



# WINE S

SINCE NEWSLETTER 2020

## THE TASTE OF PORTUGAL

Welcome to our first number of Dr Grape's biweekly newsletter. Our aim is to compile wine related articles of interest, which will increase our readers knowledge and fondness of Portuguese Wines.

Included in this issue:

- What Is Decanting Wine? When, How, and Why to Decant Your Wine
- Portuguese Wine Regions: The Region of *Vinho Verde* (Green Wine)
- *Vinho Verde* Main Grape Varieties
- Dr Grape's Suggestions from our portfolio

## What Is Decanting Wine? When, How, and Why to Decant Your Wine

When it comes to a new bottle of wine, there's one important step between corkage and enjoying a glass: decanting.





## What Is Decanting Wine?

Decanting wine means slowly pouring the wine from its bottle into a different container, without disturbing the sediment at the bottom. Wine is often decanted into a glass vessel with an easy-pour neck. Examples include the swan, cornett, duck, and standard decanters, which come in small, medium, and large sizes.

## What Are the Benefits of Decanting Wine?

Decanting has three main benefits:

1. Decanting separates sediment from liquid. Decanting is first and foremost about separating wine from the sediments that settle at the bottom of the bottle. Red wines contain the most sediment, especially older wines and vintage ports, while young white wines contain the least. Sediment is not harmful, but tastes unpleasant.
2. Decanting enhances flavor through aeration. Aeration is the process of introducing oxygen to a liquid. This is also called allowing a wine to “breathe.” Aeration enhances a wine’s flavor by softening the tannins and releasing gases that have developed in the absence of oxygen. Decanting wine allows the flavors and aromas that were dormant while bottled to expand and breathe.
3. Decanting saves wine in the event of a broken cork. Occasionally, a cork may break, dispersing pieces of solid matter you don’t want in your wine glasses. While pouring, the cork will gather near the neck of the bottle as you decant into another vessel (sediment does the same). If the cork disintegrates, use a strainer while decanting to filter out the smaller bits.

## How to Decant Wine

Decanting wine requires a light hand and a little patience. Here’s how to do it:

- If your bottle of wine has been stored horizontally, remove it from storage and sit it upright for a full day prior to decanting. This allows the sediment to settle at the bottom of the bottle.
- Open your new bottle of wine using a corkscrew.
- Tilt the neck of the bottle toward the decanter. Keep the bottom of the bottle below an angle of 45 degrees to prevent the wine from gushing forth (and disturbing the sediment).
- Pour the wine into the decanter at a steady pace. Look for any sediment that approaches the opening (shining a light or candle can help).
- Stop decanting if you see any sediment approaching the neck of the bottle. Tilt the bottle back to upright, then start again.
- Finish pouring the wine, leaving about half an ounce in the bottle with the sediment.



Decanting can be done up to four hours before you anticipate drinking the wine. There is little risk of over-decanting most wine; however, try to enjoy or recork the wine within 18 hours.

Read more About Decanting:

[What Is Decanting Wine? When, How, and Why to Decant Your Wine - 2022 - MasterClass](#)

## Portuguese Wine Regions: The Region of Vinho Verde (Green Wine)

Vinho Verde is the biggest wine producing region in Portugal, located up in the cool, rainy, verdant north west. The vines grow in fertile, granite soils along rivers that flow from the mountains of the east to burst out into the ocean between golden surfing beaches.





Across the vast expanse of north-west Portugal, a lush, green mantle flows from craggy mountain peaks and blanketing hinterland valleys sweeping down to the sea. From Melgaço to Vale de Cambra, and Esposende to the granite mountains at Basto by the border with Trás-os-Montes, the land rises and falls. Here and there, towns and villages nestle amongst the vegetation. This densely-populated, fertile land is the birthplace of Vinho Verde.

From this unique region and its native grapes comes a unique white wine. Light, fresh, young and delightfully aromatic, Vinho Verde suits all kinds of occasions: a sunny picnic, a restaurant meal, a romantic night in... Vinho Verde is great with salads, fish, seafood, vegetable dishes, citrus sauces and Asian foods. On the international market Vinho Verde is renowned for its white wines, however you can also try red Vinho Verde. Like the white, it is light and fresh, best served chilled, and a favourite with the locals in traditional restaurants. It's a fantastic match for grilled sardines. Vinho Verde can also be rosé, or sparkling.

## Sub-regions

Climate varies considerably across the Vinho Verde region, and this is reflected in the nine subregions, named after rivers or towns: Monção and Melgaço, Lima, Cávado, Ave, Basto, Sousa, Baião, Paiva and Amarante. Local grapes vary, too. Alvarinho wines (made from the delicately aromatic, full-bodied Alvarinho grape) are a specialty of the sub-region Monção and Melgaço in the northern part of the Vinho Verde Region. Rainfall here is lower, and in the summer, temperatures are noticeably higher than in the rest of the region. In this microclimate, the Alvarinho grape gives a full-bodied dry wine with a complex, subtle, fresh aroma reminiscent of apricots, peaches and citrus fruits, and a distinctive mineral quality, with smoky qualities.

To the south of Monção and Melgaço are the sub-regions Lima, Cávado and Ave. Here the main grape variety is the delicious Loureiro, sometimes also the Pedernã (or Arinto) and Trajadura. The wines here are typically fresh and aromatic, often with a scent of citrus and blossom. The hilly sub-regions of Basto and Sousa generally also produce light wines, from various grape varieties. In the sub-regions Amarante and Baião, the Avesso grape gives dry, creamy, mineral white wines. Amarante and Paiva, the latter located south of the River Douro, have a reputation for their reds.

## Past and Future

The quality of Vinho Verde, and the local brandies, has improved greatly over recent years, thanks in part to better training and renewed enthusiasm amongst today's producers, and in part to better grapes. Where once vines scrambled up trees and over high-flung pergolas, many of the region's vineyards today are trained along modern, wired rows, so that the grapes are better exposed to sunlight and breeze, and thus riper and healthier.

Some delicious wines are also made in the region under the more flexible rules of Vinho Regional Minho, sometimes blends of local and foreign grapes, sometimes oaked.



Main white grapes (varying according to sub-region):

Alvarinho, Arinto Avesso, Azal, Loureiro and Trajadura

Main red grapes (varying according to sub-region):

Alvarelhão, Amaral, Borraçal, Espadeiro, Padeiro, Pedral, Rabo de Anho and Vinhão.

Read more about Portuguese Wine Regions:

[Wine Regions | Dr Grape](#)

## *Vinho Verde* Main Grape Varieties

### 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 recognise, 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. 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.

## Arinto

This is a versatile grape, grown in most of Portugal's wine regions.



It produces vibrant wines with lively acidity, refreshing and with a strong mineral character, with a high aging potential. The firm acidity is the main calling card of the Arinto caste, guaranteeing it the adjective of "improving" caste in many Portuguese regions. If in Bucelas the grape variety reaches its zenith, it is in the Alentejo and Tejo that its assistance is more fruitful, due to the contribution of acidity which is so indispensable and difficult to obtain. It presents medium-sized bunches, compact and with small berries. It is a relatively discrete caste, without any particular aspirations of exuberance, favouring notes of green apple, lime and lemon. It is frequently used in the production of blended wines and also sparkling wines.

## Azal

Azal branco is a white Portuguese wine grape planted primarily in the Minho region but with greater expansion to Amarante, Basto, Baião and Vale do Sousa sub-regions. It noted for the high acidity of its wines, and is used for white Vinho Verde Varietal Azal Branco wines can be somewhat reminiscent of Riesling.







This variety is cultivated particularly in inland areas where it ripens well and reaches its level of quality when planted in dry and well exposed soils in the sub-regions of Amarante, Basto, Baião and Sousa. It produces wines with a pale citrus yellow color to the most intense citrus quince. Fruity aroma (lime, lemon sometimes grapefruit and green apple). Fruity green lemon flavor with citrus and mineral notes. It presents excellent freshness. Preserves the fresh and citrus character, becoming more elegant and harmonious over time.

## Espadeiro

Espadeiro is a dark-skinned grape variety used in the production of dry red and rosé wines in northern Portugal's Vinho Verde region.



Just across the Spanish border to the north, Espadeiro is also used in Rias Baixas, in both blended and varietal red wines. These tend to be light-bodied and are best consumed in their youth.

Vinho Verde's rosé wines have the same spritzy character as the far more prominent white wines that are made under the title in northern Portugal. This is due to the retention of carbon dioxide in the winemaking process, and has become a key feature of Vinho Verde wines.

There are a number of sub-varieties of Espadeiro, such as Espadeiro Tinto and Espadeiro Mole. In southern Portugal, the name Espadeiro refers to a completely different grape variety – Tinta Amarela (Trincadeira).

## 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 apple, 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 recognised as "noble". The bunches are elongated and relatively compact, bearing medium-sized, yellowish-greenish grapes.

## 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 flavours 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.

Buy these varieties from Dr Grape:

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## Dr Grape's Suggestions from our portfolio

### Verdegar Vinho Verde White Escolha



Rated at a very high 4.2 average by Vivino users, this wine falls under the top 1% of all Verdes produced in the World. We consider it one of our best quality/price ratio offerings.

A Fresh, crispy, with good acidity and well balanced variety. It has hints of ripe apples and pears. Nice length in finish.

Alcohol Content 11% vol.

Buy this wine from Dr Grape:

[Verdegar Vinho Verde White Escolha | Dr Grape](#)



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## Verdegar Vinho Verde Espadeiro Rosé



Also rated at a very high 4.2 average by Vivino users, this wine falls under the top 1% of all Verdes produced in the World. We consider it one of our best quality/price ratio offerings.

Rose in colour with orange highlights. Fresh with delicate acidity, lingering strawberry tones with lively cherry aromas.

Alcohol Content 10% vol.

But this wine from Dr Grape:

[Verdegar Vinho Verde Espadeiro Rosé | Dr Grape](#)