

Decanter

Priorat red wines: panel tasting results

This region's reputation for powerful reds and winemaking excellence held good in this wide selection of wines that showed quality and balance.

Beth Willard

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Beth Willard, Diana Rollan and David Williams tasted 97 wines, with 9 Outstanding and 43 Highly recommended.

Priorat red wines panel tasting scores

97 wines tasted

Exceptional 0

Outstanding 9

Highly recommended 43

Recommended 39

Commended 6

Fair 0

Poor 0

***Entry criteria:** producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release Priorat reds, including single varietal or blended wines*

A few years ago, I found myself with a free afternoon in the **Priorat** region of Catalonia in northeast Spain and set off on the back roads to lose myself (and all sense of direction) in its rugged hills. Through the rolled-down windows, the breeze carried the wonderful scents of wild flowers and sotobosque (garrigue) undergrowth and, while the summer sun was harsh, at times blinding, it gradually gave way to the softer hues of a Mediterranean evening: glowing, shimmering, a final warm embrace before nightfall.

Scroll down to see tasting notes and scores from the Priorat red wines panel tasting

This *Decanter* tasting of Priorat wines brought to mind that moment in time and took the judging panel on a journey through the region's varied landscapes, its bright and bold styles as well as its more subtle nuances and its unique Catalan character.

The panel had expectations of big and bold wines with lots of oak and polish – but it was the regional and authentic personality of the wines that shone.

Balance and restraint were at the forefront, even in wines with unavoidably high alcohol (it is Priorat, after all). Many of the wines showed off the region's famous llicorella (slate) soils, offering up flinty freshness without the make-up of excessive work in the cellar.

David Williams felt that 'the winemaking was much less ambitious and 'more about the vineyards'. Diana Rollan was impressed by the overall style of the wines and, as she pointed out, the best offered 'balanced oak, without being so much about the oak itself'.

The panel agreed that **Cariñena** was the star of the tasting. As the second most-planted grape in the region [with some 540ha compared with **Garnacha**'s 745ha or so, according to doqpriorat.org], it is unsurprising that the variety featured in a lot of the wines, but it was really exciting to see it dominate the highest-rated; in fact, only three of the top 11 wines (94 points or more) did not include the variety in the blend.

See all 97 wines from the panel tasting

Williams was 'blown away by Cariñena' and went on to explain that 'even Garnacha-based wines with just a bit of Cariñena offered more muscle and grit'.

If the panel had any criticism of the tasting, it was the generally high pricing: the highest-scored wines were the most expensive and, as Williams observed, quality was certainly mapped to cost. The judges felt the prices of these outstanding wines were justified, but it was a shame not to have tasted more wines below the £30 level. Rollan raised concerns about the accessibility of Priorat, noting: 'Big appellations in other parts of the world offer lower-priced wines as a way into the region – it would be good to see more value.'

It was pleasing to have a selection of vintages to sample, ranging from 2011 to 2021 – and across younger to older vintages, the tasting was of a wonderfully consistent and high quality. Even wines from more complicated vintages such as 2017 were generally good. The panel was impressed with the vibrancy and youthfulness of wines, even after 10 years of ageing, reminding us of the great collectibility and cellaring potential of the region's wines.

This tasting proved that it is time to take a new trip through the unparalleled terroirs of this vibrant region, to discover new wines from established producers as well as some deserving fresh faces.

Priorat reds panel tasting scores

The wines below all scored 92 points or above

Clos Mogador, Vinya Classificada, Gratallops, Priorat 2020

My Wines

PANEL TASTING

95

Tasted by: Beth Willard, Diana Rollan, David Williams
(at Decanter Tasting Suite, London, 30 Nov 2022)

Part of [Priorat red wines: panel tasting results](#)

Drinking Window: 2023 - 2035

Founded in 1979, the 20ha Clos Mogador lies at 350m altitude, surrounded by mountains up to 1,200m. The vines here grow on slate soils and the 2020 wine is a blend of 45% Garnacha, 29% Cariñena, 16% Syrah and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, fermented using 30% whole bunches and indigenous yeasts. The wine was aged entirely in 2,000L French oak foudres for 18 months before bottling. Beth Willard: A really dark and intense wine that speaks of the region. High-toned, perfumed notes and raspberry on the nose. Oak is well integrated. Big and rich, but with underlying elegance. Polished and serious. Diana Rollan: Dense and powerful nose with dark fruit, and notes of plum, black cherry, blueberries, sandalwood and dried herbs. Big and bold with pronounced tannins, but round and textured. David Williams: Complex nose with notes of blood orange, black cherry and Mediterranean herbs. Intensity but also drive on the palate; great mineral acidity, freshness.



Producer	Clos Mogador
Brand	Vinya Classificada
Vintage	2020
Wine Type	Still
Colour	Red
Country	Spain
Region	Catalonia
Appellation	Gratallops
Sweetness	Dry
Closure	Cork
Alcohol	15.00%
Body	Full
Grapes	Grenache / Garnacha Carignan / Cariñena