

2002 Bodegas Montecillo Rioja Blanco - [viura grap] - \$12.00

Bodegas Montecillo, founded in 1874 by the Navajas family, is owned by Osborne y Cía, Spain's largest family-owned producer of wine and spirits.

Made from 100% Viura grapes, Montecillo Blanco 2002 (\$8) is crisp and aromatic, featuring a floral green apple perfume. Without any oak aging, the Montecillo white has slightly tropical flavors and nice acidity that favors summery ceviche or spicy Thai dishes.

Macabeo

[mah-kah-BEH-oh]

The most widely cultivated white variety in Spain and the most important white grape in the rioja region, where it's called Viura. It's because of Macabeo's higher yields (and not the quality of its wines) that this variety is pushing out the more traditional white grapes used in Rioja white wines-malvasia and Garnacha Blanca (grenache). Macabeo-based wines are generally light, high in acid, slightly floral and fairly fruity. Their aroma and flavor dissipate very early, however, so they should be drunk quite young. Macabeo is often blended with xarel-lo and parellada to make sparkling wines.

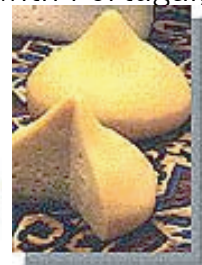


Queso de la Serena

Sheep's milk cheese, with well-defined characteristics has always been made for auto-consumption and sale. It is a cheese made from the whole and very thick raw milk of the merino sheep (a rustic breed with small milk production) coagulated with vegetable rennet (*Cynara cardunculus*), using farmhouse type manual production methods and short aging period under temperate and humid conditions.

La Serena is one of the most sought-after, highly valued and expensive cheeses in Spain. Today this cheese is made using both traditional methods on farms and in small modern dairies. The most productive time of year is from the beginning of winter to the end of spring.

The name of "Extremadura", a region in southwestern Spain, on the border with Portugal, comes from "Tierra de Extremos (Land of Extremes).



Tetilla. The word "tetilla" (meaning nipple) clearly defines the traditional shape of this cheese, that is, a flattened pear-shaped cone with a small nipple on the top. This is the most characteristic cheese from Galicia, easily recognized by its shape and smooth, fine, yellow straw-colored rind. The soft paste, thick and smooth with few air pockets, is very creamy on the palate. The flavor is clean and smooth.