

## Bodegas Txomin Etxaniz, D.O. Getariako Txakolina

### **Txomin Etxaniz** (Pronounced: Cho-min Ech-aniss)

At the top of the list when it comes to quality Txakoli production, Txomin Etxaniz wines are typical of the fiercely Basque “Txakolina Getariako” style. The Etxaniz family estate is located in the heart of the Getaria zone at the town of Getaria itself, west along the coast from San Sebastian. It is also one of the oldest, with vineyard plantings contributing to the production of Txakoli since 1649. This Txueka Etxaniz family played an integral role in the modernisation, recognition and creation of the Denomination of Origin Getariako Txakolina in 1989 (previously, a style under threat of obsolescence).



Txomin Etxaniz has 35 hectares of protected, sloped vineyards planted to the two native grapes, the white Hondarrabi Zuri (90%) and red Hondarrabi Beltza (10%). All fruit for TE wines is self-grown, and harvested by hand at the end of September. Modern winemaking techniques are employed, with the grapes receiving a gentle pneumatic pressing in an inert atmosphere, followed by temperature controlled fermentation and then kept in contact with lees until bottling. The resulting wine is crisp, dry and delicately aromatic with high juicy acidity and deliciously gentle spritz on the palate. Txakoli is typically served aerated, being poured into cups with a long arc through the air, and aided by an aerating pourer inserted into the neck of the bottle. This has more to do with aerating very rustic, reduced wine served off lees direct from casks behind the bar, and has little relevance to filtered, bottled wines.

### **Txomin Etxaniz Txakoli**

This is extremely good Getariako Txakoli and faithfully reflects this premium region of Txakoli production. Attractive brilliant straw hues, with a mid-to-low fizz spritz on palate. The nose is alluring and delicate with apple, cucumber and some light pear perfume. The palate shows more fullness and structure; gentle fruit sweetness (barely off-dry at 4.75 g/l residual) gives a bright fruit spread on entry, and it gains nice gentle tartness, facilitating a poised and impeccably balanced finish. Clean, well composed spring fruits, beautifully spiced; great drinking.

This is classic Txakoli – exactly what you should expect: correct, clear, delicious. 11% a/v.

### **Txomin Etxaniz Txakoli Gorria (Pink Txakoli)**

Watermelon Juice!! A blend of Hondarrabi Zuri (grape white) with 60% Hondarrabi Belza (grape red). Light as light can be, with a touch of gentle spritz. Delicate and just off-dry, and very beautiful, it's a truly original wine.



A note on pronunciation: tx = ch, so you could say the t is silent. z is like a hybrid z and s, point your tongue to your lower teeth. So not so much of a th sound as in casellano ... more like when you tell a kid the noise a snake makes.

For a giggle, see these you-tube clips for how to pour Txakoli:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKa-LgcCRaw&feature=related>

or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyQghLv62Mc>

It's important to note that this aerated pouring is *not* essential, not even relevant to quality contemporary Txakoli: it's a habit carried over from the Chacolines, where heavily reduced barrels of wine sitting on lees behind the bar were necessarily aerated before consumption.

With thanks to David and Mel Worthington for their assistance in compiling these notes.

## Txakoli (chak-oh-lee)

Txakoli is the wine of the Basques, and, like the Basques, it is a survivor. This rugged, rocky coast along the Bay of Biscay is hardly the ideal place to grow grapes; there is not a week of the year without rain, cloud cover is constant, and harsh northern winds continually harass the grapes. Viticulture in the region dates back over 1000 years. The first mention of 'vino chacolín' to designate local wines was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the etymology of the word coming from 'etxakoa' (home-made) or 'etxeko ain' (enough for home)<sup>1</sup>.

### THE THREE TXACOLIS

There are 3 (geographically, and stylistically) distinct Txakolis, each with its own appellation. The first two are pretty much coastal, at Getaria and Bilbao respectively, the third is inland towards Vitoria-Gasteiz. The three linguistic renderings of each are, in order of presentation below, the correct Basque (*euskera*), the common lazy international 'translation' of *euskera* for common use (equates to substituting Rome for Roma), and the Spanish version (*euskera* translated into *castellano*, similar to ingles as the Spanish name for the English) :

- Getariako Txakolina - Txakoli de Getaria - Chacolí de Guetaria
- Bizkaiko Txakolina - Txakoli de Bizkaika - Chacolí de Vizcaya
- Arabako Txakolina - Txakoli de Álava - Chacolí de Álava

After a series of plagues in the 19th century (oidium, mildium, and, of course, phylloxera), Txakoli encountered one of its greatest moments at the start of the 20th with the emergence of 'chacolines' (bars that served exclusively Txakoli wines alongside salt cod, squid, and elvers). As knowledge of the region's culinary heights grew, so did the recognition and appreciation of its wines. This high, however, was not to last, and by the 1980s, disease, industrialisation, and competition from exogenous wine regions saw the area under vine reduce from the 2,874ha that were recorded in the census of 1891, to just 50ha. The future of the Basque wine looked bleak. A striving for quality driven wines (spearheaded by the Txueka family of Txomin Etxaniz)

led to the establishment of Txakoli's first DO, Getariako Txakolina (chak-oh-lee-nyah), centered around Getaria in 1989. This was the first major step in revitalising the Basque wine industry. In time, two more DOs would be created; Bizkaiko Txakolina in 1994 (Bilbao, rather than Getaria coastal hinterland) and Arabako Txakolina (thanks to the hard work of Eugenio Alava Ugarte) inland from Bilbao towards Vitoria-Gasteiz in 2002. Today, these three regions represent 90% production of Txakoli wine.

Hondarabbi zuri (zuri meaning white in Basque) and hondarrabi zuri zerratia (petit courbu) are the two prominent white grape varieties, while hondarrabi beltza (beltza = black) is used for reds and rosé. Hondarrabi zuri is traditionally grown closest to the coast, trained on high pergolas, and produces highly aromatic wines. Hondarrabi zuri zerratia, grown in the west and further inland, has more compact clusters, with flowery, vegetal aromas, and a slight astringency. Other authorised varieties include; mune mahatsa (folle blanche), izkiriota (manseng noir), izkiriota ttippia (petit manseng), sauvignon blanc, riesling, and chardonnay.

### The Wines of Txakoli

White Txakoli shares flavour spectrums with its neighbours, Albariño from Rías Baixas to the west and Cava (Penedès) to the south-east. It often presents with a light effervescence, akin to the Vinhos Verdes of northern Portugal and is best drunk young and fresh. It is pale-straw in colour and can have green highlights, refreshing acidity and aromas of fresh fruit, flowers, and grass. The light effervescence is most typical to the coastal wines of Getariako Txakolina; Bizkaiko and Arabako Txakolis are more often bottled without petillance. Barrel fermented whites are increasingly popular. White Txakoli represents about 95% of the region's production.



<sup>1</sup> The Basques are fiercely protective people in terms of their traditions and religions. As early as the 14th century local wines became controlled and protected - entry of wine from outside the region was forbidden until all the local wine had been consumed and the uprooting of any of the region's vines resulted in a death sentence.

Rosé Txakoli, or 'ojo de gallo' (eye of the rooster) is made with at least 50% hondarrabi beltza and is often made in a clarete style (using both red and white grapes), rather than the more traditional saignee (red grapes only). The wines traditionally have aromas of wild strawberries, violets, and raspberries, with hints of green pepper.

Red Txakoli is a young wine which can have a deep cherry colour, medium tannins, and a fruit/vegetable register not dissimilar to its relative, cabernet franc. While red Txakoli has previously been rare and almost unseen outside Pais Vasco, it has more recently been popping up in international markets seeking cool climate, maritime-influenced reds.

Two wine styles have been developed within the region that fall under the protection of the DO, but cannot be labelled as Txakoli/Chacoli/Txakolina. Late-harvest wines produced from overripe grapes with a natural abv of 15% or more, aged in oak for a minimum time stipulated by the DO dependant on the vintage conditions; and sparkling wines made in the traditional method.

#### **Getariako Txakolina - Txakoli de Getaria - Chacolí de Guetaria**

This was the first and remains the largest of the Txakoli DOs. Created in 1989, its 84ha are located on the rocky Biscay coast, west of San Sebastian, in the municipalities of Aia, Getaria and Zarautz. In 2007, a change to the appellation laws allowed expansion of the DO to cover all of Gipuzkoa. The soils here are predominantly clay covered by a layer of sandy soil. Hondarrabi zuri accounts for 95% of plantings; the other 5% is hondarrabi beltza. The summers here are cool (which allows for a longer ripening period) due to its proximity to the Atlantic. Rain is fierce and frequent. The majority of vines are planted on a high trellis system (called '*parra*' in Basque) to allow circulation of air through the canopy to prohibit rot and mould in the wet, humid climate. DO regulations permit a maximum of 13,000 vines per ha, residual sugar of 9 grams or less, and, a minimum abv of 9.5%.

#### **Bizkaiko Txakolina - Txakoli de Bizkaia - Chacolí de Vizcaya**

The 60ha of Bizkaiko Txakolina, surrounding Bilbao, achieved DO status in 1998; in 2006 the DO boundaries were broadened to cover all the districts of Bizaia. The soils here are shallow and slightly acidic with clay-loam on limestone rock and marls. Rainfall is between 1,000mm-1,300mm and the climate is very much Atlantic. Vineyards here are positioned halfway up hillsides protected from the northern winds and mostly south-facing at between 50 to 400m to maximise exposure to sunshine in this cloud-covered region. The Hondarrabi zuri zerratia grape here adds a more acidic and herbaceous note to the wines.

#### **Arabako Txakolina - Txakoli de Álava - Chacolí de Álava**

Made up of 50ha in the Ayala valley, near Vizcaya, it is the youngest and smallest of Txakoli DOs. It achieved Vinos de la Tierra (VdIT) status in 1998 and was accepted as a DO in 2002. It is the most inland of the three regions, with protection from the harsh Atlantic winds thanks to the *Sierra Salvada* mountain system. Arabako Txakolina vineyards receive considerably less rainfall and have a higher average temperature than Bizkaiko and Getariako, meaning that the grapes are able to achieve higher abv (the average is 12-12.5% as opposed to the 11.5% of the coastal regions). Barrel-fermented whites are common. The soils are based on limestone. Although hondarrabi zuri is the most planted variety here, zerratia, beltza, and other native Basque varieties play their part in the wines.