



**Bierzo**  
DENOMINACIÓN DE ORIGEN

IF ITS BIERZO,  
*its different*







## THE BIERZO DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN REGULATOR BOARD

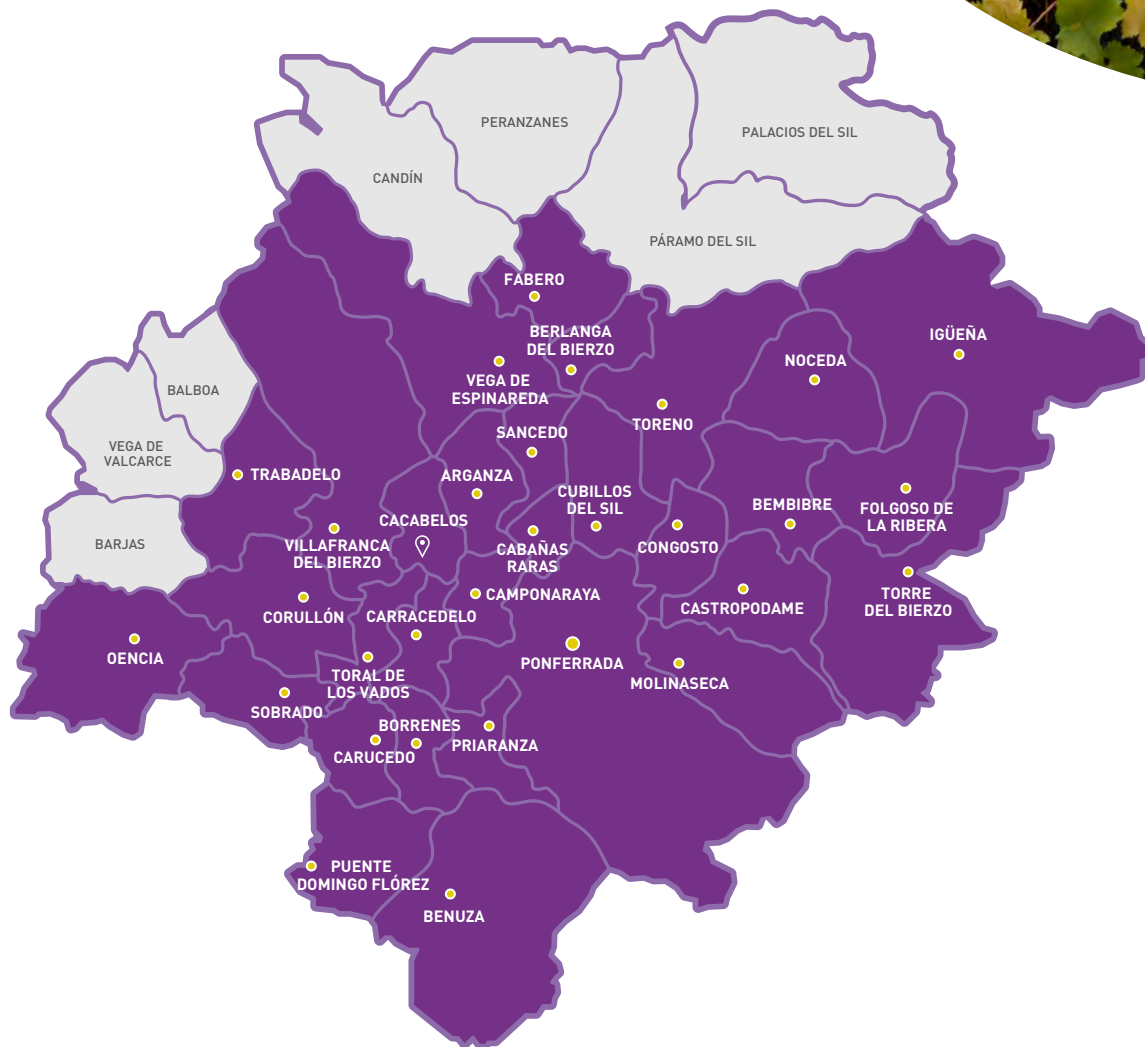
*A unique land, with its own climate and two principal varieties – Mencía and Godello – both increasingly more valued in the markets. An ancestral know-how that is more than 2,000 years old and one which has evolved in recent times to make Bierzo one of the most treasured designations of origin for experts and consumers. The region with the greatest density of old vineyards in the world today produces reds, whites and claretes of utmost quality.*

The Regulator Board was founded as a result of the initiative between the wine-producers and vine growers of Bierzo. After centuries of vine cultivating, the time came for this increasingly prosperous sector to be monitored by a regulating body in an attempt to add structure to the industry while at the same time commercializing the excellent wines of the Bierzo region.

**The Regulator Board represents not only the legacy, hard-work, tradition and knowledge of this industry but is also synonymous with the quality, progress and future of all wines from the Bierzo Designation of Origin.**

Technically, wines which receive the Designation of Origin (DO) status are prestigious, coming from a specified geographical area and with certification regulated by the Regulator Board. DO Bierzo recognition is particular in nature, as the status makes reference not only to its unique geographical location but also to the special conditions and characteristics of the wine itself. DO Bierzo wines reflect the distinctive quality of the terroir from which they are born.

**In 1988, starts the process to create the DO Bierzo and its Regulator Board.** A year and a half later, on the 11th November, 1989, DO Bierzo was officially recognized along with its Regulation and its Regulator Board. The process was legally validated the 12th December of the same year through a publication in the Official State Bulletin.



## Control and certification

The Regulator Board is responsible for overseeing the compliance of its Regulations which establish, among others, the requirements for the cultivation, control and production of Bierzo wines protected by the Designation of Origin.

The Regulator Board obtained the accreditation of the **Entidad Nacional de Acreditación** (ENAC, National Accreditation Body) in February 2021, which made it the first Designation of Origin in Castile-Leon for wines with the ability to certify the production of wine according to the UNE-EN ISO 17065 international quality standard for product certification.

This accreditation reinforces the commitment to guaranteeing the quality of the Designation of Origin and its wine cellars with the most demanding systems of international quality, which means a guarantee of confidence for consumers.

It controls the origin of its production, this being the 22 affiliated municipalities of the DO Bierzo: **Arganza, Bembibre, Borrenes, Cabañas Raras, Cacaabelos, Camponaraya, Carracedelo, Carucedo, Castropodame, Congosto, Corullón, Cabellos del Sil, Molinaseca, Noceda, Ponferrada, Priaranza, Puente Domingo Flórez, Sancedo, Vega de Espinareda, Villadecanes, Toral de los Vados and Villafranca del Bierzo.**

After the modification of the Terms and Conditions in 2019, 10 new municipalities that were wine-growing areas in the past were included: **Benúza, Berlanga del Bierzo, Fabero, Folgoso de la Ribera, Igüeña, Oencia, Sobrado, Toreno, Torre del Bierzo and Trabadelo.**

## THE BEGINNING

### Origins of viticulture in Bierzo

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Bierzo wines are experienced; they can be traced back more than 2.000 years through references to the existence of vineyards surrounding the pre Roman city of Bergidum, made in the works of Plinio el Viejo and Estrabón. Bergidum would later lend its name to the current Region of Bierzo. The boost to the region's cultivation came thanks to Roman colonization which brought with it a new species, the *Vitis Vinifera*, originally from the region of Caucasus and Armenia. The **contribution of the Romans** to the world of agriculture, and consequently, wine production, is unquestionable. Roman plowing techniques were crucial to help work the land in a more efficient manner.

**It wasn't until after the IX century**, however, at the hands of newly settled monks, in particular the Cistercians, when vineyards started their expansion and social protagonism. Wine was a central part of religious celebrations, was included as part of meals and was used as a cure for various

illnesses. All these factors contributed to the promotion of wine in all social levels.

**During the Middle Ages**, the pilgrimage to Santiago was increased along the Jacobean route. The obligatory pass through Bierzo territory activated the economy along with the birth of new monasteries, villages and towns along where the vineyards expanded.

After many centuries, Bierzo wines acquired a type of status in the markets close to Galicia and Asturias. At the end of the XIX century, however, the region suffered immeasurable damage as a result of the **phylloxera plague**. The wine market at that time was so important that a serious economic crises arose in the region, forcing many inhabitants to emigrate in search of new opportunities.

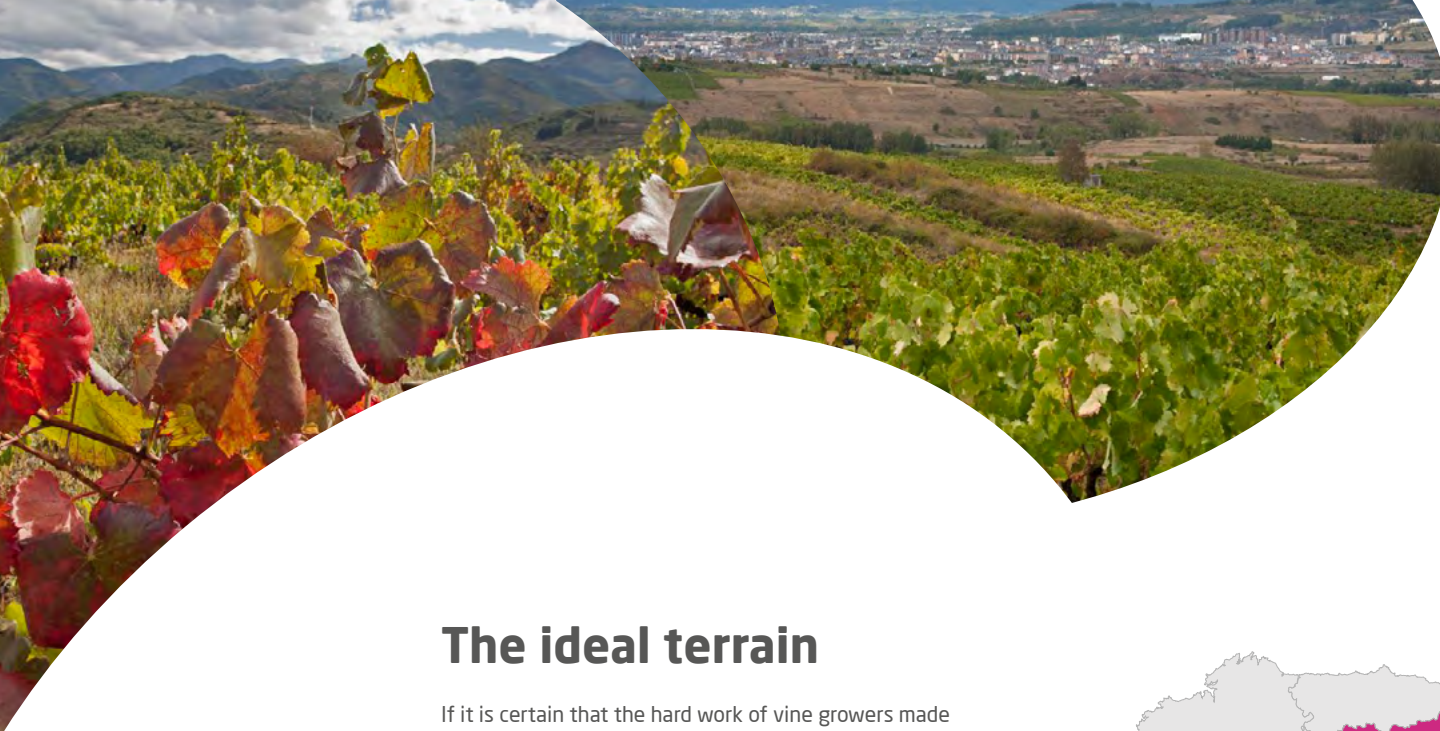
The sector recovered but not without great effort and largely thanks to the grafting of American vines onto regional stock. Production was newly established in the first half of the XX century. Vineyards were revived with renewed strength helping to recuperate its economic and social force in the Region.

**In the sixties** many co-ops were founded; which since then have played a fundamental role in the elaboration and commercialization of the wine.

Finally, and after centuries of history, effort and passion, the biggest recognition of the quality and speciality of Bierzo wine came in 1989, with the creation of the Bierzo Designation of Origin.

**In 2019**, the Ministry of Agriculture approved the new terms and conditions that collects the **new classification of vineyards** in smaller geographic units (Village Wine, Area Wine, Classified Vineyard and Great Wine from a Classified Vineyard) and the **inclusion of ten municipalities** as wine-growing areas.

It is the beginning of a new age for the Bierzo Designation of Origin that is now placed among the great wine-growing regions of the world.

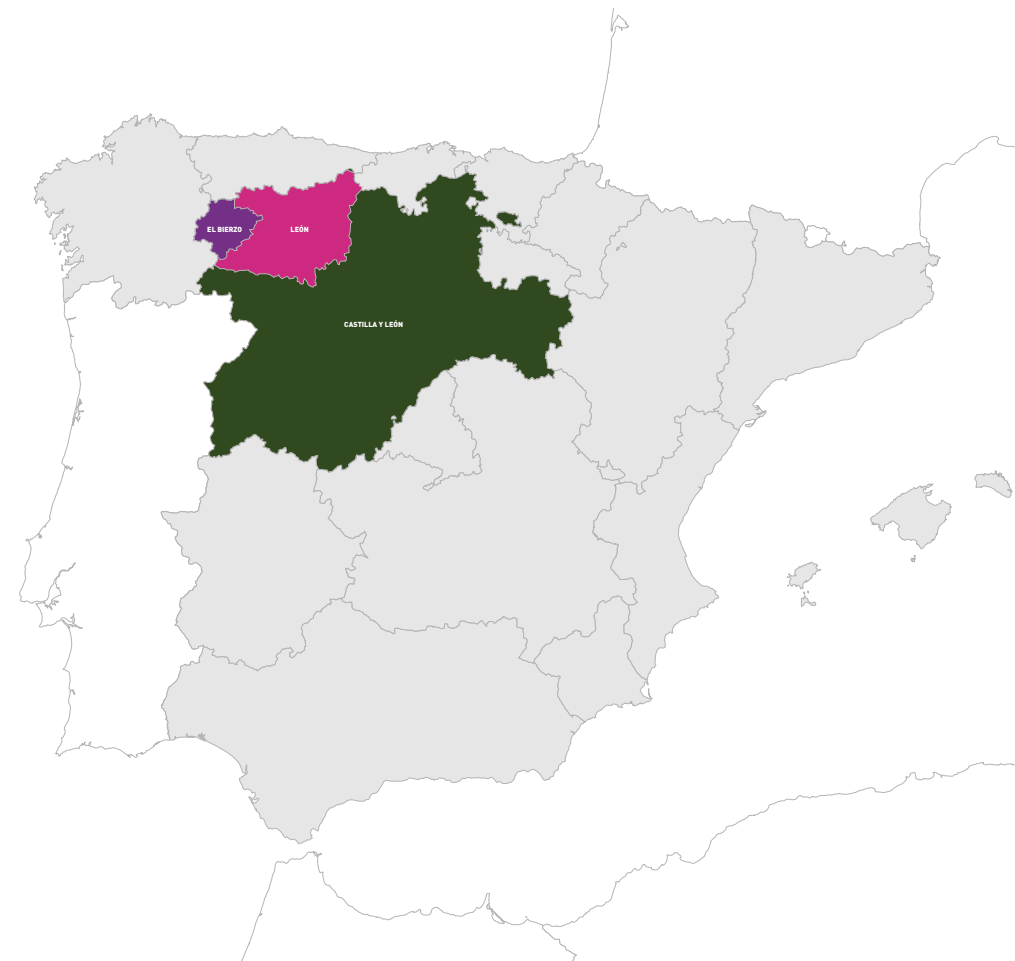


## The ideal terrain

If it is certain that the hard work of vine growers made possible the growth and prosperity of the Bierzo wine crop, it is equally accurate to say that the region was the perfect place to establish this particular product. Bierzo enjoys particular geographical, morphological and climate characteristics which, when put into collaborative force, make the zone unique with special climate and terroir. Let's take a step by step look at these factors:

### Geographical location

**Bierzo is located in the northwest of the region of Castilla and Leon; specifically in the province of Leon.** It borders both Galicia and Asturias, with the northeastern delimitation bordering the provinces of Orense and Lugo, and with Asturias to the north. Geographically, the zone is ideally located between the coast and the interior, which has motivated the settlement of various towns and civilizations throughout history. **The region, covering roughly 3,000 km<sup>2</sup>, is where nature and man have evolved in harmony for generations.**





## Geology

**Characteristic of Bierzo are the great contrasts between mountain and valley.** The region is a tectonic gem fed by various rivers including the **Sil, el Boeza, Cúa, Burbia and el Valcarce**; while being surrounded by a crown of mountains which protect and geographically define the area. The mountains clearly stand out among the Ancares y de Gistredo, the Aquilianos and la Sierra del Caurel ranges. It is here that we can find peaks more than 2,000 m high, along with valleys and lowlands that have helped forge natural plains. These features make possible the rich flora and fauna of the region with natural reserves such as the Ancares, stunning valleys such as the Valley of Silence, mighty rivers and an infinity of affluent, glacial peaks such as the Cuiña. As well, there is the existence of protected species such as the brown bear and Western capercaillie, the general protection of birds (SPA · Special Protection Area) and the conservation and betterment of historic and natural ruins such as **the Médulas**. This diversity has made the zone a prime location for the exploitation of different crops, and has made the region number one in Spain in terms of accolades of quality. In addition to DO Bierzo wine certification, quality recognition has been given to other regional products such as the Reineta apple, Botillo, the pepper, the Conference pear, the chestnut, the cherry and the jerky.

## Lithology

When we say that **the wines of Bierzo have a certain terroir** we are making a clear reference to the type of earth in which the grapes are cultivated. The properties of the earth vary considerably between the mountains and

tectonic valley. The mountain is made up of ancient materials dating back to the Primary Era; which includes crags and slate and to a lesser quantity granite and limestone. In contrast, in the tectonic valley we can find tertiary and quaternary sediments including: **clay, pebbles and alluvial plains**. **It is in this terrain and within the lowlands that the vine growers find an environment ripe for their crop.** The degree of acid in the soil ranges from 4 to 8.5 with levels above 6 in the valleys. The calcium oxide content is low, without reaching 3,000 kg/Ha and with organic material content reaching 1 %. These average levels give the valleys a greater richness than found in the surrounding slopes due to a greater presence of livestock. **The vineyards are strategically placed on terraces of relatively low inclination next to the rivers, on hillsides and on pronounced inclinations with an average height of between 450 and 1,000 meters.**

## Climate

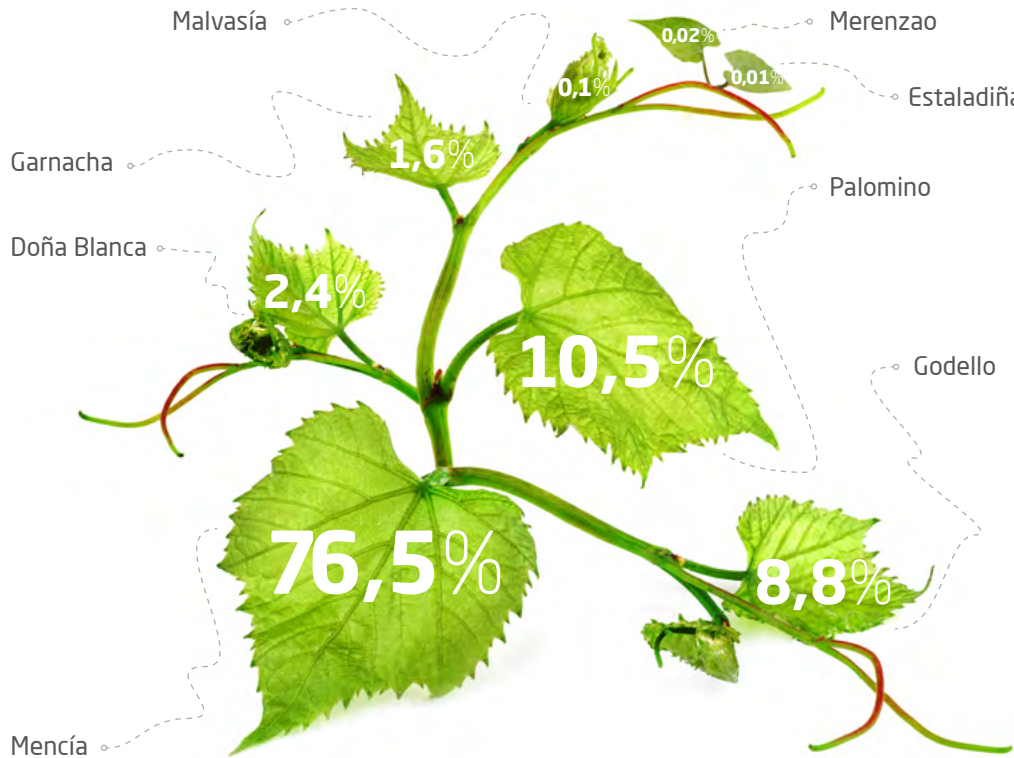
**Bierzo is said to have a special micro-climate as the area maintains a somewhat constant temperature throughout the year.** The geographical location and geology help achieve a unique and differentiated climate. The climate is a transitional one between the Atlantic and the continent, with crisp winters and mild summers. There is a notable difference in temperature between the mountains and the valley, with smoother temperatures in the valley reaching an average mean of 12 °C. The average rainfall is 721 mm, greater than other zones in the Iberian plateau, due largely to the mountains which encircle Bierzo. The rains are especially abundant during the months of September and May, reaching more than 1,000 mm in some parts. **The semi humid climate and mild temperatures are prime for grapevine growing.**

# VINE-GROWING DO BIERZO

## Varieties of DO Bierzo

Bierzo is a fertile land, full of contrasts, where different varieties of high quality grapes are produced with each crop carefully adapted to the specific characteristics of the land and climate. The production of the protected wines must be carried out with the exclusively recognized grapes: **Red varieties, the Mencía and Garnacha Tintorera; as well as white varieties such as the Godello, Doña Blanca, Palomino and Malvasía.** Recently, **the Estaladiña and the Merenzao varieties** have been included due to their wine interest, due to the quality of the wines they produce and due to having adapted entirely to the environment.

Depending on the variety, grape production levels will vary, with all grapes collected under the Designation of Origin title falling into the following categories:





Of these varieties the Mencía is considered principally for reds; while Godello, Doña Blanca, Palomino and Malvasía are allocated to whites. When it comes to making the wines, percentages and type of grape must be taken into consideration as per the rules of the Regulation.



Red

It shall be elaborated with at least 85% of the Mencía, Garnacha Tintorera, Estaladiña and/or Merenzao varieties. Any of the other authorised varieties may be used for the rest.



Rosé

It shall be produced with the authorised varieties, with at least 70% of red varieties.



White

Godello (principal grape) Palomino (principal grape)  
Doña Blanca (principal grape) Malvasía (principal grape)



Claretos

Between 40% and 60% of authorised red varieties. The other grapes shall be white grapes of any of the authorised varieties.

## Mencía

This is the star variety of Bierzo, a local grape whose production outshines that of any other in the region. **It represent approximately 76.47 % of the qualified grape production and is the principal variety used in the elaboration of reds and rosés.** Due to its importance we will outline it in further detail later on.

## Garnacha Tintorera

It accounts for just 1.58% of grape production in Bierzo and it is used both for single varieties as well as a complement for Mencía in the elaboration of reds and rosés. It is an ancestral crop in the area which produces wines with an intense color and medium alcohol content.

## Godello

Es una variedad fundamental en la elaboración de vinos blancos D.O. Bierzo. Su producción anual representa el 8.83 % del volumen. Se caracteriza por adaptarse con facilidad al suelo seco, temiendo los suelos húmedos. Sus vinos denotan un color amarillo-verdoso con reflejos pajizos y perfumados, y tienen más cuerpo que el resto de blancos elaborados con otras variedades diferentes.

## Doña Blanca

This crop makes up 2.4 % of annual production and, like the Godello, is a principal ingredient in the elaboration of whites under the DO Bierzo. It is a variety with a determined maturity, which must be harvested at just the right moment to avoid the fruit becoming overly mature.

**Cultivation of the different varieties of grape under the DO Bierzo title is carried out through overwhelmingly traditional practices like bush training.** This system requires a very direct relationship between man and the vine, as most labour must take place manually. Cultivation of bush vines is representative of long-living plants, where the grapes cluster close to the earth allowing the nector to trickle down to the fruit. This system has been overlooked in other regions to give way for more massive, mechanized production. In Bierzo, however, traditional growing techniques are maintained as the principal method of cultivation, in order to preserve the personality of the vine stock and highlight quality versus quantity.

## Palomino

This variety is also known as Jerez. Production of Palomino is the highest among the white varieties representing 10,55 % of the total. It is used to produce white wines, along with the Godello and Doña Blanca. It is a grape which is extremely resistant to insect plagues and illnesses.

## Malvasía

This variety makes up only 0.1 % of the total across vineyards and is produced alongside the Godello, Palomino and Doña Blanca. It is a grape which matures quickly, is sweet and very aromatic adding balance to any wine.

## Merenzao

The surface of this variety accounts for 0.02%, it is also known as María Ordoña or Bastardo, also present in other wine-growing areas of the north-west of Spain. It is characterized by producing wines of medium chromatic intensity, with flavors of red fruit, cherries and sour cherries, good acidity and with a capacity for ageing.

## Estaladiña

Estaladiña, whose surface accounts for 0.01%, also called Pan y Carne, is an exclusive variety of the Bierzo Designation of Origin that does not correspond to any other variety. It is a minority, from an ancestral crop in the area. It is characterized by having a high alcohol content, red fruit flavors, being highly acidic overall, wines that have a lot of color and with a good capacity for ageing.

# Mencia, the stellar variety of Bierzo

Mencia is the principal variety of the DO Bierzo. Being essential for the preparation of reds, rosés and clarete, it produces excellent, smooth and velvety top of the range wines.

The vine stock adapts easily to warm, somewhat dry terrains and production represents three quarters of DO Bierzo vineyards.

The origins of the Mencia grape go back to the Roman period when this population lived among the region. The grapes adaptability aids its proliferation and has developed over centuries to become **the principal variety of the Bierzo region.**

At the end of the XIX century, a large quantity of the plant were destroyed to a phylloxera epidemic. It was with great effort that the crop overcame the crippling epidemic and largely thanks to the grafting of the plant onto American vines.

**The Mencia flourishes in mountainous zones and maturation of the grape is closely related to the plants' orientation towards the sun as well as its altitude of the vineyard.** It is common to find it at terraces and embankments within the valley. It responds well to mineral slate based, clay-loamy soils.

**This variety is known for producing small, compact clusters with medium sized, thin-skinned berries.** The grape's juice is maroon red with a high, well-balanced sugar content resulting in aromatic and fruity wines with an intense colour and excellent ageing capacity. It is also used to produce rosés which are equally aromatic and fruity though somewhat lighter and smoother.





## DISCOVER OUR WINES

The wines from the Bierzo have their own unique personality. They are wines with terroir which speak to us from a distinct space with individual characteristics notable in the tasting and savoring of the wine.

The different varieties produced under the Bierzo Designation of Origin label permit the production of white, red and rosé wines, all of which are of the utmost quality and with their own story to tell.

### DO Bierzo red wine

These are wines mainly prepared with 85% of the Mencía, Garnacha Tintorera, Estaladiña and/or Merenzao varieties. The rest comes from any of the other authorised varieties. They are characterized by their intense color and velvety flavor.

Attention to the ageing process varies and helps differentiate among reds:

- **Jóvenes** (young wines), these are wines of less than a year maturity, open and chatty with primarily aromatic tones.
- **Roble**, minimally aged in oak barrels, with the fruit very much present; giving a youthful denotation.
- **Crianza**, aged at least two years with six months of that period having been aged in oak barrels. The result is a wine with intense tannins and a well-balanced flavor when savoured on the palate. Wines which enjoy sharing and leaving their mark.



- **Reserva**, aged at least 36 months between the barrel and bottle, with at least 12 of those months being aged in oak barrels. Subtle tones of the barrel and the mature fruit can be noted when savouring. The intensity of its colour varies to that of a ruby red. They are wines with an element of depth which must be consumed slowly.
- **Gran reserva**, these wines are aged 60 months between the barrel and bottle with at least 18 months of that time being aged in oak barrels. They are wines which invite one to reflect; tranquil, open and lengthy.

To appreciate all of its nuances, we should keep in mind the temperature of the wine when we wish to enjoy it. Young, red wines tolerate a lower temperature and can be served between 12-15 °C to mark their freshness and floral tones. Crianzas and Reservas should be served between 16-18 °C to enjoy their full complexity.

DO Bierzo reds, for their richness and flavor, are perfect with a robust meal such as with red meats, wild game, cured cheeses and our famed Bierzo botillo.

## DO Bierzo white wines

White DO Bierzo wines are principally produced with the authorized Godello and Doña Blanca grapes and complemented with the Palomino and Malvasía variety, in varying percentages. They are excellent in terms of quality and are principally young wines.

Visually they are clear and bright, with colours which range between greens and yellows. Their aroma is primarily fruity or floral with a definitive fresh character. When savoured they emphasize fresh sensations with fruity retro-nasal tones, harmonious florals and overall balance.

White wine is best enjoyed cold, anywhere between 7-10 °C in order to best mark its fruity aromas. If the wine in question is aged in oak barrel, the temperature should be raised to between 10-12 °C.

These wines are perfectly combined with white fish, apéritifs and chicken or fowl stews.

## DO Bierzo rosé wine

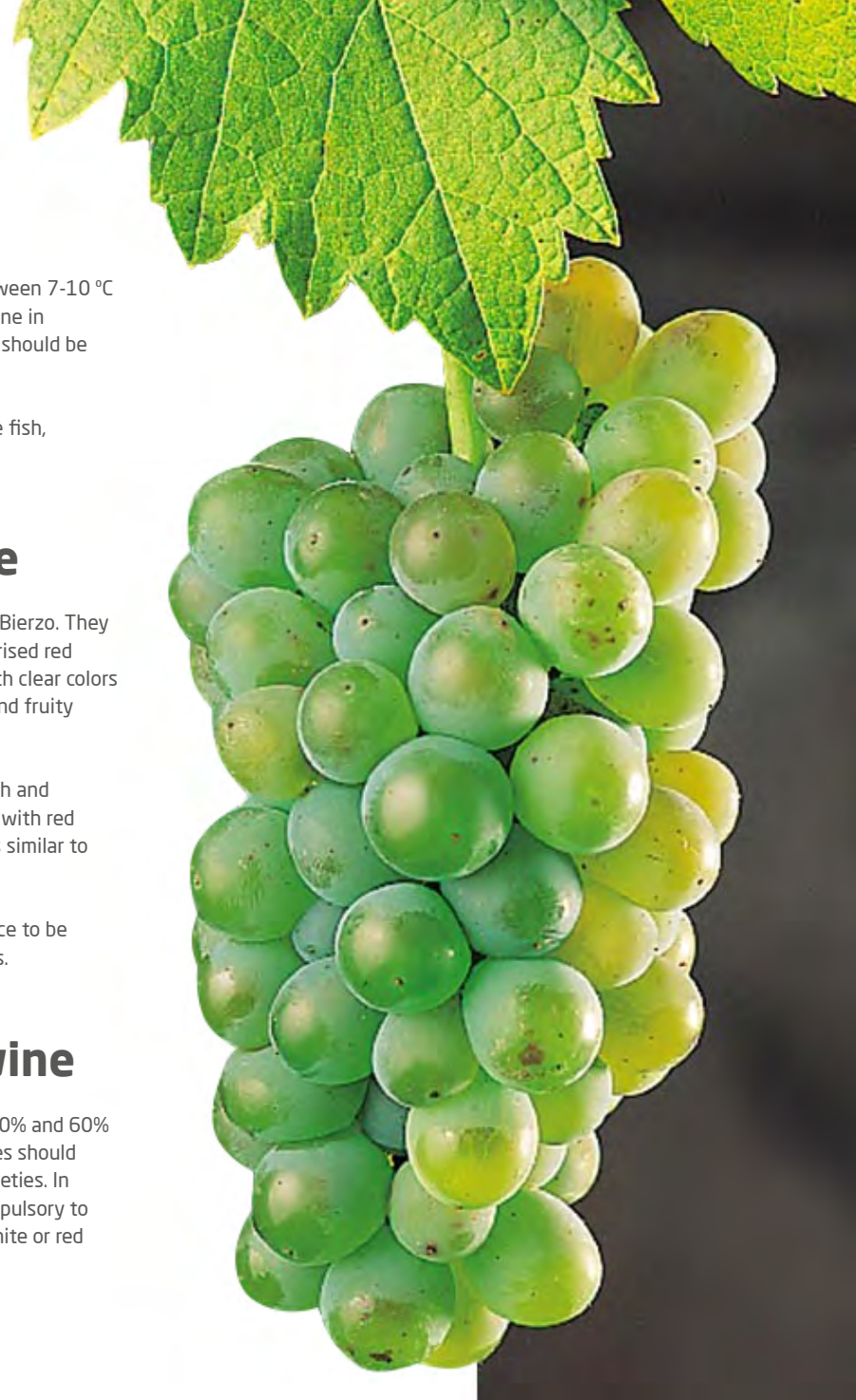
The rosé wines have their own place in the DO Bierzo. They are elaborated using at least 70% of the authorised red varieties. They are fresh and brilliant wines, with clear colors between pink and red and with a harmonious and fruity taste.

They are light with red berry sensations; smooth and pleasant to the palate. Despite being produced with red grapes, they are best savoured at temperatures similar to that of a white variety, between 6-8 °C.

The rosé DO Bierzo wines are an excellent choice to be enjoyed with pastas, blue fish and mild cheeses.

## DO Bierzo clarete wine

The clarete wine is elaborated using between 40% and 60% of authorised red varieties, the rest of the grapes should be white grapes from any of the authorised varieties. In the alcoholic fermentation of the must, it is compulsory to use between 5% and 10% of stalling skin of white or red varieties for the overall volume of the must.



# GEOGRAPHIC UNITS

In June 2020, the first wines from the village and area of the Bierzo Designation of Origin went on the market. Thus, a new era began for the Designation of Origin after six years of work in which a new Terms and Conditions was approved that considers the classification in smaller geographic units (Village Wine, Area Wine, Classified Vineyard and Great Wine from a Classified Vineyard), the inclusion of new grape varieties, the elaboration of claretes and the inclusion of 10 new municipalities in the designation of origin.

With the approval of wines classified in smaller geographic units regarding the own demarcation, the Regulator Board and their winemakers reached an important milestone by making the Bierzo Designation of Origin the first in Spain to adopt this classification of wines, usually used in Burgundy and Piedmont.



## LEVELS OF DESIGNATION BY GEOGRAPHIC UNITS



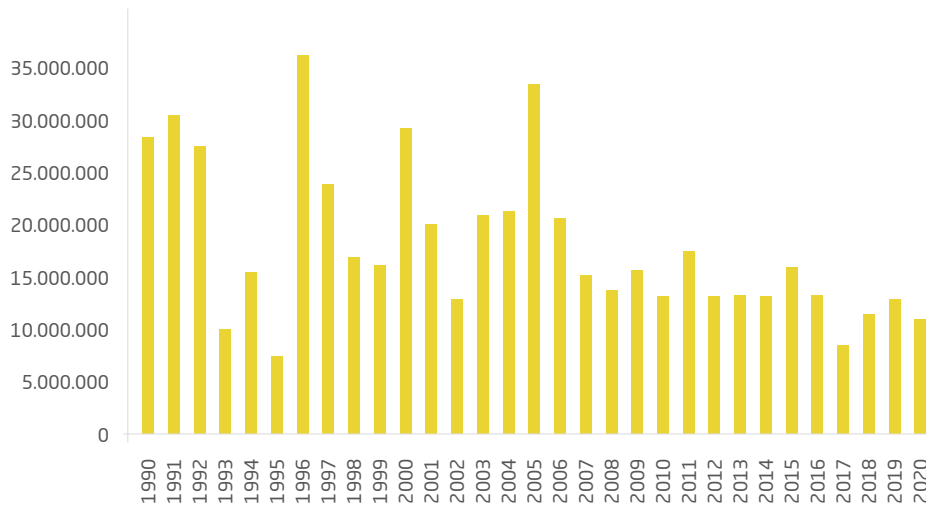
<b>Wine from DO Bierzo</b>	It is the current geographic limit of the Bierzo Designation of Origin.
<b>Village Wine (municipality or hamlet)</b>	100% of the grapes used should come from plots that belong to the municipality or hamlet in question. The performance of the grape (kg/ha) shall be 20% less than the maximum set by the Bierzo Designation of Origin.
<b>Area Wine</b>	100% of the grapes used should come from the same area, with a name recognised in the terms and conditions of the Bierzo Designation of Origin. The performance of the grape (kg/ha) shall be 25% less than the maximum set by the Bierzo Designation of Origin.
<b>Classified Vineyard</b>	100% of the grapes used should come from the same plot or adjacent plots in the same area, with a name recognised in the terms and conditions of the Bierzo Designation of Origin and that have been typified as area wines for at least five years and whose quality has been recognised by the Experts Committee of the Regulator Board. The performance of the grape (kg/ha) shall be 30% less than the maximum set by the Bierzo Designation of Origin.
<b>Great Classified Vineyard</b>	Similar case to the previous one, but typified with at least five years as classified vineyard wines and whose quality has been recognised by the Experts Committee of the Regulator Board. The grape performance (kg/ha) shall be 35% less than the maximum set by the Bierzo Designation of Origin.

# PROJECTION

Bierzo is a fairly small municipality, with a surface of 2,828 km<sup>2</sup>, a great part of the land is mountainous and not appropriate for harvesting. Currently, there are 2,349 hectares of vineyards registered in the Designation of Origin (as of 2021), shared among 1,110 wine-growers and it is worked so that the percentage of land harvested increases. More than 62 % of growers in Bierzo are associated with co-ops which reflects a clear interest in the commercialization of their product and a quality control guarantee on the part of the co-ops themselves. In parallel, there has been a progressive surge in the number of independent wineries which grow, produce and commercialize various high-quality brands. **Bierzo has 75 wineries registered under the Designation of Origin which have been able to expand beyond the national market.**

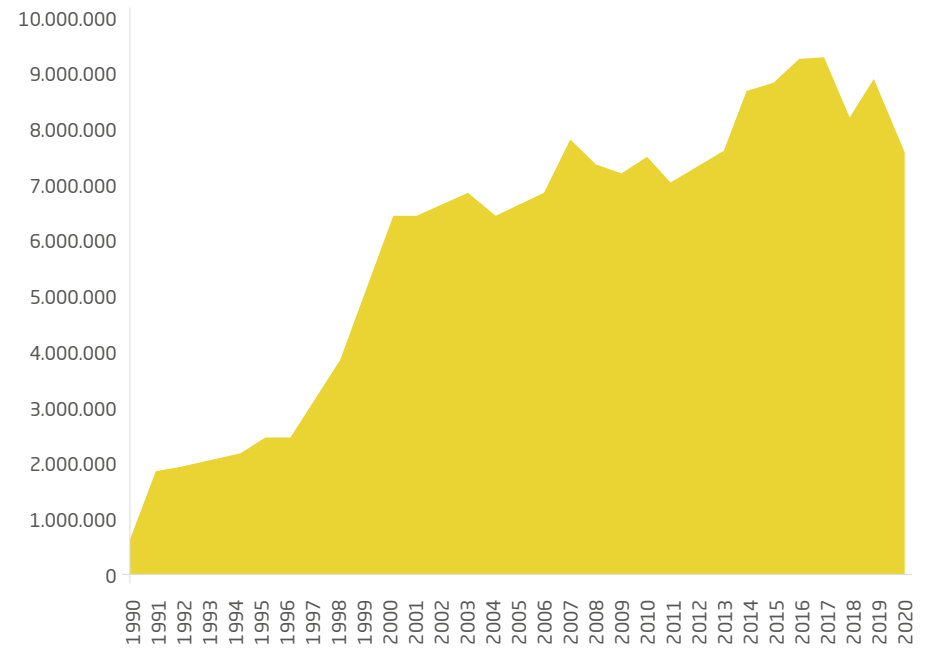
From the creation of the Bierzo Designation of Origin Regulator Board, an annual register has been carried out in regards to production and rating. Similar to other crops, climate conditions have directly affected the amount of harvested grapes and have resulted in a drastic decrease in harvestable crop from one year to the next. The quality of the grape, however, has improved; allowing for reduced production of a higher quality product.

**GRAPE PRODUCTION IN RECENT YEARS (kg)**



**The DO Bierzo label distinguishes between a before and after in the world of Bierzo wines.** The bottling of the member wineries has increased year after year, which proves and consolidates the quality and growing interest in Bierzo wines among consumers.

**VOLUME OF COMMERCIALIZED BOTTLES UNDER THE DO BIERZO LABEL**



This increase is directly related to the notable increase of exports, which currently means a third of production. **Among the destinations, Germany, the United States, Denmark and the United Kingdom stand out;** markets that are quite demanding and with a high level of competition.

The growing acceptance of Bierzo wines comes from its growing quality, due to the commercializing effort of the wine cellars and the dissemination work that the Regulator Board is undertaking throughout Europe, America and Asia.

The harvests have received good ratings, sometimes affected by the climatological conditions but always very closely overseen by the wine-growers that have known how to protect their fruit.

### VINTAGE RATINGS 1987-2016

Vintage	Rating	Vintage	Rating	Vintage	Rating
1987	Excellent	1998	Good	2009	Very Good
1988	Very Good	1999	Good	2010	Very Good
1989	Good	2000	Very Good	2011	Very Good
1990	Very Good	2001	Very Good	2012	Excellent
1991	Very Good	2002	Very Good	2013	Very Good
1992	Excellent	2003	Very Good	2014	Excellent
1993	Regular	2004	Very Good	2015	Excellent
1994	Very Good	2005	Excellent	2016	Excellent
1995	Good	2006	Very Good	2017	Very Good
1996	Very Good	2007	Excellent	2018	Excellent
1997	Good	2008	Very Good	2019	Excellent

(\*) The DO Bierzo label began to be used in 1989 with bottled wines from previous harvest (1987-1988) therefore their rating are also included in this chart.





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