

# GRAPES of PORTUGAL

## REGIONAL MAP





## Alvarinho

This northern grape is one of Portugal's finest and most characterful. It was one of the first Portuguese grape varieties to be bottled as a single variety. Its full-bodied, subtly fragrant white wines are easy to recognize, their complex but delicate aromas reminiscent of peach, lemon, passion fruit, lychee, orange zest, jasmine, orange blossom and lemon balm. The wines are delicious young, but they can also age well, often for ten years or more. Alvarinho grows mostly along the River Minho, right up in the north of the Vinho Verde region - the northern Vinho Verde sub-regions of Monção and Melgaço are its famous heartlands. Compared to other Vinho Verde, it makes richer wines, higher in alcohol wines. Alvarinho vines are vigorous, and care is needed to restrain their exuberant vegetation, yet grape yield is low, the bunches small, the grapes very pippy.





## Antão Vaz

This is one of the most prized varieties of the Alentejo, until recently grown almost exclusively around Vidigueira. Well suited to the warm and sunny climate on the great plains of the Alentejo, it is reliable and productive, consistent in its ripening. The bunches are big and not too tightly packed, the grapes large, with tough skins. As a rule it produces firm, full-bodied, well-structured wines. Made as a single variety, it has lively aromas, with hints of ripe tropical fruits, tangerine peel and something mineral, along with good structure and body. If picked early, it gives wines with vibrant aroma and crisp acidity. Left to ripen longer, it can reach high levels of alcohol, making it a good candidate for barrel maturation. It is often blended with Roupeiro and Arinto, which contribute refreshing acidity.





## Arinto

This is a versatile grape, grown in most of Portugal's wine regions. In Vinho Verde country, it goes by the name of Pedernã. It makes vibrant wines with lively, refreshing acidity, often with a mineral quality, along with gentle flavors reminiscent of apple, lime and lemon. Arinto-based wines can keep well but are also delicious young. Because it keeps its acidity even in hot climates, Arinto is often added to other lower-acid white grapes to improve blends - especially in the hot Alentejo and Ribatejo. It makes some of its greatest wines in the small DOC region of Bucelas, just north of Lisbon, where it must account for at least 75 per cent of blends (along with Sercial and Rabo de Ovelha). Its good acidity also makes it a great ingredient for sparkling wines. Arinto's medium-sized bunches are tightly packed with small grapes.

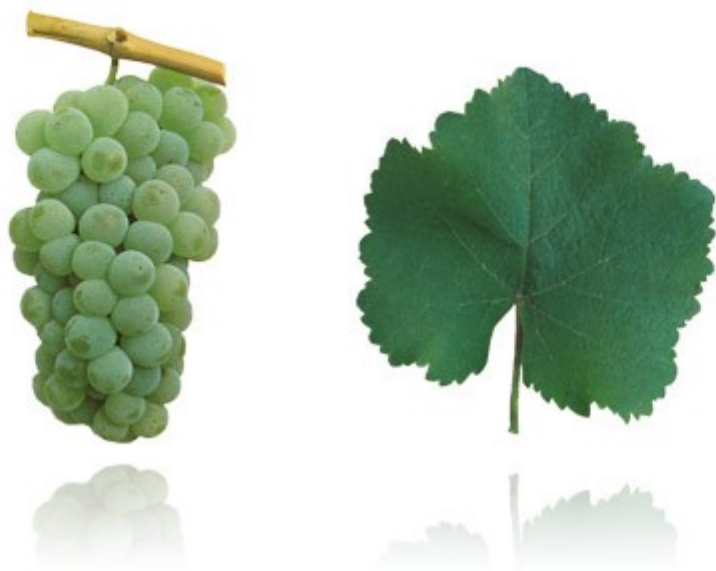




## Bical

This grape is to be found mainly in the Beiras, in the DOCs Bairrada and Dão (where, incidentally, it is sometimes called "Borrado das Moscas" or "Fly Droppings"!). Bical wines are especially soft and aromatic, fresh and well structured, typically with aromas of peach and apricot, while in riper years there may be hints of tropical fruit. They respond well to wood maturation, especially with prolonged lees contact. In Bairrada, Bical is used a lot in the production of sparkling wines, often blended with Arinto. In the vineyard it's an early variety, and although it has good, fresh acidity when picked at the right moment, if picked too late it can become over-alcoholic and a little short on acidity. Despite being highly resistant to rot, it is particularly susceptible to powdery mildew.





## Encruzado

For the moment, this grape is restricted very much to the DOC Dão, but watch this space. It is one of Portugal's absolutely top white grape varieties. The best examples have delicate aromas of roses and violets, light citrus notes, a touch of resin and, in certain conditions, intensely mineral notes. Amongst its virtues is the ability to maintain almost perfect balance between sugar and acidity, making serious, rich, structured wines with extraordinary ageing potential. It is used both as a single variety and as a star ingredient in many Dão blends. The Encruzado vine yields well, presenting no major problems in the vineyard.

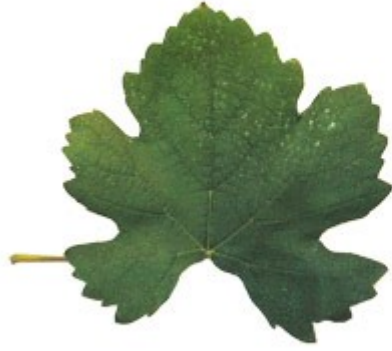




## Fernão Pires

This is one of Portugal's most planted grapes. It grows more or less all over the country, but is particularly important in the regions of Tejo, Lisboa and Bairrada. It's an aromatic variety - you might detect scents and flavours of lime, lemon, roses and other flowers, tangerines, oranges... and it's best drunk young. It is also very versatile, sometimes used as a single variety, sometimes blended, sometimes used as a base wine for sparkling wine, and can also be harvested late to make sweet wines. Fernão Pires vines are frost-sensitive, and best suited to warm or hot climates. Outside Portugal, it has been planted with some success in South Africa and Australia. It prefers fertile soils, and gives high yields.





## Gouveio

This Douro grape is now planted right across Portugal and has recently become particularly popular in the Alentejo. It produces fresh, lively wines with good acidity, plenty of body, and fresh, citrus aromas, along with notes of peach and aniseed, and lovely balance. It ages well in bottle. For years it was known as Verdelho in the Douro, which led to confusion, as Gouveio has nothing to do with the Verdelho of Madeira. It ripens quite early, giving relatively high yields of medium-sized, tightly packed bunches of small, yellowish-green grapes that are prone to oidium infection and vulnerable if rain should fall around harvest time.





## **Loureiro**

Although now widely disseminated throughout the Vinho Verde region, it seems that the Loureiro grape originated in the valley of the River Lima, towards the north of the VR Minho/DOC Vinho Verde region. "Loureiro" means "laurel" or "bay" and the aroma of Loureiro wines is said to resemble that of laurel flowers, also orange blossom, acacia and lime blossom, overlaying appley, peachy fruit. Loureiro wines usually have refreshing, well-balanced acidity. Loureiro is much in evidence nowadays bottled as a single variety, but traditionally it was more often blended with Arinto (Pedernã) and Alvarinho, or with Trajadura. It is a very vigorous, high-yielding variety that has only recently been recognized as "noble". The bunches are elongated and relatively compact, bearing medium-sized, yellowish-greenish grapes.



## **Malvasia Fina**

This is a grape of inland northern Portugal, especially the Douro, Dão and Beira Interior; it is also planted in the Távora-Varosa and Lisboa regions. Malvasia Fina wines are subtle, not particularly intense, reasonably fresh and moderately complex. You may detect a hint of molasses, a suggestion of beeswax and nutmeg, and the wine may appear slightly smoky even if it has not been matured in wood. Generally used for blending, it also contributes to base blends for sparkling wines in cooler areas and/or when harvested early, for instance in Távora-Varosa and Lamego. In the vineyard, Malvasia Fina is particularly sensitive to oidium and moderately prone to rot, mildew and color, and yields are therefore extremely variable and inconsistent.



## **Rabigato**

Planted throughout the Douro Superior, this is one of the Douro's best white grapes, contributing bright, refreshing acidity to white blends. When (rarely) it is vinified as a single variety, its aroma is reminiscent of acacia and orange blossom, with vegetal notes and a strongly mineral character, full body and good acid structure. The bunches are medium-sized, the grapes small and greenish-yellow in color.



## Síria

This land-locked grape grows in a long north-south strip over by the border with Spain. It has various alternative regional names. Síria is the name used in the Beiras, but it is best known by its southern Alentejo name, Roupeiro - this is the most-planted white grape in the Alentejo. Because it has a tendency to oxidise, Síria/Roupeiro is a wine to drink young, In its youth it is exuberantly aromatic, citrus and floral, with hints of peach, melon and bay. It does better in the cool uplands of the Beiras than in the heat of the Ribatejo and Alentejo, and is particularly successful in the Pinhel region in the northern sector of the Beira Interior. The Síria gives high yields, and both bunches and grapes are small.





## Trajadura

Originally from the north of the Vinho Verde region, the Trajadura makes wines with lower acidity and higher alcoholic strength than the other Vinho Verde grapes. This makes it a great candidate for blending in this cool, moist part of the country, where excessive acidity and low alcohol can be a problem even with vines trained in an efficient, modern way. Trajadura is a fairly aromatic variety, with gentle flavors of peach, apricot, apple and ripe pear and a pleasant touch of orange blossom. It is used in popular blends with Alvarinho, and with Loureiro and Arinto. Trajadura has a very long vegetative cycle, buds breaking early, grapes ripening late. The bunches are yellowish-green, tightly packed and medium sized. Yields are very generous.





## Verdelho

Verdelho came to fame on Portugal's islands - Madeira and the Azores- as a base wine for fortified wines. From there it made its way to Australia, where it makes rich, aromatic dry whites. On Madeira it has traditionally been responsible for the tangy, off-dry style of (fortified) Madeira wine. The base wines have high acidity, and can be aromatic. Before the vine-munching phylloxera bug reached Madeira in the late 19th century, Verdelho vines accounted for two-thirds of Madeira's vineyards. Nowadays very little remains, growing mostly on high ground along the north coast of the island. Bunches of tiny yellowish-green grapes are small and compact.





## Viosinho

This north-eastern grape survives for the most part scattered here and there in the old mixed white vineyards of the Douro. Traditionally, Viosinho has been an unpopular variety with growers because of its very low yields. It's only recently that winemakers have realized what a treasure it is, as a component both in port and in unfortified Douro white blends. It makes full-bodied but fresh, fragrant, well-balanced wines, performing best in hot, sunny climates where it is less prone to oidium and botrytis infection. Bunches and grapes are small and early-ripening.





## Alfrocheiro

This is a Dão grape by origin, but it has spread successfully southwards into the Alentejo, Ribatejo/Tejo and Palmela regions because of its ability to retain good acidity even in hot climates. The wines are rich in color with firm but ripe tannins and a good balance of tannins, alcohol, acidity and attractive, berry fruit, reminiscent in particular of blackberries and ripe strawberries. The vines are vigorous, requiring more attention than many other varieties to keep the vegetation under control, and they are prone to attack by oidium and botrytis.





## Aragonez

This is one of the rare grape varieties to be prized on both sides of the border. Tempranillo to the Spanish, the Portuguese call it by two different names depending on the region: Aragonês and Tinta Roriz (the latter name is used only in the Dão and Douro regions). In recent years it has spread rapidly throughout the Dão, Ribatejo/Tejo and Lisboa regions. It can make rich, lively red wines that combine elegance and robustness, copious berry fruit and spicy flavour. It's an early variety (that's what "Tempranillo" means in Spanish). The vines are very vigorous and productive and adapt well to different climates and soils, although it prefers hot, dry climates on sandy or clay-limestone soils. It tends to be blended with other varieties, typically Touriga Nacional and Touriga Franca, and also with Trincadeira and Alicante Bouschet in the Alentejo.





## Baga

Bairrada is the famous home of the difficult Baga grape, but it is also to be found widely elsewhere in the Beiras, including Dão. Baga grapes are small and thick-skinned (which makes for high tannin levels in the juice), and the grapes ripen late, indeed inadequately in cooler, damper years, especially if planted in an inappropriate place. Baga performs best on clay soils and requires good exposition to the sun. Even then, it is highly susceptible to rot, especially in September rains. The vines produce exuberant foliage, creating a lot of work in the vineyard for quality-conscious growers. When the grapes ripen well, in dry years, Baga wines have deep colour and a rich but lean, tannic, high-acid structure, with clear flavors of berries and black plums and hints of coffee, hay, tobacco and smoke. Though often astringent when young, Baga wines (especially the best ones from Bairrada) can age remarkably well, softening and gaining elegance and a herby, cedary, dried fruit complexity.





## Castelão

This is one of the most commonly-planted grapes in the south of the country. It is especially popular in the regions Tejo, Lisboa, Península de Setúbal and Alentejo, and is happiest in hot climates and dry, sandy soils. It performs at its best in the Palmela region of the Setúbal Peninsula south of Lisbon, in old vineyards in the hot, sandy soils around Peceirão. Castelão grapes from carefully-managed, low-yielding old vines can be made into well-structured wines with plenty of tannin and acidity, and fruit reminiscent of redcurrants, preserved plums and berries, sometimes with a hint of well-hung game. Castelão is rarely able to shake off its rustic character. The best examples can age very well, sometimes resembling fine old Cabernet when mature.





## Jaen

Jaen shows at its best in the Dão region, and that's where most of it is grown. The vines are vigorous, prone to mildew and botrytis infection, and the grapes ripen early, providing low acidity and poor color. At worst its wines are watery and acidic, at best highly perfumed, reminiscent of blackberry, blueberry and cherry. Despite a slightly rustic character, it can make early-drinking, soft, silky reds that are simple yet seductive.





### **Moscatel Galego Roxo**

This grape began life as a natural genetic mutation of Moscatel Galego, of which there were small quantities in the Setúbal Peninsula. It makes fortified wines similar to those from the "Moscatel de Setúbal" grape, but with more complex aromas and flavors. In comparison to Moscatel Galego, the bunches and grapes are smaller, and in colour an exotic pink as opposed to yellowish-green. Fortified wines made from Moscatel Galego Roxo are sweeter and very aromatic with a long after-taste.



## Ramisco

Ramisco is confined to the tiny and once famous region of Colares, in the sand dunes west of Lisbon and the palaces of Sintra. Vineyard land is shrinking, and no wonder. Colares is right next to the wonderful surfing beach of Praia Grande, just a short drive from Lisbon, and far more money is to be made from building villas than from growing vines. All the more so because growing vines in Colares is a difficult and exhausting business. The vines are planted ungrafted, on their own roots, deep into the sand (the phylloxera bug cannot survive in sand). Ramisco produces wines with hard tannins and high acidity, not much fun in their youth, but, if well made, capable of long ageing in bottle.





## **Tinta Barroca**

This is one of the most commonly-planted vines in the Douro, and one of the five officially recommended varieties for port. You will rarely meet it as a single variety, but it forms part of most red Douro blends, contributing dark color without too much tannin, thanks to its dark but thin skins, along with plummy, cherry fruit. Despite high yields, its grapes are rich in sugar and potential alcohol, and it is a reliable producer, with good resistance to pests and diseases. However, it copes badly in excessive heat and water stress, and grapes that suddenly become over-ripe can rapidly turn to raisins on the vine. It has been exported to South Africa where it is a component in port-style wines as well as making some varietal table wines



## Tinto Cão

In the Dão region, this grape is a relatively recent arrival, but in the Douro it dates back to the 18th century, and is now one of the five officially recommended grapes. Although it has drawbacks economically, it makes fine wines. Its quality is evident in the perfect balance between tannins, acidity and sugar in the juice, in the firm but ripe quality of its tannins, and its rich color. The wines are floral, dense and well structured, and can be very long-lived. It is frequently blended with Touriga Nacional and Aragonez, amongst others. The dense, thick skins of Tinto Cão grapes not only give rich tannins and color, they also provide protection from mildew and rot. So what are its problems? It is late-ripening, and produces incredibly low yields, so low as to be economically unviable, and it is possibly therefore destined to die out.





## Touriga Franca

This is one of the structural pillars of red Douro blends, and also one of the five officially recommended grapes for port. It's the most widely planted grape in the Douro, currently accounting for around a fifth of total vineyard area, and it is now much planted right across the northern half of Portugal. The Touriga Franca makes richly-colored, dense yet elegant wines with copious blackberry fruit and floral notes (roses, rock roses, wild flowers...) and firm but velvety tannins that contribute to the ageing potential of blends - it is often blended with Tinta Roriz and Touriga Nacional. Apart from the quality of its wines, it is popular in the vineyard for its resistance to pests and diseases and its reliably good crops of healthy grapes.





## **Vinhão**

Famous for its biting acidity and dark, opaque color, Vinhão is the most-planted grape of the Vinho Verde/Minho region. Unlike most red grapes, where practically all the color comes from the skins, Vinhão also has red flesh and therefore instant red juice, which then darkens further once the blue-black skins have time to macerate. This is an especial advantage in the case of port production, where colour needs to be extracted very quickly. In the Douro Valley it goes by the name of Souzão, and it is currently being quite widely replanted. Vinhão originated in the Vinho Verde/Minho region, and only later migrated to the Douro.