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Rioja promotes wines at 125 U.K. venues after British sales fell 13.16%

The October campaign reached more than 30 cities in Rioja’s biggest export market, which takes about one-third of shipments

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Rioja wines were promoted across 125 restaurants, bars, wine shops and retail outlets in the United Kingdom in October as the Spanish appellation tried to strengthen its position in its biggest export market after a sharp drop in sales volume there in 2025.

The monthlong campaign, called “Rioja Wine Month,” was organized by the Regulatory Council of the Qualified Designation of Origin Rioja, the body that represents and promotes wines made under the Rioja appellation. According to the council, the program reached businesses in more than 30 cities and included guided tastings, food pairings, by-the-glass promotions, digital activities and in-store events.

The effort was focused on a market that carries unusual weight for Rioja. The United Kingdom is the leading foreign destination for Rioja wine and takes in about one-third of the volume the appellation exports, according to the council. That importance has made the recent slowdown there more significant for producers and exporters across the region.

In 2025, the volume of Rioja sold in the British market fell 13.16% from a year earlier, based on the council’s annual report. That decline was steeper than the overall drop in Rioja’s foreign markets, where export volume fell 6.69%. The fall in the United Kingdom was therefore 6.47 percentage points deeper than the average decline across all overseas destinations.

The scale of the market remained large despite that setback. The United Kingdom received about 37.5 million bottles of Rioja in 2025, the council said. The new campaign in October was designed to reinforce Rioja’s visibility with both trade buyers and consumers in a country where the denomination already has broad distribution but where volumes have recently weakened.

The campaign included events in cities such as London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Oxford, York, Newcastle, Birmingham and Cardiff. The council said the goal was to increase contact with consumers in restaurants and bars while also keeping Rioja visible in stores and among trade professionals who decide which wines to stock, list and promote.

One of the central events was the “Rioja Wine Quiz,” held on October 13 at Barrafina in Covent Garden, London. The council said the gathering brought together sommeliers, buyers, importers and other British wine professionals for a program that mixed questions about the appellation with blind tastings and a sampling of more than 20 wines.

Winning teams in that event received £500 to buy Rioja wines from participating businesses. The day ended with a working dinner focused on future activities and commercial opportunities, according to the council.

Another part of the campaign, called the “Rioja Route,” created a food-and-wine trail through London venues including Camino, Bar Rioja, Arros QD, El Pirata, Maresco and Sabor. Those businesses offered pairings, tastings and by-the-glass selections tied to the promotion.

The 125 participating venues offer one measure of the campaign’s reach, but the council has not yet released figures for extra sales, new orders or other commercial results directly linked to the October push. For now, the available data show the size of the promotional network and the priority Rioja is giving to the British market after a year in which volume there fell more sharply than in its export business as a whole.

The campaign also reflects the way Rioja is trying to defend market share in a mature destination where brand recognition is already high but competition is strong. By placing activity in restaurants, bars and retail outlets at the same time, the council sought to support both immediate consumer purchases and longer-term trade relationships in a market that remains central to the denomination’s export strategy.