

R. LÓPEZ DE HEREDIA VIÑA TONDONIA (D.O.C. Rioja, Spain)

Founded in 1877, López de Heredia stands out as one of the few worldwide wineries that respects and adheres to core principles taught by their ancestors.



photograph courtesy of Viña Tondonia

THE WINERY

“Perhaps no winery in the world guards its traditions as proudly and steadfastly as López de Heredia does... it is paradoxically a winery in the vanguard, its viticulture and winemaking, is a shining, visionary example for young, forward-thinking producers all over the world... At López de Heredia, there is serenity that comes with adherence to core principles...” August 12th, 2009 by Eric Asimov, *The New York Times*

There are few wineries in Spain, or in the world, whose name conjures the heritage and prestige evoked by R. López de Heredia. Little about this winery has changed in the 142 years since its founding by, Don Rafael López de Heredia. The family adheres to a winemaking doctrine blueprinted in the 1880s – to make wine only from their own vineyards.

When it comes to the winemaking process, the work in the vineyard has not changed since the 1880's. R. López de Heredia is a “traditionalist” through and through and keeping the traditions alive today is important to maintain not only the quality but the personality of the house. Working by hand with some of the best terroir, respecting the soil, and working with nature on what it needs is something R. López de Heredia is very proud of.

Fermentation takes place in their 72 large oak vats, some of which are 142 years old. After fermentation, the wines are ready to be aged in 14,000 handmade American oak barrels.

The wines will remain at R. López de Heredia's underground cellars, stored at perfect temperature and tranquility for a minimum of 3 to 10 years. Wines acquire their smoothness and bouquet during the bottle aging that follows, a minimum of 3 years for Crianzas, and 10 years for Gran Reserva wines. Aging wines should be seen as a pedagogic act; the wine is "educated", hence should never be rushed through sped-up improvisations which would destroy the biological process that give it its special character. Wines need to spend a minimum of three years in barrels to begin to manifest their "education" and their soul.

THE VINEYARD TONDONIA - Don Rafael López de Heredia acquired Viña Tondonia from a group of clergies in 1913. The Tondonia vineyard is a beautiful vineyard of over 247 acres, 1,600 feet above sea level, situated on the right bank of the Ebro River in Rioja Alta. The soil is Alluvial clay with a high concentration of Limestone. There are 4 varieties of red grapes planted in this vineyard: Tempranillo, Mazuelo, Graciano, and Garnacho.

VIÑA TONDONIA GRAN RESERVA, 1995 (red)



- **Region/Sub-Region:** Spain, Rioja, Rioja Alta.
- **Grapes:** 75% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacho, 10% Mazuelo and Graciano.
- **Soil:** Alluvial clay and Limestone.
- **Harvest:** End September-early October, all done by hand, cutting with a curved knife "corquete", prevents the grape breaking causing fermentation prematurely. Bunches are placed in conical wood containers made at the R. López de Heredia cooperage.
- **Vinification:** Hoppers de-stem bunches and gently break skins. Spontaneous fermentation in large 25,000L vats.
- **Aging:** 10 years in 225L American oak barrels, handmade by the López de Heredia coopers, racked twice per year and at least 9 years spent in bottle before release.
- **Nose:** Delicate fragrance, complex and developed. Leather and cured meats, cherries, dried apple skins.
- **Taste:** On the palate the wine retains its vitality as if it wanted to conceal its true age. Freshness of the wine showing the acidity, full tannins.
- **Gastronomy:** Excellent with any grilled meats, Iberico Ham, octopus, paprika and smoked spice, hard cheeses.
- **Color:** Vibrant red and sparkling ruby leading slightly towards amber.

The Vintage:

There are very few vintages of Gran Reserva ever made in the history of the winery. The year 1995 was a particularly good year with early maturation, very good bud break, and pollination. Two weeks of sun shining before harvest gave the wines exceptional concentration in the fruit. This wine developed fantastically over the years showing more beautiful with bottle age.

CRITICS & REVIEWS:

James Suckling, "The Alluring Freshness of Spain", July '17 - 96 points - "...sweet tobacco, orange zest, and hints of balsamic with dried fruits on the nose. Full body, soft, silky, and fruity combination that gives such pleasure..."