

T'ga za Jug is a dry red wine from Macedonia's Tikves region, produced from the native Vranec grape variety. It is Macedonia's "most traditional wine." But T'ga za Jug's story transcends claims of mere authenticity, it is a wine imbued with a special cultural significance.



The name "T'ga za Jug," which translates as "longing for the south," is taken from a historically significant poem by Konstantin Miladinov (1830-62), a philologist, who is considered to be the founder of modern Macedonian poetry. He worked as a teacher for a short period and then left for Russia for university studies in 1857.

Miladinov wrote the poem while living in Russia. He was disappointed and nostalgic in Russia and obsessed with the idea of returning home. The "south" in the poem is Macedonia. Stambol is Istanbul, then a significant cultural center in the "south," and Kukus is a city that today belongs to Greece. Ohrid is the most significant cultural and historical city of Macedonia to this day, as well as Struga where the author was from.

Because of the cold climate in Moscow Konstantin Miladinov left Russia after a few years spent there. On his return from Moscow, he found his brother Dimitar imprisoned in Istanbul. He tried to save his brother but was only reached by the same destiny and they both died in the Istanbul prison, first Konstantin and then two days later his brother Dimitar Miladinov

Every year the large poetry festival held in Struga, held in honor of Konstantin Miladinov and his brother Dimitar, is kicked off by a ceremonial reading of "T'ga za Jug."

Longing for the South - T'ga za Jug

by Konstantin Miladinov

*If I had an eagle's wings
I would rise and fly on them
To our shores, to our own parts,
To see Stambol, to see Kukus,
And to watch the sunrise: is it
dim there too, as it is here?*

*If the sun still rises dimly,
If it meets me there as here,
I'll prepare for further travels,
I shall flee to other shores
Where the sunrise greets me brightly
And the sky is sewn with the stars.*

*It is dark here, dark surrounds me,
Dark covers all the earth,
Here are frost and snow and ashes,
Blizzards and harsh winds abound,
Fogs all around, the earth is ice,
And in the breast are cold, dark
thoughts.*

*No, I cannot stay here, no;
I cannot sit upon this frost.
Give me wings and I will don them;
I will fly to our own shores,
Go once more to our own places,
Go to Ohrid and to Struga.*

*There the sunrise warms the soul,
The sun gets bright in mountain woods:
Yonder gifts in great profusion
Richly spread by nature's power.
See the clear lake stretching white-
Or bluely darkened by the wind,
Look at the plains or mountains:
Beauty everywhere divine.*

*To pipe there to my heart's content.
Ah! Let the sun set, let me die.*

As for the wine itself, T'ga za Jug is a deep purple-red in appearance with a bouquet of red berries, cinnamon, and subtle oak. Reminiscent of an Italian barbera, T'ga za Jug has a good acidity, strawberry and cherry flavors, and a touch of black pepper on the finish. Great choice with food or poetry!

(sources: Wikipedia and Macedonian colleagues)