

Rías Baixas THE ALBARIÑO WINES OF RÍAS BAIXAS

THE HOME OF ALBARIÑO

Denomination of Origin (DO) Rías Baixas is renowned for the Albariño grape, a native variety that produces some of the world's foremost white wines. Located in northwestern Galicia, a lush area known as Green Spain, Rías Baixas shares the same mineral-rich soils and cool climate as renowned regions like France's Loire Valley, Marlborough in New Zealand, and the Rhine region of Germany. Elegant and food-friendly, the local Albariño variety has always been the flagship of this coastal Atlantic region and is a favorite with chefs, sommeliers and fine wine lovers.

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HISTORY

Rías Baixas shares an ancient legacy with the rest of Galicia. A Celtic tribe known as the Gallaeci settled the rugged coastline 2,500 years ago, leaving rich cultural aspects like language, pagan festivals and bagpipes that endure today, as well as a wealth of archaeology sites such as the magnificent stone dwellings of Santa Trega in A Guarda. The first winemakers were Roman, who conquered the Celts and firmly established viticulture and global trading. El Camino de Santiago (or Way of St. James) first emerged as an important pilgrimage in medieval times, leading travelers ever since to the Cathedral of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela, just north of Rías Baixas. The

modern winemaking era began in 1980 when an official denomination was created specifically for the Albariño grape variety – La Denominación Específica Albariño. In 1988, after Spain joined the European Union (EU), the denomination was renamed Denominación de Origen (DO) Rías Baixas, consistent with EU wine law that does not permit regions to be named for a single grape variety. Known for artisanal winemaking led by local growers, Rías Baixas Albariño ranks high among the world's leading white wines, including strong presence in the United States, the region's leading export market.

CULTURE & TRADITION

The annual Fiesta de Albariño takes place during the first week of August in Cambados, the heart of the Rías Baixas wine region. The fiesta kicks off on August 1 with World Albariño Day. Thousands of wine lovers celebrate the region's superstar grape variety with winemaker tastings, rock concerts, street entertainment, traditional folklore and open-air parties. Not to be missed, the region's wineries uncork their best bottles and fill this small coastal town with color and joy.





OUR TERROIR

Galicia - Green Spain

Nestled in Spain's northwest region of Galicia, Rías Baixas more closely resembles the green fields and rocky coasts of Ireland than classic images of drier, Castilian plains. Often referred to as Green Spain, the hillsides of Galicia recall the ancient Celtic history of the region, and are covered in mist that shrouds granite castles, vineyards and manor houses. The area is characterized by moderate year-round temperatures, ocean breeze and an average annual rainfall that in some spots is nearly three times the national average. However, Galicia's damp Atlantic-influenced climate is balanced by over 2,200 hours of sunshine. This ensures that Rías Baixas Albariño ripens fully and is capable of producing wines with medium-to-high natural acidity and an aromatic profile that makes it a sensory delight.

Rich in Minerals

The soils of Rías Baixas are fairly uniform throughout the five sub-regions, dominated by granite and in some places, schist. Large rivers and tributaries have also left alluvial and colluvial deposits – a combination of clay, silt, sand and gravel. There is a limited amount of organic material in the soil and an extremely high level of minerality and acidity – ideal conditions for Albariño that also contribute to the food-friendly character of the wines.

From the River to the Sea

The coastal landscape of Rías Baixas is irregular, marked by a series of jagged inlets and shallow fjords known as “rías”. The name Rías Baixas translates to “lower rías” in Galician and refers to five estuaries – Ría de Muros y Noia, the Ría de Arousa, the Ría de Pontevedra, the Ría de Vigo, and the Ría de Miño – extending for 90 miles just south of Santiago de Compostela to the Portuguese border. The rías are estuaries that mix fresh and salt water to sustain perhaps the world's richest maritime life – and also contribute to the distinctive geography of the region.

Growing Area

Rías Baixas' vineyards are primarily located within the province of Pontevedra in Galicia. There are 10,677 acres under vine with more than 6,500 growers and over 22,800 individual vineyard plots to support 180 registered wineries. Altitudes can reach up to 985 feet. The five distinct sub-regions of Rías Baixas encompass varying micro-climates that differ by topography and proximity to the rivers and sea. They include: Ribeira do Ulla, Val do Salnés, Soutomaior, Condado do Tea and O Rosal.

THE FIVE SUB-REGIONS OF RÍAS BAIXAS

Ribeira do Ulla

The northernmost sub-region, is fully landlocked but dissected by the Ulla River. The newest Rías Baixas sub-zone, this area was registered in 2000 and is composed mostly of alluvial soil. It is located inland, just southeast of Santiago de Compostela, and east of Padrón, a town famous for fried green peppers, a popular tapa.

Val do Salnés

Situated in the northern half of the region, Val do Salnés features the most coastline and is consequently the coolest and dampest of the five sub-regions. It is known as the birthplace of the Albariño grape. Located on the Atlantic coast, it surrounds the historic town of Cambados. This is the original and oldest sub-zone with the most area under vine and the highest concentration of wineries. The soil is granitic and rocky with alluvial top-soil. It is also the coolest and wettest sub-zone with an average temperature of just 55° F.

Soutomaior

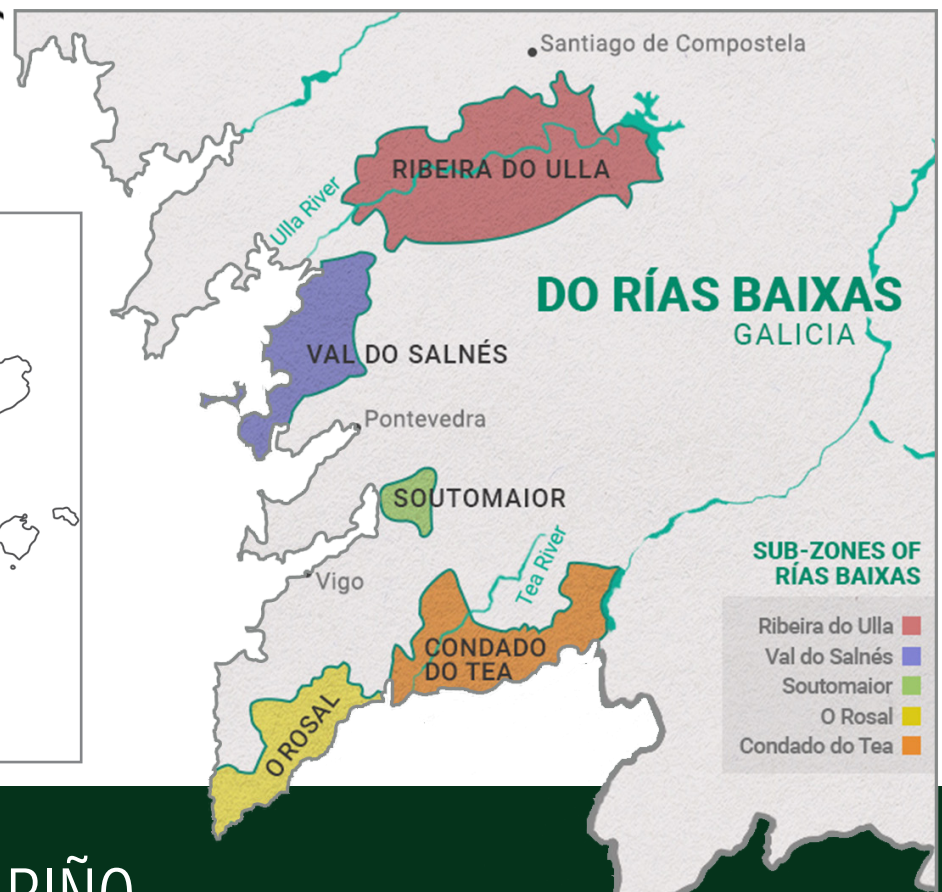
Sitting on the coast in the center of the region, Soutomaior is nestled in the hills at the head of the Rías de Vigo. It is the smallest of the sub-zones and was registered in 1996. Soils are light and sandy over granite bedrock.

O Rosal

Also lying along the Miño River where it joins the Atlantic Ocean, O Rosal is coastal and cooler. It forms the border with Portugal. With granite bedrock and alluvial topsoil, the vineyards are terraced along the sides of the Miño. The fishing village of A Guarda offers a picturesque setting to enjoy the foods and wines of the region.

Condado do Tea

"The County of Tea" is named after the river Tea, a tributary of the Miño River. Located in a fairly mountainous area along the Miño, this is the second largest sub-zone, with granite-slate and sedimentary soils. Further inland than O Rosal, it is a warmer, drier area, with an average temperature of 59° F that can soar to 104° F during the summer.



THE ORIGINS OF ALBARIÑO

Various theories exist regarding the origin of Albariño. Some speculate that it originated in central Europe and found its way to the area with the migration of Germanic peoples in the 5th Century or later by the French monks. The prevailing theory backed by genetic research is that Albariño is native to Rías Baixas, as evidenced by its ability to thrive in the region's cool, wet growing conditions.

RÍAS BAIXAS – KEY FACTS



BY THE NUMBERS



5,011 Growers
+50% Women Winemakers



10,677 Acres
22,800 Parcels



180
Producers



Primarily small,
family-owned ownership



99% White
Wine Production



Permitted White
Varieties



Albariño: **95%** of plantings
Other primary: *Treixadura, Loureiro,
Caiño Blanco, Torrontes & Godello*



The United States is the
#1 Export Market with
15% Growth



Quality Control

To guarantee the highest-quality standards, all wines from Rías Baixas carry an official label from the Consejo Regulador. The Consejo conducts regular vineyard inspections year-round to ensure that growers observe regulations on approved grape varieties, planting density, pruning and training methods, and authorized yields. Following harvest, cellars are inspected to certify that the volumes of grape correspond with the volumes harvested. Prior to bottling, a tasting committee from the Consejo samples each vat of wine for quality and performs a sensory evaluation. Only wines that pass all of the quality control trials bear the official Rías Baixas label.



8 WINE STYLES PERMITTED

RÍAS BAIXAS 100% sourced from DO Rías Baixas	RÍAS BAIXAS ALBARIÑO 100% Albariño; minimum 11.3% alc; sourced from any sub-region	RÍAS BAIXAS TINTO Red wine, less than 1% of production	RÍAS BAIXAS BARRICA Wines aged in oak (red or white); minimum 11.5% alc
RÍAS BAIXAS VAL DO SALNÉS 100% Val do Salnés	RÍAS BAIXAS CONDADO DO TEA 100% Condado do Tea; minimum blend 70% Albariño & Treixadura	RÍAS BAIXAS ROSAL 100% Rosal; minimum blend 70% Albariño & Loureiro	RÍAS BAIXAS ESPUMOSO Sparkling wine, very limited



SPECIAL LABEL TERM
Sobre Lías: Lees aging



"Albariño grapes make wines capable of evolving over 5, 10, and even 15 years."

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE WINES

Wine is often a family business in Rías Baixas supported by many small growers. More than 50% of the winemakers in Rías Baixas are women, a fact which many trace to the seafaring roots of this coastal place. Men were often away at sea, and the women of the region took charge of the vineyards. Women are at the forefront of cultivating new styles of Albariño and the development of next-generation winemaking techniques.

VITICULTURAL PRACTICES

Planting Albariño at the proper height and exposure to ensure even, healthy ripening is essential to quality. Vines are traditionally widely spaced and trained on stone pergolas hewn of the same granite as the soils below. To counter the region's rainfall and humidity, most vines are trained on a wire trellis called a "parra" anchored by granite posts. Parras are up to seven feet high, allowing breezes to flow through for maximum circulation to prevent mildew and to promote even ripening. In the fall, ripened grape bunches form a ceiling-like canopy and are harvested by pickers standing on grape bins. Some vineyards are replacing the traditional parra canopy and using a European double cordon system or espaldera. Throughout the region, yields are low, ranging from three to five tons per acre. Grapes are generally hand-picked in small plastic 40-pound crates to ensure quality selection.



WINEMAKING TECHNIQUES

Pre-Fermentation maceration

A widespread practice, the grapes are lightly pressed. Juice, pulp and skins macerate at low temperatures from several hours to days to gain aromatic complexity and structure prior to fermentation.

Wild yeast

Many Rías Baixas winemakers favor fermentation with their native yeasts for a more authentic reflection of the characteristics of the Albariño grape and terroir.

Barrel fermentation and aging

Barrel fermentation is used to impart additional texture and to increase the aging potential of Rías Baixas wines. Select oak aging can add complexity, flavors and structure, and is more common in riper vintage years.

Malolactic fermentation

With abundant natural acidity, Rías Baixas wines are known for their crisp personality. Malolactic fermentation can be blocked by the winemaker to maintain freshness. Alternatively, complete or partial malolactic fermentation can produce a rounder, softer profile, which helps the wines to age gracefully.

Extended contact with the lees

Normally, the sediment that remains after fermentation is removed. However, the small particles known as yeast lees can release compounds that enhance flavors and aromas and produce a rounder texture through extended contact. Known as “sobre lías” the technique also helps preserve freshness prior to bottling. Many winemakers experiment with lees aging to develop a full range of Albariño styles including wines with longer aging potential.

5 years.”

VINEPAIR



Granite parras of Rías Baixas



TASTING ALBARIÑO

Styles of Rías Baixas Albariño range from a crisp, aromatic “melony” character in Val do Salnés, to a peachier, softer style in O Rosal, and more earthiness in Condado do Tea. While the different sub-regions express subtle differences, the wines all share a number of characteristics. A pale golden lemon color, Rías Baixas Albariño is crisp, elegant and fresh.

Bone-dry and aromatic, the wines are packed with flavors of citrus, white peach, apricot, melon, pineapple, mango and honeysuckle. They share good natural acidity with mineral overtones and moderate alcohol levels.

FOODS AND WINES OF RÍAS BAIXAS

The wines of Rías Baixas are some of the most food-friendly in the world, a fact which is apparent to visitors to Galicia. The rías, or fjörd-like estuaries for which the region is named, mix fresh and salt water to sustain an amazing range of seafood. Galician cheeses, meats and vegetables are just as plentiful, making a visit to the many markets and restaurants in the region a gastronomic delight. In the US, chefs and sommeliers were the first to “discover” the family-owned wineries of Rías Baixas and remain enthusiastic advocates for the versatility of Albariño wines with many styles of cuisine.

For inspired recipes and food pairings, view our latest **12 WINES X 12 CHEFS** Recipe Guide and follow [@RiasBaixasWines](#).



12 WINES x 12 CHEFS



[VIEW THE 12 CHEFS RECIPE BOOK](#)

TRAVEL TO RÍAS BAIXAS

Known for its natural beauty and picturesque scenery, Rías Baixas bears a strong resemblance to the green fields and rocky coasts of Ireland. A popular summer destination, the coastline of Rías Baixas offers long stretches of sandy beaches and Atlantic views. History lovers can trace the footsteps of the Celts and the Romans in sites such as the Santa Tecla Celtic Village and the Roman town of Pontevedra. Thousands of pilgrims on the Camino make their way to wine country each year from nearby Santiago de Compostela or from Portugal to the south. Many wineries are family-owned so visitors often meet with the growers and winemaking team, and combine tastings with biking and hiking trails, museums, boutique hotels, and award-winning restaurants.

The local Ruta do Vino in Rías Baixas is an excellent source to plan a trip, as wineries often require advance reservations:

rutadelvinoriasbaixas.com

TOP 5 REASONS TO VISIT

- Walk the Camino Trail
- Visit a local market
- Tour a Ría by boat
- Explore the natural beauty of the Cies Islands
- View the Atlantic sunset from Monte Santa Trega



— LEARN MORE —

Vis for Vino
Watch. Learn. Drink.

Rías Baixas

Rías Baixas

"Stormy and romantic, the northwestern corner of Spain has an emerald-green terrain that lends itself to wine growing and a sweeping coastline that supplies Europe with fresh seafood."

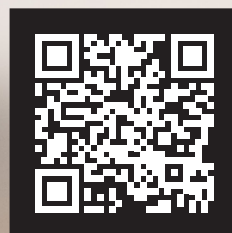
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