



**ALLIANCE WINE**



**Rioja - Confessions of an MW**  
by Giles Cooke

It's an oft used phrase that if you cut someone from Alliance in half, they would ooze smoked paprika and chorizo oil, such is our obsession with Spain. We're well known for championing the rising stars, the passionate artisans, the terroirists, the drivers of the new Spain. But every journey has a beginning, and like many Spanish obsessives, ours began in Rioja.

## A love affair

Longer ago than I care to recall, my love affair with Spain started when I was lucky enough to win a scholarship to travel to Spain, courtesy of Freixenet. I was met off the flight into Bilbao by José Madrazo, a legendary figure in the history of the iconic Rioja producers Cune & Contino. I vividly remember the smell of rich, leathery tobacco as I took my first steps into the real Spain of the 1990s and I slowly but surely fell in love with the country and its wines. That love for the country, sparked by the warmth and generous hospitality of my hosts, was to become a defining part of a large part of my career in wine.

At the time, there were few good Spanish restaurants in the UK and so, in contrast to Italy and France, Spain had a few very specialist champions of their wines. There was no one like Alliance, and so the opportunity arose to build a Spanish presence that would help create the DNA of the business over the following decades.

One of our longest standing producers, [Luis Cañas](#), was also going through of a bit of an epiphany and through a fortuitous combination of serendipity and clever portfolio.



Giles Cooke MW

Those early days, and to be honest, all the years following pre COVID, were characterised by frequent visits to Cañas where the feeling of family, of generosity, spirit and commitment led to an enduring love for all that they do.

I think that we were all struck, not just by the beauty of the region and its wines but how food was inextricably sown in to the patchwork of their lives. Whether it was the jamon iberico de bellota (that we became known for carving at all of our tastings long before it became de-rigueur) or the melting milk fed lamb of restaurants like Terete, the vast Txuleton of Sagartoki in Vitoria or the simple delights of the menestra de verdura served at Casa Cañas, the wines and foods of Rioja slowly became part of us, quite literally.

## Rioja from a different angle

Many years have passed, and my travels have taken me to Australia, where my love for the Spanish variety Garnacha has stood me in good stead. In that time, Rioja has changed too. Families like the Cañas' pioneered the way forward by moving from fruit growers to winemakers and have helped inspire a new generation to seek out the best fruit, identify the best plots within the iconic villages and eschew the domination of both big brands and excessive oak that has, at times, limited the potential of this great region.

At [deAlto](#), we have taken some of what I have learned in Australia, placing Garnacha front and centre, letting the vineyard and fruit speak fluently, but also respecting the history of Rioja while helping to frame its future.



Abel Mendoza Vineyards, Rioja , Spain

Focusing on the real strength of Rioja Oriental, Garnacha, we work with the best fruit, picked while energetic and vivid and treated in the winery with minimal intervention, and importantly, larger and less domineering oak presence. It's a way forward for us, but just another small piece of the remarkably detailed, complex, delicious and beautiful tapestry that is Rioja.

**Alliance Wine sells over 1.8 million litres of Rioja per year. This trend was down in 2020 but 2021 so far has seen a 33% increase on sales on last year.**



Los Almendros, La Planta Magica



## Our Rioja Selection

### deAlto Rioja y Más

#### deAlto

4285 La Planta Magica, Garnacha Viñas Viejas 2019 6x75cl

4206 El Primero Rioja 2019 6x75cl

#### Tradicional

2672 Rioja 19/20 12x75cl

7606 Crianza 2017 12x75cl

3021 Reserva 14/15 6x75cl

#### Gatito Loco

3499 Blanco, Organic 2020 6x75cl

3497 Tinto, Organic 2020 6x75cl

### Bodegas Amaren, Rioja Alavesa

2897 Blanco 2018 6x75cl

1563 Crianza 2017 6x75cl

3001 Ángeles de Amaren 2015 6x75cl

3003 Tempranillo Reserva 2010 6x75cl

### Bodegas Luis Cañas, Rioja Alavesa

7326 Blanco 2020 12x75cl

4097 Blanco Viñas Viejas 19/20 6x75cl

7320 Crianza 2017 12x75cl

1266 Crianza (150cl.) 2017 6x150cl

7340 Reserva 14/15 12x75cl

7349 Reserva (50cl.) 2014 12x50cl

7353 Reserva (150cl.) 2014 6x150cl

2895 Reserva Selección de la Familia 2016 6x75cl

3091 Gran Reserva 2014 6x75cl

### Bodegas Manzanos

#### Finca Manzanos

7413 Blanco 2020 12x75cl

3192 Tempranillo Blanco 2020 12x75cl

2029 Blanco Fermentado en Barrica 19/20 12x75cl

7515 Rosado 2020 12x75cl

2001 Tempranillo 19/20 12x75cl

7481 Joven 19/20 12x75cl

2809 Garnacha 2019 12x75cl

2824 Graciano 2020 12x75cl

7483 Crianza 2017 12x75cl

7329 Crianza (37.5cl.) 16/18 24x37.5cl

2152 Crianza (150cl.) 2016 6x150cl

7479 Reserva 2015 12x75cl

2634 Gran Reserva 2001 12x75cl

#### Voché

1726 Blanco Fermentado en Barrica N/V 6x75cl

1372 Crianza 2017 6x75cl

2627 Graciano 2017 6x75cl

#### Abel Mendoza

1711 Tempranillo Blanco 18/19 6x75cl

1708 Malvasia 19/20 6x75cl

1707 Viura 19/20 6x75cl

1709 Garnacha Blanco 2020 6x75cl

2088 Blanco 5 Varietals 2018 6x75cl

2088 Blanco 5 Varietals 2019 6x75cl

1713 Jarrarte 2020 12x75cl

1756 Jarrarte Oak Aged 2017 6x75cl

1716 Selección Personal 2017 6x75cl

1719 Tempranillo Grano a Grano 17/18 6x75cl

1721 Graciano Grano a Grano 2016 6x75cl

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Old vine Garnacha, La Planta Magica

