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Spain's Bobal Wines for the Summertime

By [Mark Thompson](#) on April 20, 2017



(photo by ©D.O. Utiel-Requena)

When you encounter a wine grape previously unknown to you, it's like discovering a new destination. One of Spain's three most popular grapes, [Bobal](#) is grown in the sun-drenched D.O. of [Utiel-Requena](#) in the interior plains of the province of Valencia. In spite of more than 90,000 acres of vines at more than 100 wineries, 75% of which are Bobal, the grape remains little known beyond Spanish borders.

Based on fragments of Phoenician amphorae that date to the 7th century BC, archeologists have determined that wine has been made in Utiel-Requena for more than 2,700 years. The word Bobal derives from *bovale*, meaning "bull" for its large grape bunches that resemble a bull's head. Historically, this hardy, thick-skinned grape has been admired for producing wines that are deep in color and rich with forest fruit.



(photo by ©D.O. Utiel-Requena)

In more recent years, however, [Utiel-Requena winemakers](#) have begun producing Bobal wines that retain the grape's robust quality, albeit with a more restrained elegance and a deeper complexity—and a beautiful perfume. A range of micro-climates within the nine municipalities of Utiel-Requena enables a broad spectrum of Bobal wines that express the region's unique terroir.



(photo by ©D.O. Utiel-Requena)

Notable for dark fruit flavors like plum and prune, Bobal pairs well with rich stews and casseroles, barbecued meats—and especially paella, Valencia's signature dish. Equally important for those who drink for health, the Bobal grape

contains one of the highest concentrations of resveratrol, which studies have shown to be beneficial for cardiovascular health.

Let's take a sip from three Bobal wines that work beautifully during the spring and summer seasons.



Bodegas Murviedro Bobal Cepas Viejas (2014), (photo by ©Bodegas Murviedro)

Bodegas Murviedro Bobal Cepas Viejas (2014): Now celebrating its 90th anniversary, [Bodegas Murviedro](#) was founded in 1927 and currently has a production of 25 million bottles. A family-owned company, the winery's Bobal wines are notably bold and well-balanced.

[Cepas Viejas](#), a beautifully intense red, tastes like one of those blind tasting winners where oenophiles are surprised to realize they've awarded a wine costing under twenty dollars. Made exclusively from 100% Bobal grapes selected from old vines in an area notable for an abundance of sun, Cepas Viejas showcases Bobal's full body and long elegant finish with a pleasing minerality. The tannins are luscious and smooth—and it's fascinating to imagine this wine in another few years.



(photo by ©D.O. Utiel-Requena)

Aged in French Allier and American barrels for a minimum of eight months, the red fruit aromas are already deep and complex with hints of vanilla toffee. No wonder this beauty has been the 2016 winner of at least three gold awards. What an excellent entrée into the potential complexity of the Bobal grape. Drink this with barbequed vegetables or a rich paella.

An excellent Spanish wine of character and originality—and all for an average of \$11. Unbeatable at that price.



Las 2 Ces el Tinto Barrica de Chozas Carrascal (2015), (photo by ©Chozas Carrascal)

Las 2 Ces el Tinto Barrica de Chozas Carrascal (2015): Founded in 1990 with a commitment to produce only certified organic single-estate wines that express the terroir, [Chozas Carrascal](#) has an annual production of half a million bottles from 100 acres of hilltop vines about a half mile above the Mediterranean Sea.

At this family-owned estate, winemaker Francesc Giron maximizes the micro-climate and limestone terrain to produce complex wines with a persistent minerality and smooth tannins. A 90-point award winner at Guia Peñin, [Las Dos Ces el Tinto Barrica de Chozas Carrascal](#) (2015) represents the estate's young red oaked wines, which mature for six months in French Allier barrels.



Photo by ©Chozas Carrascal

A blend of Bobal, Tempranillo, and Syrah at 13%, this well-balanced winner offers vibrant violet hues alongside a fragrant bouquet of wild strawberries and raspberries. In the mouth, there's the silky opulence of Syrah and the well-structured balance of Tempranillo, commingling with Bobal's fruity vibrancy and mineral clarity. Youthful and ripe, this is a wine with a great deal of promise for the next 2-3 years.

As a young wine with a big personality, Las 2 Ces el Tinto pairs well with fatty fishes such as anchovies and sardines, and also serves as a pleasing complement to ratatouille or white beans. A bargain at under \$10, this wine is best served at 55-57 degrees.



Grupo Covinas Aula Bobal Rosado (2016), (photo by Grupo Coviñas)

Grupo Covinas Aula Bobal Rosado (2016): Hard to believe, perhaps, in looking at this coral pink wine that it's 100% Bobal grapes, but there you have it: another perspective on this versatile grape of chameleonesque character. This fragrant rosé come from [Grupo Coviñas](#), which was created in the 1960s and currently represents over 3,000 growers under the cooperative banner.

For some, the color alone of [Aula Bobal Rosado](#) might warrant a purchase (and certainly the price point as well, which averages less than ten dollars). That roseate sunset glow comes from Bobal's potent pigment—but rest assured, there's nothing bitter here.

This is a brightly refreshing pink rosé wine with alluring aromas of raspberry and rose. Who can resist this pleaser on a summer afternoon? It's crisp and clean on the palate, with a lightly sweet finish. Serve chilled at about 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

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About Mark Thompson

A member of New York Travel Writers Association, Mark Thompson is an editor, journalist, and photographer whose work appears in various periodicals, including Travel Weekly, Metrosourc, Huffington Post, Global Traveler, Out There, and OutTraveler. The author of the novels *Wolfchild* (2000) and *My Hawaiian Penthouse* (2007), Mark completed a Ph.D. in American Studies. He has been a fellow and a resident at various artists' colonies, including the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, and Blue Mountain Center.

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