

ARTICLE ARCHIVE

Recommended New Releases from Spain

Spain represents one of the wine world's most exciting areas, largely because it has done an outstanding job both in maintaining respect for its traditions of the past and while also looking to the future. Spanish winemakers are willing to attempt what old-timers and reactionaries would consider unorthodox, anti-establishment viticulture and winemaking techniques. The country is enjoying a qualitative revolution in cuisine, wine, and the arts. With respect to wine, many young men and women are (1) reclaiming indigenous varietals that have long been ignored or sold off to huge cooperatives to be co-mingled into anonymous blends, and (2) rediscovering areas that were once considered backwater wine regions of little interest.

Obviously there are plenty of innocuous, mediocre wines from Spain. Hundreds of wines tasted did not make it into this report because (1) they were excessively woody, (2) diluted, or (3) badly made. Yet every year, the number of high quality Spanish wines increases, and my tastings this year were the most exciting in 26 years. Moreover, it is irrefutable that Spain, along with southern Italy, and to a lesser extent southern France, is leading the world in terms of sensational wine bargains (under \$20) that possess considerable character and soul.

As for vintages, the early-released **2004s** reveal exceptional promise and suggest a very strong vintage for most of Spain. **2003**, a year of extreme heat and drought, is inconsistent, with as many successes as failures. Overall, **2002** is considered mediocre, but the finest producers have excelled, and my tastings confirmed many excellent wines, but virtually all of them are on a fast evolutionary track. If you can still find them, **2001** is a mythical vintage in many Spanish viticultural areas. Even the late-released wines exhibit extraordinary quality.

—Robert Parker

REGIONAL PROFILE



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2001 BODEGAS FRIEDRICH SCHATZ COUPAGE

RATING: 89 POINTS

DRINK: 2005–2009

The seductive 2001 Coupage is a blend of 52% Trollinger, and equal parts Syrah, Merlot, Tempranillo, and Cabernet Sauvignon. A soft, round, dark ruby/purple-tinged offering, it reveals a sweet berry-scented perfume, a creamy texture, and a sexy personality. Consume it over the next 3–4 years.

—ROBERT PARKER (JUN 2005)

2001 BODEGAS FRIEDRICH SCHATZ PETIT VERDOT

RATING: 88 POINTS

DRINK: 2005-2017

Produced by an innovative German winemaker who settled in Spain near the historic village of Ronda, with its ancient medieval bridge that traverses a steep ravine, the 2001 Petit Verdot's dense ruby/purple color is followed by a Bordeaux-like austerity displaying sweet black currant, cedar, licorice, and spice box characteristics. This impressive Petit Verdot should age nicely for 10-12 years.

—ROBERT PARKER (JUN 2005)