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King of Spain Toasts Rioja

King Felipe VI honors Rioja’s centenary with visit to iconic wineries

Thursday, June 5, 2025



On June 5, the Rioja Qualified Designation of Origin (DOCa Rioja) marked its centenary with a series of events attended by King Felipe VI and leading figures from Spain’s wine industry. The celebrations took place across three significant locations in the Rioja region: the Marqués de Riscal and Marqués de Murrieta wineries, and the historic Barrio

de la Estación in Haro.

The day began in Haro, a town recognized as the birthplace of Rioja's development as a Designation of Origin. King Felipe VI visited the Barrio de la Estación, accompanied by Gonzalo Capellán, president of the Government of La Rioja, mayor Guadalupe Fernández, and members of the Regulatory Council. This area is known for its role in the first exports of Rioja wine and is home to some of the oldest wineries in the region. During his visit, the King inaugurated the new "Espacio Centenario de Rioja," a centennial space that now bears this name. The site features a sculpture by local artist José Antonio Olarte, made up of one hundred iron pieces representing each harvest cycle over the past century. The design incorporates elements inspired by nature and winemaking.

The main institutional event took place at the Marqués de Riscal Winery in Elciego. This gathering brought together not only King Felipe VI but also Spain's Minister of Agriculture, Luis Planas, and the presidents of La Rioja, the Basque Country, and Navarre—regions that share territory within the DOCa Rioja. The officials joined the monarch for an official reception and toured the winery's facilities. Around 300 guests from across the wine sector attended, including winemakers, workers, and business leaders.

During this ceremony, the Regulatory Council honored its former presidents—Víctor Pascual, Luis Alberto Lecea, José María Daroca, and Fernando Salamero—with personalized engravings crafted by Olarte. Fernando Ezquerro, current president of the Council, paid tribute to those who have contributed to Rioja's legacy but are no longer present.

A highlight of the day was the opening of bottles from the 1925 vintage—the first year wines were bottled under official protection following DOCa Rioja's creation. King Felipe VI led a toast with this century-old wine, recognizing both its historical significance and the enduring reputation of Rioja wines. Ezquerro noted that this vintage symbolized the beginning of a journey that has seen DOCa Rioja become Spain's leading wine designation by value. Today, DOCa Rioja accounts for more than 40% of Spanish wine with protected designation status and exports to 136 countries. The region supports

over 13,000 winegrowers and nearly 600 wineries, generating annual revenues around 1.5 billion euros.

In Logroño later that afternoon, festivities continued at Marqués de Murrieta Winery with the Forum of Great Spanish Brands organized by Europa Press. This event focused on discussing the role of wine in Spain’s business landscape and its contribution to promoting Spanish products abroad. Minister Luis Planas highlighted Rioja’s economic, social, and cultural importance both domestically and internationally.

Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga, president of Marqués de Murrieta, welcomed representatives from major Spanish companies such as Repsol, Banco Santander, Iberdrola, Mapfre, CaixaBank, and Barceló Hotel Group. Fernando Ezquerro recalled how a group of winemakers in 1925 decided to legally protect their wines’ identity—a move that laid the foundation for today’s internationally recognized brand.

A roundtable discussion moderated by Candelas Martín de Cabiedes included business leaders Simón Pedro Barceló (Barceló Hotel Group), Roberto Monteagudo (FCC), Antonio de Nó (Air Nostrum), José Luis Lapuente (DOCa Rioja), and Cebrián-Sagarriga. They discussed how Spanish brands can compete globally and how Rioja’s blend of tradition, quality standards, and business strategy serves as a model for other sectors.

Gonzalo Capellán closed the forum by thanking participants and emphasizing Rioja’s role as both a regional symbol and a national standard for quality achieved through collective effort.

Throughout these centennial events, speakers highlighted how DOCa Rioja has adapted over time while maintaining its identity through collaboration between winegrowers and institutions. The day ended without formal closing remarks or announcements but left attendees with a clear message: after one hundred years, Rioja remains a strong brand built on shared commitment to quality and innovation while honoring its roots.