

Cortijo Blanco



There are volumes written on the use of oak and the winemaking practices of the famous DOCa Rioja, but to the team making Cortijo it all boils down to a simple proverb: to make better wine, you need to harvest better grapes. Rather than build a chateau or a beautiful tasting room, the fourth-generation winemakers at Cortijo invest in cultivating the most meaningful ingredient (perfect, healthy grapes) and preserving its freshness and natural character after harvest by avoiding the use of oak. Cortijo Blanco is made from grapes grown in the best part of the valley, Rioja Alta. Aged only in stainless steel, Cortijo offers an unadulterated look at the vibrance and minerality of Viura and is a great opportunity to taste a “no makeup” version of the grape that forms the backbone of all the most revered whites of the region.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: This is a pure, bright expression of Viura from one of the most authentic, humble local wineries in Rioja Alta. The emphasis is entirely on showing the mineral stone fruit flavors that define Viura, and rejecting the traditional oaky, oxidative elements that hide the gorgeous Rioja terroir.

RATING HISTORY: 2015 88VM; 2013 89IWC; 2011 89RP

GRAPE: 100% Viura. Vines planted in 1973. Tended in clay and limestone soil at 630 m (2,067ft) elevation

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: This white wine's clean character is a perfect pairing for grilled chicken or steak salads, thin-crust brick oven pizza (especially Margherita with fresh basil), and most seafood dishes. This wine's easy drinking character is an excellent match for most casual foods, but it's also a perfect sipper by itself, especially in summer.



VINIFICATION AND AGING: After picking during the cool morning hours, the grapes are transported to the winery in small boxes, and then de-stemmed and crushed. The skins rest with the unfermented juice for three days. Fermentation takes place in stainless steel tanks. The slow fermentation process (30 days at 54F) allows Cortijo Blanco to retain a high degree of richness and flavor. When vinifying Viura, the challenge is to help the grape overcome neutral aromas and flavors. Skin contact and long, slow fermentation are both strong solutions. After fermentation, the wine ages in stainless steel tank for 2 months on the lees. To retain freshness, the wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation. After a light filtration, the wine is bottled.

PRODUCTION: 10,000 cases

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: The estate-owned vineyards are located in the towns of Najera, within the Rioja Alta subzone of DOCa Rioja, at approximately 630 meters (2,067t.) elevation. The soils are clay and limestone. The average temperature from April-October is 61.5F with 18.3 inches of yearly rainfall. The moderately warm days and cool nights of this Continental Atlantic climate forces the grapes to ripen slowly, resulting in wines that show brighter aromas and more fruit flavors.

TASTING NOTES Pale gold. Sharply focused lemon zest, pear and floral scents carry subtle honey and herb overtones. Dry and fleshy in the mouth, offering bitter citrus pith and fresh fig flavors that put on weight with air. Nicely concentrated yet nervy, finishing with good energy and warm, fruity persistence.-- Josh Reynolds

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 12.5%

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