

DO EMPORDÀ WINE ROUTE

The Empordà is one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world. Since the ancient Greeks first settled in the area, the Empordà has had several periods of splendour, and we are hoping that the current horn of plenty will never run dry! In September 2005, influential wine guru Robert Parker put the Empordà on the world wine-producing map when he wrote in *The Wine Advocate* «What a discovery these terrific wines from ... Empordà are! Could [this] be the next Priorat?».

The Empordà landscape is so quintessentially Mediterranean that the first farmers in the area decided to use the plains for planting olive trees and the slopes for planting vines on terraces separated by drystone walls. The system has continued for over two thousand years, and has survived icy weather, torrential rains and north winds tearing through the wheat fields.

The best vines in the Empordà are found on these terraces, where the drystone walls prevent soil erosion; the most spectacular are the «green vines by the sea» in the words of Catalan poet Josep Maria de Sagarra. The Empordà has entered the 21st century with excellent red wines, updated rosé wines providing a link with the past, white wines making their way onto the market, and sweet wines, especially Empordà grenache, which are outstanding examples of their kind. The area produces ten white grape varieties and ten red grape varieties. Grenache blanc, Macabeo and Muscat of Alexandria are the most popular white varieties, whereas Samsó and Grenache noir are the favourite red varieties. The Monestrell grape is associated with the Empordà in viticulture and ampelography studies. Medieval scholar Francesc Eiximenis (Girona c. 1330 - Perpignan 1409) extolled Monestrell in a chapter of his *Terç del Crestià*. He added advice on the subject in his manual *Com usar bé de beure e menjar* (How to Eat and Drink Correctly), which contains a letter from a gluttonous clergyman asking a doctor for counsel on his «life regime»:

«Sir, You should know that I am not in full health and am unable to eat hardly at all, as I rarely feel hungry. I shall describe my life regime so that you may see whether this is good and wholesome for my health. On rising, I eat some warm bread and drink a cup of fermented wine or Grec [...] As regards white wine, I drink Grec in summer and fermented wine in winter, or Moscatell, Malvasia, Trebbiano, Corsican, Candia or Genovese Grenache. (...) I cannot drink the red wines from this land, so in summer, I drink Santo Noceto from Calabria, Tropean or Trilla, Picapoll from Mallorca, Rosset or clarets from Avignon. In winter, I drink red wines from Madrid in Castile, or fine Spanish wines, or Gascon wines, or Monestrell from the Empordà. (...) For supper, I drink wine from Beaune or Saint Pourçain, and then bathe my legs with refreshing waters».

DO Empordà comprises 2020 hectares of vineyards in Alt Empordà and Baix Empordà counties, with 423 vine growers and 45 wineries inscribed in the Regulatory Council, and an estimated annual production of approximately 50,000 hectolitres or 3.5 million bottles of wine.

The DO Empordà Wine Route Club promotes wine tourism in the Costa Brava destination

The DO Empordà Wine Route Club, an initiative promoted by the Costa Brava Girona Tourist Board in mid-2012, was created with the goal of bringing together, structuring and marketing the various tourism resources and services of the wine-growing area of Empordà and obtaining the Spanish Wine Route seal, awarded by ACEVIN (Spanish Association of Wine Cities), in order to add value to the Costa Brava tourist destination.

The Costa Brava Girona Tourist Board recognises the potential of the area in terms of food and wine tourism and collaborates with the DO Empordà Regulatory Council and the private sector in the structuring of a solid, targeted and high quality tourism offering for those with an interest in wine, agro-food and environmental matters.