



PRESS RELEASE

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The D.O.Ca. Rioja admits new white grape varieties to improve the competitiveness of its white wines

- *Recovery of the roots of Rioja's grape growing heritage and a search for greater complexity in its white wines while maintaining its identity.*

Following the guidelines of its Strategic Plan requiring that Rioja's products adapt to current market demands and provide greater competitiveness for its wines—in this case its white wines, the Control Board of the Rioja Designation of Origin unanimously approved regulations that authorise the use of new white grape varieties in its wines. These include three non-native varieties—Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Verdejo—as well as three native ones—Maturana Blanca, Tempranillo Blanco and Turruntés. Another three native minority grape varieties, these red, were also approved: Maturana Tinta, Maturano (also known as Maturana Parda) and Monastel. In the latter case, the aim is to regain Rioja's grape-growing heritage, provide grape production with greater diversity and maintain Rioja's identity, setting it apart from other regions. The president of the Control Board, Víctor Pascual Artacho, considers that this decision is a significant advance in the future development of the D.O.Ca. Rioja, underscoring that it received the support of all the wine sector's organisations.

The new grape varieties join the seven grape varieties which are currently allowed—four red (Tempranillo, Garnacha, Graciano and Mazuelo) and three white (Viura, Garnacha Blanca and Malvasía). This is the first time that new grape varieties have been admitted since the creation of the Rioja Designation of Origin in 1925. The decision is the result of intensive research and lengthy discussions by the Control Board's Technical Control Committee. It was partly based on the favourable report of a research project on minority grape varieties in Rioja and the need for their revitalisation. In fact, at the last plenary session, Juan Carlos Sancha, one of the researchers in this project and a member of the Control Board Plenary, was heartily congratulated for his work. The decision also answers to the need identified by the Strategic Plan for Rioja 2005-2020 of adapting the characteristics of white Rioja wines to current consumer trends, a turn of events that necessarily required new grape varieties.

The new varieties authorised by the Control Board may only be planted to replace other vines that have been grubbed up, to ensure that the current total planted surface within the Region is not increased unduly. The newly-admitted native red and white grape varieties may be used to make single-varietal wines and no percentage limits are set. However, non-native grape varieties (Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Verdejo) may not predominate in the final product, and labels will always have to show first the traditional Rioja white grape variety (Viura, Garnacha Blanca or Malvasía de Rioja), or a minority Rioja grape (Maturana Blanca, Tempranillo Blanco or Turruntés).

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COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

In compliance with legal requirements regarding the official registration of planted grape varieties, the Control Board has requested that the Regional Governments of La Rioja, the Basque Country and Navarre include the new grape varieties in their lists of authorised grapes. The Control Board will also soon submit the proposed changes to its regulations to the Ministry of Agriculture for approval, so that the new grape varieties can be planted as soon as possible.