

De Maison **Selections** Reviews from Steven Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

Issue 158, Sept./Oct. '11

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=76581

All reviews were written by Josh Raynolds and were published in issue 158 (Sept./Oct. '11) of Steven Tanzer's International Wine Cellar. Original reviews can be found online at <http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer> (subscription required). Tasting notes, wine and winery names, and technical information appear as published on <http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer> and may contain errors in spelling and content. The wines were tasted in the summer of 2011 and reflect vintages that were current at the time.

Best New Wines from Spain

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=76581

By Josh Raynolds

I was presented with more wines for this year's coverage of Spain than I've ever seen before. And that's at every price point. Most of the importers and retailers to whom I spoke while working on this year's piece admitted that sales have slowed at the upper end, which is in fact the case with wine across the board. But at the entry level especially, and up to about \$20, Spain is rolling right along. This probably has something to do with the buzz surrounding the two most recent vintages, 2009 and 2010, which have both been eagerly awaited following the mostly lackluster 2008s and 2007s, which were themselves preceded by the average 2006s.

Spain, like almost all of Europe, enjoyed--if that's the right word--a warm to hot growing season and harvest in 2009, conditions that in my view play particularly well into the hands of producers who specialize in easy-drinking, fruit-forward wines meant to be drunk on release or within a few years of bottling. Hot vintages typically mean low acidity, elevated alcohol and loose-knit structure, none of those factors being very conducive to ageworthy wine. Longevity is clearly a non-issue for the vast majority of wine lovers who are looking for maximum value, especially when it comes to red wines, and that's a game that Spain continues to pretty much own these days. There are plenty of excellent, under-\$15 red wines being made around the world today that would shame the wines that people happily paid \$25 or more for a decade ago, but no country is producing as many right now as Spain.

And on the white wine front, I'm hard-pressed to think of a more dramatic reversal of fortune than what has occurred in Spain. Only a decade or so ago most of the white Spanish wines found on retail shelves in the U.S. were next to undrinkable. There were the random white Riojas that were either inoffensive or eccentrically oxidative but that was about it. Wines from Rueda, Rias Baixas and the Basque country were basically non-existent here and for many winos the very term "Spanish white wine" was cause for alarm.

How things change. Right now, one could easily argue that Spain is the best source for vibrant, pure white wines of any country on earth. The best white wines from Spain's northern regions can stand toe-to-toe with those from anywhere, as I was reminded over the last few months. And the value delivered by many top-notch Spanish whites is really remarkable.

On a downbeat note, those 2007 and 2008 red wines I mentioned earlier are a distinctly mixed bag. Rotten weather and resulting vineyard maladies in both vintages conspired to produce wines that are often lean, mean and green. The best producers, whose wines tend to be the focus of the IWC, made the necessary sacrifices in the vineyards and cellar to make respectable and even excellent wines, but these are years that I would approach with a jaundiced eye. As with all difficult vintages there are a number of wines that are successful by any measure, and, as always, there's a better than good chance that they'll be ignored by the larger market, which will subscribe to the usual simple math of "2007 and 2008 = bad" without considering the individual wines. That can be a good thing for savvy wine lovers who prefer to drink wine rather than read vintage charts, because a number of really good '08s and '07s are already being discounted in the retail market. Keep your eyes and mind open and you can score some outstanding wines for far less than they're worth.

Notes on many more new releases from Spain will follow in Issue 159.

94 points

Granja Nuestra Senora de Remelluri

1999 Rioja Gran Reserva(\$90)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81463

(86% tempranillo, 12% garnacha and 2% graciano, rased in all new French oak): Bright ruby. Pungent red berries, cherry compote, licorice and musky underbrush on the nose, with sexy rose and oak spice qualities gaining strength with air. Broad and fleshy on entry, then more taut in the mid-palate, offering densely packed black raspberry and cherry-vanilla flavors. Fine-grained tannins add grip and focus to the impressively long, seamless finish. This is complex enough to drink now but has the depth and balance to repay lots of patience.

92 points

Conde de Hervias

2005 Mencos Rioja Reserva(\$32)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81442

(100% tempranillo): Bright violet; looks a lot younger than it is. Exotic aromas of cherry-vanilla, black raspberry, fruitcake and mocha. Lush and palate-coating, with

excellent depth and clarity to its sweet dark fruit flavors. Plush, seamless and ready to drink, with a long, sweet finish featuring energetic cherry and spice notes.

92 points

Do Ferreira

2010 Albarino Rias Baixas(\$28)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81406

Light, bright gold. Juicy, lively and intense, with highly fragrant, complex flavors of lime, lemongrass, fresh pineapple and minerals. Offers a suave combination of depth and vivacity, and noteworthy precision to its sweet, mineral-accented tropical and citrus fruit flavors. Impressively long on the finish, with the mineral and floral notes echoing.

92 points

Dominio de Bebei

2007 Lapena Ribeira Sacra Blanco(\$75)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81482

(100% godello): Bright yellow-gold. Pear skin, quince, jasmine, honey and vanilla on the fragrant nose. Taut, refreshingly bitter citrus pith and toasty lees flavors give way to sweeter melon and peach with air, with floral and spice notes adding complexity. A pungent, waxy note carries through the very long, smoky, taut finish. For all this wine's power I was most impressed by its energy and precision.

92 points

Domino de Bebei

2007 Lalama Ribeira Sacra(\$35)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81482

(85% mencia, 7% garnacha, 6% brancello and 2% mouraton): Bright ruby. Extremely fresh, mineral-accented red berry and floral aromas are complicated by sexy Asian spices and incense. Lively and precise in the mouth, with energetic raspberry and cherry flavors lifted by tangy acidity. Shows very good clarity and snap on the finish, leaving behind cherry and star anise notes.

92 points

Dominio de Bebei

2006 Mouraton Ribeira Sacra(\$55)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81482

(mouraton is regional dialect for alicante bouschet): Inky purple. Blackberry, cherry-cola, Indian spices and a licorice nuance on the nose. Bright, sweet and high-pitched,

with striking intensity to its dark berry and floral flavors complemented by coconut and minerals. Packs a serious punch but clocks in at a mere 12.5% alcohol. Finishes bright and very long, with lingering spiciness and dark fruit character.

92 points

Dominio de Bebei

2005 Brancellao Ribeira Sacra(\$75)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81482

Vivid red. Lively, pure aromas of red berries, minerals, potpourri and spicecake. Silky and spicy in the mouth, with impressive intensity and a graceful quality to the vibrant raspberry and floral pastille flavors. Finishes tangy, floral and long, leaving mineral and red fruit notes behind. This variety is originally from Portugal and is considered indigenous to Spain's northwest but is virtually extinct now.

92 points

Granja Nuestra Senora de Remelluri

2008 Rioja Blanco(\$80)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81463

(a crazy, barrel-fermented blend of garnacha blanca, roussanne, marsanne, viognier, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, petit graciano and moscatel): Green-tinged gold. Pungent, highly expressive aromas of melon, quinine, ginger and toasty lees, with a kiss of oak spice. Offers impressive density and richness but also energetic cut, displaying highly complex flavors of mango, candied citrus fruits and exotic spices. Finishes very long, spicy and smooth, with resonating ginger and orange notes.

92 points

Vina Sastre

2008 Ribera Del Duero Crianza(\$33)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81501

(aged in 100% new French oak): Bright violet color. Aromas of red berry preserves, Asian spices and woodsmoke, with a sexy floral quality in the background. Juicy, penetrating red and dark berry flavors show excellent clarity and sneaky depth. Smooth, open-knit and fruit-driven, finishing with very good lift and persistence. There will be no Pago de Santa Cruz or Pesus bottled from the 2008 vintage so all the estate's best fruit wound up here.

91 points

Adegas A Coroa

2010 Godello Valdeorras(\$23)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81405

Green-tinged gold. A complex, fragrant bouquet of poached pear, melon and orange zest, along with a bright mineral overtone. Succulent orchard fruit and honeydew flavors are brightened by zesty lemon peel and mineral qualities and pick up a hint of white pepper on the back. Lithe bit powerful, with excellent finishing cut.

91 points

Ameztoi

2010 Txakoli Getariako Txakolina(\$21)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81364

Pale straw. Intense, mineral-accented aromas of grapefruit, lime pith, ginger and quinine, along with a fresh floral quality. Taut and nervy, with bright citrus zest flavors complemented by intense mineral and floral notes and building spiciness. The citrus and mineral notes repeat on the racy, persistent finish.

91 points

Conde de Hervias

2008 Mencos Rioja Crianza(\$25)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81442

(100% tempranillo): Bright ruby-red. Vibrant raspberry and cherry aromas are complicated by blood orange and potpourri nuances. Fresh, incisive red fruit flavors show an exotic floral pastille quality and are nicely lifted by juicy acidity. An elegant, precise Rioja that finishes with excellent tangy cut and persistence.

91 points

Dominio de Bebei

2008 Lapola Ribeira Sacra Blanco(\$35)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81482

(80% godello, with dona blanca, torrontes and loureira): Bright yellow. Vibrant nose displays pure citrus fruit, quince and floral scents, with a spicy overtone. Deep and powerful but taut, with nervy acidity framing and enlivening the sappy citrus, quince and floral flavors. Finishes very long, tangy and dry, with fresh acidity and lingering citrus notes.

91 points

Bodegas Ostatu

2006 Rioja Reserva(\$35)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81462

(100% tempranillo): Opaque ruby. Spicy cherry and dark berry aromas, with incisive licorice and floral accents adding complexity. Spicy cherry and blackberry flavors show very good depth and energy, and a seamless texture. Finishes nervy and sweet, with lingering spice and floral notes. Very pretty wine, and delicious right now.

91 points

Granja Nuestra Senora de Remelluri

2007 Rioja (\$39)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81463

(90% tempranillo and 5% each of graciano and garnacha): Vivid purple. Exotic, oak-accented aromas of cherry-vanilla, cassis, licorice and dark chocolate. Deep and broad, with highly expressive dark fruit compote and candied licorice flavors framed by youthful tannins. Smooths out nicely on the finish, which clings with serious tenacity and smoky persistence. This will be even better in a couple of years.

91 points

Uriondo Ibarretxe Zorriketa

2010 Bizkaiko Txakolina(\$19)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81366

Green-tinged yellow. Citrus zest, beeswax and orchard fruit aromas are complemented by dusty minerals and quinine. Racy, sharply focused pear and quince flavors pick up a refreshing lime zest quality with air. Brisk and very pure, finishing with excellent lift and mineral-driven thrust.

91 points

Finca Vina Mein

2010 Ribeiro(\$23)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81481

(80% treixadura, 10% godello, 5% loureiro and the rest albarino, torrontes, albilla and caino): Pale yellow-gold. Fresh melon and fig aromas are complicated by notes of peach pit and licorice. Impressively complex and lithe, with penetrating citrus and pit fruit flavors braced by dusty minerals. An herbal note builds with air and carries through the long, dry, sharply focused finish.

91 points

Vina Sastre

2009 Ribera Del Duero Rosado(\$21)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81501

Bright purple. Highly aromatic bouquet displays cassis, boysenberry, anise and black cardamom, plus a hint of vanilla. Ripe, rich and supple, with a seamless texture and energetic flavors of dark berries, candied licorice and mocha. The long, seamless finish features an exotic floral quality and clings with impressive tenacity. This is drinking very well right now but really deserves some patience.

90 points

Amizade

2010 Mencia Monterrei(\$20)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81403

Bright purple. Spicy redcurrant and cherry aromas are complemented by notes of Asian spices and minerals. Lively and precise on the palate, offering vibrant, spice-accented dark fruit flavors and a hint of rooty sassafras. The minerally finish features very good clarity and spicy length.

90 points

Conde de Hervias

2010 Mencos Rioja Blanco(\$16)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81442

(100% viura): Bright straw. Vibrant pear and lemon zest scents are powerfully underscored by dusty minerals and spices. Deep, energetic orchard fruit flavors are complicated by candied citrus fruits and a subtle floral quality. Finishes clean, focused and very long.

90 points

Conde de Hervias

2009 Mencos Rioja(\$16)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81442

(100% tempranillo): Bright ruby. Aromatic, complex bouquet of cherry, tobacco and dried flowers; quite classic. Juicy, dry and penetrating, with a silky texture and pliant red fruit and floral flavors. Gains power and depth with air and finishes on notes of cherry and cassis. This is a baby right now but I find it pretty delicious.

90 points

Doniene Gorrondona

2010 Tinto Bizkaiko Txakolina(\$28)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81441

Bright purple. Wild, highly perfumed bouquet evokes dark berries, cherry and smoky

herbs, with floral and cracked pepper notes building in the glass. Juicy and precise, with very good clarity and spicy cut to its bitter cherry and blackberry flavors. Smokiness builds with air and carries through a long, spicy, precise finish. A lovely bottle of the 2005 that I drank recently reminded me a lot of a Loire Valley cabernet franc.

90 points

D. Ventura

2010 Vina Do Burato Ribeira Sacra(\$19)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81421

(all mencia, no oak): Vivid purple. Cherry and black raspberry scents are perked up by cracked pepper and floral topnotes. Fresh, sharply defined red and dark berry flavors show lovely purity and precision. Firm acids and fine-grained tannins add spine and lift the sappy, persistent finish. This is a baby.

90 points

Bodegas Gurrutxaga

2010 Txakoli Gurrutxaga Bizkaiko Txakolina(\$21)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81365

Greenish straw. Vibrant, racy aromas of lime pith, green apple, quince and agave. Chewy and plump in the mouth, with flavors of fresh peach, pear skin and fennel. Finishes dry, dusty and chalky, with firm acids and refreshing bitterness. This is not what most Americans expect of a Txakoli but it's a classic rendition of the wines from this subregion, whose wines tend to be fatter and richer.

90 points

Joan d'Anguera

2010 Garnatxa Montsant(\$17)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81502

Vivid ruby-red. High-pitched aromas of raspberry, cherry and fresh rose, along with a sexy note of Asian spices; smells a lot like a New World pinot noir. Bright and juicy, with pliant red berry flavors and a late kick of white pepper. Offers very attractive fruity character and shows no rough edges on the long, focused finish.

90 points

Luberri

2010 Orlegi Rioja(\$16)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Reynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81443

(100% tempranillo): Vivid red. Floral- and spice-accented aromas of red fruits, rose and minerals; smells like a Dujac wine. Seductively perfumed in the mouth, with juicy raspberry and floral pastille flavors dominating. Shows impressive clarity and spiciness on the long, sweet finish. This is extremely easy to drink.

90 points

Bodegas Ostatu

2008 Rioja Crianza(\$21)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81462

(95% tempranillo, the rest grenache, mazuelo and graciano): Bright violet color. Aromas of cassis, cherry, licorice and mocha. Dense, alluringly sweet and juicy, with excellent concentration to its dark berry and bitter chocolate flavors. Stays sweet through the finish, which features silky, fine-grained tannins.

90 points

Xarmant

2010 Txakoli(\$17)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81402

Pale gold. Lime zest, flowers and dusty minerals on the nose, plus a hint of fresh ginger. Dusty, very dry citrus fruit and strong mineral flavors are lifted by a spicy element. This very fresh, tightly wound wine finishes with excellent clarity and lingering minerality.

89 points

Amizade

2010 Godello Monterrei(\$18)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81403

Greenish yellow. Pungent, nuanced nose displays tangerine, lemon pith, anise and herbs. Dense and sappy, with good breadth and depth to the lively flavors of citrus and orchard fruits. Finishes tight, spicy and energetic. At only 12.5% alcohol this drinks very easily. This project is a joint venture between importer Andre Tamers and the Do Ferreira winery.

89(+?) points

Do Ferreira

2009 Albarino Cepas Vellas Rias Baixas(\$39)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81406

Bright gold. Very ripe, minerally aromas of apple, Meyer, lemon honey and crushed

stone. Silky in texture and distinctly ripe, with powerful flavors of pit and orchard fruits and an exotic note of mango. Showing the ripe vintage character today, with resonating spice notes on the long, clinging finish. In fact, this seems a bit disjointed but this old-vines release has a fine track record for harmonizing and improving with bottle age.

89 points

Bodegas Ostatu

2010 Rioja Blanco(\$14)

International Wine Cellar, #158, Sept./Oct. - Josh Raynolds

http://www.wineaccess.com/expert/tanzer/article.html?content_id=81462

(90% viura and 10% malvasia): Greenish straw. Lemon and pear on the fragrant nose. Juicy and plump in the middle, with good intensity to the flavors of lemon, orchard fruits and white pepper. Finishes with lingering pear and citrus notes and very good persistence.