

PORTUGUESE WINE TASTING - IWHSS12

Portuguese wine history

Portuguese wine history is longer than the foundation of Portugal. It is believed that wine was first planted in the Iberian Peninsula (in the Tagus and Sado Valley) around 2000 B.C. by the Tartessians. The Phoenicians took over the Tartessian trade, including wine trade around 10th century B.C. and have introduced new grape varieties. In the 7th century B.C. the Greeks settled in the Iberian Peninsula and developed wine growing. In the 6th century B.C. the Celts brought their own grape varieties into the Iberian Peninsula.

The Romans arrived into the Iberian Peninsula during the 2nd century B. C. and contributed to the modernization of the vine culture. With fall of the Roman Empire the wine has continued to be produced by the subsequent civilizations.

With the foundation of Portugal wine was Portugal's most exported product. A major boost in winemaking and wine exports happened in the second half of the 14th century. In the 15th and 16th centuries with the Portuguese Discoveries, the vessels and galleons sailing always carried wine. The Methuen treaty of 1703 opened trading between Portugal and England, setting up special duty rights for the penetration of Portuguese wine in England and wine exports experienced a major increase. In 1756 the Port wine was already so famous that with the purpose of regulating the region's wine production and trade was officially created by Marquis of Pombal, the Alto Douro wine region, the first delimited region for wine in the world. In the 19th century the phylloxera plague devastated large areas of Portuguese vineyards. In late 19th century wine production started a slow recovery. In the beginning of the 20th century several wine regions were demarcated and in 1986 the regions were re-defined as Portugal started to be part of the European Union.

Portuguese wine varieties

In Portugal as in Europe there has been used several vine varieties from *Vitis vinifera*. There is an American type of vine which has been used since late 19th century as rootstock to combat the phylloxera on which then Portuguese or other European wine varieties are grafted. In Portugal there are more than 350 grape varieties which produces an abundant variety of different wines. The same vine variety will produce different wines when growing in different regions because of the soil, the micro-climates and the technology.

Some of the more important white vine varieties include: Alvarinho, Loureiro, Arinto, Encruzado, Bical, Fernão Pires, Moscatel and Malvasia Fina. Until recently, apart from Alvarinho and Moscatel it was difficult to find white variety wines. Traditionally several varieties should be blended. Since 1990s there has been a decrease in the interest in white wines by the producers as well as an increase in red wines.

Some of the more important red vine varieties include: Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz (or Aragonês), Baga, Castelão, Touriga Franca and Trincadeira (or Tinta Amarela).

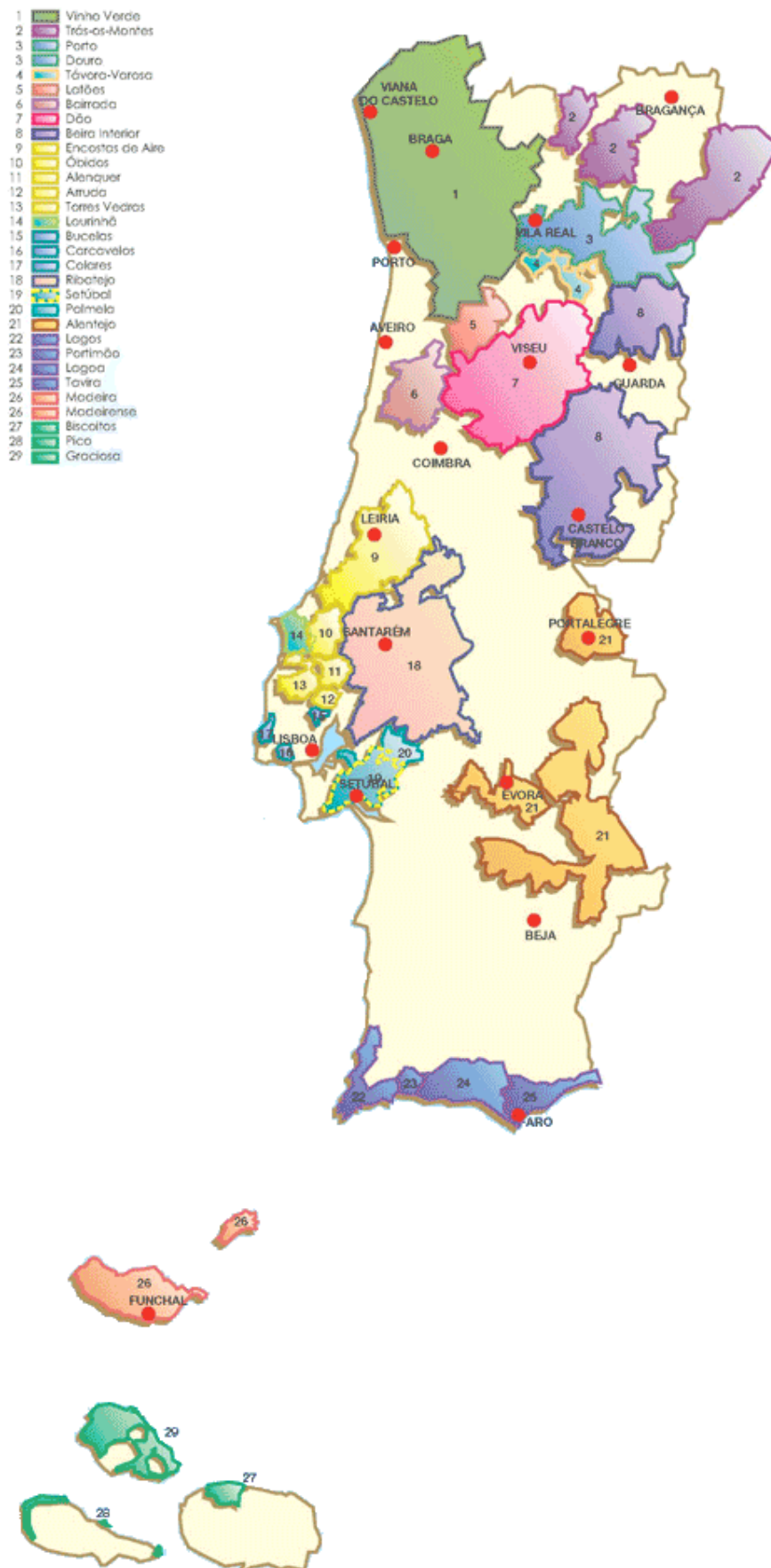
There has been an on-going debate on the use in Portugal of Portuguese varieties in relation to the use of foreign ones. Debate persists as many foreign markets seem to prefer varieties that they already know such as Cabernet Sauvignon in relation to Portuguese varieties which are less known.

Appellation system of portuguese wine

The most protected wines are labelled D.O.C. (*Denominação de Origem Controlada*) which secures a superior quality.

The Regional Wine - *Vinho Regional* carries with it a specific region within Portugal.

Portuguese wine regions



- **Vinho Verde** is produced from grapes which do not reach great doses of sugar. Therefore, Vinho Verde does not require an aging process. The most popular variety in Portugal and abroad are the white wines, but there are also red and more rarely rosé wines. A notable variety of Vinho Verde is **Vinho Alvarinho** which is a special variety of white Vinho Verde, the production of Alvarinho is restricted by EU law to a small sub-region of Monção, in the northern part of the Minho region in Portugal. It has more alcohol (11.5 to 13%) than the other varieties (8 to 11.5%).
- **Douro wine (Vinho do Douro)** originates from the same region as port wines. In the past they were considered to be a bitter tasting wine. In order to prevent spoilage during the voyage from Portugal to England, the English decided to add a Portuguese wine brandy known as *aguardente*. Today's Douro table wines are enjoying growing favor in the world.
- **Dão wine** is from the *Região Demarcada do Dão*, a region demarcated in 1908, but already in 1390 there were taken some measures to protect this wine. The Dão Wine is produced in a mountainous region with temperate climate, in the area of the **Mondego** and **Dão** Rivers in the north region of central Portugal. These mountains protect the *castas* from **maritime** and **continental influences**.
- **Bairrada wine**, is produced in the *Região Demarcada da Bairrada*. The name "Bairrada" is from "barros" (clay) and due to the clayey soils of the region. Although the region was classified in 1979, it is an ancient vineyard region. The vines grow exposed to the sun, favouring the further maturity of the grapes. The *Baga casta* is intensely used in the wines of the region. The Bairrada region produces table, white and red wines. Yet, it is notable for its **sparkling** natural wine: the "Conde de Cantanhede" and "Marquês de Marialva" are the official brands for this wine.
- **Bucelas** (historically known as *Bucellas*) is located in the **Lisboa** wine region. The region has **Portugal's** highest **wine** classification as a *Denominação de Origem Controlada* (DOC). Located south of the **Arruda DOC**, the region is noted for its potential for cool **fermentation** white wine production. Vineyards in the area are planted on predominately **loam** soils. The white wines of Bucelas were widely popular during the **Elizabethan era** in **England** and again during the **Victorian age**. In **London** the wines were sometimes described as "**Portuguese hock**" because of their similarities to the **German Rieslings** from the **Rhine**.
- **Alentejo wine** is produced from grapes planted in vast vineyards extending over rolling plains under the sun which shines on the grapes and ripens them for the production.
- **Moscatel** is a liqueurous wine from the **Setúbal Peninsula**. Although the region has produced wines since the dawn of nationality, it was in 1797 that the wines of Setúbal were first mentioned. There is another variety of Moscatel wine, the "Moscatel de Faveiros", in the *Região Demarcada do Douro*, it is made from a different *casta*, and the "Galego" (white), while Moscatel Roxo is made upon a *casta* with the same name as the wine.