

OCTAVE



Vinho Verde, Portugal's most popular white wine. Vinho Verde (literally "green wine") is a light white with touch of spritz. The word green refers not to the wines color, but to the fact that it's a young wine. Vinho Verde is made with the Alvarinho grape. This grape is light, crisp and acidic.

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Styles

The Vinhos Verdes are light and fresh, and are intended to be drunk within a year. At less than one bar of CO₂ pressure, they do not quite qualify as semi-sparkling wines but do have a definite pétillance. The white Vinho Verde is very fresh, due its natural acidity, with fruity and floral aromas that depend on the grape variety. The white wines are lemon- or straw-coloured, around 8.5 to 11% alcohol, and are made from local grape varieties Loureiro, Arinto, Trajadura, Avesso and Azal. Vinho Alvarinho is made from Alvarinho grapes, from a small designated sub-region of Monção. It has more alcohol (11.5 to 14%) and ripe tropical aromas. The reds are deep red and tannic, and are mostly made from Vinhão, Borraçal and Amaral grapes. The rosés are very fresh and fruity, usually made from Espadeiro and Padeiro grapes.

History

Both the Romans Seneca[disambiguation needed] and Pliny made reference to vines in the area between the rivers Douro and Minho.[3]

There is a record of a winery being donated to the Alpendurada convent in Marco de Canaveses in 870 AD, and the vineyards seem to have expanded over the following centuries, planted by religious orders and encouraged by tax breaks. Wines were mostly produced for domestic consumption, although Vinho Verde may have been exported in the 12th century, to England, Germany, and Flanders.[4] The first definite exports to England are recorded by John Croft as taking place in 1788.[3]

The arrival of maize in the 16th century left a distinctive stamp on viticulture in the region. To maximise production of maize, new regulations banished vines to the field margins, where they would be draped over trees and hedges, forcing the vignerons to pick them from tall ladders. Even today, vines are trained on tall trellises, although now that has more to do with reducing rot caused by the region's high rainfall (1500 mm on average). Another problem is that the rainfall encourages vegetative growth which shades the grapes.

The "Vinho Verde Region" was demarcated by the law of September 18, 1908 and a decree of October 1 of the same year.[3][4] The regulations controlling production were largely set in 1929, with recognition as a Denominação de Origem Controlada (DOC) in 1984.[3] The DOC is overseen by the Comissão de Viticultura da Região dos Vinhos Verdes ("Wine Commission of the Vinho Verde Region").

There are currently nearly 35,000 hectares of Vinho verde vineyards, making up 15% of the total in Portugal.[5] There are 30,599 producers, down from 72,590 in 1981.[6]

Subregions

The Vinho Verde DOC is divided into nine subregions, which may be indicated on the wine label together with the name of Vinho Verde, for example as Vinho Verde-Amarante.[7] The subregions are:[4]

- * Amarante
- * Ave
- * Baião
- * Basto
- * Cávado
- * Lima
- * Monção e Melgaço
- * Paiva
- * Sousa

Furthermore, there are two special designations connected to a grape variety and a wine style, Vinho Verde Alvarinho and Vinho Verde Alvarinho Espumante.[7]

Grapes

The grape varieties recommended or permitted for the DOC are as follows:

- * Recommended white grapes: Alvarinho, Arinto, Avesso, Azal, Batoca, Loureiro, and Trajadura
- * Permitted white grapes: Branco-Escola, Cainho de Moreira, Cascal, Douradinha, Esganinho, Esganoso de Castelo de Paiva, Esganoso de Lima, Fernão Pires, Lameiro, Rabigato, S. Mamede and Semilão
- * Recommended red grapes: Amaral, Azal Tinto, Borraçal, Brancelho, Espadeiro, Padeiro, Pedral, Rabo de Ovelha and Vinhão
- * Permitted red grapes: Doçal, Doçal de Refóios, Espadeiro Mole, Labrusco, Mourisco, Pical Pólho, Sousão and Verdelho Tinto. [8]

The two most successful white wine varieties are Alvarinho and Loureiro. Alvarinho tends to produce low yields and can reach alcohol levels of 12.5%. The grape is widely planted in the northern Minho between the Lima Valley and Spanish border. Loureiro produces higher yields but very aromatic wines. The most successful red wine grape has been Vinhão, followed by Azal Tinto and Espadeiro. These grapes can produce wines with deep purple coloring and peppery notes.[2]

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