


The World's Best Value Rioja

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Rioja is unarguably Spain's most famous wine region, but on a worldwide scale it is also one of the best regions for value you can imagine.

Known for its superb winemaking, exceptional wines and deep history, it has long been a favorite amongst critics. But unlike Burgundy, Bordeaux or Napa, this top wine region doesn't cost the earth. In fact, our most expensive Rioja sits at an average price of just \$286.

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So we knew there would be value to be found in this historic Spanish region, and we went through the database to find the best value Rioja out there. Using both average price and our aggregated critics' scores, we've cherry-picked the below five from our Best Value list, which can be found at the bottom of our Rioja region page. For the purposes of this article, we are only looking at the reds but that is not to say there aren't some great white Rioja bargains out there as well.

These berry-bright reds produced mainly from Tempranillo and Garnacha generally spend time in oak, favoring American for its sweet coconut notes, but French timber is also used, meaning that – stylistically – Rioja quite often walks that tightrope between tradition and modernity.

The resulting wines? Well first, they are from well-known and respected wineries; but, most importantly, they're complex, spicy little numbers evocative of dried fruits and other forest berry flavors. Perfect accompaniments to your jamón, manchego and other Spanish goodies.

1. Bodegas Muga Seleccion Especial Reserva, Rioja DOCa Our first stop is Bodega Muga, a respected winery that has become well known for a more traditional style of Rioja. One of the few producers in Spain to have their own cooperage from which they make the casks, oak is incredibly important to their winemaking process. Their Seleccion Especial Reserva, which has garnered rapturous reviews across the board, is aged for more than two years in oak and then spends a year down in the cellar. Often described as dark and plummy, this wine more than delivers. At an average price of \$34 and an aggregated score of 93 points, it's no wonder this wine tops our list.

2. Sierra Cantabria Reserva Unica, Rioja DOCa For our second wine, we look to Sierra Cantabria, formerly known as Bodegas Eguren, whose winemaker Marcus Eguren is widely recognised as one of Spain's most talented winemakers. Sierra Cantabria focuses primarily on Tempranillo, with all grapes carefully hand picked. Very traditional methods are often used – for certain wines, the grapes are even trodden underfoot for softer extraction. And the Reserva Única is no exception to this meticulous style of winemaking, having spent time in both American and French oak. In short, this is a particularly refined, elegant expression of Rioja that consistently impresses the critics. With an aggregated score of 91 points and an average price of \$28, this jammy little number won't disappoint.

3. La Rioja Alta Vina Arana Reserva, Rioja DOCa Next, we travel to another of Rioja's most respected estates, which began in 1890 when five Riojan and Basque families decided to form the Sociedad Vinícola de La Rioja Alta. United by a desire to produce top-quality, ageworthy reds, La Rioja Alta has gone on to create a small range of wines adored by restaurants and critics alike. Their Viña Arana is a particular favorite. Predominantly made from Tempranillo, this wine – in true Rioja fashion – has spent considerable time in American oak lending it those classic sweet notes so typical of the region. With an average critic score of 90 points and an average price of \$22, this wine is undeniably great value for your dime.

=4. CVNE Viña Real Reserva, Rioja DOCa It's a dead heat for fourth spot, with two big names sharing the honors. CVNE's Viña Real has been in existence since the 1920s and has become well respected for making crianza wines in oak barrels. Taking inspiration from both traditional and modern techniques, Viña Real is well known for bucking the trend, as illustrated by its use of sloped-shouldered bottles – typical of Burgundy – for some of its range. The Viña Real Reserva is one of their most popular wines. Produced from hand-picked grapes, this wine is then matured in both French and American oak casks, giving it an elegant, complex profile. Very well received, this wine has an average critic score of 90 points and at an average price of \$25, you just can't go wrong.

=4. Artadi Vinas de Gain, Rioja DOCa, Spain The other big name in fourth place is Artadi. Initially a co-operative, the winery is now under the ownership of Juan Carlos López de Lacalle, a strong advocate of sustainable viticulture. The philosophy around Artadi is that winemaking should be as close to nature as possible, so both organic and biodynamic practices are used. Carlos López de Lacalle is also a strong believer in using grapes native to their region, hence his passion for traditional varieties like Tempranillo, Garnacha and Viura. His Vinas de Gain is made from Tempranillo hand-picked from a select number of 20- to 30-year-old vineyard sites. With a typical red fruit flavor profile, this award-winning wine is ready to drink now but will easily hold on for a number of years. Vibrantly crafted, the Vinas de Gain has an aggregated critic score of 90 points – and at \$25 that's not to be sniffed at.

You can find the best-value wines from the region or grape of your choice by simply navigating to the grape or region page you want and then clicking on the Best value tag at the bottom of the page.