



OLIVIER RIVIÈRE

Gabaxo Rioja

With about 25 hectares of rented and owned vineyards in Rioja Alta, Rioja Baja, Rioja Alavesa, and splitting his time between his own wines and consulting with other producers, it would be an understatement to say that Olivier Rivière is busy. Originally lured to Spain in 2004 by Telmo Rodriguez to convert his vineyards to biodynamics, Olivier came to appreciate the rich history of Rioja and the diversity of its soils and grape varieties. In 2006 he started his own project, and owing to the high cost of land in Rioja, he traded his farming talents for access to grapes from the best sites he could locate.

Coming from France, Olivier has an innate sense of terroir. Unlike many of his peers in Rioja, he bases his cuvées not on political boundaries or the length of barrel aging but on terroir. He believes in a quality hierarchy inspired by Burgundy with generic Appellation and Village wines at the base and Premier and Grand cru wines at the top. This is how to understand best what Olivier is doing in Rioja, rather than the traditional Crianza, Reserva, Gran Reserva model or traditionalists versus modernists.

In keeping with his education and advocacy, nearly all of Olivier's vineyard sources – whether owned or leased – are farmed organically with biodynamic practices. Harvested is manual and each variety is fermented separately. Depending on the source, it may be partially destemmed or fermented whole cluster. Fermentations are with indigenous yeasts. Macerations are gentle and short. Aging takes place in stainless steel or cement tanks, foudre, and barrel with each container chosen to benefit the expression of the terroir. SO₂ is kept to a minimum, usually added only before bottling. These are not your grandparent's Riojas, nor are they your parent's. These wines represent a novel approach that relies almost entirely on the specificity of site and the transparency of winemaking necessary to capture it.

Gabaxo is Olivier's only wine that blends fruit from various sites within Rioja. The Tempranillo and Graciano are from Rioja Alavesa, planted on rocky, clay-limestone soil at 500 meters above sea level. The Garnacha is from Cárdenas in Rioja Alta on red clay at 600 meters and from Rioja Baja. Gabaxo is a not wholly flattering term for a French border jumper – a nickname that Olivier embraces with pride. Along with Bastid, Olivier considers Gabaxo to be equivalent to Côte de Nuits version of Rioja.

ORIGIN

Spain

APPELLATION

Rioja

SOIL

Clay limestone, red clay, sand

AGE OF VINES

20–65

ELEVATION

500–650 meters

VARIETIES

Garnacha, Tempranillo

FARMING

Practicing organic and biodynamic

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, whole cluster natural yeast fermentation in concrete vats

AGING

12 months in foudre and 500L French oak demi-muids

ACCOLADES

91-93) – 2022 Gabaxo – Wine Advocate

94 – 2020 Gabaxo – James Suckling

92 – 2019 Gabaxo – Wine Advocate

