



**ARLEQUIN WINE MERCHANT**  
**ONE-BOTTLE CLUB, MAY 2019**  
**BODEGAS RODA II 'RESERVA' RIOJA, SPAIN 1998**  
**GRAPE VARIETY 73% Tempranillo, 27% Garnacha**

**WINEMAKER** Located in the historic town of Haro, Bodegas Roda (a creative combination of the names of founders Mario Rotllant Solá and Carmen Daurella de Aguilera) is a full century younger than most of its veteran Rioja neighbors. Founded in 1987, the winery is considered “the most modern of the traditionalists, and the most traditional of the modernists” in Rioja. Its wines are some of the most sought-after reds from Rioja, and indeed from all of Spain. Small quantities of spicy, powerful and concentrated ultra-high quality Reserva wines are released each year and snapped up by collectors and restaurants around the world. Roda releases no *joven* (young) or *crianza* wines—only ageworthy *reservas*. (And for anyone traveling to Rioja, make sure to try some of Roda’s estate-grown olive oils, which, we can vouch, are as exceptional as its wines.)

**VINEYARD** Located 230 miles northeast of Madrid, the Rioja region unfolds between mountain ranges in north-central Spain, following the twists and turns of the Ebro River as it flows eastward from the Pyrenees to the Mediterranean Sea. Vineyards planted in the three subregions of Rioja — Alavesa, Alta and Baja — range in elevation from 1,300 to 2,600 feet. With Tempranillo as its signature grape, Rioja is one of only two appellations to attain Spain’s coveted D.O.C. designation. In 1991, it was promoted to D.O.C.a., a higher category reserved for wines maintaining a proven consistency and quality over a long period of time. Located outside the Rioja Alta town of Haro, Roda sources about half its fruit from contract vineyards, the majority of which are very old. Roda’s own estate vineyard are a mind-boggling repository of 552 different Tempranillo clones. All its fruit comes from old-school, unirrigated bush vines—i.e., low, untrellised vines that require back-breaking labor to prune and pick.

**WINEMAKING** There are four wines in the Roda lineup: Sela, Cirsion, Roda I and Roda II. The winery harvests grapes in very small lots and ferments each lot separately; the wines are created by identifying specific characteristics in the micro-lots, and then blending them. Roda II is a wine that reflects Tempranillo’s red fruit profile—red plums, red cherries, red berries. (Whereas Roda I is crafted from vineyards whose grapes yield flavors reminiscent of black fruits, such as blackberries and black cherries.) Since the 2002 vintage, Roda II has been known simply as “Roda”. Both Roda II and I ferment in French oak *barriques*, then spend two years aging, also in French oak (instead of Rioja’s traditional American oak), followed by further aging in bottle prior to release. Typically, the barrels are half new, and half one-year-old.

**VINTAGE** 1998 was a successful year in Rioja, according to *Decanter*, which writes: “This looked to be a textbook year throughout Rioja after a mild, wet winter; in a frost-free spring the flowering went without a hitch and the summer provided excellent flowering weather. However, rain came in mid-September forcing an early start to the harvest, which began on September 15th, and the lack of sun also curtailed the final ripening period. By October 12th everyone was picking or had picked, but those who picked late saw the benefit of an Indian summer which allowed ripening to continue in excellent conditions until November 3rd.”

**TASTING NOTES** After twenty-one years, this wine has taken on a savory complexity that recalls dry fruit and tea, yet it keeps the bright cherry core and lively acidity that define the Tempranillo grape. On the aromas, sweet French oak mingles with dried cherry, balsamic, dried rose petal and bergamot notes. The palate offers succulent, medium-bodied, dusty red cherry, strawberry and black tea flavors that glide across the palate and resolve in a spicy finish.

**FOOD PAIRING** Older wines, whose fruit flavors are receding to the background, do well with simple food that won’t overwhelm their subtle flavors. Consider a typically Riojan dish of pork, lamb or goat, such as *caparrones*-- beans cooked with pork sausage or quail—or *patatas a la Riojana*, a stew of potatoes, chorizo and peppers. Grilled lamb, or pork- and chorizo-studded paella, also make great choices.