



KERMIT LYNCH WINE MERCHANT

MAISON ARRETXEA

Country: France

Region: Southwest

Appellation(s): Irouléguay

Producer: Thérèse & Michel Riouspeyrous

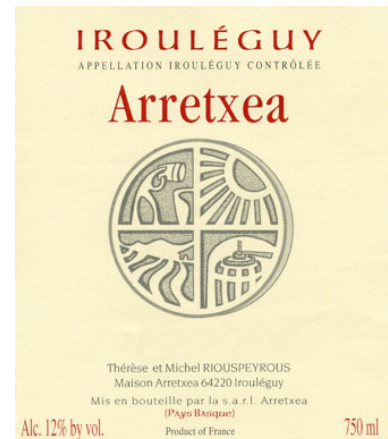
Founded: 1993

Annual Production: 3,300 cases

Farming: Organic (certified since 1998) and

Biodynamic (since 1998)

Website: N/A



The Basque country lies along the southwestern border of France and Spain, deep in the dramatic Pyrénées mountains. The eleventh century monks of Roncevaux made wine to cater to a population of tourists—religious pilgrims traveling through the mountain pass from France on their way to Santiago de Compostella in Spain. However, throughout the centuries, wine production dissipated drastically. Although Irouléguay was awarded its own A.O.C. in 1970, by the late twentieth century, most of the remaining *vignerons* were selling to the local cooperative. And then along came Michel and Thérèse Riouspeyrous...

Just after losing his father at the age of thirteen, Michel was raised by his grandfather, with whom he worked in the family farm and vineyards. He eventually gravitated towards studies in Agronomy before the mandatory *service militaire* sent him to Africa for duty. While in Africa, Michel met Thérèse, an Alsatian who was on vacation. They married and returned to Michel's home in the Southwest in the early eighties. In 1989, they decided to start their own domaine by renting two hectares of vineyards. The decision to farm organically came rather instantaneously to Michel. Once certified as organic, he and Thérèse pushed on towards the next logical progression: biodynamics. Juxtaposed against a backdrop of co-op wine that has come to categorize the appellation in recent decades, the Riouspeyrous seem even more radical—not only for bottling their own wine, but also for farming it as they do. For Michel and Thérèse, it just translates into a more authentic expression of the grape. A mere glimpse of their steep, terraced land, amid beautifully lush wildflowers, set against the white peaks of the Pyrénées, with sheep grazing on the soft, aerated soils in between vineyard rows, makes it easy to see what inspired such a decision.

The majority of their eight hectares are planted to the native grape varietals, Tannat (red), Gros Manseng and Petit Manseng (whites). The sandstone soils of Irouléguay are ideal for these grapes because they are streaked with iron oxide, mica, silica, limestone, clay, and dolomite. The mineral diversity lends an intensity to the wines, making them wild, earthy, tannic, and rich in spicy aromas. Full southern exposure allows the Riouspeyrous to achieve ripeness in these cooler climate vineyards. They vinify each *terroir* individually through traditional vinification methods to bottle four delicious cuvées. Their rosé is what Dixon Brooke calls, “a winter rosé”—deep in color, generous in fruit, with unusually pronounced tannins, it is the perfect accompaniment to grilled sausages.



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MAISON ARRETXEA (continued)

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Blend</u>	<u>Vine Age</u>	<u>Soil Type</u>	<u>Vineyard Area*</u>
Irouléguy Blanc “Hegoxuri”	60% Gros Manseng 35% Petit Manseng 5% Petit Courbu	15 to 20 years	Sandstone	3 ha
Irouléguy Blanc “Pantxuri”	60% Gros Manseng 40% Petit Manseng	15 to 20 years	Sandstone	N/A
Irouléguy Blanc “Schistes”	60% Gros Manseng 35% Petit Manseng 5% Petit Courbu	15 to 20 years	Schist and Sandstone	N/A
Irouléguy Rosé	80% Tannat 20% Cabernet Franc	7 to 15 years	Sandstone, Limestone	1.2 ha
Irouléguy Rouge	66% Tannat 17% Cabernet Franc 17% Cabernet Sauvignon	7 to 15 years	Sandstone	5 ha
Irouléguy Rouge “Haitza”	70% Tannat 30% Cabernet Sauvignon	20 years	Sandstone	2 ha

* “ha”=hectares; one hectare equals roughly two and a half acres

VITICULTURE / VINIFICATION

- All grapes are harvested by hand
- Grapes are sorted in the vineyard and in the winery
- After de-stemming, grapes are transferred by gravity to *cuve*
- Each parcel is vinified separately
- All fermentation is natural

White Wine:

- 65% of grapes are directly pressed, 35% are macerated for 18 hours
- Fermentation and aging in *foudre*, 600-L *demi-muid* (40%), and the rest in stainless steel
- Wine is aged for 10 months on the lees

Rosé:

- Juice is obtained by *saignée*, with attention paid to gentle extraction
- Wine does not undergo malolactic fermentation
- Wine is aged on the lees

Red Wines:

- Maceration lasts 3 to 4 weeks with daily punch-downs
- Irouléguy is aged for 10 months on the lees in cement



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- “Haitza” is aged for 16 months on the lees in *foudre* and 400 to 600-L *demi-muid*
- Red wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered