

Five Indigenous Portuguese Grapes Everyone Should Know

Portugal's plethora of local varieties means there is a grape for every type of wine lover



Lisbon, Portugal, July 12, 2018 - Many top winemaking countries specialize in a handful of grape varieties, relying on standard, international options that oenophiles have tasted time and time again. Not Portugal, where vineyards stretch from verdant Vinho Verde to sunny Alentejo. Unencumbered by the limits of a singular climate, Portugal is home to over 250 indigenous varieties offering countless taste profiles for wine lovers to explore.

“Portugal’s winemaking history dates back thousands of years,” **Sónia Vieira**, Head of Promotion & Education Departments for ViniPortugal, says. “This has created a wealth of high-quality, native grape varieties, each of which thrives in special pockets of Portugal’s diverse winemaking regions.”

As consumers increasingly clamor for the new and different, Portugal delivers with local varieties suited to each and every palate preference. These five grapes will get you started on an entirely unique flavor journey:

1. If you like Dry Riesling, drink Alvarinho

Also known as Albariño just across the Spanish border, Alvarinho calls Portugal’s northwestern Vinho Verde region home. In this cool, hilly area, Alvarinho produces Vinho Verde’s highest quality wines with fragrant, citrus and floral driven aromatics reminiscent of orchard fruit such as peach and apple, snappy acidity and fine minerality of Dry Riesling.

2. If you like Chardonnay, drink Encruzado

Though Encruzado is definitely under-the-radar for most American wine drinkers, it is one of Portugal’s most exciting white grape varieties. The north-central Dão region produces elegant, complex Encruzado wines that combine richness with fine texture and minerality. Like Chardonnay, the wines range from full and oaky to pure and acid-driven, spanning many style iterations.

3. If you like Cabernet Sauvignon, drink Touriga Nacional



Once used solely to produce world-renowned Port wines, Touriga Nacional is now creating some of Portugal's most exciting reds. It is black-fruited in nature, with lovely violet and herbal notes that meld well with the sweet spice flavors of new oak. Round and mouth-filling, Touriga Nacional satisfies palates attuned to a smooth Cabernet, with added complexity and aging potential.

4. If you like Pinot Noir, drink Baga

Lovers of red Burgundy and Barolo will wonder why they haven't been drinking Baga all their lives, as this north-central variety could easily pass for Pinot Noir or Nebbiolo, depending on the age. It makes long-lived, complex reds with distinct acidity, high tannins, and full body, progressing from rich cherry flavors to nuanced herbal, savory, tobacco-like notes over time.

5. If you like Malbec, drink Touriga Franca

This is the most widely grown grape in the Douro Valley and is responsible for a large proportion of the grapes that contribute to making dry Douro wines and Port. Wine growers love Touriga Franca, as it is easy to cultivate, hardy and dependable for good yields. Touriga Franca shows delicate floral aromas with notes of black berry fruit combined with a full-bodied character and a vibrant ruby colour that is akin to Malbec.

If a spark of enthusiasm is lit at just the idea of tasting these five indigenous varieties, the full treasure trove of Portugal's native varieties will set off an explosion. From Arinto and Antão Vaz to Castelão and Trincadeira, the endless possibilities of Portuguese wine styles may just have you eschewing all other winemaking countries for good.

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About Wines of Portugal

A small, yet diverse country, Portugal offers a stunning variety of terroirs, grape varieties and blends brought alive by a dynamic group of grape growers and winemakers with the perfect balance of creativity, artistry and technical skill. The result is a collection of wines both distinctive and authentic, unique among a sea of the same – this is what Portuguese wines are all about! The more you get to know them, the more these distinctions fascinate and draw you in – until finally it's love, pure and simple.

Since 2010, the trade association ViniPortugal has promoted the Wines of Portugal brand in the U.S. and around the world, highlighting Portugal as *the* hot spot on the international wine scene. Wines of Portugal provides strategic support to the Portuguese wine sector, bringing together organizations representing trade (ANCEVE and ACIBEV), production (FENAVI and FEVIPOR), cooperative wineries (FENADEGAS), distillers (AND), farmers (CAP), demarcated regions (ANDOVI) and governmental bodies (IVV).

For more information about Wines of Portugal, please visit www.winesofportugal.com.

Media Contact:

Mi Mi Chloe Park

Sopexa for ViniPortugal

Email: mimichloe.park@sopexa.com

Tel: 212.386.7441