

Quebrar o molde

Breaking the Mold

Wine Spectator

Breaking

Portugal's white wines surge in quality as vintners exploit older vineyards in the Douro and beyond

BY KIM MARCUS

THE MOLD

Portugal's Douro River Valley contains an amazing mix of terroirs where native grapes have adapted to searing summer heat to produce world-class red table wines. And when it comes to making intensely flavorful and concentrated Ports in the deepest reaches of the Douro gorge, the hotter the better.



PHOTOGRAPH BY
SHERI GIBLIN

Last year, Alvarinho was recognized as an authorized grape in the Douro, meaning that wine made from it will no longer carry the more generic regional Duriense moniker; expect to see more Alvarinho bottlings from the region.

PORTUGAL'S MAJOR WINE REGIONS



Cornucopia of Whites

Portugal is home to a wealth of native grapes. Here is a guide to some of the leading white varieties. When in doubt, look for "branco," which means "white" in Portuguese, on the label.

- ◆ **Alvarinho** | The low-yielding Alvarinho produces aromatic wines of complexity and richness, characterized by flavors of peach, citrus zest and passion fruit. Known as Albariño in Spain.
- ◆ **Gouveio** | High-yielding and widely planted, its citrus aromas and peach and aniseed flavors produce bright wines with lively acidity. Once called Verdelho in the Douro, this variety is unrelated to the Verdelho of Madeira.
- ◆ **Rabigato** | Primarily used for blending and known for its acidity, this variety is powerfully mineral and bright, with a vegetal undertone and floral aromas.
- ◆ **Roupeiro/Códega/Síria** | This high-volume, low-acid variety, known as Roupeiro in Alentejo and Códega in the Douro, offers aromas and flavors of citrus, peach and melon.
- ◆ **Viosinho** | Once overlooked for its low yields, it is now gaining a following in the Douro, adding body, fragrance and freshness to a range of white table wine blends and Ports. Low in acidity, it performs best at high altitudes.
- ◆ **Arinto/Loureiro/Trajadura** | In addition to Alvarinho, these varieties are found in the light, crisp, mildly fizzy bottlings from the northern Vinho Verde DOC. Arinto (or Paderñã) is vibrant and mineral; Loureiro is aromatic and floral; and Trajadura steely and higher in alcohol.
- ◆ **Encruzado** | The headliner in the Dão, Encruzado balances sugar and acidity to create ageable and structured wines. Floral and citrus notes dominate, resulting in rich, mineral versions. It is a leading component in many blends.

Known as Albariño in Spain, where it produces high quality whites in the Rías Baixas region, Alvarinho has traditionally been a component in the light and spritzy blends from the Vinho Verde appellation, which lies north and west of the Douro. Quality in Vinho Verde has improved over the past decade, as vintners have modernized grapegrowing and cellar practices, benefiting both blends and varietal bottlings.

An excellent Alvarinho from Vinho Verde is the Soalheiro Primeiras Vinhas 2014 (90, \$25). It's made from old vines and features Riesling-like flavors of green apple and citrus, with minerally notes. With its richness and power, it should gain complexity over the next five years. For a lighter-style white from

Kim Marcus' Recommended Portuguese White Wines

More than 100 white wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at www.winespectator.com/083116. WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

WINE	SCORE
SOALHEIRO Alvarinho <u>Vinho Verde</u> Primeiras Vinhas 2014 A taut and powerful white, with concentrated minerally notes to the kiwifruit, green apple and Key lime pie flavors.	90