

IBERIAN

Neighbors

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL COME FACE TO FACE
AT THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA'S
SOMMELIER SUMMIT IN NAPA

by John Buechsenstein / photos by Alexander Rubin

You're almost always within reach of a wine region in Spain and Portugal. With their diverse soils and microclimates, these neighboring countries share a link that's readily apparent in their wines. Our panel at the Sommelier Summit, held at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) at Copia in Napa, was moderated by Master Sommelier Bob Bath, who serves as Head Beverage Professor at the CIA at Greystone in St. Helena. Here's how we connected the dots between the expressions and winemaking styles presented:



At the recent Sommelier Summit, The SOMM Journal's panel of experts convened at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia in Napa to discuss terroir and flavor profiles from the diverse regions throughout Spain and Portugal. From left to right: Lorea Amatria, Area Manager, Bodegas LAN, Rioja; Nicole Andrus, European Sales Director, Trinchero Family Estates; Colin McNeil, California Sales Manager, J. García Carrión; Jean Hoefliger, Consulting Winemaker, Perinet, Priorat; Bob Bath, MS, moderator and Head Beverage Professor at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone; Evan Goldstein, co-founder of Full Circle Wine Solutions, representing Wines of Alentejo; Paul Hodges, SoCal Chain Manager, Vineyard Brands; and Joshua Blissett, Northern California Area Manager, Frederick Wildman & Sons.



PRIORAT, SPAIN

Wine: Perinet 2015 Priorat DOQ, Spain

Presented by: Jean Hoefliger; Consulting Winemaker, Perinet (and Winemaker for Alpha Omega, Napa)

If you ignore any architectural clues, a first glance at the vineyards of Priorat gives a solid impression of hilly wine-growing sites similar to those seen elsewhere in the wine world. But when you stand in the vineyards with their steep slopes and varied aspects, sensing the cool Mediterranean breeze as flinty stones crackle under your feet, it's no exaggeration to say that the terroir comes alive.



Surrounded by the Montsant Mountains of Catalonia, Priorat wines were first developed by Carthusian monks in the 12th century (the term "priorat" means priory). With its elevation changes, the area does resemble a "stairway to God" or *escaladei*, the original Latin name. Consulting winemaker Jean Hoefliger reminded us that while "Priorat was the 'poster child' for emerging wines of Spain, now its potential is being realized. Here wine is not considered a luxury good as it still is in most of the U.S., rather a part of the culture and day-to-day life."

Perinet's three estate vineyards are characterized by their varietal mix as well as their slope and aspect. North-facing Mas d'en Xes furnishes Cabernet and Syrah while its northeastern slope supports Garnatxa and Carinyena (alternative spellings for Garnacha and Cariñena, respectively). Other sites wrap around to sunnier southern exposures, and the steepest slopes are found in north-eastern-facing Pendants, which is strongly influenced by cooling Mediterranean winds.

For the Perinet 2015 Priorat DOQ, careful hand-sorting was done in the vineyards and at the winery, where Winemaker Toni Sànchez had the fruit "gently destemmed and crushed directly [into] to small open-top tanks and large neutral barrels for fermentation," Hoefliger said. "Most lots were cold-soaked for two days. Fermentation started slowly, with punch-downs by hand daily. Depending on the lot, macerations lasted from 10 to 21 days, and at the completion of maceration, free-run wines were transferred to barrel. The wines were aged in 90% new French oak before being bottled without either fining or filtration," he added.

The resulting blend of Garnatxa (33%), Carinyena (25%), Syrah (25%), and Cabernet (17%) brings the Perinet terroir to the glass with black cherry, plum, violets, tobacco leaf, and forest floor. The palate supports the nose with full-bodied extract and a touch of minerality.