



The Grapes of Navarra

Navarra has grown grapes since the time of the ancient Romans, and its location between Rioja and Bordeaux has encouraged growers here to combine the best of both worlds in their quest for quality. The region is famous for growing the classic grapes of Northern Spain—tempranillo and garnacha (grenache)—each having their native roots in Spain. Both are full of flavor and are unabashedly proud of the soil and sun that have created them.

Navarra has considerable plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc however, tempranillo and garnacha currently dominate.

95% of the wine produced in Navarra is red and rosé. White wines make up the other 5%. The Navarra Denominacion de Origen (D.O) allows 14 grape varieties:

Garnacha is the grape that steered Navarra through the 20th century. It was used to make the region's most internationally popular wine – rosado (rosé), along with very ripe, full-bodied red wines. Today, garnacha is no longer the most widely planted grape in Navarra. It represents 25% of the plantings in the region, and much of it is still used to make its wildly popular, fresh and fruity rosado, but in its smaller quantities it has also achieved new status as a component of hand crafted, high quality red wines. Wines made from grenache tend to be very lush and fruity, with highly aromatic notes of blackberry and currants. There are varietal bottlings, as well as blends with tempranillo, cabernet sauvignon and/or merlot.

Tempranillo is the classic red grape of Spain, and the most widely planted varietal in Navarra today. It makes up almost 38% of grape plantings in the region. It produces deep colored, wonderfully complex wines with aromas and flavors of cherry, dried leather and earth.

Graciano plays a minor role in the region, comprising 1% of all plantings here. It is used for varietal as well as blended wines. A deep colored red grape with good tannin and acidity, graciano usually graces its wines with aromas of perfume.

Mazuelo plays a minor role in the region with 1% of all plantings. It is difficult to grow here, as it is highly susceptible to mildew. Mazuelo is also called carinena in Spain, which is the same as France's carignan. This is a red grape variety high in acidity, tannin, and color.

Cabernet Sauvignon makes up about 15% of all grape plantings in Navarra. Traditional varieties such as garnacha and tempranillo are often blended with cabernet sauvignon to create some of the most exciting wines of the region.

Merlot comprises approximately 14% of all grape plantings in Navarra, and is used often to create blends with the more traditional varieties—garnacha and tempranillo.

Navarra also has small plantings of **Pinot Noir** and **Shiraz**, the former growing well in the cooler or elevated regions of Navarra and the latter creating lush wines throughout the region.

Garnacha Blanca is the white-skinned version of the garnacha noir grape. It produces easy-drinking, lower-acidity, higher-alcohol wines with citrus and herbal aromas and flavors. Also one of the great white grapes of the Rhone Valley in France, garnacha Blanca is both bottled varietally or used in blends.

Malvasia comes in various mutations and can be used to produce deep and light colored white wines depending on the subvariety used. The grape generally makes full-bodied wines which age gracefully and give lots of lavish perfume aromas.

Moscatel (small berry Muscat) is Spanish for Muscat and in Navarra it is used to produce naturally sweet, grapey wines, some of which are fortified with spirit and then aged for several years before release.

Viura is the same grape as Rioja's Macabeo. It is northern Spain's most widely planted white grape variety (2% of plantings), able to tolerate hot, dry conditions. Navarra bottles viura as a varietal, and produces blends. The grape gives soft, floral aromas and flavors—acidity is low unless the grapes are picked early.

Chardonnay (3%) is gaining ground in Navarra with bottlings of both rich, full-bodied oaked styles and fruitier, floral un-oaked wines. It is a main white grape variety with very good results in cooler climates. Navarra is considered the best producer of dry Chardonnay wines in Spain. There are also interesting sweet, late-harvest wines being made here.

Sauvignon Blanc is often blended with Chardonnay blends being a favorite. The styles vary.

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