



# OLIVIER RIVIÈRE

## Gabaxo Rioja

With just shy of twenty hectares of vineyards that are rented, farmed or owned outright in Rioja Alta, Rioja Baja, Rioja Alavesa and Arlanza, and splitting his time between his own wines and those of Bodegas Lacus, it would be a gross understatement to say that Olivier Rivière is a busy man. Originally lured to Spain in 2004 by Telmo Rodriguez to convert his vineyards to biodynamics, Olivier came to appreciate the rich history of Rioja, and the diversity of its soils and grape varieties. In 2006 he started his own project and owing to the high cost of land in Rioja he traded his farming abilities for access to grapes from the best sites he could find. In 2009 he joined Luis Arnedo at Bodegas Lacus and found a more permanent home for his growing portfolio of wines.

### ORIGIN

*Spain*

### APPELLATION

*Rioja*

### SOIL

*Clay limestone, sand*

### AGE OF VINES

*20-65*

### ELEVATION

*500 meters*

### VARIETIES

*Garnacha, Graciano, Tempranillo*

### FARMING

*Biodynamic*

### FERMENTATION

*Hand harvested, half whole cluster and natural yeast fermentation in cement vats*

### AGING

*Aged 12 months in foudre and 500L French oak barrels*

Olivier, as you might guess, is not Spanish but French. We was born and raised in Cognac, studied enology (with an emphasis on biodynamic farming practices) in Bordeaux and gained practical experience there and in Burgundy. The list of estates where he has worked is impressive by anyone's standards from the most dedicated fans of natural wines (Elian da Ros) to ultra-traditionalists (Domaine Leroy.) When his plans to set up a domaine in Fitou fell through, Olivier decided to spend a few years consulting in Spain, and he's never left.

Coming from France, Olivier has an innate sense of terroir. Unlike most of his peers in Rioja, he bases his cuvées not on political boundaries or the length of barrel aging but on terroir. He believes in a quality hierarchy inspired by Burgundy with generic appellation and Village wines at the base and Premier and Grand Cru wines at the top. Gabatxo, a rather ribald term for a border jumper from France – and a name Olivier was frequently called when he first moved to Spain – is a Garnacha-dominant blend from two sites: one near Cárdenas in Rioja Alta on red clay and the other near Aldeanueva de Ebro in Rioja Baja on sandy soils. Half of the fermentation is whole cluster and the wine is aged in a combination of demi-muid and foudre. Along with the Jequitiba, Olivier considers the Gabaxo to be his Côte de Nuits version of Rioja.

### ACCOLADES

90 – 2013 Gabaxo – Wine Advocate



ERIC SOLOMON  
SELECTIONS