



OLIVIER RIVIÈRE

Pozo Alto

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.

At the foot of the Sierra de Cantabria just outside the village of Leza, Pozo Alto has a sandy clay soil of decomposed limestone and sandstone. This site is planted mainly with Graciano with smaller amounts of Tempranillo and Garnacha – making it somewhat unique as Graciano fell out of favor after phylloxera.

ORIGIN

Spain

APPELLATION

Rioja

SOIL

Sandy clay limestone, sandstone

AGE OF VINES

90+

ELEVATION

600 meters

VARIETIES

Graciano, Tempranillo, Garnacha

FARMING

Practicing organic and biodynamic

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, destemmed, natural yeast fermentation in concrete vat

AGING

24 months in a 600L French oak demi-muid

ACCOLADES

97 – 2020 Pozo Alto – James Suckling

96 – 2019 Pozo Alto – Wine Advocate

97 – 2018 Pozo Alto – James Suckling

