

The World in your Wineglass...

It has often been said that music is the universal language of love. If that is the case, then can we not arrive at a similar conclusion about wine? After all, wine is the international expression of love – the international accompaniment to food and sharing. With this thought of going international in mind, we would like to take our readers on a journey around the world (one winery each month) and highlight some familiar wines and maybe some new varietals as well.

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But, where does one start? The world is round. I decided to flatten my globe, nail it to the wall, and throw the proverbial dart. My dart landed in Galicia, a northwest region in Spain. This is very fortunate as it gives me a chance to talk about Albarino.

Albarino (Ahl-bah-reen-yo) is primarily grown in the section of Galicia called Rias Baixas. As the story goes, the grape and the wine produced therefrom were enjoyed by the Galegos (as the people of Galicia are called) going all the way back to the 1200's. None of the locals gave any thought to sharing this terrific beverage with the rest of Spain or Portugal. And why should they? Galicia has excellent access to the sea and the Albarino wine is an excellent companion to seafood. In addition to this, the area is surrounded by extremely rugged terrain, making travel to and from very difficult. And so the Galegos remained complacent for hundreds of years, consuming every drop with no desire to expand. However, during the 1980's, along came progress in the form of Cash, Technology and Galician pride. Investment in high tech equipment by a class of well-educated businessmen, and concentrating on the one grape that had the potential to make superb wine, appeared to be a winner. Whoever the investors were, I would like to shake their hands because the concept worked. Rias Baixas was transformed into an area that now commands the attention of knowledgeable consumers worldwide. The area grew from two wineries in 1986 to over 80 in just two years. Robust growth indeed!

So, just what is this amazing discovery that was hidden from the rest of us for so many years? It is Albarino, a medium to full bodied varietal, which at its best is crisp, dry and vibrant with a complex texture. It is highly aromatic with aromas of peach, melon and apricot. No longer hidden from us, it is produced by many wineries in Rias Baixas and exported to the USA and many other countries. There is a plentiful supply in the Lowcountry at most retailers, and I

particularly enjoy the Martin Codax brand. This is my choice over chardonnay of the same price.... around \$14.00.

An important note: The best Rias Baixas white wines are made from the albarino grape. The word albarino appears on every bottle. By comparison, most other Spanish wines are referred to by their geographic region, i.e. Rioja.

Winespeak. This month's term is **ALCOHOL**. Alcohol is produced by the transfer of sugar from the wine MUST during fermentation. The alcohol content of wine is measured by volume or degrees and is so indicated on the label. Thus a 12 degree wine (12% volume) contains 12% of pure alcohol.

Terry Connor is a longtime wine connoisseur who has studied extensively and traveled to many of the world's finest wineries. He looks forward to taking our readers on a journey through the wide, wide world of wine.