known grape from Spain. In the glass, it has a deep ruby color and flavors of cherry and black currant with notes of spice and chocolate. Young, fruity versions are ideal alongside burgers or pulled pork, while longer-aged Crianza and Reserva wines will work better with well-marbled steaks or grilled baby lamb chops. Tempranillo is grown across the whole country, but you are most likely to find bottles from Rioja, Ribera del Duero, and Toro in your local wine shop.

## Garnacha

This is the same grape that the French call Grenache, but it actually originated in Spain before crossing the border. Garnacha does best in hot, dry climates, where it is made into powerful wines with flavors of raspberry and strawberry joined by hints of jasmine and licorice. Easy-on-the-wallet bottles from Cariñena and Campo de Borja are great to serve alongside ribs or grilled sausage, while those at the higher end of the price spectrum from Priorat are best reserved for sit-down affairs featuring filet mignon or porterhouse steaks.

## Monastrell

Monastrell is noted for its mixed berry flavors accented by notes of herbs such as thyme, oregano, and anise. It is mainly grown on the Mediterranean coast in the regions of Alicante, Jumilla, Yecla, and Valencia, the last of which is the home of paella. If your kitchen skills are up to making a homemade meat and seafood paella, Monastrell is the natural choice, and it also goes well with pork tenderloin or spicy fried chicken.



## Albariño

Hailing from the Rias Baixas in the northwest of Spain, Albariño is known for its clean flavors of Granny Smith apple and lemon with light floral touches. This refreshing white wine has an affinity for seafood. If you are opening oysters and clams for an iced-down raw bar platter, make sure to put a few bottles of Albariño on ice as well. It's also a surefire crowd pleaser with boiled crabs or shrimp scampi.

## Macabeo, Parellada, and Xarel-Lo

These are the three main grapes that are in Cava, Spain's famous sparkling wine. The name Cava comes from the cave or wine cellar where it is made. Cava can be made in 8 different places around the country, but 95% of it comes from within the Penedes region near Barcelona. Macabeo brings nice floral notes to Cava, Parellada adds citrus flavors and flowery notes, while Xarel-lo's contributions are fruit flavors and bright acidity. Whether it is light and refreshing or toasty and complex, Cava is appropriate for any occasion. Bubbles are always a great way to get the party started, and Cava's delicate flavors work well with seared tuna or plank-grilled salmon.



## Verdejo

The Verdejo grape has been grown in northern Spain since the 11th century, but the style of wine coming out of the Rueda region is entirely modern. Expect bracing citrus flavors backed by notes of melon, apple, and peach. Verdejo's rich fruit flavors and light aromatics will work with seafood tacos, lobster roll, and crab cakes, and you should also try it the next time you are enjoying simply boiled lobster with butter.