

# RIOJA WINES

## Vinification and ageing



**Vinification.-** Once the grapes have been taken to the bodega, different processes are used to make the wine, depending on whether we are making white, rosé or red:

**White Wines:** The whole grape is passed to a draining tank. The stems are then removed and it is pressed to obtain the must which is transferred to the fermentation tanks.

**Rosé Wines:** The grape is destemmed and lightly crushed and sent to draining tanks. Here, it is left to macerate for a short period. It is then pressed and left for a day for the suspended particles to settle. It is then decanted and the almost crystalline must is transferred to the fermentation tanks.

**Red Wines:** There are two ways of making red wine in Rioja. The most widely used today involves the removal of the stalks in a destemmer before fermentation. This is more appropriate for wines which are to be aged in wood. In the traditional system, the whole grape bunches are fermented in large pools. This is known as “carbonic maceration”. The resulting wines are smoother, with good body, intense colour and ideally suited for drinking during their first year. In both cases the must is overpumped during fermentation, to ensure good colour extraction and maintain a constant temperature throughout the tank. Both systems aim to achieve uniform fermentation and to ensure the aromas from the must are not lost.

After fermentation, the wine is decanted and transferred to storage tanks for quality controls. At this point the Control Board carries out sensorial and laboratory tests to determine whether the wine deserves to be considered a Rioja.

**Ageing.-** Rioja wines are aged in 225-litre oak casks, with periodic rackings, followed by a further period of bottle ageing. There are over 270 ageing bodegas in Rioja which have a total of over 900,000 casks. The different Rioja wine categories are based on minimum ageing periods, which can vary between 1 and 3 years in casks and between 6 months and 6 years in the bottle, depending on whether the wine is to be a Crianza, a Reserva or a Gran Reserva.