

Hello Spanish Table wine friends!

What the heck is Tamborrada? Well according to a message I got from [Txori](#), the Harvest Vine's new Basque pintxo bar, Tamborrada is the annual festival of San Sebastian where cooks are honored as kings. Legend has it that during an invasion, a band of cooks took up some empty wine casks & went banging about the city... They made such a ruckus that the enemy soldiers fled, fearing that they were greatly outnumbered!

Today, Tamborrada has become the world's noisiest festival, with parading drummers dressed as cooks & soldiers marching about the streets for a full twenty-four hours. At night, people dine at *sociedades gastronomicas* (gourmet clubs) & now Txori would like to give you the opportunity to join in the fun on Saturday, January 19th from 5 pm to 1 am. Live drummers, drink specials & a late night communal supper at 10:30 pm by reservation only. Bring your ear plugs...

Salud!

Catherine

PS- Did you know I have a blog? Our Berkeley store found out my secret identity today when googling...You can read my review of Txori & get more recipes on my blog "Madeleine" at <http://madeleine.typepad.com> --click [here](#) to read all about it!

CHICKEN THIGHS WITH LENTILS, CHORIZO & RED PEPPER from **Food & Wine**

Now, I'm not much of a chicken eater, but I know my readers are! When this was described as a faster & easier Spanish version of cassoulet, it even tempted me to give this recipe a try. Our selection of dried beans is incredible with over a dozen types of lentils alone. I particularly love pardina lentils as they have a natural nuttiness & they keep their shape & texture which is great for Mediterranean cooking.

Serves 4

1 2/3 cups lentils (about 2/3 pound)
3 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons cooking oil
1/2 pound dried chorizo or salami, casings removed, cut into 1/8-inch slices
1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
4 chicken thighs
1/4 teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper
2/3 cup canned low-sodium chicken broth or homemade stock
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

In a large saucepan, bring the lentils, water, 3/4 teaspoon of the salt, the thyme, and bay leaf to a boil over moderately high heat.

Reduce the heat. Simmer, covered, until the lentils are tender but not falling apart, about 25 minutes. Meanwhile, in a large frying pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over moderate heat. Add the chorizo and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat from the pan. Reduce the heat to moderately low and add the onion, garlic, and bell pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the onion mixture to the simmering lentils.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in the pan over moderate heat. Season the chicken with the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and the black pepper and add it to the pan. Cook the chicken, turning, until brown, about 12 minutes in all. Pour off all the fat from the pan. Add the broth, reduce the heat and simmer, covered, until the

chicken is just done, about 15 minutes. Add the pan juices from the chicken to the lentils along with the lemon juice and the parsley. Top with the chicken and let sit, covered, for 5 minutes.

NEW & NOTABLE

Vila Tinto Fundacion 2005, Mendoza \$6.99

New vintage! Hand Picked Selections has found a real steal from Argentina, made by one of the few old world Castilian families in a predominantly Basque & Italian-dominated wine industry. The Vila family has created a blend of 50% Bonarda, 25% each Malbec & Cabernet that's polished & nearly gulpable for \$6.99. Fundacion is gently aged in oak, lending aromas of juicy blackberries & smoked meat. Rich fruit that's nicely spiced gives the palate-coating blackberry some kick. An excellent value that can fool your dinner company, but that's not too uppity for a sausage & mushroom pizza.

Aroa Tempranillo 2005, Navarra \$11.99

"Zurukoain herritik gertu, Aroaren mahastiak kokatzen..." says Aroa's website. Wow, this is seriously Basque wine! Not only does this wine score points for being from the Basque country, but also because the winery is completely biodynamic & certified organic. Harsh winters & summer heat waves give Aroa a gutsy personality with old world earthiness that marks the sign of great Navarran wine. Smokey charcoal with a touch of barnyard backed up by concentrated black cherry & berries, Aroa is everything you love about Spanish reds but without the oak!

Aventino 2004, Ribera del Duero \$13.99

This is 100% old-vine Tempranillo the way I like it! Our customers actually recommended this wine to me because it's a glass pour at the Harvest Vine, & what a great discovery it is. With affordable as its middle name, Aventino tempts with rich nose of vanilla, candied black cherries & chocolate, but has that classic fresh earth that let's you know it comes straight from Spain. Full-bodied & sassy with even-keeled tannins, this could easily pair with a Sunday night hearty bolognese sauce or simply a weeknight picnic of chorizo, Idiazabal & a baguette by the fireplace.

Alamos Seleccion Pinot Noir 2006, Mendoza \$14.99

Since Pinot Noir is virtually non-existent in Spain, I'm glad to know that we can count on Argentina to supply us with one of the world's most beloved, but difficult, grapes. As part of the line up from Bodegas Catena Zapata, the Alamos wines have always represented wonderful values, but their new Seleccion line ups the ante by featuring small family growers. Many families in Argentina have old vineyards that have been passed on for generations, but the grapes have been mostly sold as bulk. Catena Zapata's winemakers have convinced growers to cut their yields & extend the hang time on the vine so they get only premium juice to make their selection. This has the supple body I expect from Pinot, a subtle minerality, juicy plum & strawberry fruit, plus soft tannins that are lightly spiced. When is the last time you saw a Pinot for fifteen bucks? Thanks, Catena!

Tobia Crianza 2002, Rioja \$18.99 4 bottles left!

Another customer discovery, this time from the glass pours at the new Basque pintxo bar, Txori. Several customers came in raving about this Rioja, so I knew I had to track it down & just in time because I got the last of the 2002 vintage (the one on their list). Oscar Tobia is privileged to belong to the prestigious DeVinos tasting group in Rioja, made up of some of the top winemakers including Maria Jose Lopez de Heredia at one end of the scale, Manuel and Jorge Muga in the middle, and Jesus Madrazo of Contino at the other. Not bad company! Tobia is 100% Tempranillo from 20-45 year-old vines aged in French Allier barrels, which imparts added elegance. Inside there's notions of candied fruit, roasted coffee, fine tannins & a long finish that has people coming back for more. Get it before it's gone!

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Fondillon Gran Reserva 1948, Alicante \$32.00

Know someone with a birthday this year? This should give any wine lover a lot to chew on... No it's not a sherry, a port, or a madeira, it's vintage MONASTRELL for goodness sake. Crazy! Thank you to Jose Pastor for having the courage to import such a rare wine.

"Amber color. Explosively aromatic nose shows an intriguing bouquet of cherry, strawberry preserves, maple, floral honey and smoked meat. Very dry in style, with powerful red berry flavors, a sappy texture, and vaguely oxidized, nutty qualities. Just when you think it's a sherry style, the exuberant red fruit snaps back hard. The impressively persistent finish strongly emphasizes strawberry and raspberry. Intriguing, utterly singular wine; it ought to be fun to pair this with food. I say blue cheese." **-93 points, Steven Tanzer's International Wine Cellar**

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