

Harpers approached several specialist importers and retailers, asking what is working for them with Spain?

# TRADING SPAIN



**RUPERT LOVIE**  
HEAD OF MARKETING, ELLIS WINES

**Which wines and regions are doing most to help increase perception of Spain and its diversity?**

The good thing about Spain – it's a bit of a cliché – is you can go up from entry price, fighting house wines, and it provides great wines and great value all the way through. In addition, it is providing us with some really interesting wines in the biodynamic and organic sphere.

The trend for organic and biodynamic is something we are getting a lot more demand for and we are finding Spain can provide that, with the country having several regions with good conditions to produce such wines.

I think what maybe people also overlook is the quality and diversity of the packaging coming out of Spain. In terms of design it's a real winner – they are really nailing that. Like the Albariño we have here (see picture) – it's a real fun label. Certainly from an independent and a hand sell in the on-trade viewpoint, Spain is really good and the packaging on the retail shelves is an important factor.

**THEO SLOOT**

TASTINGS AND FINE WINE, THE OXFORD WINE COMPANY

**What is most engaging for your customers beyond the obvious big hitting names?**

The thing about Spain is that there is a lot of change and notably in areas such as Rioja, which has been a traditional area for a very long time. We are losing the oxidation and rustic style and moving into much more modern, fruit-lifted, aromatic styles.

Galicia is still producing wonderful wines, absolutely fantastic, but more subtle than wines we have tried before. Ribera del Duero is overpriced as always, but there is a market for it – it depends what you like. Toro produces nice, warm-region wines at an OK price that are special.

Whites are the driver of people moving beyond the old-style Rioja and this is to do with modern winemaking methods. Also, they are using more interesting grape varieties now as well. Whites are really coming into being – nicely aromatic – which is great to see.



**NICK TELFER**

SALES, BIANCA TRADING

**What from Spain is working for you?**

Business is fine. In terms of perception of Spanish wine I suspect we are probably a little bit behind the curve in [provincial UK]. Customers will have heard of Albariño, which sells very well, while Godello is still seen as slightly too obscure for that market – but that's a massive generalisation. I think as soon as you offer people something slightly different that has crisp, good acidity from north west Spain, which is also good value, then customers will buy it. The "Celtic relationship" between the two areas also helps. You know how mature the British market is and, if you can find any little link at all between customer and product, then you are in.



"Whites are the driver of people moving beyond the old-style Rioja and this is to do with modern winemaking methods"

Theo Sloom

**MIKE TAYLOR**

ACCOUNT MANAGER – NORTH, MORENO WINES

**What less well-trodden styles are delivering real commercial traction?**

Beyond the traditional Rioja and Ribera del Duero regions we are finding that Txakoli is starting to gain a little bit of traction in independents and also in the Spanish on-trade in London, on the back of lower-alcohol such as Vinho Verde.

People are also delving into the single variety indigenous wines and [varieties such as] Godello are also proving popular.

Albariño is the driver of whites thanks to its quality – I've rarely tasted a bad Albariño – and I am tipping it for a real boom, with consumers tired of Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio buying into it. Verdejo is another great one, with all of these helping to change the perception of Spanish wines.

With regards to the reds, Rioja still rules the roost but there are other wines playing into the trend for lower alcohol. Wines such as this paint a slightly different picture of Spain, away from the old fashioned, but the broad perception is still that it is all about big reds.



**ADRIÁN CORTÉS**

SALES DIRECTOR, EL TORO WINES

**What inspired you to set up El Toro Wines and why now?**

We don't think Spanish wine is properly represented in the UK, with Rioja wines taking over the market with their focus on producing big volumes. Our idea was to bring quality wines to the country from wineries that produce smaller volumes, but with very good quality. It's a hard path as we need to convince people it's worth spending a bit more to get great quality and to enjoy the real flavours of Spain, such as Ribera del Duero and Toro. Wines from those areas are much better in general, although we do have wonderful wines from Rioja as well.

