

12 wines of CHRISTMAS

Whether you're newly curious or you already have a wine rack full of Rioja, Spanish wines make for the perfect festive tipple and can be paired with everything from gamey meats to luscious desserts.

While the idea of pairing each course with the perfect wine might seem too specialist for the rest of the year, Christmas is one of those times you need to get it right. It may seem like a hard art to crack but there is a way even the most amateur of wine drinkers can master, and that's Spanish wines. Perhaps your wine of choice is a modern one, where ripeness and richness can't be denied. Or, you prefer a more classic made-to-age gracefully for decades type of wine. How about a white wine that's so fresh, you feel as though you've been transported to the beach? Or, what if you have a more obscure palette and enjoy wine made from lesser-known grapes? Or, maybe you just want a great deal, where luxury doesn't cost a fortune. While a palette of this variety would usually require extensive sourcing from many regions, Spain is the one country that has it all. From the rolling hills of Rioja to high plains of Ribera del Duero, down to the steep terraces of Priorat, Spain has more acres of vineyard than any other wine-producing nation making it a top source for world-class wines. A guaranteed crowd pleaser, Spanish wines saw their share of the Irish wine market grow to fourteen per cent, ranking them second in wine sales.

So, to help get the festivities started, we've compiled twelve of the best Spanish wines to serve at your celebratory Christmas meal.

FWS Foods and Wines from Spain

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ARZUAGA LA PLANTA (RIBERA DEL DUERO), €18

A rich Tempranillo red with high aromatic intensity. Best served with fried fish, roasted poultry and soft cheeses. (Jus de Vine; Redmonds Ranelagh; Donavans Cork and some other independent off-licences)



VALMIÑOR (RIAS BAIXAS), €19.95

This Albariño is intense in the nose with green apple, pear, and white flowers and a fresh intensity in the mouth. (Baggott Street Wines; Sweeny's D3; McHugh's; Jus de Vine; Morton's Salthill, Galway; World Wide Wines, Waterford)



GRANBAZÁN LIMOUSIN (RIAS BAIXAS), €29.47

This is the first Albariño to be aged in French oak barrels. Powerful scents of oak, fruit and spice, it is rich on the tongue with a fine bitter taste. (O'Briens Wines)



FRAGA DO CORVO MENCÍA (MONTERREI), €21.95

An attractive wine with intense fruits of the forest aromas, and notes of liquorice and coffee. (Mitchell & Son; Clontarf Wines, Dublin; Galvins, Cork; The Fat Angel, Waterford)



CANFORRALES LUCÍA AIRÉN (LA MANCHA), €11.50

Pale yellow with aromas of green apple and citrus, this light white is the perfect after dinner tipple. (A Taste of Spain; Nudewine Company; 64 Wines Dublin; Liliput Stores Dublin)



DE ALBERTO ECOLÓGICO (RUEDA), €14

Verdejo 100% Organic. A variety of intense aromas with distinct notes of aniseed, herbs and white bone fruit. Best served with poultry, fish and seafood. (O'Briens Wines)



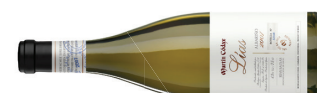
DIEZ SIGLOS SAUVIGNON (RUEDA), €11-€14

This is a highly intense, structured and rounded white wine. Ideally served with fresh mussels, clams and oysters, but also goes well with all types of fish. (Curious Wines)



LOSADA (BIERZO), €19.95

Toast, dark chocolate and liquorice flavours frame the black cherry and plum fruit in this expressive red, accented by mountain herb and mineral notes - in addition to Bierzo's remarkable conflation of fruit, flowers, and herbs. (Searsons)



MARTÍN CÓDAX LÍAS (RIAS BAIXAS)

This exclusive Albariño is intense in the nose with notes of ripe pear, apple and white peach. Upfront in the mouth, with fresh fruit, lactic and warm brioche. (Sold in restaurants only but Martin Codax Albarino is €18 in SuperValu stores)



HONORO VERA VERDEJO (RUEDA), €12

This young white wine exudes intense aromas of white flowers and fresh fruit with tropical notes. Best served with, shrimp, fish, rice and pasta. (Supervalu; Winesonline; Joyces Supermarkets Galway; Dollard & Co, Dublin)



PAGO DE LOS CAPELLANES CRIANZA (RIBERA DEL DUERO), €39.95

Tempranillo with intense aromas of red and black fruits, with spicy nuances from French oak. In the mouth, it's broad, fresh, balanced and silky with a long finish. (Mitchell & Son)



RIOJA VEGA RESERVA (RIOJA), €21.99

No Spanish wine list would be complete without a Rioja. The nose experiences an array of aromas ranging from ripe fruit, toasted toffee and vanilla whilst being unctuous, velvety and balanced on the palate. (Martins, Fairview, Dublin; No 21 Middleton, Cork; Ardkeen)