



Vintner Select

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Priorat DOCa (DOQ in Catalan) in the southwest of Catalonia is the site of René Barbier's project and home to some of Spain's richest, most concentrated red wines. The second region in Spain to be promoted to DOCa, Priorat derives its name from *Priorato de Scala Dei*, a Carthusian monastery (priory) founded on the site of a boy's vision of angels ascending to heaven. The region is overwhelmingly devoted to red wine production, although some white and rosado wine is produced. Garnacha and Cariñena are the traditional varietals of Priorat, struggling to achieve even small yields in the rock-strewn schist soils of the region. *Llicorella*, a mix of black slate and quartzite, characterizes the best vineyards, requiring vines to dig deeply for water. Managing alcohol is a key factor in a warm, Mediterranean region where grapes can ripen unchecked to a potential alcohol of 18%



Winery: D.O.: The region has produced superb quality wines for more than 8 centuries, starting when Carthusian monks founded a priory or Priorat in 1163. Phylloxera wiped out nearly all of the plantings of grapes at the end of the 19th Century and it wasn't until the 1950s that serious replanting began. The region rocketed to fame in the 1990's as a new generation of winemakers came to the area combining new technology and old vines for superior results. There are only 26 wineries listed with the Consejo Regulador.



The Wine:

Vega Escal All of the fruit for this wine is grown in and around Gratallops, where there tend to be warmer daytime temperatures than more northerly sub-regions of Priorat. Vines range in age from 10 years for the Syrah to 50 years for the Cariñena. Grapes were hand harvested in the middle of September. Varietals were fermented separately with a total of 22 days on skins prior to pressing. Aged 6 months in a combination of French and American oak barrels.

Grapes: 60% Cariñena, 30% Garnacha, 10% Syrah

Reviews:

"The fruit for the 2008 Vega Escal was sourced from around the village of Gratallops, a warmer sub-region of Priorat. It is a blend of 60% Carinena, 30% Garnacha, and 10% Syrah aged for 6 months in French oak. Enticing aromas of garrigue, lavender, incense, plum, and black cherry lead to a racy, intense, impeccably balanced, lengthy wine that can be approached now but will provide enjoyment for another 6-8 years."

91 points Wine Advocate issue 194 May 2011