

# Olivier Rivière

## Profile

Olivier Rivière, a native of Cognac, studied enology in Montagne St-Emilion, worked briefly with Elian Da Ros in Côtes-du-Marmandais, then at Domaine Leroy in Vosne-Romanée. His main interest there was to learn about biodynamic methods. He went on to Domaine de Chassorney in St-Romain to see how unsulfited wines are made, then spent two years managing the now defunct Domaine de la Combe in Pommard.

His dream was to start his own estate in Fitou, but that did not pan out for lack of money, so in 2004 Olivier took a job with an estate in Rioja Alavesa to convert its vines into biodynamic culture. This was not a happy experience, but Olivier decided to stay in Rioja and started looking for vines tended organically, with the goal to buy grapes. He found a grower in the tiny village of Cárdenas, and bought and vinified his grapes. He was able to rent a 1.20HA plot from another person, and had his first harvest in 2006.

His grapes come from three types of soils: the Graciano vines and part of the Tempranillo for the bottling of Rayos Uva grow on alluvial soils, sandy with round stones; the old vines Garnacha (65 to 90 years) that go into Ganko grow on red soil, with marl and sand colored by ferrous oxides, at an altitude of 600 meters in Rioja Alta; the best Tempranillo vines (25 years old) are in Rioja Alavesa, on clay and limestone soils at 650 meters. Altitude is extremely important to Rivière, the cool nights keep acidity in the grapes, so he can make much fresher wines than most in the region.

His red bottlings are Rayos Uva, all Tempranillo aged in vats; Ganko, half and half Garnacha and Tempranillo aged in barrels; and Gabacho that is 50% Tempranillo, 35 Garnacha, and 15 Graciano. Rivière also produces a cuvée of white wine called Jéquitibá from old vines of Viura, made in barrels on lees, and a Rosé of Garnacha and Tempranillo called La Vida en Rosa.

Since vines in Rioja are exorbitantly expensive, Olivier turned to another area to purchase 1HA of old Tempranillo vines at 1000 meters of altitude. These are in the village of Cavarrubias, in the Burgos province, in the AOC Arlanza. The vines are very old, and Rivière thinks he'll be able to make a long-lived, yet fresh wine from them.