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Raquel Pérez Cuevas becomes first woman to lead DOCa Rioja in its 100-year history

Her appointment marks a milestone for Spain’s renowned wine region as it celebrates its centennial and looks to the future

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On June 24, 2025, Raquel Pérez Cuevas was officially appointed as the new president of the Regulatory Council of the Rioja Qualified Designation of Origin (DOCa Rioja), marking the first time a woman has held this position in the organization’s 100-year history. The appointment took place during a formal ceremony at the council’s headquarters in Logroño, Spain, where new board members representing both wine production and marketing sectors for the next four years were also sworn in.

Pérez Cuevas received overwhelming support from the sector, securing 99 percent of votes from the 32 council members. These members represent a broad spectrum of the Rioja wine industry, including cooperative associations, agricultural organizations, and

wine sector groups. Her election coincides with a significant milestone for DOCa Rioja, which is celebrating its centennial year as Spain’s leading wine region and one of the most recognized appellations worldwide.

The new president brings extensive international experience to her role. She has been involved with her family’s Ontañón winery project from an early stage and is part of a new generation of winemakers with strong academic and professional backgrounds. Pérez Cuevas holds a degree in agricultural engineering from the Public University of Navarra and a degree in oenology from the University of La Rioja. She furthered her education with postgraduate studies in wine marketing and management in Paris and Navarra, as well as an Executive MBA from Universidad Pontificia Comillas. Fluent in Spanish, English, and French, she has worked across global markets and has received several awards throughout her career, including the Mercurio Ejecutivo Award (2018), “World Leader in Wine” by the Chinese government (2014), and twice “Businesswoman of La Rioja.”

During her inaugural speech, Pérez Cuevas emphasized her commitment to inclusive leadership and dialogue within the sector. She acknowledged the challenges facing Rioja but expressed confidence in collective effort and loyalty to the region’s identity. She thanked outgoing president Fernando Ezquerro for his service over the past four years. Ezquerro’s term saw progress in sustainability initiatives, increased national and international promotion, and strategic efforts to balance sector interests and boost wine tourism. Ezquerro will now serve as first vice president of the Interprofessional Organization of Rioja Wine (OIPVR), joined by Begoña Jiménez Díaz as second vice president, Alejandro Las Heras Pérez as secretary, and Javier Ruiz de Galarreta San Vicente as treasurer.

Pérez Cuevas highlighted that her leadership will focus on maintaining quality as a top priority for DOCa Rioja. She called for unity without uniformity among stakeholders and stressed the importance of dialogue, engagement, and loyalty to what makes Rioja unique. She also underlined DOCa Rioja’s role not only for the region but for Spain’s wine sector as a whole.

DOCa Rioja covers about 100 kilometers of diverse landscapes and climates along northern Spain’s Ebro River valley. It is home to more than 600 wineries and 14,000 grape growers who produce red, white, and rosé wines known for their quality and tradition. The region exports to over 100 international markets and is increasingly popular among wine tourists seeking both classic styles and innovative expressions.

Founded on June 6, 1925, DOCa Rioja is Spain’s oldest protected designation of origin for wine. The Regulatory Council oversees traceability, quality standards, and transparency for all producers under its label. As it marks its centenary this year, DOCa Rioja continues to reinforce its reputation as a benchmark for excellence in global winemaking.

The new leadership under Raquel Pérez Cuevas signals both continuity and renewal for DOCa Rioja at a historic moment. The region remains committed to adapting to global market demands while preserving its heritage—a balance that will shape its future in the world of wine.