



OLIVIER RIVIÈRE

Ganko 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.

Ganko is another nickname that Olivier has acquired but this one came from his Japanese importer. It means “stubborn”, which is a useful trait for any outsider, especially one making wine his own way in Rioja. Ganko comes from a site at 600 meters in elevation near the village of Cárdenas in Rioja Alta. Here Olivier farms 60–90 year old Garnacha and Mazuelo in sandy and ferrous, red clay soils. Olivier considers this wine to be his 1er Cru Village Rioja.

ORIGIN

Spain

APPELLATION

Rioja

SOIL

Sandy red clay

AGE OF VINES

60–90

ELEVATION

600 meters

VARIETIES

Garnacha, Mazuelo

FARMING

Practicing organic and biodynamic

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, whole cluster, natural yeast fermentation in concrete tanks

AGING

16–18 months in foudre and French oak demi-muids

ACCOLADES

95 – 2020 Ganko – James Suckling

95 – 2019 Ganko – Wine Advocate

94 – 2017 Ganko – James Suckling

