

## Xarel-lo's Versatility: From Sparkling Stunner to Varietal Star



Gone are the days when only [Albariño](#) or Verdejo are considered the epitome of Spanish white wines. Xarel-lo (pronounced 'CHA-REL-OH'), one of the primary grapes used in producing Cava, is making waves not only for imparting structure and acidity to bottles of the iconic [Spanish sparkling wine](#) but also for shining on its own as a still wine varietal expression. If 'golden hour' had a flavor profile, this thick-skinned, aromatic grape would be it — bright lemon, ripe white peach, and fresh herbs with a hint of nutty spice.

### **The Role of Xarel-lo in Cava**

Xarel-lo made its entrance onto the Catalan wine-making scene in 1785. Its vines grow best near the Mediterranean Sea, where the terroir (altitude, soil composition, and climate) helps strengthen the grape's structural balance and flavor concentration.

The Denominación de Origen (D.O.) for Cava spans seven autonomous regions across Spain. However, most Cava production (95%) happens about 45 minutes south of Barcelona, in D.O. Penedès in central Cataluña. There, the grape trio of Xarel-lo, Macabeo, and Parellada comprise most expressions of Cava.

# Stepping Outside the Cava Box

For [Juvé y Camps](#), the well-renowned family estate that has worked with the grape variety since 1796, Xarel-lo is a “key variety in all our sparkling and also still wines from the region,” says Ana Lópezcano Lamarain, communications manager for the brand. “Right now, we own 48 hectares (~119 acres) of Xarel-lo in our most important estate, Finca d’Espiells, and we keep on looking after excellence in each of them as for the rest of our vineyards.”

[Flor de Xarel-lo d’Espiells](#), from Juvé y Camps, is an example of 100% Xarel-lo as a still wine. “Due to its versatility, Xarel-lo is perfect for any type of elaboration — from young, fresh wines to those fermented and aged in oak (or other vessels) with body, structure and a wide range of flavors and aromas,” Lópezcano Lamarain adds.

## An Essential Building Block to Quality Cava

At Juvé y Camps, the Finca d’Espiells soils are low in organic matter, and the climate is warm and dry. These factors are crucial for growing Xarel-lo which, despite its strength, is a very sensitive grape that performs much better in low yields.

Juvé y Camps is one of the few houses producing a premium monovarietal Cava from 100% Xarel-lo, [La Capella](#). “The inspiration for La Capella reflects the essence of our wine region and our desire to bring what we are from the land to the glass,” says Lópezcano Lamarain. Because of the lower hand-picked yields from the 40-year-old vines, this sparkling wine only sees release in the most exceptional years.

“Located at the highest part of the estate (about 200m above sea level), we yield unique grapes with a stark landscape, a shallow soil bed, and loads of character and spirit, which is essential for long aging sparkling wines.”