

thebacklabel®

A monthly wine journey curated for adventurous souls

WELCOME TO IBERIA







LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One of my favorite memories from studying abroad in Barcelona was an afternoon of simplicity spent on the beach.

My friends and I bought a bottle of white wine for €3, which I was skeptical about, and spicy mixed nuts from a little bodega right by the beach. I remember being pleasantly surprised by the wine thinking it was as good as any \$20 bottle back home. Its light, easy-drinking style was the perfect thing to cool down the heat of the summer day and the spice of the nuts. We laid on the beach for hours as we watched kids play, women walk up and down the beach offering Thai massages, and couples being very intimate on their towels.

The white wines we've selected this month are deliciously crisp, light-bodied, and transport me right back to that day on the beach — I can almost feel the warm, salty air with each sip. But nothing takes me back quite like the food.

My friend and I were placed with a host family that went above and beyond every expectation we had. They were loving, engaging, genuinely interested in us, and every meal was a family experience where we felt all of this. And the food? Talk about above and beyond.

Although they never made us anything that flashy — except when they made us sushi and fideuà for our farewell dinner — most of

our meals were simple dishes made from seasonal produce. I never saw our host mother use recipes, and much like my mom, she would just throw together what worked and what was available. It felt like being at home. The basic, yet amazing tortillas (or Spanish omelets) with homemade aioli are something I'll never forget. You've never seen me eat so fast until you put one of their tortillas in front of me and watch it disappear in a matter of seconds.

I embarked on my trip fully anticipating coming home 10 pounds heavier from eating my weight in jamón (pg. 6), bocadillos, and tapas. Granted, I did eat plenty of all of those things, but some of my most treasured moments aren't the extravagant ones I'd imagined.

I'm always excited to pick out the recipes for the magazine, but this month felt special to me. The first reason being my love for food, but the second is having the opportunity to share with our members dishes similar to the ones I found on my host family's table. From fried anchovies (pg. 14) to Spanish omelets (pg. 24), these are authentic recipes you could easily find in almost any Spanish home — especially the one I lived in a few summers ago.

¡Salud! And welcome to Iberia.

—MORGAN KATZ



EDITOR **MORGAN KATZ**

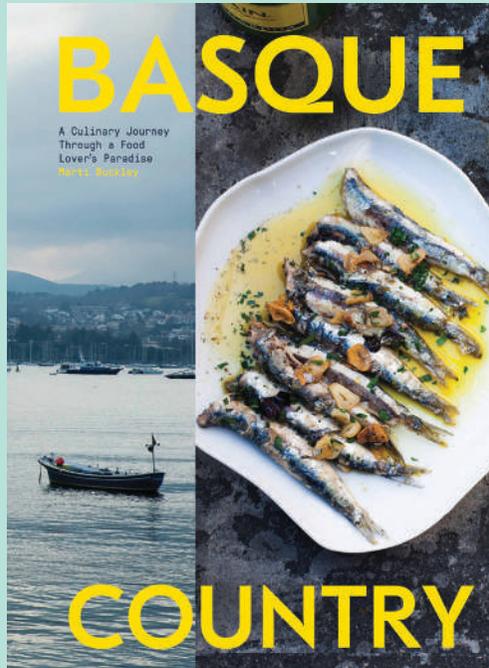
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THIS MONTH'S RECIPE PAIRINGS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Tucked away in the northwest corner of Spain, Basque Country not only boasts more Michelin-starred restaurants per capita than any other region in the world, but its unique landscape and traditions inform every bite of its soulful cuisine, from pintxos to accompany a glass of wine to the elbows-on-the-table meals served in its legendary eating clubs. Marti Buckley, an American chef, journalist, and passionate Basque transplant, unlocks the mysteries of this culinary world in her new book by bringing together its simple, ingredient-driven recipes with stories from the Basque kitchen, and vivid photographs of both food and place.

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IBÉRICO VS. SERRANO: YOUR GUIDE TO SPANISH HAM

The discussion of Spanish food often cues mental images of plates layered with thinly sliced, almost transparent, pieces of bright red meat streaked with ribbons of fat. Ham, or jamón, is a staple in Spanish cuisine (the average Spaniard eats about 20 pounds of ham per year!). Legs of cured meat can be found hanging from ceilings at almost any tapas bar, hunks of pork in all shapes, sizes, and preparation methods line cases in super markets. It can be shocking at first, but eventually the sight of ham becomes comforting — a reminder of the unique culture you're experiencing. There are two categories of jamón found in the Iberian Peninsula that you've most likely heard of: jamón Ibérico and jamón serrano.

We got to talk to the experts at Fermín — the biggest exporter of the highest quality hams from Spain — and got a little insight.

BY MORGAN KATZ

JAMÓN IBÉRICO

When it comes to Spanish ham, Jamón Ibérico is on the higher end of the quality and price spectrum — a pound of Iberian pork going for \$200 is pretty standard. The Spanish government passed a law to regulate and control the production and labeling of Ibérico pork products, much like the regulations for Chianti or Champagne. This color-coded labeling system specifies the breed and feeding of the animal and ensures you're getting what you pay for.

Black Label

Jamón Ibérico de Bellota is the crown jewel of Spanish cuisine, but it isn't made from your everyday pig. Only black Iberian pigs with a purebred ancestry can be used for jamón Ibérico de Bellota. They're free to roam the dehesa (a Mediterranean grassland found in the southwest of Spain and southeast of Portugal) and graze on acorns — which are rich in the same chemical found in olives, and contributes to the overall unique taste of the

ham — and whatever else the land has to offer.

The legs of meat are hung to cure in a temperature controlled room for 36 months where they're carefully tended to daily by a team of experts until a judge with a discerning palate determines they've passed all the requirements.

The resulting meat is incomparable. It's complex, bold, rich, streaked with marbling, and has a nuttiness that hints at the animal's diet. Due to the pigs' genetics and diet, jamón Ibérico de Bellota has heart-healthy monounsaturated fats with cholesterol-lowering abilities and vitamins B1, B6, and B12 giving it a higher nutritional value than most pork products.

Red Label

A pork product with a red label indicates the meat is from a pig with 75 percent Iberian heritage that was free range and had a natural diet of acorns and anything they could find in the dehesa.

Green Label

These were free range pigs that feasted on grass and grains, not acorns. The pork products can come from 50, 75, or even 100 percent Ibérico pigs, but what differentiates it from the black or red labels is the non-acorn diet.

White Label

The white label on products is an indicator it has a 50 percent Ibérico status, ate grains, but was not raised in a free range environment.

Note: although they weren't free range animals, they weren't confined to small enclosures or crates. They lived in large pens where they were able to roam.

JAMÓN SERRANO

Jamón serrano isn't quite as complicated as the more prestigious Ibérico, but it's still tasty meat in its own right and must comply with strict guidelines implemented by the Consorcio del Jamón Serrano Español — the Spanish Consortium for Jamón Serrano.

Serrano is made from a few different breeds of white pigs such as Duroc, Landrace, or Large White and can be made anywhere in Spain. Look for a label from the Consortium on the meat with a control number and the word "serrano" spelled out with a ham symbol above it, that's how you know you're getting ham that's passed diligent inspection. Just like Ibérico, this category of ham has its own quality breakdown.

Serrano Gran Reserva

The highest quality jamón serrano, Gran Reserva, is cured longer than 15 months, but no more than 24, which allows the rich and meaty flavors to develop.

Serrano Reserva

These hams are cured between 12 to 15 months.

Serrano Bodega

Meats under the Serrano Bodega category have been cured between 10½ to 12 months. —MK



2016 GATEWAY DOURO DOURO, PORTUGAL

50% Touriga Franca, 30% Tinta Roriz, 20% Touriga Nacional



Notes of tobacco and sweet baking spice with red berries, raspberries, and strawberry jam.



Medium-bodied with a low tannin, the acidity comes through with fruit lingering on the finish.



This should be served slightly chilled. Pop it in the fridge for about 10 minutes before serving.

FRUIT



TANNIN



ACIDITY



BODY



MOOD: When we're sitting on the front porch unwinding after a long day, we're listening to "Blue in Green" by Miles Davis with a hefty pouring of this wine as our companion.

Its low tannins, fruit-forward style, and notable acidity make it the perfect wine for front porch sipping when the hot summer air is intoxicating.

Winemaking is very much intertwined within the fabric of the Douro region. There's evidence that winemaking has been going on since the third century. The region gets its name from the Douro river that runs through it. This part of Portugal is hot and dry, perfect for growing one of the country's most popular native red grapes, Touriga Nacional, which you'll find in this bottle! Touriga Nacional is a grape that grows in smaller quantities, making it all the more precious, so be sure to appreciate its presence here.

During the summer, it's always great to have medium-bodied reds around that aren't too heavy but still have a little weight to them, and this wine fits the bill. Its low tannins, fruit-forward style, and notable acidity make it the perfect wine for front porch sipping when the hot summer air is intoxicating.



This wine's medium body and acidity are an excellent complement to a rich dish like a foie gras terrine.



FOIE GRAS TERRINE

SERVES 8 TO 10

1 (1-pound) piece duck liver, fresh or frozen and thawed (see Notes)

1 teaspoon table salt, plus more if needed

1 loaf raisin-walnut bread

Olive oil

Flaky sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper

Choose a container that will create the final form of the foie—a small loaf pan, rectangular mold, or small bowl will do. Line it with plastic wrap.

Cut the duck liver into large pieces. Remove any prominent veins. Put the pieces of liver in a saucepan and cook over medium-high heat, stirring, until all the pieces of liver have melted. You want to keep the foie at a just-warm temperature; if you see that the melting foie is getting too hot (steaming or bubbling), remove it from the heat and stir before putting it back on the heat. This process takes about 3 minutes. Stir in the table salt, taste, and adjust the seasoning.

Pour the foie into a fine-mesh sieve set over a bowl and push it through with a whisk, stirring and scraping until the liquid has passed through and any veins remain behind. Discard the solids in the sieve.

Transfer the strained foie to the prepared mold. Cover tightly and refrigerate until completely cool, at least a few hours.

When ready to serve, preheat the broiler.

Slice the raisin bread into thin slices, about ½ inch (1.5 cm) thick, lay them on a baking sheet, and drizzle with olive oil. Toast under the broiler until crunchy. Transfer to a serving platter.

Slice the foie into thin pieces (less than ¼ inch/6 mm thick) and place a slice on each piece of bread. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt and cracked black pepper. Serve while still warm. Any leftover foie can be wrapped well and frozen for up to three months and defrosted to serve when desired.

Notes

This recipe can be adjusted to use smaller or larger quantities of liver; just be sure to season to taste.

To make a classic balsamic glaze, in a small saucepan, combine 4 parts balsamic vinegar with 1 part sugar and heat over medium-high heat, stirring frequently to dissolve the sugar, until the liquid reduces and a thick syrup forms. Drizzle the glaze on the plate before arranging the toasts on top.

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2016 NEXO GARNACHA

CARIÑENA, SPAIN

100% Garnacha



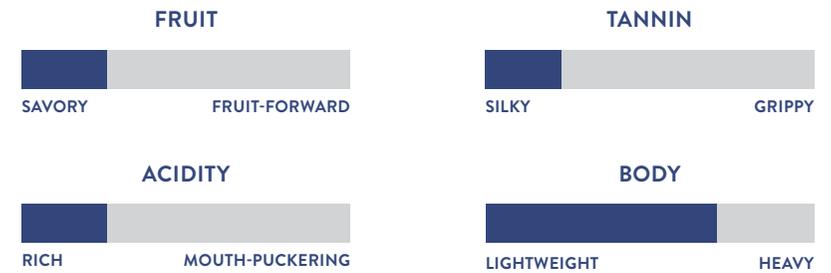
Nutmeg, rose petals, and cinnamon sticks. Warm baking spice, like Christmas and apple cider.



Medium to full-bodied, the tannins and acid are low resulting in a wine made for gulping.



This wine should be served slightly chilled. Refrigerate for about 10 minutes before serving.



MOOD: For those summer nights that feel like winter will never rear its ugly head again, we have this wine by our side while blasting "Kokomo" by the Beach Boys. Aruba, Jamaica, ooh I wanna take ya...

This is a lighter style of Garnacha that's perfect for the individuals who say they "don't like red wine."

While most of the world's Garnacha — or Grenache as we know it in the US — is grown in France, we'd argue that the Spanish do it best. Typically, this medium-bodied wine would have a slightly higher alcohol content (around 15 percent ABV), but this Nexo Garnacha isn't quite so strong, making it a perfect pairing for drinking all day long and for balancing out spicier foods.

This is a lighter style of Granacha that's perfect for the individuals who say they "don't like red wine." It is easy to drink and the spice and subtle fruit drift together nicely. The fruit isn't overly aggressive, the tannin is integrated well — it's everything you need, and want, in a friendly red.



Medium-bodied and care-free, this quaffable wine would go great with light and easy appetizers. We're thinking fried anchovies.



FRIED ANCHOVIES

SERVES 4

16 anchovies (about 9 ounces/255 g), heads and guts removed

Kosher salt

½ cup (60 g) all-purpose flour

½ cup (120 mL) extra-virgin olive oil

1 large dried guindilla chile, cut into rings

4 garlic cloves, sliced

Chopped fresh parsley

Rinse the anchovies under cold water to clean thoroughly. Pat dry. Season the anchovies with salt and set aside for about 15 minutes.

Place the flour on a plate or shallow bowl. Dredge each anchovy through the flour, shaking off any excess.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and the chile over high heat. When the olive oil is so hot it is almost smoking (about 400°F/200°C), add the garlic. It will brown quickly, so add the anchovies immediately, carefully placing them in the pan in a single layer. Do not crowd the pan. (It might be necessary to cook them in two or three batches.) After 30 seconds, turn the anchovies with a spatula or a slotted spoon. Fry for 30 seconds more and remove. Arrange the anchovies on a serving plate along with the garlic and chile. Fry the remaining anchovies, adding the parsley in the last moment of cooking.

To serve, pour the parsley oil over all the anchovies. It should be abundant, forming a bed of oil under the anchovies.

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2016 CASTRO VENTOSA MENCIA “EL CASTRO” BIERZO, SPAIN 100% Mencía

-  Juicy plums and dates. Lots of earth notes: soaking wet pavement, dried tobacco, gravel.
-  Big, bold, and jammy with punchy fruit. Bone dry with a nice acidity that could age for years.
-  This red should be served slightly chilled. Cool it down for about 10 minutes before serving.



MOOD: It can be a high-stress situation when your family comes to town for the weekend, but this wine with a classic jam like "Desperado" by the Eagles can help calm everyone down.

With its easy-going tannins and zero residual sugar, this is a wine we can drink all night long.

This young red hails from the northwest Spanish region of Castilla y León. The Bierzo winemaking region within Castilla y León is particularly unique because it has its own microclimate. The grapes are shielded from frost in winter by the surrounding mountains, and the warm summers make for

optimal grape growing temperatures. The grapes used to make Castro Ventosa Mencía were grown by the Perez family who has been making wine in Bierzo since 1752. With that kind of winemaking experience, we think it's safe to say they've got this process down.

This is a summertime fireside wine if we've ever tasted one. It has bold tannins but they disperse rather quickly into the back of the palate. With its easy-going tannins and zero residual sugar, this is a wine we can drink all night long. Heart-warming and comforting, it's the perfect companion for sitting on a log swaddled in a flannel button-down breathing in the crackling embers of an open-air fire.

 This is a bold wine that needs to be paired with dishes packing equally bold flavors, and a chorizo and potato stew is ready for the challenge.



RIOJAN POTATO-CHORIZO STEW

SERVES 4 TO 6

5 tablespoons (75 mL) olive oil

1 small onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

**10 small potatoes, preferably
Monalisa, Kennebec, or Yukon
Gold, peeled**

1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt

**1 link (8 ¾ ounces/250 g) Spanish
chorizo (dulce or picante), sliced
into thick coins**

¼ teaspoon paprika

**1 dried red guindilla chile
(optional)**

1 cup (240 mL) white wine

In a wide, shallow saucepan, heat 3 tablespoons of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring, for 5 to 7 minutes, until soft.

Meanwhile, insert a knife about ½ inch (1.5 cm) into a potato and then rotate and lift the knife, breaking off an irregularly shaped piece. Rotate the potato and repeat; repeat with the remaining potatoes.

Add the potatoes to the pan and, if the pan looks dry, add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil. Season with the salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes more. Add the chorizo, paprika, and chile (if using) and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 to 3 minutes more. Raise the heat to medium-high and add the wine. Simmer until slightly reduced, about 3 minutes. Add water almost to cover and bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally to encourage the potatoes to break slightly. Cook until reduced to a thick sauce, about 15 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning, if necessary. Serve in shallow bowls with a glass of Rioja wine alongside.

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WINE REGIONS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

BY MORGAN KATZ

PORTUGAL

Douro Valley

Named after one of the major rivers in the Iberian peninsula, Douro Valley has been producing wine since the third century. The region cranks out tasty red table wines, but its real claim to fame is that it's home to Port, aka the fortified wine named after the country. Douro Valley is such a special place, it's listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Minho

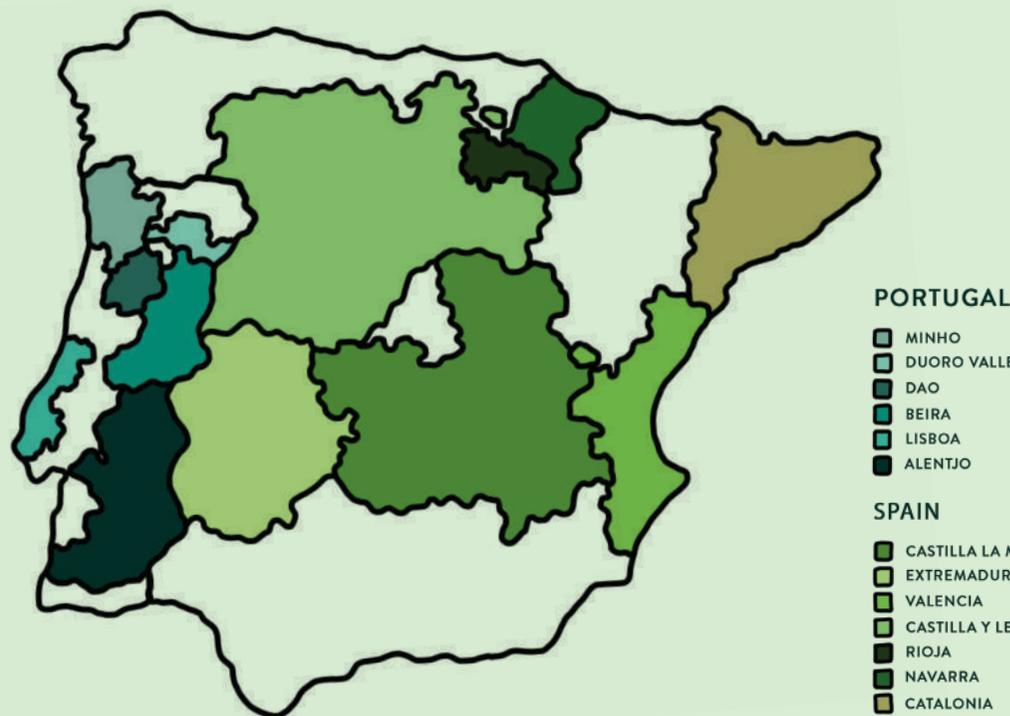
If you know anything about Portuguese wine, you've probably heard of Vinho Verde. Translating to "green wine" but really meaning "young wine," Vinho Verde wines are the light-bodied, acidic, crisp, and slightly effervescent whites the country is famous for. It's primarily made from Alvarinho (Albariño) grapes, although others can be used, and the result is a low ABV wine you can drink all day long (pg. 23).

Beira Interior

At 6,500 feet, this mountainous region has some of mainland Portugal's highest vineyards trained with old vines. Although the growing season doesn't last very long, the combination of elevation, terroir, and summer heat produce bright wines with delicious fruitiness. The most popular wines coming from this region are Tinto Beira (red fruit-driven reds) and Branco Beira (lean, mineral whites).

Lisboa

Receiving its name from the country's capital, Lisboa is the most productive of Portugal's wine regions by volume. It's also one of those regions where quality meets affordability — not only can you find first-rate bottles, you



can find them at the same price you'd pay for a chip and sandwich combo.

Alentejo

The geographically largest region in Portugal — covering almost a third of the country — doesn't just produce wine. Alentejo also makes olive oil, cereal grains, and over half the world's cork supply. When it comes to wine, Alentejo mostly produces red blends made from local varieties — Alicante Bouschet, Aragonez (aka Tempranillo), and Trincadeira, to name a few — in addition to a growing number of refreshing whites.

Dão

A red table wine region, Dão is one of the oldest established wine regions in Portugal. The region dedicates 80 percent of its production to red wine and 20 percent of the vines planted must be the indigenous Touriga Nacional, according to DOC regulations. When it comes to whites, the indigenous Encruzado is the varietal that dominates and results in simple, easy-going white wines.

SPAIN

Castilla-La Mancha

Although this region is responsible for producing large quantities of Spanish wine, it's better known as the place Cervantes set his novel "Don Quixote." But back to the wine, Castilla-La Mancha is one of the world's biggest wine regions, dwarfing Napa Valley 100 times, and is relied on to produce high-quality, dependable wines at a reasonable price. With over 40 varieties grown here, you could say viticultural conditions are optimal.

Valencia

Valencia was founded in 138 BC and as a result, winemaking has been around for almost as long. Despite the region's rich viticulture history, it's possible Valencia is most famous for being the birthplace of paella, but it's also known for producing large quantities of tasty reds, whites, and rosés.

Rioja

If high-quality reds are your style, then you

know about Rioja. Winemaking in Rioja dates back centuries before Christ was even a thought. All this time making wine is probably what helped them achieve the highest winemaking classification that only one other Spanish region holds. Rioja is famous for its red wine, which explains why 85 percent of the region's production is dedicated to it.

Navarra

Another region with an ancient winemaking culture, Navarra has been producing wine since 200 BC. In the 12th century when Navarra was an independent powerhouse, its wines were recommended in local guidebooks to travelers passing through and it was even exported abroad. The indigenous Spanish Garnacha is the primary varietal here and it's used to make robust reds and easy-drinking rosés. So, if you're looking for Spanish rosés, this is the region to look out for.

Castilla y León

With eight World Heritage sites, Castilla y León is a place with a lot of cultural significance, and the wine coming from the area isn't bad either. Accounting for roughly one-fifth of Spain's surface area, this is the largest of the country's seventeen wine regions. Within this region lies notable regions such as Torp, Rueda, and Ribera del Duero, and although relatively new to the Spanish winemaking scene, the region is recognized for producing some of the country's best bottles since its founding in 1983.

Catalonia

Home to cultural hotbed Barcelona, Catalonia has provided some of the world's most influential artists such as Salvador Dalí, Antoni Gaudí, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso who lived in Barcelona during his Cubist movement. Catalonia is where Spanish bubbly originated in the 1870s. Although Cava production is most prominent, the region also makes dry whites and reds so deep in color they're called vi negre, or black wine. —MK



2017 GATEWAY VINHO VERDE

VINHO VERDE, PORTUGAL

35% Arinto, 35% Loureiro, 30% Trajadura



Lime leaves, key lime pie, the ocean. Smells like a fresh breeze blowing through your window.



Crisp, light-bodied, high acid with balanced fruit, this is a wine waiting to be chugged.



Vinho Verde should be served chilled. Take it out of the fridge 10 minutes before serving.



MOOD: When you're out in the sun planting herbs in your terrace garden and Redbone's "Come and Get Your Love" comes on, take a moment to pour yourself a hefty glass of this wine and get lost in its drinkability.

Light fruit and floral notes with high acidity, this is a summertime dream.

Portuguese "green wine" aka Vinho Verde is the ultimate morning, noon, and night vinous partner. Its gentle fizz, modest alcohol, and citrus twist make for glass after glass of mouthwatering deliciousness. Although Vinho Verde is technically a still wine, it has a slight effervescence that makes it fun and dangerously easy to drink. Its translation of "green wine" isn't in reference to the color but to its youth. Vinho Verde wines are very young and intended to be drunk shortly after they're produced. In fact, back in the day, because these wines were consumed so quickly after they were made, many producers didn't even bother putting the wine's vintage on the label.

This wine is as easy as they come. Low in alcohol, this wine is made for the summer heat. Vinho Verde has earned the nickname "porch pounder" for a reason. Put a chill on this wine, walk out on your porch and you will find out why. Light fruit and floral notes with high acidity, this is a summertime dream.



This wine rocks the high acidity, and it needs a heartier dish to keep it in check. A classic recipe like a Spanish omelet is certainly a worthy companion for this wine.



SPANISH OMELET

SERVES 8

3 large potatoes, preferably Monalisa, Kennebec, or Yukon Gold, peeled

3 tablespoons (45 mL) extra-virgin olive oil, plus more if needed

2 onions, thinly sliced

2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more as needed

1 cup (240 mL) sunflower or vegetable oil

10 large eggs

Halve the potatoes lengthwise and then cut each half lengthwise into quarters. Chop into pieces about ½ inch (1.5 cm) thick; you should have about 4 cups (see Notes). Put the potatoes in a bowl, add water to cover, and set aside.

In a small sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil over high heat. Add the onions and sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of the salt. Lower the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 40 minutes, until the onions are totally soft and have taken on a deep golden color. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a separate medium skillet, heat the sunflower oil over medium heat to about 250°F (120°C). Drain the potatoes and pat them dry. To test the oil, drop in a piece of potato; if it begins to bubble and sizzle, the oil is ready. Fry the potatoes for about 15 minutes, or until a knife inserted into a larger piece comes out easily. Use a slotted spoon to remove the potatoes from the oil. Sprinkle them with ½ teaspoon of the salt.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs with the remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Add the onions and potatoes and stir to combine.

Heat a perfectly clean 10-inch (25 cm) nonstick skillet (see Notes) over high heat. (The bigger the stove burner, the more evenly the tortilla will cook, so use your largest burner.) Coat the skillet with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add the egg-potato mixture and immediately lower the heat to medium. Stir quickly a few times, scraping along the bottom with a silicone spatula, then leave the skillet untouched, allowing the egg to cook. Move the spatula around the sides of the pan, slipping it under the omelet and loosening any stubborn stuck parts very gingerly, in an attempt to ensure the omelet is not adhering to any part of the skillet's surface. Cook for about 4 minutes, until the edges are fully cooked but the center is still a bit liquid.

Place a round plate with a diameter larger than the pan's upside down on the top of the pan. With one hand on the plate and one hand holding the pan, quickly flip the pan and plate together in one motion so that the tortilla is on the plate.

If the pan has any pieces stuck to it, quickly clean it and coat it with a bit more oil. Return the pan to the heat and slide the omelet back into the pan. Tuck the edges under with your spatula and cook for 3 minutes more.

Slide the omelet onto a clean, dry plate and let rest for 5 minutes before slicing into 8 wedges and serving.

Notes

The shape of the cut potato is a highly personal preference. Some people like an irregular shape; to get it, insert a knife about ½ inch (1.5 cm) into a peeled potato and then rotate and lift the knife, breaking off an irregularly shaped piece. Rotate the potato slightly and repeat. Others prefer thin, round slices.

The choice of pan is key. It should be a 10-inch (25 cm) nonstick skillet, with its nonstick properties fully intact. In most Basque homes, there is one pan used always and sometimes exclusively for making tortilla.

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2017 ARIOS LOUREIRO

MINHO, PORTUGAL

100% Loureiro

-  White peaches, star jasmine, and early morning rain. Fresh and light with grassy citrus.
-  Light-bodied with an electric acidity. A bit earthy with citrus and freshly cut grass.
-  The wine should be served chilled. Remove the fridge 10 minutes before you plan on serving.



MOOD: This is the wine you want to smuggle onto the beach and sneak stealthy sips of as you walk down the boardwalk to find that perfect spot in the sand. “Feel Good Inc.” is playing through your speakers making you truly feel good, wishing the moment never ends.

The wine’s body is very light, but its prominent acidity keeps it bright and lively.

This wine is made entirely from the Portuguese varietal Loureiro, which means “laurel” in Portuguese, and hints at the distinctive aroma of berries and flowers the grape produces. The varietal has been in Portugal for quite some time and there’s evidence of it dating back to the late 18th

century. The grape is often used to make blends, so the fact that this is a single varietal wine is pretty special.

The wine’s body is very light, but its prominent acidity keeps it bright and lively. Some of the citrus notes are similar to Sauvignon blanc but its body and style are all its own. Loureiro is known for its aromatic notes of laurels in addition to bright citrus and refreshing acidity, all of which can be found in this wine. Because plantings of Loureiro have recently declined, it’s hard to find in the modern market, but when you do, it’s a beautiful treat. Enjoy this wine on a day you want to spend every minute outside and see why we think it’s so special.

-  Pairing this wine with a dish like trout stuffed with salty serrano ham will help keep its zippy acidity in check.



NAVARRRE-STYLE TROUT

SERVES 4

4 small trout (about 8 ounces/226g each), cleaned and butterflied

Kosher salt

6 slices Serrano ham (about 100g)

2 tablespoons milk

All-purpose flour, for coating

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or lard

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).

Rinse the trout with cool water and pat dry with a paper towel. Sprinkle the interior generously with salt and place 1 slice of ham in each fish.

Using a kitchen brush, paint each fish with a bit of milk. Mix the flour and a pinch of salt on a plate and dredge each trout in the flour to evenly coat, shaking off any excess.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the remaining 2 slices ham and cook until its fat begins to render and its edges begin to approach crispiness. Remove and set aside. Add one or two trout to the pan and cook for a few minutes on each side, until the fish gains a bit of color. Transfer to a baking sheet and repeat to cook the remaining fish.

Transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake for about 5 minutes. Turn the fish and bake for 5 minutes more.

Transfer the fish to a platter. Serve garnished with the reserved ham.

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2017 ALAIA VERDEJO

CASTILLA Y LEÓN, SPAIN

100% Verdejo

-  Smells like bright lemon zest and freshly bloomed gerber daisies and rainy summer nights.
-  Bright acid like lightning right down the center of the palate. Fresh and crisp, a beautifully comforting wine.
-  Verdejo should be served chilled. Take it out of the fridge 10 minutes before serving.



MOOD: We like to slowly sip on our Verdejo as we listen to the summer rain beating on the asphalt with the windows wide open and “Dancing in the Moonlight” on in the background.

This Verdejo comes with an acidity that draws saliva, making you come back sip after sip.

A lot of TLC went into this Spanish wine. The juice was monitored and tested daily to control the fermentation process and prevent oxidation thus producing a high-quality wine. This Verdejo hails from Castilla y León where the wine culture is more than 2,000 years old. Over the course of the two millennia, Castilla y León has developed quite the reputation for producing some serious red wines, primarily Tempranillo, so when we find a tasty white from the area, it's definitely worth trying.

Everyone needs electric and vibrant white wines in the summer — the kind that give you a buzz just by the smell. On the nose, this wine presents notes of white flowers that are wet from a midnight rainstorm, tropical air, and pineapple wafting in the sea breeze. This Verdejo comes with an acidity that draws saliva, making you come back sip after sip.

 A wine with such a bright acidity is superb when accompanied by delicate seafood like hake and clams.



HAKE WITH CLAMS IN SALSA VERDE

SERVES 4

20 clams

Bones, head, and tail from 1 fish,
preferably hake

4 skin-on hake fillets, about 7
ounces (200 g) each

Kosher salt

½ cup (120 mL) extra-virgin olive
oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (see
Note)

½ cup (120 mL) txakoli or other
acidic white wine

4 teaspoons finely chopped fresh
parsley

Place the clams in a bowl, add cold water to cover, and set aside.

Rinse the bones, head, or whatever scraps you have from the hake with cold water. Place in a medium pot and add water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for about 20 minutes. Strain the liquid (called fumet) through a fine-mesh sieve and discard the solids. Set the fumet aside.

Scrub and drain the clams; set aside.

Rinse the hake fillets and pat them dry. Season the skin-free side of each fillet with salt.

In an earthenware casserole or a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil and garlic over medium-high heat. When the garlic starts to “dance,” add the flour and cook, stirring, for about 30 seconds. Pour in the wine and simmer for about 30 seconds to cook off the alcohol. Add 1 cup (240 mL) of the fumet and simmer for about 1 minute.

Add the hake fillets to the pan, skin-side up. Simmer for about 3 minutes. Gently turn the hake fillets over. Add the clams, placing them around the pot, and cook for about 5 minutes. Should the pan begin to look dry, add more fumet.

Sprinkle the parsley over the pan. Remove from the heat and move the pan in a circular motion until the sauce begins to come together and emulsify, 1 to 2 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Serve in individual bowls or family-style. You can reserve the remaining fumet for another use.

Note

The inclusion of flour in the salsa verde is a matter of debate. It helps to thicken the sauce, but purists say “less flour, more wrist,” insistent that the correct stirring technique will result in perfectly emulsified sauce. Experiment to see which version you like best.

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USEFUL PHRASES TO KNOW IN

Portuguese

I WANT THE HOUSE WINE.

Quero o vinho da casa.

THANK YOU.

Obrigado/a.

GOOD MORNING/ GOOD AFTERNOON/ GOOD NIGHT.

Bom dia/Boa tarde/Boa noite.

THE BILL PLEASE

A conta por favor.

WHERE CAN I EAT GOOD QUALITY BACALHAU?

¿Onde posso comer Bacalhau de boa qualidade?

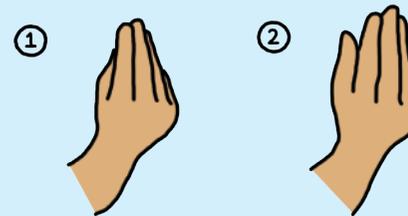
MORE ROSÉ PLEASE.

Mais rosé por favor.

COMMON SPANISH HAND GESTURES

We all know someone who likes to “talk with their hands.” Well, the Spanish take this to a whole new level. Whether you are expressing love, anger, uncertainty, or goodness, there’s probably a gesture for that. Communication for the Spanish isn’t simply verbal — it’s dramatic and involves using the whole body.

When interacting with a more gesticular culture, it might be helpful to pick up on some common uses of body language. You’re likely to encounter some of the following gestures during your Iberian adventures, so keep a lookout!



Accompanying Phrase: “Está lleno de gente.”

Translation: It’s packed.

Modern Translation: “It’s crowded AF.”

Uses: This sign is used when a place is pretty crowded. The Spanish see this as a positive thing especially when referring to a restaurant or social atmosphere.

How to: Move your palm in an upright position, and move all 5 fingers in and out. Make sure your fingers are as straight and upright as possible.

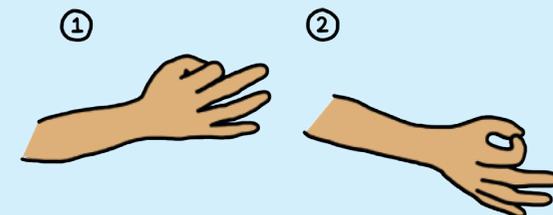
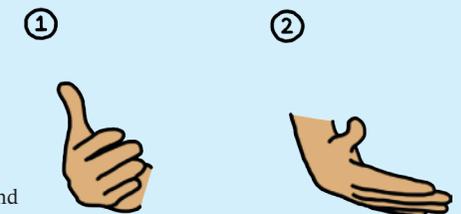
Accompanying phrase: “Me parto de risa.”

Translation: “I’m splitting with laughter.”

Modern Translation: “LOL”

Uses: People use this when something is very funny.

How to: Face your palm in an upright position and karate-chop your torso.



Accompanying Phrase: “Güeno, Güeno, Güeno.”

Translation: “Really, really, really good.” “Güeno” is “bueno” but in a dialect that’s particular to Southern Spain.

Modern Translation: “Super awesome.”

Uses: When you are just over the moon about food, an experience, or really everything.

How to: Use your index finger and thumb to make a circle. Move your hand downward each time you say “Güeno.”

GLOSSARY

ACIDITY

Gives wine a bright, crisp, tart taste and is essential in keeping a wine balanced — acidity balances out sweetness. You can gauge how acidic a wine is by taking note of how much you salivate after your first sip of wine. More saliva = more acid.

BODY

Describes how heavy wine feels on the palate. When determining body, picture the difference between how skim milk feels in your mouth versus how heavy cream feels. If a wine feels like skim milk, it has a lighter body. If it feels more like heavy cream, it has a full body. Acidity, sweetness, tannin and alcohol all affect the body of a wine.

DRY

A “dry wine” is one that does not have a sheet taste. However, even if a wine is technically dry, it can still have a considerable amount of residual sugar that’s concealed by a higher acidity. Example: unsweetened is technically “dry.”

FRUITY

Commonly confused with sweetness (because we affiliate fruit with sweetness), “fruity” describes the presence of fruit flavors in wine. To better understand fruitiness in wine, imagine unsweetened iced tea with lemon squeezed in it. The tea has a fruitiness from the lemon but is still dry because it’s unsweetened.

SWEETNESS

A wine’s sweetness is measured by the amount of naturally occurring sugar — Residual Sugar (RS) — that’s left in the wine at the end of the fermentation process. This sweetness is ranked from bone dry (Brut Nature) to very sweet (doux) and can usually be detected by a slight tingling sensation on the tip of the tongue.

TANNIN

The astringent or “grippy,” almost drying, feeling a red wine leaves in your mouth. A wine’s tannin level is determined by how long the pressed juice sits with the grape seeds and stems, which is where tannins are naturally found. Example: think about how your mouth feels after drinking unsweetened black tea — also high in tannin.

VARIETAL PRONUNCIATION

Touriga Franca: *too-REE-gah fran-kuh /*

Tinta Roriz: *tinta roh-reez /*

Touriga Nacional: *too-REE-gah nah-syoo-NHL /*

Garnacha: *gahr-NAH-chah /*

Mencia: *mehn-THEE-ah /*

Arinto: *ah-RIHN-toh /*

Loureiro: *loh-REH-row /*

Trajadura: *tra-jah-DOO-rah /*

Verdejo: *ver-Day-ho /*

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THE WINE

We’re constantly tracking down, taste-testing and selecting authentic bottles from winemakers around the world — wines that are new to us and hopefully new to you, too. We curate authentic wines rather than bulk blending so that you can truly experience the diverse world of wine.



ADD YOUR FAVORITES

Discovered something you love in your box? Browse our wine shop and stock up on your favorites. Members get exclusive discounts on the wine shop (up to 25% off!) AND free shipping (when you select “No-Rush” shipping at checkout). Hurry! They go fast.



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More in the mood for only red (or white) wine this month? Switch the type of wine you want to receive. Swimming in wine right now and need a break? Log in to manage your membership to fit your wine needs. P.S. We’re now offering 6 packs of all white or all red!



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