



**CENTENARY**  
**1925 - 2025**

Qualified Designation  
of Origin Rioja

**RIOJA, ONE HUNDRED YEARS  
LIVING AND BREATHING WINE.**

# A CENTURY-OLD HISTORY

In the north of Spain, on both banks of the Ebro River and flanked by the majestic Sierra de Cantabria and Sierra de la Demanda, lies the historic wine region of Rioja.

With exceptional conditions for the cultivation of vines, this ancient land is the origin of a diverse array of wines that today are a worldwide reference point. The archaeological remains and traces of ancient wineries, dating back more than two thousand years, testify to Rioja's deep-rooted connection to the history of wine.

Over the centuries, several milestones have shaped the identity of this appellation, establishing it as Spain's quintessential wine region and a pioneer in many aspects. Rioja was the first region to introduce the concept of quality wines, a revolutionary transformation at the time. This innovation paved the way for other advancements, such as the creation of the Haro Oenological Station in 1892, the arrival of the railroad in 1864, and the adoption of techniques from French winemakers who, fleeing from the phylloxera plague, facilitated Rioja's evolution from "ordinary quality" wines to "fine wines", specialised in barrel ageing.

The growing reputation of a product so closely linked to its origin led to the need for Rioja winegrowers and winemakers to protect the brand, resulting in the recognition of Rioja in 1925 as Spain's first Designation of Origin. Its firm commitment to regulation continued to evolve until it received the recognition of "Calificada" ("Qualified") in 1991, the first region in Spain to obtain this title. This recognition solidified its position as one of the world's most prestigious appellations, offering the greatest guarantee to consumers with regards to the quality and authenticity of its wines.

Over the decades, Rioja has conquered the palates of multiple generations and today remains Spain's favourite wine, and the wine that enjoys the most worldwide fame and recognition. Rioja paved the way for Spanish wine as a whole in international markets; a journey that has led QDO wines to expand to all corners of the world. Today, Rioja is present in 136 countries, positioning itself as the most recognised Spanish appellation abroad.

At the same time, Rioja has continued to innovate with new production methods such as sparkling wines, the development of new white varieties, and the introduction of geographical indications that highlight the place of origin, such as the "Vino de

Pueblo" ("Village Wine") and "Viñedo Singular" ("Singular Vineyard") categories.

Rioja's commitment to wine tourism has also evolved and flourished. As a pioneer in this field, Rioja has broken its own records: becoming Spain's most visited wine region, home to the largest number of open wineries and an internationally recognised benchmark for wine tourism, with a steadily growing number of international visitors.

To add to these milestones, in 2025 the DOPCa Rioja proudly celebrates its first centenary: a century of excellence, demonstrating that in Rioja, wine is everything and is part of its DNA. This milestone is a time to celebrate, to show the world the greatness and diversity of this land, and to demonstrate the skills and expertise that a century of history attests to. With this centenary legacy, Rioja QDO looks forward to embracing the challenges and opportunities of the next century, continuing to set the standard for quality, tradition and innovation in the world of wine.

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# ABOUT THE DOCA RIOJA



■ Rioja was the **first wine region in Spain to be officially established** in 1925 and the first to receive "Qualified" status in 1991. To this day, only two wine regions in Spain have achieved this prestigious designation.

■ Rioja is a **powerful economic force** within its region, **comprising 13,000 winegrowers and nearly 600 wineries**. The industry generates approximately **1.5 billion euros annually**, which is reinvested into the appellation.

## A DIVERSE AND PRESTIGIOUS PORTFOLIO

- Rioja's portfolio is one of the most complete, including reds, whites, aged wines, single-varietals, rosés and sparkling wines. One of the great strengths of Rioja is its **enormous diversity**, catering to the most discerning consumers.
- Rioja is **the most popular wine amongst Spanish consumers**, ahead of all other appellations, with a 27% market share of DO wines in Spain, well ahead of its direct competitors. In value terms, Rioja accounts for 30.44% of the market share.
- For **red wines**, the flagship of Rioja, the QDO accounts for **more than 38% of the total volume**.
- Rioja is already **Spain's second-largest Designation of Origin for white wine production and sales**: in 2024 alone, the QDO sold 271 million litres, a figure that continues to rise.
- Rioja maintains its leading position in global wine markets. **Present in 136 countries, it is Spain's most exported and consumed still wine** appellation abroad: with more than 40% of Rioja sales occurring outside Spain.
- Rioja represents 36.8% of Spanish DO wine exports, and over 40% in value, serving as one of **the flagships of Spain outside of Spanish borders**.
- Combining the domestic and international markets, in 2024, 328,461,466 bottles of Rioja wine were sold worldwide, equivalent to 899,894 bottles per day or **37,500 bottles of Rioja every hour!**
- Despite a global decline in wine consumption, **Rioja has shown its resilience: in 2024, the QDO achieved positive sales figures**, with over 240 million litres sold.

## DISCOVERING RIOJA

- Rioja is a pioneer and leader in wine tourism, **attracting more visitors than any other Spanish wine region**. With nearly 900,000 visitors in 2023, it is recognised as a **clear international benchmark for wine tourism**.
- Rioja **helps to diversify Spain's tourism offer while also helping to balance seasonal demand fluctuations**. In addition, international visits already represent 33% of the total.
- The **economic impact of wine tourism** in Rioja was estimated at **almost 186 million euros** in 2023, a 20% increase from the previous year.
- Rioja is the appellation with **the highest number of wineries open to visitors: with 204 open**, out of the nearly 600 wineries that make up the DOCa. In addition, the wineries of Rioja **have offerings for everyone**, whether for a wine expert, a couple, a family, or a group of friends.
- Some of **the most iconic and prestigious wineries** are in Rioja, famous for their avant-garde architecture, historic cellars, centuries-old winemaking traditions and gastronomic excellence. Some of the world's most awarded wineries are located in Rioja, as well as some of the most sustainable.

# LEADING THE WAY

- **I Century.** The archaeological remains of cave wine presses and cellars dating back more than 2,000 years, highlight Rioja's long-standing winemaking tradition.
- **X Century.** Vineyards were already widespread across the region, as evidenced by numerous donations and sales of vineyards recorded in the cartularies of the monasteries of San Millán, Valvanera, Nájera and Albelda.
- **XIII Century.** The monk of the Monastery of San Millán, Gonzalo de Berceo, highlights the wines of "La Rioja" in his verses.
- **XVII Century.** Wine becomes the main source of wealth in the region.
- **1650.** The first dated document referencing the protection of the quality and guarantee of the origin of Rioja wines.
- **1790.** The Royal Board of Harvesters is established in Fuenmayor (La Rioja) to facilitate wine exports and achieve optimum wine quality.
- **1867.** The appearance of phylloxera in France, Portugal and Italy spurs demand. Over 20 years, this led to an increase in vineyards in La Rioja to 55,174 hectares, with a production of approximately 129 million litres.
- **1907.** Sixteen wineries founded the first Wine Exporters' Union of La Rioja in Haro.
- **1925. The Royal Decree of 6 June 1925 approved the creation of the Rioja Designation of Origin, the oldest in Spain.**
- **1928.** The first regulatory framework for Rioja is introduced, focusing on both quality and brand protection.
- **1970.** The second industrial revolution in Rioja sees the arrival of large winemaking groups leading to a new expansion of the Rioja production structure.
- **1974.** Certification of the ageing of wines: for the first time, a Council seal of guarantee is established to differentiate and certify wines aged in barrels.

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## RECOGNISED QUALITY AND PRESTIGE

The quality and diversity of Rioja wines are recognised year after year by critics, experts, and consumers, both locally and internationally. Rioja is the Spanish DO with the most mentions and its wines frequently rank in top positions in some of the most prestigious lists and competitions.

Throughout these 100 years, Rioja has maintained a leading presence in Spanish publications and guides, such as Guía Peñín, Guía Proensa and Guía de Vinos Gourmet. Internationally, it is prominently featured in annual publications, such as Decanter's Rioja monograph, Wine Spectator's list of the 100 best wines, Wine Enthusiast, and in exclusive reports prepared by critics such as James Suckling and Tim Atkin. Rioja wines also triumph in the main international competitions, such as the Decanter World Wine Awards (DWAA) and the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, among others.



# LEADING THE WAY

- **1980.** The Regulatory Council introduces vintage classifications and quality controls.
- **1985.** The Control Board implements a rigorous control system for the qualification of all wines.
- **1991.** In this year, the Rioja Denomination of Origin was granted "Qualified" status, the highest step in the pyramid, the first in Spain to obtain this status.
- **2000.** Community shielding of bottling at origin.
- **2007-2008.** The white revolution: the Control Board approves the incorporation of six new varieties into the regulations to improve the competitiveness of its white wines, giving them greater complexity.
- **2017.** Focus on the origin and terroir leads to the protection of a new product, 'Rioja Quality Sparkling Wines,' and creation of a geographical indication.
- **2023.** A balance recovery plan for the DOCa is introduced, aiming to optimise vineyard production control, enhance wine quality control, reduce the bureaucratic burden on growers and wineries, and maintain investment in promotion, with a focus on boosting sales.
- **2025.** Celebrating a century of excellence, Rioja's Centennial is both a reflection on past success and a launchpad for the next hundred years.

## WITH ITS OWN VOICE



“The next decision that has to be made in the world of wine will be made by Rioja, for sure”.

“We continue to lead the sector in Spain and strengthen our presence in the world, exporting not only wines, but also passion and know-how. It has been a hundred years living wine and I am confident that the best is yet to come”.

**Fernando Ezquerro**, President of the Rioja QDO Control Board



## REGULATORY COUNCIL OF THE QUALIFIED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN RIOJA

### HEADQUARTERS

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### ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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