

BARRON'S

October 25, 2010 | METROPOLITAN CLUB | NEW YORK CITY

## The Art of Successful Investing Conference

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

WSJ.com

JUNE 14, 2010, 11:44 AM ET

### Back to Priorat

Back in the '90s, Jean Luc Le Du, then sommelier at New York's Daniel, introduced me to a spectacular Spanish wine called Clos Erasmus, from Priorat, in Cataluna. It had the earthiness and minerality of an old-world wine with the power and ripeness more often found in the new world. It reminded me of a bit of great Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and indeed it had some Grenache, the main component of CDP, but was a blend of red grapes including the obscure Carignan.

I soon discovered some other great wines from Priorat, including Clos Mogador and Clos de l'Obac. The region had been celebrated for its wines since the Carthusian monks established vineyards there in the 12th century, but the vineyards were largely abandoned by the time a group of viticulturally savvy pioneers led by René Barbier discovered the area in the 1980s, rehabilitating the old vineyards and planting new varieties alongside the Carignan and Grenache. Within a decade their wines were receiving world-wide acclaim. I visited in the late '90s and was deeply impressed with the level of winemaking as well as the beauty of the countryside, with its precipitously steep, terraced vineyards.

Priorat has continued to attract investment and winemaking talent since then. Among the newer bodegas in the region is Melis Cellars, owned by Victor Gallegos and Javier Lopez, who met when both were studying at UC Davis and who first visited Priorat in the '80s, when the revolution was in its infancy. They eventually found and purchased an abandoned vineyard in 1999 and brought in their first vintage in 2004. I discovered their wine when I was searching for something to accompany an order of ribs from Townline barbecue in Sagaponack, N.Y. Zinfandel would have been an obvious choice, but it had been a while since I'd had a Priorat and I'd never had anything from Melis. The bottle I popped was its second label, the 2006 Elix. It retails for \$45, about half of what most top Priorats go for. It was big enough to more than stand up to the ribs, really ripe and rich, with the slatey and earthy undertones that I often find in these wines. It renewed my love affair with the big, bold wines of Priorat.

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones &amp; Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)