

OCTOBER CLUB - Basque Country

Txakoli (pronounced cha-KO-lee) is THE region in Basque Country! And while this fiercely independent and isolated region of Spain may not be the first name to roll off your tongue, its light, dry white wines have a barely-there sparkle which can be a brilliant tonic for your fall evenings AND its rare and minerality-driven reds are the perfect fall red wine!

Hondarrabi Zuri is the white grape here and they are absolutely perfect as a gentle aperitif or as an accompaniment to first courses or salad for dinner or just to drink on a sunny fall afternoon! Whites are famously poured from an extravagant height in the local pintxos bars around San Sebastián's old town and also in Bilbao - where around 80% of total production is consumed.

Hondarrabi Beltza is the red grape and is RARE even in Basque Country it is rarely exported. With its peppery minerality and tingly red fruit, this wine is amazing! perfect for those cool, fall evenings when you

so now you know that Txakoli is a region not just a wine! more facts - there are 3 sub-regions to Txakoli and their proximity to the ocean drastically affects the grapes and thus the wines:

Txakoli de Getaria (Getariako Txakolina) - mostly if not all, white grapes:

The largest of the three sub-regions, located close to the coastal town of San Sebastián.

Txakoli de Bizkaia - mostly white but some red:

Produces particularly mineral examples from vineyards along the coast in the north-west of the region.

Txakolí de Álava - mostly red:

The smallest of the three, located further inland in the Ayala Valley. The southern part of Álava is home to the Rioja Alavesa region. More on this region later!

Ameztoi 'Hijo de Rubentis' Sparkling

from: País Vasco, Basque Country

grape: Hondarrabi Zuri & Hondarrabi Beltza

facts: 20-150 year old

red and white grapes are co-fermented

Made in the traditionnelle method (just like champagne) with no shortcuts!

sourced from the same vineyard as the their still wine but the grapes were picked 10 days early to ensure a lower base alcohol

Secondary fermentation occurs in bottle

Lees aging for 14 months to give a bit of extra richness and stability

tasting notes: bright pink grapefruit color with fine and persistent bubbles. Floral aromas with notes of red fruit and raspberries on the nose. The wine is cheerful, fresh, elegant and persistent with a hint of red fruit.

pairing ideas: everything from radish on toast to pate to steak!

random info: Ignacio (current winemaker) is the 7th generation Ameztoi!!

They own 20 hectares of vines where from the vineyards you can see the town of St. Sebastian and understand the influence of the Atlantic Ocean on these vines and resulting wine.

Hijo de Rubentis means "Son of Rubentis".

Urkizahar Txakoli

from: Beizama, Gipuzkoa (Getariako Txakolina), Basque Country

grape: Hondarrabi Zuri

facts & random info: these mountains are where the Cantabrian and Pyrénées mountains meet, the collision point of the Iberian and European tectonic plates.

The soil makeup here is a wild and complex blend of principally limestone, then hard sandstone, shale, all kinds of multicolored volcanic slate, shiny metamorphic lherzolites, among others.

This place is the very definition of wild! Urkisahar means 'old birch tree' in Basque

There are incredibly few organic producers of txakoli, and most people think that he is crazy for attempting to do so in this place with vineyards this steep and so small; nonetheless, with vigilant hard work, the results in the bottle are impossible to argue with!

He is a one man act-literally! he uses sea water, cow's milk, and tinctures of sage and other plants as vineyard treatments. Like all the winemakers I believe in, Luisa is completely against the use of any chemical or additive both in the vineyard and in the cellar. He and his family work very hard to revive one of Gipuzkoa's ancient farming techniques while protecting and working with rather than against the local ecosystem. These vineyards are the highest in the region and so steep they are impossible to work with machines so all work is done by hand.

Mark my words - this wine is going to be a cult-favorite. Previously only available in the Basque country and only at Michelin restaurants (Arzak in San Sebastián to name one), I am so excited to share it to you!!

pairing ideas: grilled fish! fresh anchovies, green vegetables.

2017 tasting notes: hands down the best and most authentic Txakoli I have ever had the privilege to try!! so true and so honest with it's salinity and minerality. The classic fizz or tingle on the tongue is followed quickly with sorrel, quince and the sea! Floral notes dance in the background while green apple and lime make for a lively palate!

2018 tasting notes: This vintage was much more generous than 2017. Maybe more of an easy vintage if that's possible in these mountains - no real weather (hail or rain at the wrong moment) and long ripening summer days. Again, slightly fizzy as it should be, this wine is just so much more beautiful than is the standard in the DO Getariako Txakolina or what we have been trained to think of when/ if we think of Txakoli. Pink Lady apples with balanced acidity and high-tone floral notes, bay leaves and bright citrus. So vibrant and not showy at all, but pure and straightforward just like Luisa & his family!

Doniene Gorrondona 'Beltza'

from: Bizkaiko, Basque Country

grape: Hondarrabi Beltza

facts & random info: LADY WINEMAKER!!

these vines are over 150-years old and are pre-phylloxera Hondarribi Beltza vines. Indeed this is a rare red wine in the land of spritzzy, white wines.

Perched above the Bay of Biscay on steep, green cliffs near seaside village of Bakio, this winery (name is a combination of *Doniene* which is Basque for *Saint John* - the patron Saint of Bakio and whose shrine and hermitage is on the summit of the nearby San Juan de Gaztelugatxe island), and *Gorrondona* which is the name of the farmhouse and winery which was built in 1852.

The amazing Itziar is the champion of this region and without her, this region would not have the recognition or status that it does - Bizkaiko Txakolina DO was created in 1994 because of Itziar's advocacy. With her brother & partner, Itziar is staying true to the old ways of Bizkaiko and making some pretty bomb wine as well!

tasting notes: reminds me of Loire valley Cabernet Franc with hints of green peppercorn and spice followed up by a mouthful of crushed minerals and juicy red fruit - luscious red raspberries and black cherry. So structured and balanced. Definitely ageable but not sure I could let it be in my cellar for too many years cuz I just wanna drink it!

pairing ideas: grilled flank steak (maybe hanger) with peppercorns
aged sheeps milk cheese

veg option - grilled tofu crusted with peppercorns