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# Portugal – place your winning bet

Neil Phillips discovers refreshing whites and complex reds from rejuvenated old world vineyards

In 2012 Vini Portugal, the generic wine organisation responsible for promoting Portuguese wines, launched 'Discover a World of Difference', a campaign to host a series of Portuguese wine tastings at wine merchants and restaurants in the UK.

The Wine Tipster presented some of these tastings at retailers such as Oddbins and independent wine merchants including The Oxford Wine Company, showcasing the diversity and quality of Portuguese wine styles produced from the north to the south of the country.

The sessions were a huge success. It was noticeable, as someone who has presented on Portuguese wines for a number of years, that with our increasing thirst for wine knowledge, punters' curiosity had evolved from white Vinho Verde on holiday, port at Christmas with some Stilton and the underrated Mateus Rose, to enjoying the range of styles from exciting regions like Dao, Douro and Alentejo.

So what has changed? Portugal has an impressive 250 indigenous grape varieties and winemakers have spent a great deal of time finding out which of these varieties produces the best results in their vineyards.

Their judicious use of popular varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah in blends is impressive.

Many of the winemakers have gained experience, ideas and completed harvests in other wine-producing countries in the old world and new world and have, importantly, imposed a high-level of vineyard management.

Winemakers are backed by strong, well established family businesses who have vineyard interests across Portugal or by new investors, who are not ego wine owners.

Then you come to the wonderful regions themselves, which shape the diversity of the country's wines, producing a whole range of wine styles.

As a result you can find a style of wine that is wonderful on its own, while others are at their best with fish, meat, cheese or even chocolate!

So where should you start?

Kick off with the dry, refreshing whites from Vinho Verde in the north such as Quinta de Azevedo or the fuller styles made from 100 per cent Avarinho by one of the

leading winemakers from the region Anselmo Mendes; or try the softer, peachy styles made from the Louriero variety in this region. Easy-drinking whites made from the widely-planted Arinto are the type of wines that are handy for the perfect summer's evening.

If you looking for Burgundian elegance and complexity then go to the Douro for whites (currently more well known for reds and ports but the whites are a big part of the future) or try Julia Kemper's excellent white from the Dao region.

In the innovative Lisboa area, Quinta de Chocapalha are making high-class whites, with Esporão, J Portugal Ramos and Herdade da Malhadinha Nova doing a great job of producing classy, balanced whites in the warm south in Alentejo.

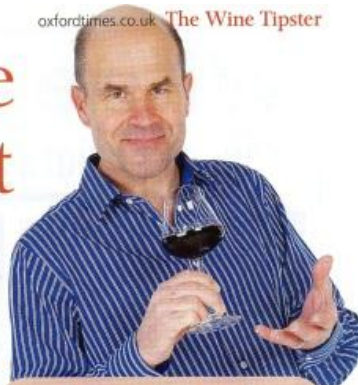
For the reds, lighter styles from Tejo and Lisboa are increasingly sought after, with serious, foodie reds produced in Dao by Quinta dos Roques, Quinta das Malas and Quinta da Falorca, while Filipa Pato and Luis Pato in Barriada make rich, intense, long-aging reds from the Baga variety.

In the Douro, Touriga Nacional is the kingpin red grape variety in Portugal and plays a crucial role whether blended or on its own so depending on the depth of your pockets go for Niepoort, Quinto do Crasto and Wine & Soul.

Down in the south, in the exciting Alentejo region, Sonho Lusitano and Esporão, among many others, are worth spending your cash on for high-class complex reds.

Finally, do not forget about port, as it is not just for Christmas because it is so adaptable with cheese, nuts, chocolates, tarts and desserts, with quality port houses such as Sandeman and Taylor's.

Look out for the 2013 Discover a World of Difference tastings later in the year – in the meantime you will not have to travel far to get a taster of the diversity of Portuguese wines as Stevens Garnier, WineBear, Oddbins, The Oxford Wine Company, Majestic and Waitrose all have a strong selection.



## My pick of Portugal

**Aphros Vinho Verde Loureiro Branco 2011, abv 13 per cent, Vinho Verde, Portugal, £11.05. Stockist: WineBear**  
This dry white is what quality Vinho Verde is all about. Made from 100 per cent Loureiro, the smooth, soft peachy, lime and melon flavours are balanced by lovely texture and crisp acidity.

**FP 2012 by Filipa Pato, abv 12.5 per cent, Barriada, Portugal, £11.75 Stockist: Oddbins.**  
Like her father Luis Pato, Filipa Pato is a very talented and individual winemaker, who believes in only using indigenous grape varieties. Like the FP 2011, this blend of Arinto and Bical, combines beautifully the refreshing citrus flavours from Arinto with some weighty character from Bical.

**Portal da Águia 2009, abv 13.5 per cent, Tejo, Portugal, £8.25. Stockist: Oddbins**  
This excellent, medium-bodied, fruity red from the quality Oddbins Portuguese range is great value and a crowd pleaser too.

**Quinta dos Carvalhais Duque du Viseu 2009, abv 13 per cent, Dao, Portugal, £9.50. Stockists: Stevens Garnier, Barrica Wines**  
Dao is one of my favourite Portuguese regions and this delicious, well-structured, balanced red is packed with spice, plums and chocolates. Bring on the suckling pig!

**F'OZ 2011, J. Portugal Ramos, abv 14 per cent, Vinho Regional Alentejano, Portugal, £9.99. Stockist: Waitrose**  
Aragonez and Trincadeira dominate the blend of this lovely, full-flavoured red with plums, spice and herbaceous character.

**Ramos Pinto Collector Reserva Port, abv 19.5 per cent, Douro, Portugal, £13.99. Stockists: Café de la Post and The Oxford Wine Company**  
This wonderful, silky-smooth, delectable port has plums, damsons and a subtle balance of sweetness, that will match nicely with chocolate.

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