

Rioja and Ribera del Duero vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 was a mild year of weather in Spain. It was the fifth consecutive small vintage, thanks in large part to very dry conditions. The resulting small harvests harvested in Rioja are likely to make wines of great concentration and high levels. The Ribera del Duero crop was also shrunk by drought but producers there are a little more optimistic about eventual quality.

2011 Hot and heat-stressed for the vines in Rioja with lower acidity than average but powerful, concentrated wines of good quality. Similarly hot in Ribera del Duero, giving very powerful intensity and smooth, soft tannins.

2010 Exceptional for Ribera del Duero with no excessive weather patterns, uniform ripeness and quality as promising as 2004. Good quality in Rioja also, considered better than 2009.

2009 Very hot conditions gave average temperatures above the infamous 03 vintage. However, timely rains in Rioja and Ribera del Duero relieved the vines and rescued the vintage. Very good quality.

2008 Very good quality for Rioja, with favourable weather throughout autumn. In Ribera del Duero, temperatures were cooler than normal, giving a slow, balanced ripening process and elegant wines as a result.

2007 After a miserable summer, frost on 24 Sep decimated the crop from many young Ribera del Duero vineyards. Most grapes struggled to ripen but late pickers were rewarded. Not a stellar year though.

2006 Some spring hail in Rioja. Hot summer with some drought stress. May not quite live up to the two previous vintages.

2005 Another good vintage with high temperatures but with (just) enough rain.

2004 Very good year, especially for Rioja, with wines that should last well.

2003 Small, early, drought-plagued harvest of often unbalanced wines.

2002 Exceptionally cold winter and spring was followed by nasty wet weather during summer - disastrous for both quality and quantity. Rain persisted even during harvest. Truly a severe test for both regions.

2001 Smaller-than-usual crop because of spring frosts but distinctly superior quality accentuated in some cases by further deliberate crop thinning. Some very fine wines.

2000 Record crop levels and extremely variable quality with exceptionally high summer temperatures and in many cases a lack of concentration. Some very good wines from Ribera del Duero though.

1999 April frost in Rioja delayed ripening of grapes that suffered thanks to summer rains. Better quality in Ribera del Duero, however, although harvest rain reduced acidity. Good quality but not quite as good as 1998.

1998 Despite spring frosts, yields were still too high to ripen some grapes sufficiently in Ribera del Duero. Quantity was also Rioja's strong suit.

1997 Rain at harvest. Not glorious.

1996 Particularly successful in Ribera del Duero, where ripe, relatively friendly wines were made.

1995 Another frost-shrunk crop in Ribera del Duero, although the grapes were riper and probably better balanced than in 1994. Rioja's bodegas, on the other hand, were swollen by an enormous harvest of ripe, healthy grapes.

1994 Quality isn't a problem but quantity is after spring frosts and summer drought. Some very nice wines indeed.

1993 Heavy harvest rains again. Good but not great seems the rule.

1992 This looked good until prolonged rains, which diluted the grapes and encouraged rot. Early maturing. Should have been drunk.

1991 An excellent year in Spain, only a small crop but impressive weight and structure.

1990 Another large and fine quality crop in all areas.

1989 Plenty of rich and charming wines from both regions.

1986 Good in Rioja but outshone by Riberas of complexity and power.

1982 A very great year, the best since 1970, with plenty of Reserva wines.