

Visitar Portugal – 8. Fabulosos Vinhos Soalheiro

Portugal Revisited – 8. Fabulous Wines of Soalheiro

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Dr. Bernard Dias / 1 day ago

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Luis Cerdeira

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Quinta de Soalheiro in Melgaço on Portugal's northern border with Galicia, produces exquisite white wines from Alvarinho. The vineyards were first planted in 1974 and the Alvarinho brand "Soalheiro" meaning 'sunny place' was created in 1982. Today, the 6 ha estate is one of the best in Vinho Verde and is run with meticulous attention to detail by the founder's son Luis Cerdeira.



Alvarinho vineyards of Soalheiro

Luis met us at his modern winery in Melgaco one Sunday morning last June. He talked about Soalheiro, showed us the winery and the vineyards and led us to the professionally arranged tasting room.





The following wines were tasted:

1. **Alvarinho Clássico 2015:** Floral nose. Crisp. Sweet fruit. Expressive. (16)
2. **Alvarinho Granit 2015:** Fruit from several small vineyards planted in granite soil above 150 meters, fermented at a higher temperature (22 degrees C) than usual for white wine. Subdued nose, precise, dry and mineral and wonderfully balanced. (16.5)
3. **Alvarinho Premeiras Vinhas 2015:** Fruit from old vines (>30 years), 15% fermented in used oak barrels and aged on lees in large oak barrels. Has power and elegance. (17.5)
4. **Alvarinho Reserva 2014:** Fermentation in French oak (old and new - 25%) and aged on lees for eleven months. Oak not overt. Crisp. Persistent and long. Honeyed. Lovely! (18)
5. **Allo 2015:** Alvarinho and Loureiro from Lima Valley. 11% alcohol. Floral and light with a good balance. (16)
6. **Alvarinho Terramatter 2015:** Organic viticulture. Early picked. Malolactic in Chestnut casks, Low sulphur usage (<25 mgs). Intense and persistent. (18)
7. **Oppaco 2013:** A red from Vinhao and 15% Alvarinho. This is the first Soalheiro red wine. 30% aged for one year in new French oak barrels. (15)

After the tasting at Quinta do Soalheiro, we drove along a winding dirt track to Quinta de Folga managed by Luís Cerdeira's sister Maria, for lunch. Quinta de Folga is dedicated to the rediscovery of smoked pork products from Bisaro in the county of Melgaço.



Quinta de Folga

We sat on a high deck overlooking the vineyard and sipped Alvarinho in the warm sunshine.



Lunch was an elegant dining room presided over by Luís and his sister Maria. Hams and sausages from the Quinta, grilled peppers, pork with rice and cheeses were washed down with Soalheiro Sparkling Alvarinho 2012, Docil 2015 and Granite 2015 *en magnum*.







We sat outside after lunch and drank coffee. Luis joined us. It has been a splendid tasting and lunch with charming hosts. We left reluctantly - the journey ahead to the Douro that afternoon was long.

