A Tour of Spain

- Background and History
- Geography
- Spanish Culture and Wine Laws
- Classic Regions: Penedès, Jerez, Rías Baixas, Priorat, Rioja, Ribera del Duero

Background and History

- Vines cultivated since around 3000 BC
- Phoenicians founded Gadir (modern day Cádiz) around 1100 BC and established value of viticulture
- Stints by the Carthaginians, Romans, Moors
- Columbus opens up trade; high alcohol and fortified wines most popular
- Late 1800s:
    - Champagne-method sparkling wines take hold in Penedès
    - Phylloxera strikes Bordeaux; they look to Spain, particularly Rioja
- 1926: DO system begins in Rioja
- Late 20th century = international "rediscovery" of Spanish wine; big bump in quality and investments in vineyards/winemaking

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Geography

- Iberian peninsula
- World's largest vineyard:
    - 2.9 million acres planted
    - More than 625 grape varietals planted
- Diverse Topography: Spans from Pyrenées in North to nearly touching Africa in South
- Rivers, mountains, oceans, valleys, flatlands
- Climate becomes more extreme as you move toward center

Spanish Culture and Style

- Fierce local pride; very different traditions, culture, language (and food and wine) across country
- Love for food: Incredible culinary traditions; today considered by many to be the most cutting edge, finest cuisine in the world
- Wine and food go together (and grow together)

Spanish Quality System: Denominaciones de Origen

- Formed in 1926
- Modified in 1970s and regulated by the Consejo Regulador
    - 1926: Rioja
    - 1927: Jerez
    - 1933: Malaga
- DO = Denominación de Origen
- DOCa = Denominación de Origen Calificada
- DO and DOCa equivalent to EU's DOP
- DO and DOCa have aging requirements (Joven, Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva)
- VCIG = Vinos de Calidad con Indicación Geográfica
- VdIT = Vino de la Tierra
- VCIG and VdIT fall within EU's IGP

Tasting components *(subject to change)*…

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Focus: Penedès

- Northern Spain, part of Catalunya
- Mediterranean climate
- Famous for Cava; most famous area = San Sadurní d'Anoia
- Champagne method sparklers
- Gyropalette invented here
- Macabéo, Parellada, Xarel-lo white grapes, plus Chardonnay
- Red grapes = Ull de Llebre (Tempranillo), Garnacha, Monastrell

Wine: Bohigas Cava Brut Reserva NV – San Sadurní d'Anoia, Spain

Focus: Jerez

- Southern tip of Spain, within Andalucía
- Warmer climate plus sea breeze
- Sherry country: fortified wines in three main styles:
    - Fino
    - Amontillado
    - Oloroso
    - Also: Palo Cortado
- Manzanilla from Sanlúcar de Barrameda
- Best soils are chalky *albariza*

Wine: El Maestro Sierra Fino – Jerez, Spain

Sherry – the Basics

- Fino is lightest, most delicate; 15-18% ABV; most protected by *flor*
- *Flor* = film of yeast that forms on top of the wine
- Amontillado is a Fino allowed to eventually age oxidatively; slightly more robust, caramel colored, nutty
- Oloroso has aged oxidatively; has richer texture/flavor, higher alcohol, more spicy and nutty
- Palo Cortado has delicacy yet richness and color – a rare and coveted in-between
- All above naturally dry but can be sweetened before bottling
- Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel = sweet

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Focus: Rías Baixas

- Northwest Spain, within Galicia
- Cooler from Atlantic Ocean
- Five subzones: Val do Salnés, Ribeira do Ulla, Soutomaior, O Rosal, and Condado do Tea
- Albariño grape (white), aka Alvarinho in Portugal's Vinho Verde, just south across border
- Stonefruit, citrus, mineral… great with shellfish

Wine: Do Ferreiro Albariño '10 – Rías Baixas, Spain

Focus: Priorat

- Back in Catalunya, Northeast Spain
- Warmer, influenced by Mediterranean
- Llicorella soil = schistous, black slate and quartzite
- René Barbier and his 5 "Clos"
- Garnacha, Cariñena (reds), often blended with French varietals

Wine: Alvaro Palacios Camins del Priorat '10 – Priorat, Spain

Focus: Rioja

- Middle North of Spain
- Three sub-regions: Alta, Baja, Alavesa
- Reds = mostly Tempranillo, also Garnacha, Mazuelo, Graciano
- Whites = Viura, Malvasia, Garnacha Blanca
- "Traditional" v. "Modern" styles
- Aging requirements – different than rest of Spain; differences between Joven, Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva

Wine: Beronia Gran Reserva '04 – Rioja, Spain

Focus: Ribera del Duero

- Middle North of Spain, southwest of Rioja, within Castilla y León
- Warmer than Rioja
- Thicker skinned Tempranillo
- No whites
- Relatively "new" wine region: DO status in 1982
- Vega Sicilia followed by Pesquera led to major acclaim and investment, big increase in quality since 1980s
- Aging requirements (different than Rioja or rest of Spain) – Joven, Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva

Wine: Tinto Pesquera Crianza '08 – Ribera del Duero, Spain

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