



The Wines Of Portugal

For years this country was denied access to a variety of wines because getting them to the United States was fraught with problems relating to preservation and cost. But the invention of refrigeration and faster travel ushered in wines from remote regions just waiting to be discovered. Even after writing about these regions for more than three decades, we are still covering new ones.

Our most recent discovery is the Alentejo (Ah-len-TAY-zhoo) wine-growing region of interior Portugal.



alicante bouschet grape

More than 250 grape varieties are grown in Portugal but the primary red grape grown in Alentejo is alicante bouschet, an incredibly dark grape that is so bold and powerful it can temporarily stain your teeth - like petite sirah. A cross between grenache and petit bouschet, it is also grown in France and Spain where it is primarily a blending grape.

If you like inky, full-bodied red wines with tannin and muscle, these are must-try wines.

Located in a dry climate in southern Portugal, the vineyards of Alentejo soak up the sun to produce grapes with thick skins. Fruit forward in style and low in acidity, the flavors are typically jammy. Although the tannins indicate they can be aged, they are delicious to drink now alongside a big steak or even some barbecued ribs.

Here are several we recently tasted:



*Herdade de Sao
Miguel Alicante
Bouschet 2015*

Herdade de Sao Miguel Alicante Bouschet 2015 (\$23). Vibrant red fruit, soft mouthfeel and hints of smoke. The grapes natural tannins are more moderate in this elegant and forward wine.

- **Rocim Alicante Bouschet 2016** (\$20). Spicy plum and blackberry fruit flavors with a nice mineral thread.
- **Herdade dos Grous Moon Harvested 2017** (\$25). The grapes are harvested when the moon exerts its greatest pull, for whatever that means. Fermented in traditional lagares and aged in French oak. Lots of forward, ripe black cherry flavors.
- **Dona Maria Grand Reserva 2012** (\$45). The additional bottle age has presumably tamed the tannins a bit. Still a big wine with mouth-puckering tannins, it is blended with petit verdot, syrah and the indigenous touriga nacional grapes.
- **Moucho Red 2013** (\$60). This colossal wine demonstrates how full-bodied and ageworthy these wines can be. Made only in exceptional years, this single-vineyard wine has dark, spicy fruit is aged in large wooden vats made from Portuguese oak, mahogany and macacauba (Brazilian hardwood). Grapes are foot-trodden twice a day in stone tanks.

Although 80 percent of the wines from this region are red, Alentejo does produce white wines known for their crisp acidity and unique flavors. More than 200 indigenous grape varieties are grown in this region, so don't expect to recognize them.



*Herdade do
Rocim
Mariana
Branco 2017*

We were impressed with several blends that use the antao vaz grape as its foundation. These wines are fermented in stainless steel to keep them light and fresh, perfect for summer drinking.

- **Herdade do Rocim Mariana Branco 2017** (\$13). Generous lychee nut aromas and tropical fruit, and orange rind flavors with a dash of mineral. Antao vaz is blended with arinto and alvarino grapes.
- **Malhadinha Antao Vaz da Peceguina 2016** (\$25). Made entirely from antao vaz grapes, this lively summer wine is medium body with pineapple and orange peel flavors. Mineral notes in the background and generous aromas.

EMERITUS WINES

McDonald "Don" Blackburn loved his Burgundy pinot noirs after studying and working there for many years. When he returned to the United States, he wanted to recreate those expressive pinot noirs and teamed up with Brice Cutrer Jones, who was turning orchards into vineyards in the Russian River Valley. The first release of this effort, Emeritus Vineyards, came in 1999. Blackburn died in 2008 and today the wines are

made by David Lattin and the property is operated by the founder's daughter, Mari.



2016 Emeritus
Vineyard Hallberg
Ranch Pinot Noir

We recently tasted the new releases from this property and were impressed with their Burgundy-like character.

Our favorite was the **2016 Emeritus Vineyard Hallberg Ranch Pinot Noir**. At \$44 is a relative bargain in the expensive pinot noir field. It has the elegance of burgundy plus the pure, young fruit character of black cherries.

The Pinot Hill West and **Pinot Hill East** show at \$75 each are more complex and show a depth of character found in classic California pinot noir.

The full-bodied **2016 Emeritus Vineyard Wesley's Reserve** (\$75) has chewy tannins to give it some texture to match the blackberry and black cherry flavors.

WINE PICKS



Cantos de
Valpiedra 2013

Cantos de Valpiedra 2013 (\$15). This is a very rich and delicious tempranillo from Rioja that coats the mouth with black cherry and plum flavors. A touch of vanilla and spice from the 24 months in spends in American and French oak barrels.

- **Eberle Cotes-du-Robles 2017** (\$30). We enjoyed this youthful blend of grenache, syrah, mourvedre and durif – common grapes found in France's Cotes-du-Rhone wines. This version from California's Paso Robles region has pure fruit flavors redolent of plums and raspberries.
- **Gamble Family Vineyards "Heartblock" Sauvignon Blanc 2015** (\$90). It's rare to see a sauvignon blanc at this price, but Tom Gamble takes the grape variety to a new level. It is more complex and concentrated than your average sauvignon blanc.
- **Our Daily Cab California Cabernet Sauvignon 2018** (\$12). If you object to sulfites, a preservative, in your wine, then try this tasty treat. Simple but loaded with upfront, ripe plum flavors and vanilla.

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, MoreAboutWine, posted on SouthFloridaReporter.com, June 17, 2019

Additional Wine reviews on MoreAboutWine

All photos are randomly selected and do not indicate any preferred wine

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