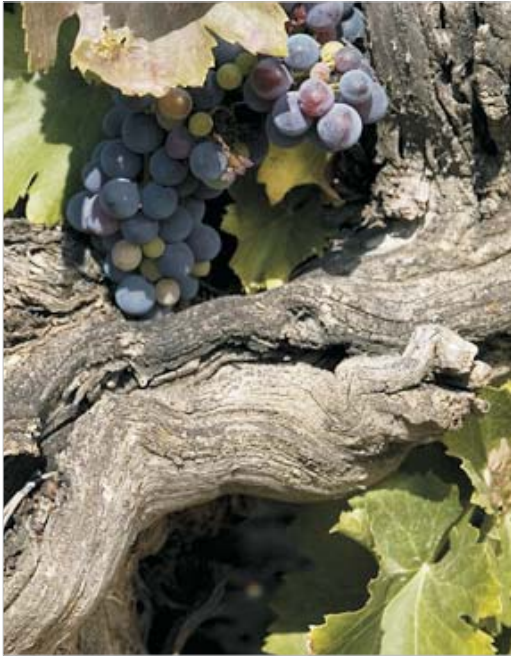




EL COTO DE RIOJA

El Viñedo

The Land



In this section we would like to refer to the land in its widest sense, and here the use of the French word "terroir" is preferable to the more limited concept of terruño.

What is the land to us? Of course it is the soil for our crops, the ultimate material for supporting and nourishing the vine stock, but it is also the surrounding landscape, its relief, climate, people, traditions and identity.

The Rioja D.O.Ca. is blessed with an extensive variety of soils, although these can basically be narrowed down to the three dominant types. We are now going to provide a brief description of the general features of each soil type and how they contribute to the character of the wine (although in actual fact soil is but one of a long series of factors that combine to give the wine its personality, and here it is simplified for didactic purposes):

- **Limestone clay.** This is the red ochre soil of villages such as Oyón, where El Coto is located, and also Laguardia, San Vicente de la Sonsierra, Ábalos and Haro. It accounts for 25% of La Rioja and is predominant on the north bank of the river Ebro (Rioja Alavesa, Sonsierra and other Northern parts of Rioja Alta). Due to their proximity to the mountains, the plots of land are smaller and steeper. This soil gives the wine good acidity and extract, something that is essential in the wine ageing process, glycerides, with structure and colour.

- **Ferrous clay.** This is the reddish brown soil that is particularly predominant in Nájera and along the Najerilla river banks, in Rioja Alta. Soil with a high concentration of iron which gives the wine a mineral content. Fresh red wines with more body.

- **Alluvial.** This soil is to be found in most of the D.O.Ca of La Rioja, accounting for practically 50% of the total surface area, stretching along the river banks and containing a large proportion of round stones. Full-bodied wines.

The soil composition has a direct effect on the grape quality. Paradoxically, we don't want fertile land which makes vines easier to grow, but poor soils in which the vines need to fight to produce their fruit. This is when the best quality is obtained.