

A Tour Through The Vineyards Of Navarra

Savoring the Great Wines & Gastronomy of Spain - Part Two



Fall colors at Bodegas Pago de Larrainzar, in Ayegui, south of Pamplona

The Taste of Excellence in the Reyno de Navarra

Exploring the Wines of Navarra along the Way of St. James

Recently, we had the pleasure of visiting three of the Kingdom of Navarra's most lauded wineries, two honored with the prestigious D.O. de Pago classification.

What is a D.O. de Pago (Denominación de Origen)?

It's the very top classification a winery estate in Spain can achieve, similar to France's Gran Cru Classé. These Pago wineries can only produce wines from grapes grown and aged on their own estate, and the estate must have an international reputation for producing wines of the very highest quality.

There are only ten D.O. de Pagos in the entire country, three of which can be found in the Kingdom of Navarra.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER:

Bodegas Señorío de Arínzano
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 Bodegas Señorío de Otazu
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The Premium Wines of Navarra

Like the Ribera del Duero, Navarre is home to a wealth of premium wineries, including three of Spain's ten official D.O. de Pagos; Señorío de Otazu, Prado de Irache and Señorío de Arínzano.

Although the best known wines of Navarra are the light, fruity rosados, the region also produces a selection of esteemed chardonnays and well regarded tintos from tempranillo, merlot, garnacha tinta and cabernet sauvignon grapes.

Iberian Traveler



BODEGAS DE NAVARRA ON THE PILGRIM'S ROUTE OF ST. JAMES

Bodegas Señorío de Arínzano

Iberian Traveler made our first stop in the Tierra de Estella sub zone at the stunning and vast estate of **Señorío de Arínzano** in the tiny village of Aberín on the route of the Camino de Santiago, the Pilgrimage's Route of St. James. After passing through a dense poplar forest and crossing a bridge over the River Ega, we finally arrived at the 16th century defensive tower now used as the winery's shop. We were given our V.I.P. tour by Sr. Federico de Salas, the winery's Communications Director.

This noble estate, spanning some 1,700 acres, with its medieval tower, 18th century palatial residence and Neoclassical chapel, belongs to the Chivite family of winemakers, Spain's oldest wine producing family.

The award winning labels produced here are the outstanding Chivite Colección 125 and the Señorío de Arínzano, whose '01 vintage was selected as one of the 15 best wines of Spain. We sampled their Chivite Colección barrel fermented chardonnay '03, which has been awarded multiple prizes as Spain's top white wine. And we couldn't resist taking home a bottle of their late harvest Moscatel, Colección Vendimia Tardía, as utterly delicious and intense as it is rare.



Tower and tasting room.

In 1988 the family purchased the estate, commissioning Pritzker Prize winning architect, Rafael Moneo, a fellow Navarran, to design its state-of-the-art wine making facility. This soaring, cutting edge space, inaugurated by the King and Queen in 2002, is a knock-out! At Arínzano visitors tour the spectacular, enormous barrel aging room from above, via a 100 meter long catwalk, a bridge-like structure wedged between the sections of the roof framework. From this perspective the French oak Allier barrels appears to go for infinity!



Rafael Moneo's stunning wine cellar in Bodegas Arínzano



The Neoclassical chapel and 16th century tower

Bodegas Pago de Larrainzar

Our next stop was the **Bodegas Pago de Larrainzar**, just a short drive away in the village of Ayegui, also in the Tierras de Estella sub zone. This new and dynamic family-owned winery has been producing a single label wine since 2004, although the estate has belonged to the Larrainzar-Canalejo family for 150 years.



View of the Irache Monastery to the north

The bodega sits directly on the Camino Francés, the historic French Route of St. James Way, in a spectacular setting next to the Irache Monastery, with the beautiful Montejurra mountain as its backdrop.

Here we were greeted by Marian, the Wine Tourism Director, and the winery's Technical Director and owner's son Miguel Canalejo Lasarte. It was his father's dream to revive an interrupted wine making tradition on this beautiful estate, and he realized this quest with the inauguration of this state-of-the-art facility in 2006, a design by the acclaimed Pamplona architect, Fernando de Redón.

Visits to the bodega begin with a video of the family's wine making history, followed by a tour to the unique "trellis museum", a garden exhibit displaying the various vine training and pruning methods from around the world, a walk through the vineyards themselves and through the neighboring "enchanted forest", finishing with a tasting in the airy upstairs tasting/dining room with its immense windows and spectacular views of the Tierra de Estella countryside.

Thanks to the director's warm welcome, the well-designed and unique visit and ample tasting of their gold medal wines, we'll be sure to return here often, in fact our next visit will be in July, during Sanfermines.

The private tour, for a small group of VIP clients, will include a four-course gourmet lunch, featuring local Navarran grilled vegetables and a very special roast suckling lamb prepared by the winery's acclaimed chef.



Part of the "trellis museum"



The tasting room of Pago de Larrainzar

Bodegas Señorío de Otazu

Backtracking along the Way of St. James, just 8 kilometers south of Pamplona, in the Valdizarbe sub zone, wine lovers will find another majestic (and very romantic!) *señorío*, or ancient feudal estate, that rivals the Señorío de Arinzano on the enchantment scale.

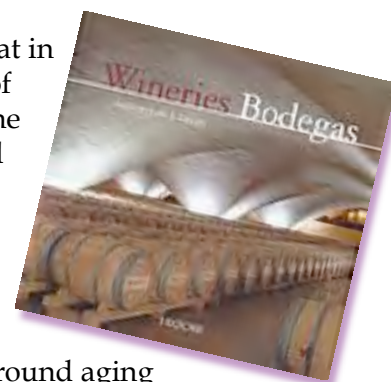


This 350 hectare (865 acre) estate, the **Señorío de Otazu**, across the Arga River from the small hamlet of Echauri, was designated an official **Pago** in 2009, and is our sentimental favorite. Why, because we were invited by the Bodega to use their beautiful Romanesque church and cellar for our pre-Fiesta de San Fermín '07 wedding, a rare and very special treat!

While wines have been produced on the estate since the 14th century, the winery is relatively young, having begun production only in 1991. Bodegas Otazu is a delightful fusion of art and architecture, nature and great wines. Here visitors will find a 16th century French chateau-like palace (still inhabited), a 14th century dove coat-defensive tower and the small, jewel-like, 13th century Romanesque church of San Esteban, along with an avant-garde wine making facility, surrounded by an expansive forest, a truly magical spot along the banks of the river.

Bodegas Otazu is Spain's northernmost vineyard for the production of fine red wines. The estate enjoys an exceptional microclimate, sheltered year around by the Peña de Echauri mountains to the west and Perdón range to the south.

At Otazu we were greeted by the director, and friend, Javier Bañales, who has so generously welcomed Iberian Traveler's guests for more than 7 years. Javier and his family have restored the old Bordeaux-style 1860s bodega, keeping the original wine presses on display in the bodega's cellar, and have added a high tech, contemporary designed winery, an architectural marvel, that in 2005 was listed as one of the top 25 wineries in the world and was featured on the cover of Kliczkowski's *Wineries Bodegas - Architecture & Design*.



Its most impressive space is its vast underground aging cellar, 3,600 square meters, housing two thousand oak barrels, a mix of American and French oak. The cellar is divided into nine bays and covered by elegant vaults, which the winery calls its "cathedral" of wine.



Otazu's "cathedral" of wine

Bodegas Otazu's double gold medal winning **Palacio de Otazu Altar** (18 months in a barrel) is an exceptional and complex blend of cabernet sauvignon and tempranillo grapes that should be on every serious wine aficionado's wine wish list, along with their **Vitral**, which is made of 100% cabernet sauvignon with a limited production of only 900 bottles per year.

LUXURY LODGING IN THE KINGDOM OF NAVARRA

Pamplona has several excellent 3 and 4-star hotels to choose from, but for visitors seeking a more refined and luxurious accommodations while wine touring on the Camino de Santiago, Iberian Traveler recommends these very special lodgings: the beautifully restored, 18th century, 25-room (2 suites) manor home, 4-star **Palacio de Guendulain**, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, located in the city's Historic

Quarter, and the new luxury 5-star, clean-lined, contemporary styled, **Hotel Muga de Beloso AlmaPamplona**, a unique all-suites hotel which sits below the city center. And for those wishing to stay on Pamplona's famous Plaza del Castillo, in the heat of the Casco Viejo, there is the emblematic, 44-room, 5-star **Gran Hotel La Perla**, of Hemingway fame.

DINING IN THE KINGDOM OF NAVARRA

For fine dining in the city we suggest...

El Embrujo, C/ Padre Calatayud, 16
www.elembujo.net

Alhambra, Bergamín, 7
www.restaurantealhambra.es

Europa, Espoz y Mina, 11
www.hreuropa.com



Rodero, Emilo Arrieta, 3
www.restauranterodero.com

Enekorri, Tudela, 14
www.enekorri.com

Josetxo, Plaza Príncipe de Viana, 1
www.restaurantejosetxo.com

La Nuez, Taconera, 4
www.restaurantelanuez.com

El Portal de Descalzos, Descalzos, 56
www.portaldedescalzos.com

Otano, San Nicolás, 5
www.casaotano.com

Pamplona is also well known for its outstanding *pintxos* bars including: Gaucho, Otano, Baserri, Iru and La Madarra de la Ramos, all found in the Historic Quarter.



See the complete list of Tapas & Pintxos bars in Pamplona at:

www.navarratapas.com