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### Spain - The Other Appellations From The Duero: Rivers of wine August 29, 2014

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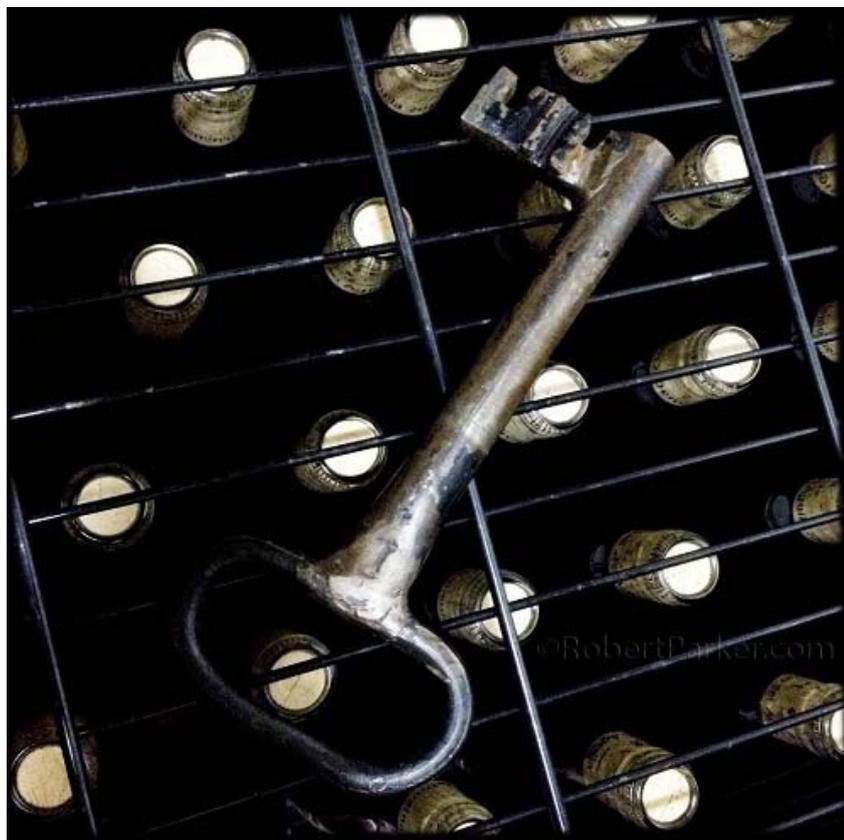
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*The key to big wines is balance, even if everything is in XL size.*

The Duero River is one of the main rivers, not only in Spain, but also in Portugal, where it's known as the Douro and is the backbone of the region where Douro table wines and the prestigious Vinho do Porto are produced. In Spain, the region that carries its name, Ribera del Duero (the banks of the Duero), might be the most obvious one, followed by Toro and Rueda, but there are myriad other wine regions surrounding the golden river, its banks, its tributaries and its area of influence. It's not so easy to set the limits to the Duero's region of influence. As I'm grouping appellations and regions into clusters to cover all the zones in Spain, I decided to put the limit in Salamanca and leave León for when I review Bierzo and Galicia. It might be a bit arbitrary, but sometimes you need to draw the line somewhere. The Sierra de Francia part of Salamanca is quite far removed from the Duero, but the Aribes, which are on the banks of the river, are mostly in the province. If I didn't include them here I don't know in which large geographical area they would fit. So, here you'll find wines from a number of these appellations to complement the individual articles on Ribera del Duero, Toro and Rueda in this issue. I intentionally left out the wines from the province of León, where the main appellation is Bierzo, which also has a whole region dedicated to some local grapes, mainly Prieto Picudo and I intend to write about them at the same time as I cover Galicia. It's a transition region, and it could have been included in either, but I think Bierzo with the red Mencía and the white Godello, wine-wise, have more in common with Galicia than with the rest of Castilla.

Castilla y León is a political region, the Comunidad Autónoma that includes the provinces of Valladolid, Soria, Burgos, Segovia, Ávila, Salamanca and León, so we have the Vinos de la Tierra de Castilla y León, equivalent to the Italian IGT, the generic appellation that acts as an umbrella for any and all wines produced within those provinces, but not fulfilling the requisites of the individual appellations of origin. For the sake of simplification, I've called them simply Castilla y León. This is, of course, a hodgepodge, catch-all appellation that would accept you if you decided to produce a cryogenized Müller-Thurgau in the limits of Ribera del Duero, a Syrah in Rueda or anything you can think of. In other words, there are basically no restrictions as to what you can do, what grapes you can use or what style of wines you produce as long as you are within the limits of the common Spanish wine legislation. Here we find the orphans from Rueda, the ones just outside the geographical limits of Ribera del Duero - and some notable ones at that, like Mauro or Abadía Retuerta - and all the others in between. Some wineries within an appellation often have a wine that they sell as Vino de la Tierra de Castilla y León, as maybe they use non-authorized grape varieties or they simply want to have the freedom to not comply with some of the appellation rules. The whites produced with Verdejo grapes within the limits of Rueda, but sold as Castilla y León, are bundled together with the Rueda wines in a specific article, as they have more in common with them than with the rest of Castilla y León. Most of them are excluded or denied the appellation mostly for political/economical/arbitrary reasons, and in fact they often provide more Rueda typicity and quality than most wines wearing the appellation back label. More about that in the Rueda article. Similarly, reds like the mentioned Quinta Sardonía, Abadía Retuerta, Mauro or the new Galia could as well have been grouped together with Ribera del Duero, as they share a lot of characteristics and part of the grapes used in their production are from Ribera del Duero. But what then should be left for this article?

Once I've explained the generic regional appellation let's look at the others - in strict alphabetical order! One of the newer appellations of origin is Arlanza, short for Ribera del Arlanza. The Arlanza is a tributary of the Douro, a small river that crosses the province of Burgos, whose wine capital is Lerma. The wines here are as close as it gets to the cold climate reds from Ribera del Duero, as the zone is quite close to the Burgos part of it. There are Tempranillo-based reds but the appellation also contemplates whites. Although there are some larger wineries, I selected the three names that are producing the most interesting wines: Buezo, Olivier Rivière and Sabináres. Let's see how the appellation develops.

**Arribes** used to be known as Arribes del Duero, as it's the proper name of the region, but Ribera del Duero objected to the name and lobbied against it, wanting to monopolize the name of the river all for themselves, which I find a bit unfair, but there you go. This is a region that geographically or morphologically has more in common with the Portuguese Douro, as the steep terraces by the river and its tributaries resemble those across the border. The grapes, however, are completely different. There are local grapes here, Juan García and Bruñal and myriad others, often found mixed in the old vineyards. Both reds and whites (and I guess rosés if you wanted to) are contemplated. The region is really a transition between the Spain and Portugal, and in my opinion, it has much higher potential than that currently provided by their wines. This is a zone waiting to be awakened.

**Cigales** was once known for its rosés, but as they lost the lackluster of yesteryear and people started to use their worst grapes for the category, they really lost their street credibility. Once people are looking seriously at rosés again, producers are getting back to using decent (even good!) grapes for their production, the quality is rising by the minute. But, for very long time, Cigales was replanted with Tempranillo and lived in the shadow of Ribera del Duero. Most of the wines are red, Tempranillo-based, but Garnacha has good potential there. Not a lot of new names in Cigales, the region seem to be quite static.



The Sierra de Salamanca has proven to be the source of a good number of personal wines full of character.

A very young appellation, **Sierra de Salamanca** is borderline for being considered a Duero-related region, but if I didn't include it in this report it would be lost forever. There is an interesting red grape here, Rufete, which is also found on the other side of the border and is part of the grapes allowed in the production of Port there. The zone is known as Sierra de Francia, but the name would be just too confusing to name the wines so it was changed to the politically correct Sierra de Salamanca, mountains of Salamanca. La Zorra and Tragaldabas are names to follow there and I was sadly disappointed with the wines from Cámbrico, which in the past have shown much better. I hope they get back on form.

**Zamora**, the province where Toro is located, also comprises one new appellation, DO Tierra del Vino de Zamora, which to me doesn't have a marked personality though I link it to powerful, ripe reds produced with Tempranillo. Only a handful of wines carry the appellation.

### What's in a Grape?

There was a time when it seemed like Cabernet and Chardonnay - or Tempranillo as a matter of fact - were going to be the future. Things have changed a lot and it's now the local, autochthonous and sometimes obscure grapes that play with advantage. But in that mess of local, imported and regional names, there is the need to shed some light on what varieties really are. The Duero zone is obviously dominated by Tempranillo and its different clones (Tinta de Toro, Tinto Fino) but there are lots of other grapes planted there, especially in the old vineyards where varieties are planted together and you can find almost anything: Bobal, Viura, Graciano, Palomino - you name it. I got information about the local grapes from Charlotte Allen, an English woman who produces wines in Arribes, and together with the Wine Grapes book by Jancis Robinson, Julia Harding and José Vouillamoz, I worked out the following: the main grape in Arribes is the red Juan García, which is also found in Galicia under the name Mouratón and called Gorda or Tinta Gorda in Portugal. There's been some local hype about another red called Bruñal that was thought autochthonous, and the same as Albariño Negro from Asturias, but this has turned out to be none other than Alfrocheiro Preto, found mainly in Dão in Portugal. Juan García and Bruñal are related, and they are also possibly related to Trousseau from Jura, Prieto Picudo from León and Carrasquín from Asturias. Bastardillo Chico seems to be local to Arribes possibly related to Bruñal, but with bigger bunches and grapes. Verdejo Colorado, Tinta Jeroma and Gago Arroba are obscure and possibly autochthonous. The white Puesta en Cruz seems to be autochthonous and has potential for quality. Rufete is also found in the Sierra de Francia in Salamanca and in Portugal, where it's one of the permitted grapes for Port. Finally, let's untangle some other local synonyms used: Tinta Madrid is the local clone of Tempranillo, quite similar to Tinta de Toro. Malvasía de Arribes is Doña Blanca, the same found in Bierzo and Galicia, while Bastardillo Serrano is Cinsault.



*Despite many being pulled up, there are still plenty of old vines in the Duero region in Spain. It's a patrimony that should not get lost.*

I tasted some academic wines, produced in homeopathic quantities, difficult to find, but I decided to include them here as they are of interest, at least to start hearing about producers, zones and grapes. **Some new names join the ranks of the best veterans of the region, Galia, La Zorra, Mandrágora, Olivier Rivière.**

—Luis Gutiérrez

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## The Wine Advocate Tasting History



### 2013 La Zorra Raro

A Rufete Dry Red Table wine from Spain, Salamanca, Castilla Leon, Spain

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eRobertParker.com #214 Aug 2014	Luis Gutierrez	92	Drink: 2014 - 2016	(30)
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The 2013 Raro is pure Rufete from old vineyards planted on granite and slate soils fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged for a short time (111 days!) in barrel. It has a bright (almost fluorescent!) red-ruby color, translucent and with a showy, exuberant nose denoting youth and plenty of character, notes of smoked bacon, licorice, underbrush and meaty blue fruit. This is not so different from a wild Syrah from Valais or the Northern Rhone (which now that I think about it is a bit of a pleonasm, as Valais is as Northern Rhone as it gets). It reveals smoke, Morello cherries, and citric hints. It's young, but has complexity and changes quickly in the glass. The palate is light to medium-bodied, with the flavors found in the nose, and no noticeable tannins. This is easy to drink, fresh and vibrant. A delicious, superb young red, a good example of what Rufete is capable of and offered at a very good price. 4,300 bottles were produced. Drink now-2016.

La Zorra is a new project (created in 2010) around 26 hectares of vineyards, mostly over 60 years of age in the Sierra de Salamanca from which they craft around 34,000 bottles every vintage. I tasted very young wines, mostly recently bottled, and even so they were lovely. Fun wines, full of energy and character. Bravo! A new name to follow.

No known American importer.

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## The Wine Advocate Tasting History



### 2013 La Zorra 8 Virgenes Serranas

A Proprietary Blend Dry White Table wine from Spain, Salamanca, Castilla Leon, Spain

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Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	Current (Release) Cost
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eRobertParker.com #214 Aug 2014	Luis Gutierrez	92	Drink: 2014 - 2017	(20)
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Let's start with a white I loved, the 2013 8 Virgenes Serranas, an unusual blend of Rufete Blanco, Palomino Fino and Moscatel de Grano Menudo from over 60-year-old vineyards on sandy soils. The wine was aged for five months in used French oak barrels. Rufete Blanco, an obscure white local grape from Salamanca is also known as Verdejo Serrano, but both names are misleading as it's not related to either Rufete or Verdejo. The wine is quite light, clear and shiny and has a leesy, mineral nose denoting character. There is fruit there, but plenty of balsamic and earthy notes as well. The palate is light, with pungent flavors, good acidity, a strong personality and a mineral-driven finish. This is a delicious white that would do very well with food with its vibrant acidity and saline minerality. Well done! 6,800 bottles produced. This is a great value. Drink now-2017.

La Zorra is a new project (created in 2010) around 26 hectares of vineyards, mostly over 60 years of age in the Sierra de Salamanca from which they craft around 34,000 bottles every vintage. I tasted very young wines, mostly recently bottled, and even so they were lovely. Fun wines, full of energy and character. Bravo! A new name to follow.

No known American importer.

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The Wine Advocate  
Tasting History



**2013 La Zorra La Zorra**

A Proprietary Blend Dry Red Table wine from Spain, Salamanca, Castilla Leon, Spain

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eRobertParker.com #214 Aug 2014	Luis Gutierrez	91	Drink: 2014 - 2014	(30)
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The 2013 La Zorra is a Rufere and Tempranillo blend from old vineyards on sandy, granite and slate soils, fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged for seven months in oak barrels. This is a more serious wine than the other 2013s, with subtle aromas of black fruit, spices and earthy, undergrowth tones. The palate is light to medium-bodied, with fine tannins and clean, delineated flavors ending with a floral note that is attractive and pleasant. This is very good, but not as vibrant and fun as the white or the pure Rufete. Still, it is highly recommended. 14,000 bottles produced. Drink now.

La Zorra is a new project (created in 2010) around 26 hectares of vineyards, mostly over 60 years of age in the Sierra de Salamanca from which they craft around 34,000 bottles every vintage. I tasted very young wines, mostly recently bottled, and even so they were lovely. Fun wines, full of energy and character. Bravo! A new name to follow.

No known American importer.

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## The Wine Advocate Tasting History



### 2012 La Zorra La Vieja Zorra

A Proprietary Blend Dry Red Table wine from Spain, Salamanca, Castilla Leon, Spain

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Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	Current (Release) Cost
eRobertParker.com #214 Aug 2014	Luis Gutierrez	90	Drink: 2014 - 2018	(40)

Source	Reviewer	Rating	Maturity	Current (Release) Cost
eRobertParker.com #214 Aug 2014	Luis Gutierrez	90	Drink: 2014 - 2018	(40)

The 2012 La Vieja Zorra is a blend of Rufete, Tempranillo, and a pinch of Garnacha from over 60-year-old vineyards on granite and slate soils rich in sand that were fermented with indigenous yeast and aged for 13 months in a mixture of French and American barrels. It's the only wine that shows an oaky character, with balsamic aromas, graphite, shoe polish and Mediterranean herbs, over a core of blackberries and currants. The palate is medium-bodied with grainy, dusty tannins, enough acidity and a fine, silky texture. Its only problem is the strong competition from its siblings! Only 1,100 bottles were filled. Drink now-2018.

La Zorra is a new project (created in 2010) around 26 hectares of vineyards, mostly over 60 years of age in the Sierra de Salamanca from which they craft around 34,000 bottles every vintage. I tasted very young wines, mostly recently bottled, and even so they were lovely. Fun wines, full of energy and character. Bravo! A new name to follow.

No known American importer.

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