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Wine David Williams's wines of the week

# A trio of southern Portuguese reds

When it comes to quality, at sometimes unbelievable prices, the southern edge of Portugal is the place to go. Here are three reds that show the area at its best



Pick of the bunch: harvesting grapes in Portugal. Photograph: Alamy

David Williams  
Sunday 17 January 2016 05.59 GMT

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**Paseo Red, Lisboa, Portugal 2014 (£5.75, Oddbins)** If you're looking for budget red wine in Europe it pays to head south. In Italy that might be Puglia, in France the Languedoc-Roussillon and in Spain the dusty plains of Castilla-La Mancha or the cluster of regions around Valencia known as the Levant. The theory holds on the furthestwestern reaches of the continent, too: the powerful but refined wines of the Douro and, to a lesser extent, the Dão, get most of the critical attention in Portugal –the country's equivalents of Bordeaux and Burgundy. But the easy-going reds of the south are where you'll find most joy if your budget doesn't stretch much beyond a fiver, Oddbins' Lisbon-sourced Paseo being a red plum-juicy old favourite of mine for this credit-straitened time of year.

**Quinta de Chocalpa Tinto, Estremadura, Portugal 2010 (£11.95, Corney & Barrow)** The vineyards around Portugal's capital aren't only concerned with the simple, cheap and cheerful, however. At Quinta de Chocalpa just to the northeast of Lisbon, there's a commitment to something rather more serious from the husband-and-wife team Paulo and Alice Tavares da Silva, whose daughter, Sandra, just happens to be one of Portugal's most talented winemakers. Their house red, made from a mix of grape varieties including Portugal's finest Touriga Nacional, is a polished mix of lavender, damson and dark cherry; their Reserva Vinha Mae 2010 (also available from [Corney & Barrow](#), £20.95) adds intensity, chunkier tannin and oak spice to the mix. Both have a seam of freshness that makes them intensely drinkable.

**Ramos Reserva, Alentejo, Portugal 2013 (£9.99, or £6.66 as part of a mixed case of six bottles, Majestic)** The biggest and best-known southern Portuguese wine region is the Alentejo, a vast undulating plain (it takes up a third of the country's total area) sprinkled with the Mediterranean trinity of cork oaks, olive trees and vines. The star producer here is João Portugal Ramos, a key figure in the renaissance of Portuguese wines since the 1980s, lending his expertise across the country before starting his own project in the Alentejo in 1990. While his name is still attached to projects throughout Portugal, it's Ramos's strikingly bright fruit-driven Alentejo reds that I find most consistently rewarding. Both Majestic's Reserva blend and the similar Marques de Borba 2014 (£9.90, [www.tanners-wine.co.uk](http://www.tanners-wine.co.uk)) offer a deeply satisfying slick of warming dark plummy richness.

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**Nickoakley** 17 Jan 2016 17:40

1 ↑

We are the company responsible for the Ramos Reserva and Marques de Borbe (UK office for the producer). The Asda Dão mentioned in the previous comment is ours too. As for the dearth of Portuguese wines on the shelf we are doing our best and sales are on the up. But the problem is not quality nor price, it's the lack of familiarity of Portuguese grapes and brands. When we promote the region (like Dão, Douro, vinho verde), we see sales booming. But producers are reluctant to relegate their brand to a subservient position in relation to the region, on the label. The answer is in their hands.....but Portuguese are conservative by nature and things change only slowly.

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**ID863084** 17 Jan 2016 12:09

0 ↑

Portuguese wine is criminally underrepresented in UK supermarkets. Asda Extra Special Dao is unbeatable value for a fiver. They are also producing some great whites and not just from the cooler regions-Douro whites can be superb.

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