

Importer to debut wine in Tampa

Tampa Bay Business Journal - November 24, 2006

by [Agustina Guerrero](#)



Kathleen Cabble

Jose Antonio Briz Sanchez, CEO of Grandes Vinos y Vinedos and Rainer Appold, president of World Wineries Inc., hold one of the Spanish wines that will be distributed in the United States. Rainer Appold, president of Oldsmar-based [World Wineries](#), does not speak Spanish, but this New Year he plans to raise his glass and toast, "[Salud!](#)"

World Wineries has signed an agreement with [Bodegas Grandes Vinos y Viñedos S.A.](#), a Spanish winery, to bring its wines to America.

The partners would not disclose financial details.

The Spaniards have decided to try to conquer Tampa first. The area's rich Hispanic heritage attracted them here, said GVV's GM, Jose Antonio Briz Sanchez.

"Communities with large, affluent Latino populations tend to be supportive of Spanish (and South American) wines, and this would certainly suggest that Florida would be a good market," said Robin Garr, of [WineLoversPage.com](#).

GVV and World Wineries have selected a brand, Gaspar, that will be introduced at the Gasparilla Pirate Festival. Two other brands, Salduva and Corona de Aragon, will be available at [Cork & Olive](#) stores and selected Bay area restaurants.

GVV also will bring its Disparates de Goya wine collection to Tampa. It was created to honor the famous Spanish painter, Francisco Goya, born in Aragon, where the winery is located.

Trend toward improved quality

Spain is the second largest producer of wine in the world, behind France. As the country transitioned to a democracy after the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, its wineries improved their production techniques and infrastructure, gaining worldwide recognition.

In the United States, Spanish wineries face a non-European competitor: California, which is the second largest wine consumer in the United States, behind New York. Florida comes in third.

GVV, with 20 million bottles produced each year, plans to sell 250,000 cases in the United States in its first 12 months.

Tampa was selected over other markets like Miami because in Spanish culture, people mean more than numbers, and its relationships have blossomed here, Briz Sanchez said. "The affinity with the people is important for the business to work," he said.

The relationship with World Wineries has been growing for more than a year, and now the partners are ready to take on the U.S. market, he said.

If the deal works out as expected, GVV could open its own office in Tampa.

"Central and North Florida have not started to click yet," said Frank Bacon, state wine manager for Premier Beverage. "It's a good time for smaller wineries to get started here."

Founded in September 1997 to channel the sales of six cooperatives, GVV is the largest winery in its region of Cariñena and the autonomous community of Aragón.

Still, it is by no means one of the largest players in Spain. The largest names in Spanish wines are located in other popular wine regions such as Rioja.

GVV competes with the giants through "humility, hard work and quality," said Briz Sanchez.

The company already sells its wines in Canada, Japan, Mexico and Brazil. It was just waiting for the right partner to enter the challenging U.S. market.

Unlike Canada, where locals are familiar with French and other European wines, GVV had to create a special line of wines to attract U.S. customers, Briz Sanchez said.

Finding the right partner was also important. "We wanted to partner with somebody from the [New World](#) that could transmit all that's good about our products to this market," Briz Sanchez said.

World Wineries plans to manage the new venture attending to every detail, said Appold. "For us, GVV is not one out of thousands," he said. "We are not an importer with a portfolio of 1,000 wines."

Once the GVV brands take off in Tampa, a plan calls for expansion to other Florida cities, and states such as Texas, Appold said.

INFO

Grandes Vinos y Viñedos S.A. by the numbers:

- 12,355 acres of wineries
- 4.8 million pounds of grapes
- 60 percent red wine
- 30 percent white wine
- 10 percent rosé wine