

Arak or araq is a clear, colourless, unsweetened aniseed-flavoured distilled alcoholic drink (also labeled as an Apéritif). Although it is the traditional alcoholic beverage in Lebanon, Arak is produced and consumed in the Eastern Mediterranean and Northern African countries, The word comes from Arabic is meaning 'sweat'. Arak is not to be confused with the similarly named liquor, and not an aniseed-flavoured drink. Raki, zivania, and ouzo are aniseed-flavored alcoholic drinks.

Arak is usually not drunk straight, but is mixed in approximately 1/3 arak to 2/3 water, and ice is then added. This dilution causes the clear liquor to turn a translucent milky-white colour; this is because anethole, the essential oil of anise, is soluble in alcohol but not in water.



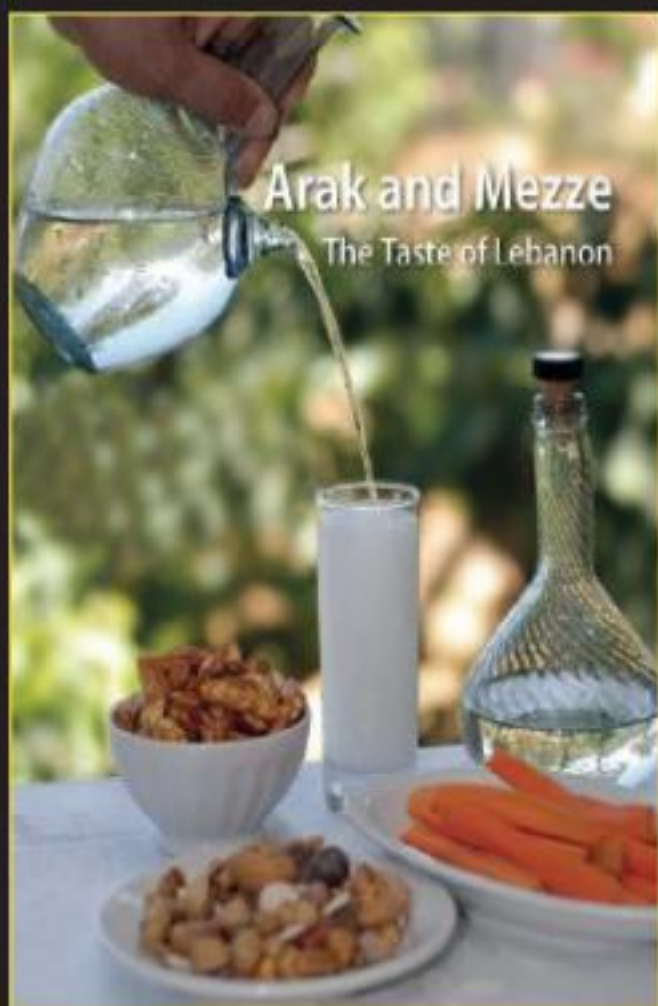
Arak Rayan

ARAK



Arak with water and ice.

This results in an emulsion, whose fine droplets scatter the light and turn the liquid translucent, a phenomenon known as louching. Arak is also commonly mixed with teas and juices. Drinkers may also take arak with a chaser on the side. Arak is usually served with mezza, which could include dozens of small dishes, which many arak drinkers prefer as accompaniment rather than main courses. When the main course of the meal is served, it may hardly be touched, in favour of these smaller dishes. It is also well appreciated with barbecues, along with garlic sauce. Distillation begins with the vineyards and quality grapevines are the key to making good arak. The vines should be very mature and usually of a golden colour.



Arak and Mezze
The Taste of Lebanon

Instead of being irrigated, the vineyards are left to the care of the Mediterranean climate and make use of the natural rain and sun. The grapes, which are harvested in late September and October, are crushed and put in barrels together with the juice (in Arabic El romeli) and left to ferment for three weeks. Occasionally the whole mix is stirred to release the CO₂.

The finished product is made during the second distillation..The alcohol collected in the first distillation is distilled againbut this time it is mixed with aniseed.The alembic is washed to remove all the remains of the previous distillation. The alcohol and the aniseed are mixed together in the lower part of the karkeh (called in Arabic ddesett). The ratio of alcohol to aniseed may vary(approximately 600 grams of anise to 4.5 gallons of alcohol),[citation needed] and it is one of the major factors in the quality of the final product. Another distillation takes place,

usually on the lowest possible temperature. The procedure is very slow.

Traditionally a drinking party takes place at the same time and people would gather to help the producer and have a drinking party. This is one of the most prestigious and traditional parties of the Lebanese mountains and it usually takes place in November.

Traditionally, Arak was generally of local or village manufacture, but in the last few decades it has increasingly been produced in large manufacturing plants. It has remained the preference of those who enjoy alcoholic drinks in the Middle East, in competition with the many drinks imported from the West.

Lebanon considers arak its traditional alcoholic beverage and the name Arak Zahlawi is a "controlled term of origin" given by the Lebanese people to arak produced in Zahleh, Beqaa Valley.

