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## Vinous Media - Rioja Looks Back and Ahead February 21, 2019

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Vinous Media's Spanish editor Josh Reynolds has just published reviews of recent release wines from Rioja. His introduction to the article follows along with reviews of Grapes of Spain wines.

"Traditionally made Riojas are having a moment. Old-school, elegant Riojas, made with a light hand, have caught the attention of collectors and sommeliers around the world, putting pressure on the supply of some of the region's most famous wines. At the same time, a number of modern-leaning producers have begun to throttle back on assertive oak, extraction and alcohol levels, which is a highly welcome development, in this Rioja lover's opinion. The recent 2016, 2015 and 2014 vintages have been very good to outstanding, with healthy yields that ensure there's plenty of wine to go around."

### Bodegas San Pedro Apostol (Rioja Alta)



#### **Campellares Tempranillo 2017 – 90 points**

"(all stainless steel) Vivid ruby. Fresh cherry and blueberry aromas are complemented by suggestions of candied rose and cracked pepper. Juicy and precise on the palate, offering lively dark fruit flavors that deepen slowly on the back half. Dusty tannins lend shape to a long, incisive finish that leaves a subtly sweet blue fruit note behind."

### Casa La Rad (Rioja Baja)



#### **Solarce Blanco 2016 – 90 points**

(fermented and aged in a combination of 600 liter French oak barrels and stainless steels tanks) Bright yellow. Fresh melon, tangerine and honeysuckle on the fragrant nose. Silky and seamless on the palate, offering juicy honeydew and orchard fruit flavors and a refreshingly bitter orange zest nuance that builds with aeration. Closes with very good, tangy lift and floral-tinged persistence, leaving a subtle floral note behind.



#### **Solarce Rosado 2018 – 90 points**

(all stainless steel) Vivid onion skin color. Fresh strawberry and tangerine aromas are sharpened by a mineral nuance and a hint of white pepper. Chewy and focused on the palate, offering zesty red berry and citrus fruit flavors and a refreshingly bitter touch of peach pit. Finishes firm and dry, with a building mineral note and an echo of juicy red fruit.



#### **Solarce Tinto 2016 – 91 points**

(fermented in stainless steel tanks; malo in 500 liter French oak barrels and eight months of aging in used barriques, 80% French and 20% American) Brilliant violet color. Pungent, spice-tinged cherry and redcurrant scents are complemented by mineral and woodsmoke notes and a hint of mocha. Sappy and energetic on the palate, offering juicy red fruit preserves, spicecake and violet pastille flavors that convey an appealing blend of richness and delicacy. Finishes taut, smoky and quite long, leaving suggestions of candied flowers and cola behind.





### **Casa la Rad Blanco 2015 – 92 points**

(made from 50+ year old vines; fermented in 500 liter French oak barrels, with malo and a year of aging in new French oak barriques) Limpid yellow. Powerful, mineral-tinged Meyer lemon and pear nectar scents show very good clarity and complicating hints of anise and toasty lees. Sappy and precise on the palate, offering intense, mineral-laced orchard and citrus fruit flavors and deeper suggestions of buttered toast, peach and honeydew melon that emerge on the back half. Shows impressive energy and finishes silky and very long, with a suave floral nuance hanging on.



### **Casa la Rad Tinto 2015 – 93 points**

(fermentation and malo in 800 liter French oak barrels and aging for 14 months in new French oak barriques) Lurid ruby. Powerful aromas of ripe black and blue fruits, vanilla, incense and potpourri are complicated by a smoky mineral flourish. Broad, fleshy and appealingly sweet, offering palate-staining boysenberry and cherry-vanilla flavors that firm up slowly on the back half. Rich yet vibrant in style, with excellent finishing clarity and smooth, even tannins arriving late to frame the wine's lush, sweet fruit.

## **Union de Viticultores Riojanos (Rioja Alta)**



### **Viña Otano Rioja Blanco (Viura) 2016 – 88 points**

Light bright straw-yellow. Aromas of dried pear and lemon pith, plus a subtle floral nuance in the background. Juicy and focused in style, showing good energy and a touch of warmth on a smooth finish that leaves a hint of lemon curd behind.

### **Viña Otano Rioja Blanco “Fermentado en Barrica” 2016 – 90 points**

Pale green-hued gold. Oak-spiced orchard and pit fruits and a suggestion of vanilla on the perfumed nose. Pliant, appealingly sweet pear and peach flavors are firmed by a jolt of bitter quinine. The vanilla note recurs on a very long, smooth finish that leaves sweet pear nectar and orange notes behind. The oak here is quite well-judged.



### **Viña Otano Rioja Crianza 2015 – 90 points**

Vivid ruby. Sexy, oak-spiced cherry and dark berries, plus a hint of smokiness that gains strength as the wine opens up. Smooth, sweet and open-knit, showing good depth to the juicy blackberry and cherry cola flavors. A coconut nuance emerges on the clinging finish, which is given shape by supple, even tannins.

### **Viña Otano Rioja Graciano 2012 – 92 points**

Lurid ruby. Sexy, smoke- and spice-accented cherry, red berry and potpourri scents show excellent clarity and mineral lift. Silky and focused on the palate, offering nervy raspberry and bitter cherry flavors that turn sweeter with air. The floral note repeats emphatically on the impressively persistent, focused finish, which is shaped by supple, deftly integrated tannins.

