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Ciders of the Basque country and Asturias



Tinto will have a Txotx! party Thursday, pairing four courses with still and sparkling apple ciders - (from left) Txalaparta from Bordatto Extaldea; Isastegi; Castañon; and Poma Áurea from Trabanco. (CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer)



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On the northern coast of Spain in Basque country and Asturias, a taste for hard cider instead of wine reaches its height in April, when cider houses called *sagardotegi* celebrate with calls for "Txotx!" (say: "choach!") and casks are tapped, sending newly fermented fall *sidra* streaming from holes in the barrel straight into revelers' glasses. Tinto is having its own Txotx party Thursday, and it's an ideal moment to taste how fascinatingly different these ciders are - low in carbonation and vivid with earthy apple essence. Sour-beer lovers will enjoy the Isastegi (\$12.50, half-bottle/\$25, 750 ml), which has a funky tang reminiscent of apple lambic. Brut Champagne aficionados should try the light, crisp Poma Áurea from Trabanco (\$11 glass/\$48 750 ml), the fizziest of the bunch. Covet intense drinks? Try the Asturian Castañón (\$22, 700 ml) cloudy with echoes of autumn smoke. For more finesse and refinement, the Txalaparta (\$40, 750 ml) from Bordatto Extaldea, in Irouleguy, across the French border, features brilliant apple tartness softened by six months of wood. Txotx!

Tinto's Txotx, Thursday, \$50 a person (four courses with paired cider), 114 S. 20th St., 215-665-9150.

- Craig LaBan

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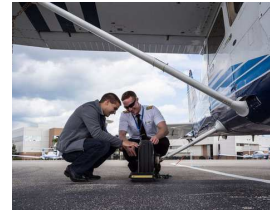
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