

La Antigua Clásico Crianza



La Antigua Clásico is one of Alberto Orte's most enduring history projects and shows off an unexplored region of DOCa Rioja, the western mountain range of Sierra de la Demanda. Inspired by the style of winemaking that was popular in the first half of the 20th century, Alberto's winemaking emphasizes freshness and minerality, leading to balanced, long-lived wines. To that end, he has found old vine Garnacha, Tempranillo and Graciano in Sierra de la Demanda, south of the Ebro river in Rioja Alta. The northern facing, high-altitude vineyards receive far less sunshine than those in the valley, resulting in grapes that ripen slowly, showcasing intense flavors of greater balance and focus. This poses quite a risk that only hands-on viticulture can remedy: this area is one of the last to harvest in all of Western Europe, usually in early November! In addition to the cool climate, Sierra de la Demanda's vineyards are extremely scattered and steep. This terrain is impossible to mechanize, and all vineyard work must be done by hand. The result is a handcrafted wine of precision and elegance – fresh and beautiful to drink now, with built-in longevity.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: This is a wine that intentionally refers to a style of farming and winemaking that has fallen out of fashion in Rioja – difficult and painstaking work that results in incredibly fresh, elegant wines made in a classic style. Aged far longer than most crianzas, La Antigua Clásico has an elegance and silky texture unusual for this age statement of Rioja.

RATING HISTORY: 2013 92D; 2012 92JS, 91VM; 2011 91JS; 2010 91WC

GRAPE: 70% Tempranillo, 20% Graciano, 10% Garnacha. Vines planted from 1940 to 1955. Tended in limestone and sandy soil at 568 m (1,865 ft) elevation.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: 24 months in stainless steel tanks plus 24 months in 60% French and 40% American very-old-oak barrels

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Sustainably grown vines planted from 1940 to 1955. Tended in sandy and limestone soil at 568 m (1,865ft) elevation. The Sierra de la Demanda mountain range is at the western edge of DOCa Rioja, in a series of valleys that border the Ezcaray national forest: remote and untouched.

TASTING NOTES Brilliant ruby. Lively aromas of fresh, spice-tinged red and dark berries and candied flowers are complemented by suggestions of vanilla and woodsmoke. Juicy and energetic on the palate, offering appealingly sweet black raspberry and rose pastille flavors that deepen slowly as the wine opens up. Gentle, slow-building tannins shape a smooth, persistent finish that strongly echoes the floral note. -- Josh Raynolds.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 13.5%

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