



# Rías Baixas

## Why So Many Somms Are Albariño Enthusiasts

Some of the oldest Albariño vines, including a few that are 300 to 400 years old, thrive in Rías Baixas leading many scholars to consider this the variety's birthplace. It is the signature grape of this autonomous and Celtic-influenced Spanish region, where the Atlantic Ocean batters granite cliffs; where the ancient Romans, who were the area's first winemakers, thought the Earth ended; and where the centuries-old Santiago de Compostela pilgrim route does. From Galicia's DO Rías Baixas comes a range of styles according to terroir and winemaker vision, from nuanced minerality to rich almost-tropical fruit—all with a trademark salinity. The vines here are trained pergola-style on wire *parras*, tied to granite posts, high above the damp ground. The grapes' thick skins offer extra resistance to the fungal diseases that are part and parcel of this cool, wet climate.

To celebrate the grape's unique flower-fruit-freshness profile and unrelenting quality, we asked three top wine sellers for their thoughts on the Rías Baixas Albariño. Here's what they told us:



"Besides being one of the classic wines of the world, Albariño is also a way for many small winegrowers to support themselves, and it's incredibly versatile at the table. Extended lees aging creates richer, age-worthy examples, like Pazo de Señorans."

— Amber Rill, Assistant Beverage Director, Corkbuzz Union Square, New York, NY

"My palate leans toward drier, high-acid whites, which is one of the reasons I find Albariño so enjoyable. Then there's the subtle melon and citrus notes! I crave shellfish with these wines. Keep them around for everything from a shrimp cocktail to a crawfish boil."

— Stefanie Schwartz, Sommelier, Olmstead, Brooklyn, NY



"It's just so delicious and versatile! As a pre-dinner or cocktail wine, Albariño gets your appetite going with its zesty acidity. I love how producers from Rías Baixas balance ocean-breeze salinity with a phenolic bitterness that's a perfect complement for lively Spanish appetizers like shrimp ceviche, fresh oysters, spicy chorizo, salty Spanish cheese, or my personal favorite, mango salsa, to go with that bright peach note. Yup . . . I just booked a flight to Spain . . . Adios!"

— Gary Swantner, Associate, Nolita Wine Merchants, New York, NY

