vinetur

London festival marks 100 years of Rioja with wine tastings, cultural events, and culinary showcases

Thousands attend Hackney Wick celebration highlighting Rioja’s legacy, British ties, and growing popularity in the UK market

Monday, July 21, 2025



Thousands of Londoners gathered in Hackney Wick over the weekend to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Rioja, Spain's most renowned wine region. The "Rioja 100" festival took place at Hackney Bridge, transforming the venue into a tribute to a century of Rioja's history, diversity, and evolution. Nearly 5,000 attendees enjoyed a program that combined wine tastings, international cuisine, cultural activities, and live entertainment.

The event featured more than 70 different Rioja wines available for tasting. Visitors could explore the full range of styles and regions within the Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa) Rioja. Three dedicated "Rioja Bars" offered guests the chance to sample reds, whites, and rosés from across the appellation.

Educational sessions were a key part of the festival. British wine expert Mike Turner moderated masterclasses and panel discussions with winemakers such as Pablo de Simón from Bodegas Valserrano, Gonzalo Salazar from Bodegas Tarón, Sergio Leza from Bodegas Leza García, and Ignacio López from Bodegas Campo Viejo. These sessions explored Rioja's roots, current trends, and future directions. Olly Smith, a well-known British TV personality recognized for his appearances on BBC's Saturday Kitchen and ITV's This Morning, led additional workshops introducing visitors to the region's wines.

Culinary demonstrations added another dimension to the celebration. Spanish chefs José Pizarro and Omar Allibhoy prepared dishes inspired by both traditional recipes and modern fusion cuisine. Their live cooking shows paired food with selected Rioja wines, highlighting the versatility of the region's offerings.

The festival also included performances by DJs, live music acts, and traditional dances presented by the Grupo de Danzas de Logroño. The group brought Riojan folklore to London with bagpipers, drummers, and twelve dancers performing on stage.

Iñigo Tapiador, Marketing and Communications Director for the Rioja Regulatory Council, attended the event and emphasized its significance for the brand in the UK market. He noted that the festival demonstrated Rioja's strong connection with British consumers and its role as an ambassador for Spanish culture abroad. According to Tapiador, "The festive atmosphere has been extraordinary. Over an entire weekend,

Rioja wines have connected directly and emotionally with British consumers through authenticity, quality, and celebration.”

The event attracted significant media attention from both British outlets specializing in wine, gastronomy, and lifestyle as well as Spanish correspondents who traveled to London to cover the festivities. Many importers, buyers, sommeliers, and wine professionals also attended.

London was chosen as a key location for this centenary celebration due to its cosmopolitan spirit and dynamic cultural scene. Organizers aimed to reach a new generation of consumers who appreciate both tradition and innovation in wine.

The “Rioja 100” festival is part of an international program marking 100 years since Rioja became Spain’s first official Denomination of Origin. The UK remains one of Rioja’s most important export markets. In 2024 alone, more than 32 million liters of Rioja wine were shipped to Britain—a 12% increase over the previous year—further cementing its status as a leading Spanish wine brand abroad.