

Generous, smooth vanilla and coconut with fresh strawberry jam buried between. Juicy and refreshing. **UK £9.99; Nkd**

**Honoro Vera, Organic Monastrell, Jumilla 2012** (15%) **A**

Fun palate of chocolate-dipped strawberries and crunchy cranberries. Simple, easy and gratifying. **UK £6.99; DBy, F&F, Hen, Wow**

**Iniesta, Corazón Loco, Manchuela 2012** (13.5%) **B**

Soft redcurrant and juicy strawberry are apparent. Very attractive, straightforward, pure, fruity style.

**Iniesta, Corazón Loco Selección, Manchuela 2010** (13.5%) **B**

Really big, powerful fruit with creamy vanilla and a light seasoning of freshly ground black pepper.

**Inurrieta, Norte, Roble, Navarra 2010** (14.5%)

Fresh cherries and dried herbs with a complex palate adding stony minerality. **UK £8.99; C&D. US \$15; USVIL**

**J Chivite, Finca De Villatuerta Syrah, Navarra 2010** (13.5%) **D**

A biscuity note among the dense flavours of red fruits and cassis. Sensual texture.

**Juan Gil, 18 Meses, Jumilla 2010** (15.5%) **C**

Glossy mouthfeel, dark, ripe berry flavours. A touch of oak on the nose, but integrated well.

**Juan Gil, Silver Label, Jumilla 2010** (15%) **B**

Delicious and savoury with a bruised berry character. Ripe tannins and a zingy, clean finish.

**La Bâscula, Catalan Eagle, Terra Alta 2011** (14%) **B**

Vibrant nose of herbal cassis and tobacco with a fabulously fruity palate, with tacky tannins.

**US \$14.99; USFAC**

**La Bâscula, The Charge, Rioja 2010** (14%) **B**

Black cherries, anise with spice and fresh acidity rising around. Gentle tannins reveal distinctive minerality.

**US \$14.99; USFAC**

**La Bâscula, The Gauntlet Monastrell, Yecla 2011** (15%) **B**

A cheery, easy entry of fleshy berry flavours with tinges of fennel and brown sugar.

**La Bâscula, Turret Fields, Monastrell - Syrah, Jumilla 2012** (14.5%) **B**

Sweet, fleshy damsons and fresh, just-ripe blueberries at the core, with some earthy character.

**US \$14.99; USFAC**

**La Perla del Priorat, Noster Nobilis, Priorat 2009** (14.5%)

Smoky aromas, superb red fruits in a savoury style. Animal notes nicely balanced with plush fruit.

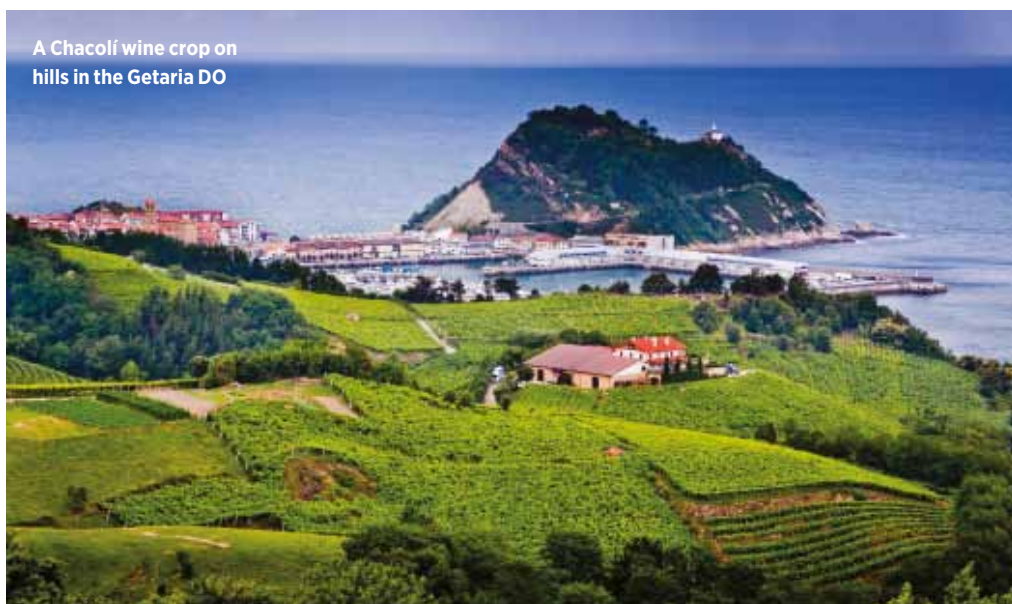
**UK £9.98; Asd**

**La Purísima, Trapío Monastrell 100%, Yecla 2008** (15%) **B**

A pure, deep berry flavour with massive, huge, chunky tannins. Very masculine style.

**La Viña, Juan de Juanes Vendimia Plata Petit Verdot, Valencia 2010** (14%) **B**

Some tobacco, sweet ripe red cherry ➤



A Chacolí wine crop on hills in the Getaria DO

## Check out Chacolí

by Cristina Alcalá

NOT ONLY IS Chacolí (written as Txakoli in Basque) relatively unknown beyond Spanish shores, but also it is equally low profile within Spain itself. Chacolí is traditionally served by pouring it from a height, in a similar way to Spanish cider but in a glass half the size. From its image as a green, acidic and naturally sparkling wine, it has become an attractive Atlantic white wine with a personality that reflects its artisanal production in Basque *casaríos* or manor farmhouses. The DOs are Chacolí de Getaria-Getariako Txakolina, Chacolí de Vizcaya-Bizkaiko Txakolina and Chacolí de Alava-Arabako Txakolina.

DO Chacolí de Getaria is the oldest of the three (1989), boasting the largest vineyard area, around 400 hectares, and 27 bodegas. The DO covers the entire province, but most vineyards are located in the coastal area between Getaria and Zarautz. This traditional Chacolí region produces very light and fresh wines. Recommended bodegas are Talai Berri, Txomin Etxaniz and Hirutza.

Slightly smaller than its neighbour is DO Chacolí de Vizcaya, which has nearly twice as many bodegas. It has distinct climates between its coastal and mountainous areas, and more varied soils. This DO produces late-harvest and sparkling wines. These pioneering wines account for less than 1% of total production, but show the progress being made by enterprising young winemakers and bodegas, such as Gorka Izagirre (*see box opposite*) Itsas Mendi (*see box p293*), Egia Enea, Berroja and Doniene-Gorronzona.

The youngest DO, Chacolí de Alava (2001) has just eight bodegas and 100ha of vineyards in an area that coexists with the famous reds



Above: grapes from rugged Chacolí vineyards now produce attractive Atlantic white wine

of Rioja Alavesa. Its temperate climate and moderate rainfall set it apart. One of its most interesting wines is Señorío de Astobiza.

The features that unite these DOs are high rainfall, rolling green countryside, rugged landscapes, bodegas in unsuspected places, and legendary vineyards (many trained on trellises or arbours), with grape varieties in common. Hondarrabi Zuri and Hondarrabi Zuri Zerratia (Petit Courbu) are the main white varieties and the Chacolí hallmark. Hondarrabi Zuri is a vigorous vine which gives rise to citrus, ripe fruit and grassy aromas, the Hondarrabi Zuri Zerratia less vigorous with many grape clusters with golden berries, a high alcohol content and aromas of white flowers. Other permitted varieties are Mune Mahatsa (Folle Blanche), Izkiriotia (Gros Manseng), Izkiriotia Ttipia (Petit Manseng), Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Chardonnay. Chacolí is set to earn the recognition it deserves.

Cristina Alcalá is a writer, author, sommelier, wine consultant and judge based in Spain