

URBINA RIOJAS

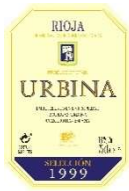
montes obarenes, oja-tiron valley, cuzcurrita del rio tiron

5 generations of Urbinas have managed this property since the 1870s. Urbina make 'classically styled' Rioja (Gran Reservas and the like with regular racking and so forth) from their own vines and are a village-specific producer, with their best wines all from the cold limestone sand soils of Cuzcurrita del Rio Tiron, west of Haro in the Ojo-Tiron Valley under Montes Obarenes.



Urbina have 75 hectares across 34 plots in Cuzcurrita (there are also some holdings in Uruñuela but these don't go into the top wines). They make 300K bottles, cropping around 4.5 t/ha and export 80%. A new bodega with lots of sparkling inox was installed in 1986, replacing a relatively rustic installation. A starter of own vineyard yeast is put in motion at the commencement of the harvest and is then used to inoculate for controlled natural fermentation start-ups. Fermentation is in stainless, followed by ageing in mixed French/US oak with occasional racking in barriques aged from new to 7 years. The wines are Tempranillo with some Mazuelo and Graciano.

Urbina wines have an incredibly distinct style:



They are gamey, elegant, spare, red berry wines of great longevity. All are free-flowing and delicate, with fine, uncluttered lines. The fruit is in a juniper and red current spectrum laced with red thyme and a trace of sweet spice. Nestled in the acid line is an old, well-used teapot, smoked tin or the tang of a rainwater tank. Balsam smells of tobacco, herb, tea leaf and autumn forest (twigs, briars, wet earth and dried leaves) are scattered through developed red fruits which retain great freshness and a plushness.

Our selection is the best wines from Urbina's cellar: this is an incredible opportunity to buy stylish old wines at great prices (all of which have cellar futures ahead of them).

URBINA Seleccion 'LBC' 1999

1999 (like 1994 and 2018) had big spring frosts after the April 16 new moon. Fermented at 28 degrees, macerated 28 days, this 'LBC' (late-bottled Crianza) spent 6 years resting in tank after a year maturing in French oak. Cray-zeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Really balsamic, it has the leaf scatter smells of a forest walk, sweet black tea, plum flowers, red thyme and a holly branch. Earthen and spiced, red currant and juniper berry fruit sits in a gentle, sparse, very elegant palate. Silky, with good length, it is very clean for wine with such ageing.

URBINA Reserva Especial and Gran Reserva Especial



Urbina are a fascinating mix of Rioja via location and terroir specifics and Rioja via winemaking (the Reserva etcetera fetish for wood and racking). The Reserva is aged as much as 3 years in mixed FR/US casks, and Gran Reserva for more than 3. The wines are often racked to stainless during this ageing, for checking, stabilising, re-blending, confirmation ... they are also aged for a couple of years in stainless after ageing. All are naturally stabilised without fining or filtration.

URBINA RE (Reserva Especial) 2006

2006 has a heightened red tea note, and really great fruit depth, as you would expect from this opulent vintage. That said, it's classic Urbina house style: all that red note, vegetal, dry mulch and cedar forest cold air perfume. There's tobacco with clove woodiness, licorice and orris root, and earthiness both 'shroomy and mineral. It's delicious, savoury and rounded with lovely tea tannin stripes.

URBINA RE (Reserva Especial) 2005

Urbina's trademark dry undergrowth here takes on the faded smell of a woodpile, mulberries in air, gentle balsam and a whisper of earthy spice on the nose. The palate is lovely: deep and soft, animated, layered, cedary and spiced, with tannins redolent of sweet grape seeds and the dry springy floor of a birch forest.

URBINA RE (Reserva Especial) 2004

Urbina's autumnals run through lovely airy red fruits, with strawberry seed richness in a beef-stock savoury register. There is a good volume of fruit on entry, declining to a deep, softly earthen middle with a metal tang run to the wood-spice finish.

URBINA 2001 RE (Reserva Especial)

Sweet dried birch bark, a hint of anise, red apple florals, briar, cob pipe, and nicely coated leather. A great juice and release rolling affect (considering the non-frutale style). Mid-weight, and certainly not plush, it has a lovely open volume, and an excellent wander to its wood-spice/acid/forestale end.

URBINA GRE (Gran Reserva Especial) 1996

Plum, carob, briar and earth, all mature with figs and mixed dried fruit. Complex, with orange peel, cardamom and angelica, birch branch, amarone earth, nice space and nice spice. This is beautifully organised and mobile, with sabroso interplay and a lovely dry leaf vegetal after-perfume.

URBINA GRE (Gran Reserva Especial) 1995

More earthen, loaded with adobe, baked quince, a mineral glint and sweet baking spice in turned earth. In the mouth everything starts from the earth and sweet baking spice, dried flowers rise beautifully through red wood and achieve a loganberry fruit sparkle among all the developed glory.

URBINA GRE (Gran Reserva Especial) 1994

Red orchard florals, deeply leathery and vegetal sweet, a wine of extreme length and depth. Red-currant fruit gains an electric jolt of rainwater tank tang, with dry leaf compost scattered around in red dirt.

