



SPANISH AYES

*In the second column of a quarterly series, Master of Wine **JEANNIE CHO LEE** spills why she is a fan of Spanish wines, and the best bottles for every occasion.*



Quietly, Spain (above) moved into third place among the top wine exporters to China in 2015. Typically, America, Italy and Chile have contested this spot. But over the past few years, the Spaniards have staked their claim, armed with aged Riojas, juicy Garnachas and the versatile Tempranillo grape.

I have been a fan of Spanish wines for over 20 years, finding great value in 20- to 30-year-old Riojas and Ribera del Duero reds that cost a fraction of what you'd typically spend on first-growth Bordeaux. For everyday drinking wines, look for young Garnachas and Bobals that are authentic, unoaked expressions of juicy dark berry fruit. Young Rioja Crianzas or simple Reserva

wines from reliable producers such as Marques de Riscal, La Rioja Alta and Marques de Murrieta also offer great value.

Crowned the Best Overall Wine Cellar in Business Traveller's Cellars in the Sky 2015 Awards, Singapore Airlines has been serving a range of Spanish wines to Business Class passengers since 2012. We (fellow Singapore Airlines wine consultants Oz Clarke, Michael Hill Smith and I; below left) loved the intense, complex flavours of 2007 Bodegas Roda Rioja Reserva poured on Business Class routes from 2012 to 2014. This full-bodied Rioja offered depth from 30-year-old bush vines, which were carefully vinified and matured for three years before release.

The response was so positive that we added another Spanish wine, the 2009 Pago de los Capellanes Crianza (above, inset) from Ribera del Duero. Both Roda and Pago de los Capellanes are softer in tannins than Bordeaux reds and sweeter on the palate, making them suitable for consumption in the air.

This year, Singapore Airlines branches out into Chile, where the Spaniards planted grape vines nearly 500 years ago. The Airline's Business Class passengers can now enjoy the 2010 Vina Errazuriz La Cumbre Syrah, along with high-quality Spanish drops, on select routes.