

Tasting Notes
May 2019 Pick-up
Wines of Portugal



Welcome to the May 2019 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is “Wines of Portugal”. We are returning to Portugal after several years – for those of you who’ve been around since the beginning, it was our first theme in August 2016.

Portuguese wines are always a wonderful value, and an excellent choice for summer. Portugal is probably most famous for a style of young wine called Vinho Verde which is crisp, light and refreshing – often even a bit spritzy! They make other whites and rosés as well, that tend to be fresh and great for summer sipping. Happily, many of the reds from this region tend to pair very well with grilled foods. I’ve also chosen a bonus 7th bottle of wine that you can mix with tonic water to create a fun and delicious aperitif (directions below)!

For your info, Portuguese blended wines are generally named by the region and then the wine color. So, when you see “Douro Branco” that means a white blend from the Douro region. A “Douro Tinto” would be a red blend from that same region.

Don’t forget, you can always return your wine club red bags to the store when you come in to pickup. We are happy to re-use them and reduce waste!

- **2017 Quinta de Porrais Douro Branco** – The vineyards of the Douro region grow on amazingly steep, terraced shallow shale soils. (Seriously, look Douro up on Google to see beautiful photos of these terraces!) This particular vineyard is at quite high elevation, almost 2,000 feet above sea level. The wine is a blend of old-vine Codega do Larinho and Rabigato and expresses the minerality of the shale soil. Look for aromas of pineapple and honeydew with hints of smokiness and hay. Great acid and a long clean finish. An excellent value. Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: Beautiful with oysters or other shellfish. Or try it with pesto zoodles!

- **2017 Opta Dão Branco** – The Dão wine region is in the upper northeast corner of the country, and is one of the oldest winemaking areas, home to many lesser-known indigenous varietals. This wine from Opta is a blend of Encruzado, Malvasia Fina and Cerceal Branco. The wine is light, vibrant and food-friendly. You’ll enjoy crisp citrus aromas. Reg retail: \$11 Smart price: \$10

Pairing: Very tasty with a nice fillet of grilled fish served with a Mediterranean salsa verde (I like the recipe online for Salsa Verde from Epicurious.com – I don’t always use all the different herbs, just what I have on-hand.)

- **2018 Arca Nova Vinho Verde Rosé** – This is summertime in a bottle! Light, fresh and zippy with freshly crushed strawberries, raspberries and red currants. A hint of lime zest on top. This rosé is a blend of Espadeiro and Touriga Nacional grapes. All grapes for Vinhos Verdes (it's a style/region, not a type of grape) are grown in the upper northwest corner of the country. Reg retail: \$11 Smart price: \$10

Pairing: Drink before dinner, with a charcuterie plate, or with practically anything off the grill. Whatever, just find a friend and drink it!

- **2014 Lago Cerqueira Douro Tinto** – This red blend features a gorgeous ruby-red color. It includes many of the indigenous Portuguese grapes: Tinto Roriz, Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca and Tinta Barroca. Aromas of ripe red fruits and hints of cedar wood. Flavors of berries and dried fruits, and cocoa. Well-balanced with soft tannins. Reg retail: \$10 Smart price: \$9

Pairing: This works well with grilled pork or red meats and is also a great choice for semi-soft, less-aged cheeses like Havarti.

- **2015 Caso Santos Lima “Colossal” Tinto Reserva** – This complex red blend is from the Lisboa region (formerly called Estremadura) along the central Atlantic coast of Portugal. It's a blend of Syrah, Touriga Nacional, Alicante Bouschet and Tinta Roriz. The wine has a unique slow maceration period and is later aged in a blend of American and French oak barrels, both of which provide richness and complexity. Luscious aromas of ripe fruit and spice, followed by flavors of blackberry and plum. Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13.50

Pairing: Grilled stuff is the way to go here. This would be lovely with grilled lamb chops, spicy grilled sausages, or the ever-popular cheeseburger.

- **2016 Quinta da Romaneira “R de Romaneira” Tinto** – Interestingly, the inclusion of Syrah in the variety of grapes for this wine (a field blend of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz, Syrah and Tinto Cão) prevents it from being labelled an official Douro wine. Therefore, it is labelled as a more humble “IGP Duriense” and is a great value! The Romaneira vineyard estate is classified “A” which is the highest mark that can be given in the Douro region. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: Search online for “Grilled Short Ribs and Lettuces with Mustard Orange Dressing.” It looks wonderful and I think it would be great with this one.

- **Dow's Fine White Port (NV)** – OK, so here's the simple and stylish Portuguese apéritif you can make with your bottle of white port: Go to the store and get some better-quality tonic water such as Fevertree or Q. (I mean, Schweppes is great too. Just get some tonic water.) Mix yourself up two parts tonic to one part port. (I'll let you decide how big of a drink you need depending on your day.) Serve on the rocks in whatever glass makes you happy. Garnish with something fun – you can use various citrus slices, cucumber slices, mint leaves, olives, or a combo. Sit back, relax, and enjoy your drink before dinner – pretend you're at a café in Europe somewhere! Reg retail: \$15 Smart price: \$13.50

Pairing: It's an apéritif, so you want salt – chips, nuts, olives.