

IHAY TXAKOLINA!

A Guide To The Basque Wine Known As Txakolina

By André Tamers

What is Txakolina?

Txakolina is a white wine from the Basque country made predominantly with the indigenous grape variety Hondarribi Zurri. Txakolina comes from three distinct Denominations of Origin in the Basque region of Spain. It is the most common drink found throughout the tapas bars. It is simple, straight forward and perfectly suited to socializing and great tapas (preferably seafood). Txakolina comprises three Denominations of Origin: Getariako Txakolina, Arabako Txakolina, Bizkaiko Txakolina.

What makes Txakolina special?

Having traveled extensively throughout Spain in search of the most authentic products, txakolina has always been on my mind. It's one of those great experiences you have in Spain. You approach any tapas bar in the Basque Country and you are likely to see txakolina being poured. The reason you know it's txakolina is because of the unusual way in which it is poured. Txakolina is an experiential kind of wine. By this I mean it is more than just about the wine, it's about the totality of the experience. It is the food, the ocean and its people all brought together in a liquid form.

Why so many Txakolinas?

Why not! I made my way through hundreds of tapas bars looking for the perfect Txakolina. I started out by importing Uriondo, which comes from the Bilbao area. I found it lurking in one of the most beautiful bars in Spain: Café Iruña. I later met Roberto Irbarretxe Zorriketa who made the wine and it confirmed all that this wine was about: iconoclastic, original and a pleasure to be around. I then made a pact to look for the other two Denominations of txakolina. On a trip in January to one of my favorite Tapas bars in St. Sebastian (Gambara) I decided it was time for txakolina and low and behold my first glass of Ameztoi. It was light, amiable and thoroughly refreshing after a mouthful of baby eels. I had solved two pieces of my puzzle. The last part was to come together during one of the great food and wine shows in Barcelona. As I wandered the halls lost in a sea of sameness I unexpectedly came upon Xarmant. This wine came from a denomination founded in 2003! I pulled up a glass which was immediately followed by a gorgeous tapa and voilà the rest is history. Not content with only one txakolina per Demonination, I have since added two additional and unique txakolinas to our portfolio: Doniene Gorrondona and Gurrutxaga.

How do you drink Txakolina?

Certainly not in a wine glass! A tumbler is preferred. And of course the wine must be served very cold. It is usually poured from high above the shoulder in order to break the natural carbonic gas which the wine contains. To slow the pour, some tapas bars will carve a wedge the length of the cork, reinserting the cork and allowing only a small channel of wine to come out of the bottle.