



QUINTA AZENHA DO RAMALHO

Vale Lourenço, São Mamede, Portugal

## **Alentejo Wine favourites in the Serra de Sao Mamede or Portalegre region.**

Chris's quick 2013 guide for guests of [Quinta Azenha do Ramalho](#).

Load this PDF to your [Dropbox](#) for viewing on your mobile device while shopping.

When you stay at Quinta Azenha do Ramalho you are in a **very interesting area for some excellent Portuguese wines**. If you don't have their rich flavours lodged in your brain's memory bank it had just as well be empty.

If you are visiting the Quinta from abroad and you like wine, especially red wine, I would like to guide you towards **some of the best Serra de Sao Mamede or Portalegre wines** so you don't spend your limited time sipping the not so good local wines. I'd like to maximise your quaffing pleasure.

### **This wine list has four sections.**

- **Favourite Local. Recommended Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines.**

These are the wines I think **you should not miss**. I have tried these recently.

- **Local, worth trying. Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines**

It has been a while since I tried these but they were very good at the time.

- **Favourite Alentejo Wines. Not local.**

I recommend these but they are not local.

- **Other Local. Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines.**

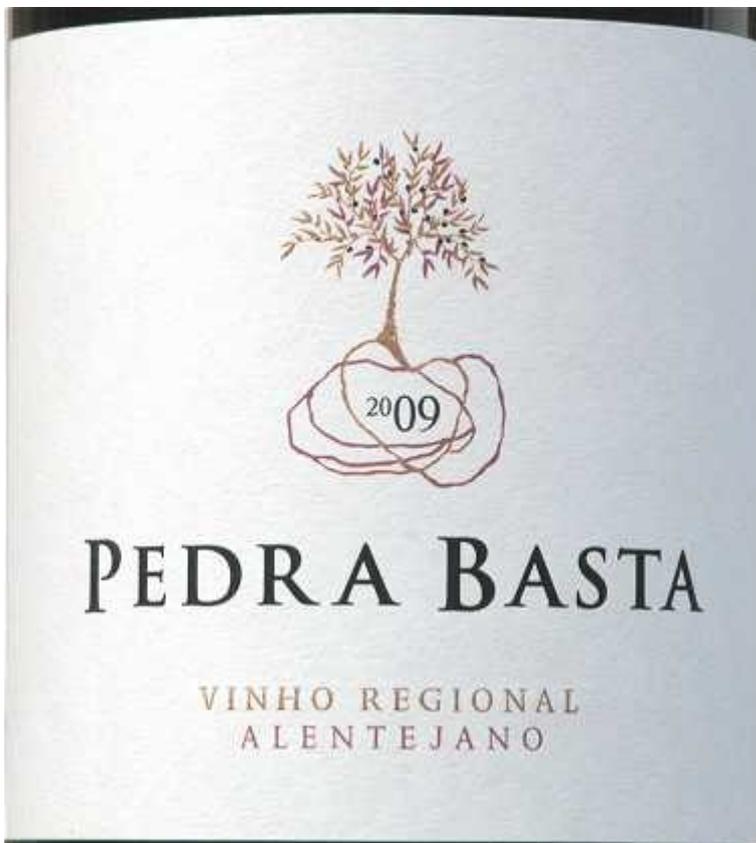
These are other local wines. They include those I don't think are the best and

those I haven't tried.

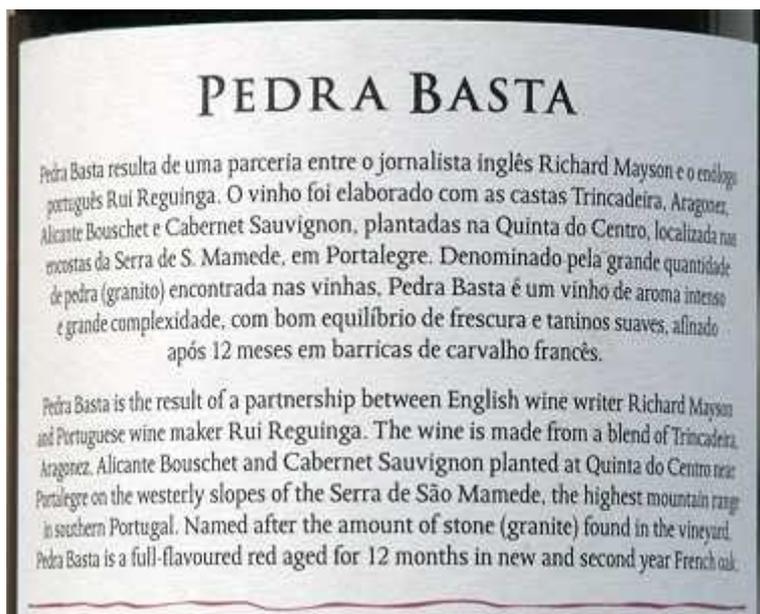
## **Favourite Local. Recommended Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines.**

These are the local wines I have tasted recently and I hope you will enjoy when you stay at the Quinta.

### **Pedra Basta Tinto Red**



Pedra Basta Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Pedra Basta Red Alentejo Wine

Category: **Favourite Local**

They say the first impression is a lasting impression but when it comes to wine I'm not so sure. The first sniff and sip certainly impressed me but the impression was "**French**". It wasn't until half way through the glass the wine became **gloriously Alentejan, soft and elegant**.

The French impression comes from the wine being aged in new and second year French oak, as it says on the label. There's some Cabernet Sauvignon too but I'd be pushing it to claim I detected it.

Of all the wines in the Favourite Local list this one is **by far the best** and at **about 12.50 Euro** it is several Euro more than any other. In this case you actually get what you pay for and it is a delight.

This is a quality wine and it is the fruit of a partnership between the wine writer **Richard Mayson** and oenologist **Rui Reguino**. Richard has written several books on Portuguese wines and his journalism has appeared in the esteemed Decanter Magazine in the UK.

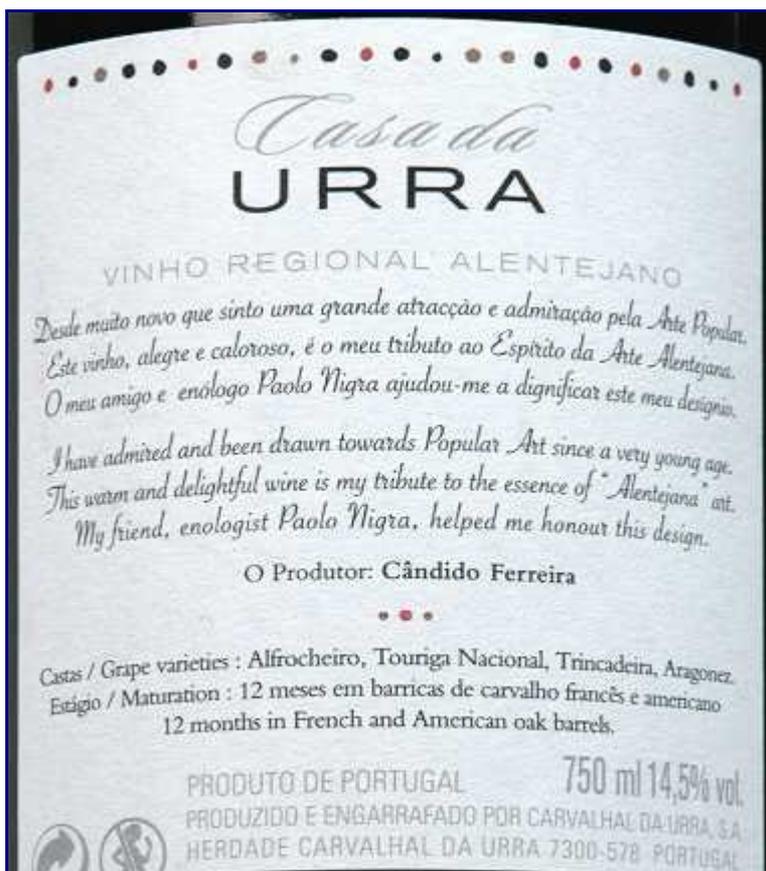
### **Where to find Pedra Basta.**

You might not see this wine (and Duas Pedras) in the main supermarkets. It appears in some of the **Artesanato shops** and local speciality produce shops in places where tourist would go. It also appears in better restaurants. In Portalegre there is a delicatessen up the steps from the entrance to Pingo Doce which is at the top of the main central park.

## Casa da Urra Tinto



Casa da Urra Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Casa da Urra Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)

Category: [Favourite Local](#)

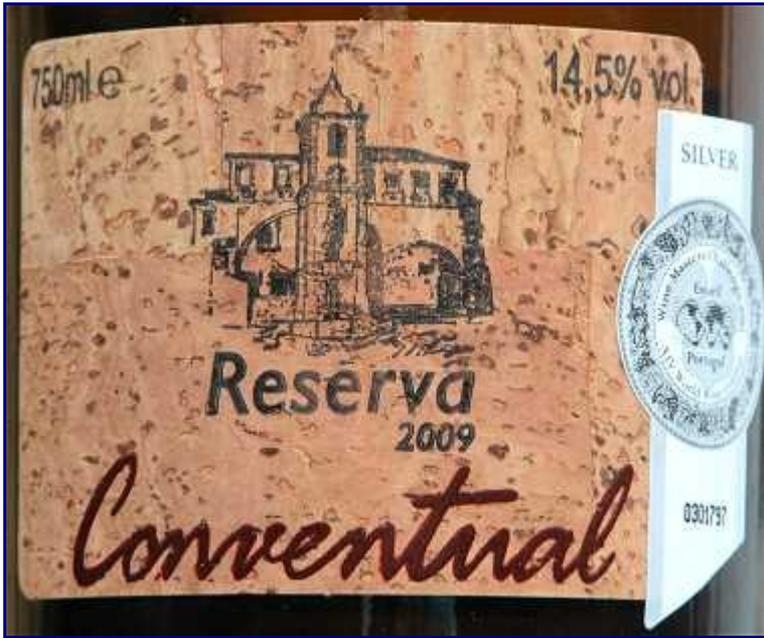
I would not want you to miss this full fruit delight.

This is one of the new wines that has appeared in Serra de Sao Mamede. I first slurped it in March 2013 and rejoiced. I now see they have released a Reserva but I haven't had the chance to sample it.

### Where to find Urra Tinto.

Probably most supermarkets but definitely E Leclerc and artesanto shops. I E Leclerc you should also find the Urra white so maybe that could be worth a try. Note that E Leclerc at the south of Portalegre also have cheaper Urra wines in boxes but these are likely to be a cheaper blend.

## Conventual Reserva Red



Conventual Reserva Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Category: **Favourite Local**

The Portalegre Wine Cooperative have a range of wines from grapes supplied by growers near to Portalegre. The cheapest wines are very good for the amazingly low price and that is a mark of the quality of the region and the skill of the winemaker.

They must have a good selection process for their grape deliveries and the Conventual Reserva red is medium priced and will give you a good indication of the Terroir of the region.

## Where to find Conventual Reserva.

Most supermarkets.

## Conventual Reserva Branco



Conventual Reserva White Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Category: **Favourite Local**

Conventual Reserva White is lighter and cleaner than typical "interesting or distinctive" local whites so if you have been dissatisfied by an Alentejo white wine this should redeem.

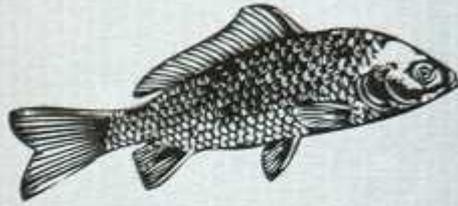
### **Where to find Conventual Reserva Branco.**

Most large supermarkets.

### **Local, worth trying. Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines**

I haven't tried these recently so they are not on my recommended list but from past experience I think they are likely to be good. By all means let me know what you think.

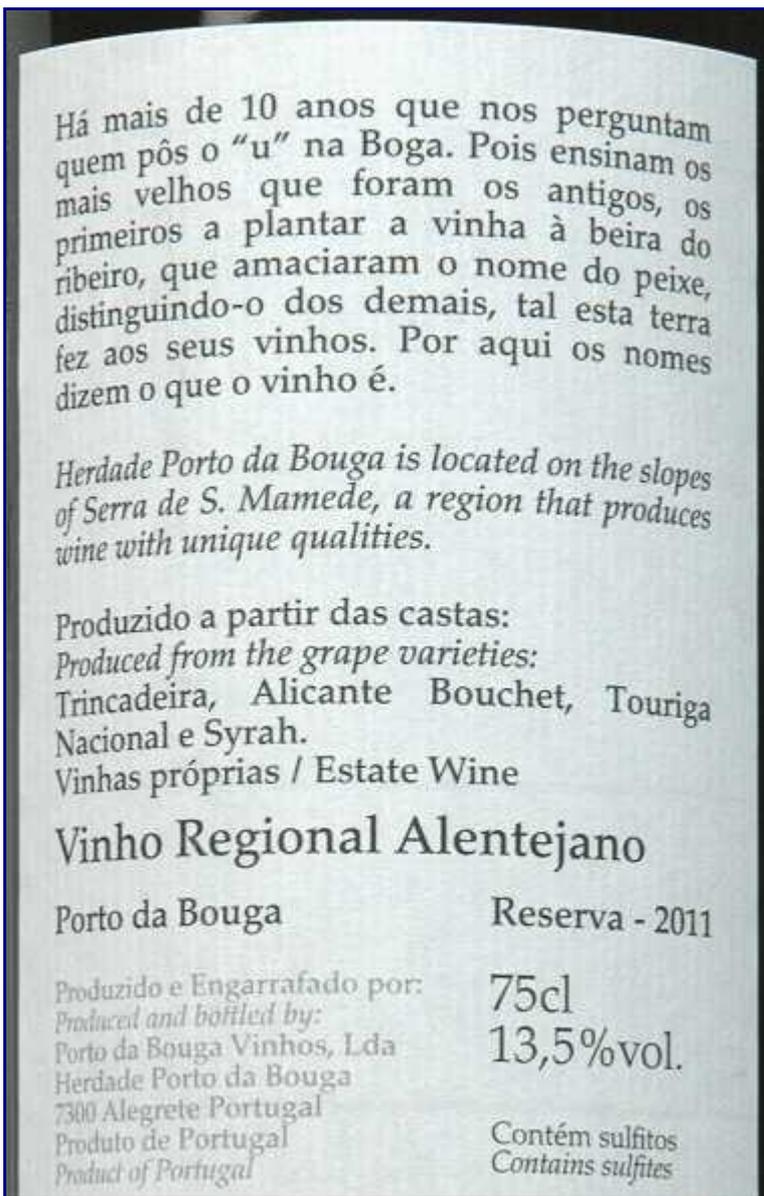
## **Herdade Porto da Bouga Tinto**



VINHO TINTO · RED WINE

Herdade Porto da  
**BOUGA**  
RESERVA 2011

Herdade Porto da Bouga Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Herdade Porto da Bouga Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)

Category: **Local worth trying**

Herdade Porto da Bouga Tinto has been a favourite for many years but didn't get to taste it since the bottle I had was so badly corked it didn't reach the glass. It is not in the recommended list simply because I didn't get to try it. The cork looked perfectly ok and I began to doubt it was to blame especially since the quality cork production has improved immensely since screw cap became popular.

It used to be that Pingo Doce at the top of the park in Portalegre was the only place I could find it and you had to look hard to find it. Just recently Pingo Doce had a large stack of it at a fraction of its normal price so it looks like production has increased dramatically and I wonder if it is the same wine. I know it as a wonderfully intense and richly fruity wine. If you catch a bottle, do let me know what you think.

## Where to find Herdade Porto da Bouga Tinto.

Most supermarkets.

## Favourite Alentejo Wines. Not local.

These I recommend. I have kept them separate because although they are Alentejo wines they are not local to the Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede region.

## Monte da Ravasqueira Tinto



Monte da Ravasqueira Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Monte da Ravasqueira Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)

Category: [Favourite Alentejo](#)

Dark, inky, rich and full bodied with a big fruity bouquet.

It is intense and is unusual in that it has seven grape varieties: Syrah, Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Aragonez (Tempranillo), Trincadeira, Touriga Franca and Petit Verdot. Of those only Aragonez and Trincadeira are typical of traditional Alentejo wines.

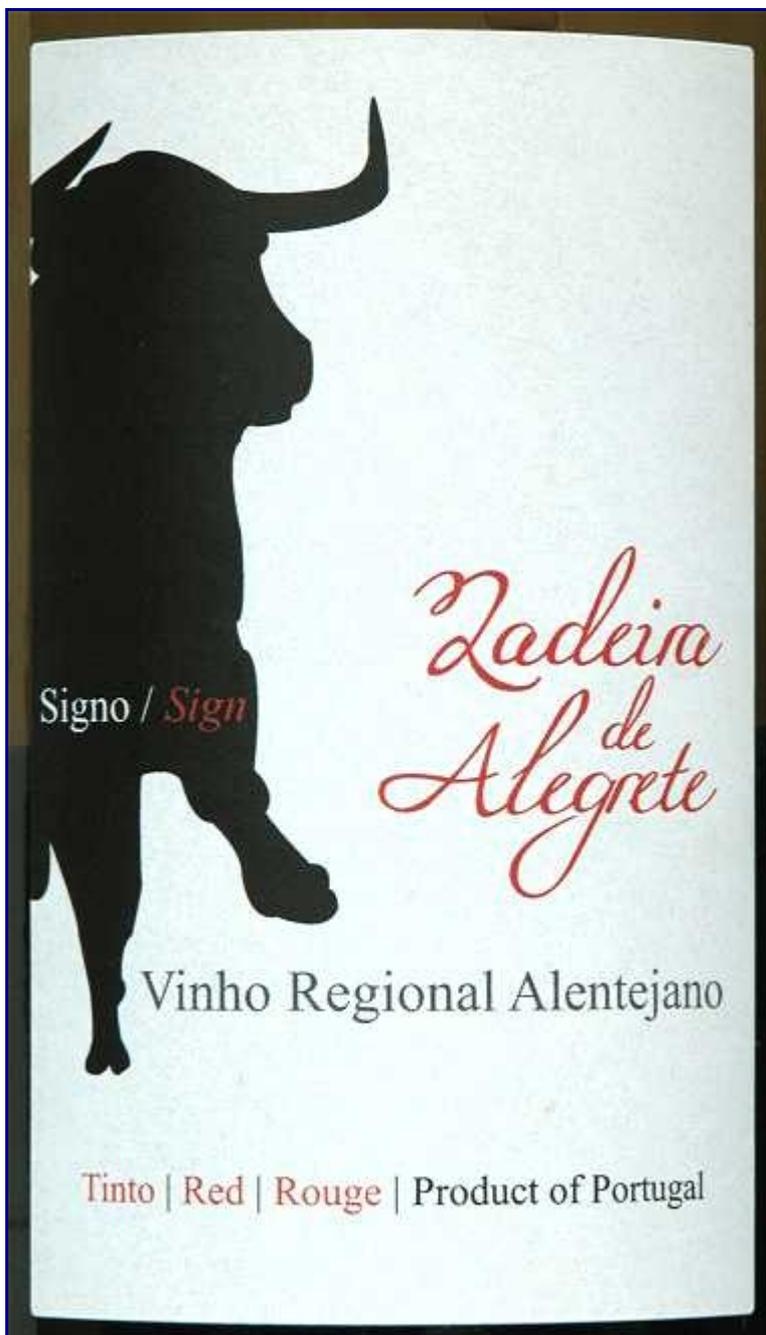
**Where to find Monte da Ravasqueira Tinto.**

Most supermarkets.

**Other Local. Portalegre / Serra de Sao Mamede Wines.**

These are local wines that I don't recommend because either I have not tried them recently or I don't think they are among the best. Your time at the Quinta is too short but do try these if you like the look of them.

## Ladeira da Alegrete Tinto



Ladeira da Alegrete Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Category: **Other Local**

If you have a penchant for Terroir this one is "closer to the soil" than most and it is only about 3.20 Euro.

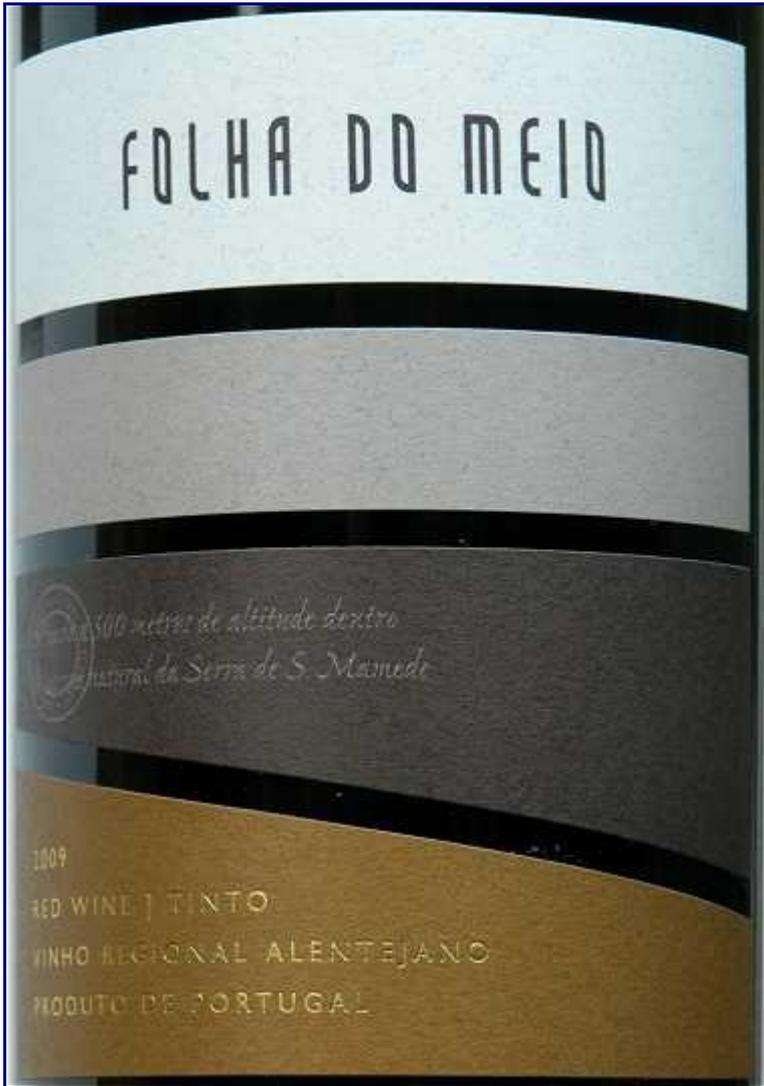
There are lots of locals who make their own rustic wine which puts you in touch with the flavour of the region in no uncertain manner. Ladeira da Alegrete Tinto is by no means a rustic wine but I can't help thinking of the many a "copo de vinho" from friends near the Quinta.

This one has no date so it is a blend of wines from more than one vintage.

**Where to find Ladeira da Alegrete Tinto.**

E Leclerc.

## Folha do Meio Tinto



Folha do Meio Tinto Red Alentejo Wine [Tweet This!](#)



Category: **Other Local**

This is another of the new Serra de Sao Mamede wines and there is enthusiasm for it locally. When I tried alongside others it didn't make it onto my recommended list. I haven't written it off but I will need to try it again.

### **Where to find Folha do Meio Tinto.**

Some supermarkets and definitely E Leclerc. Also artesanato shops.

### **Where to buy these wines.**

Most of these wine can be found in the larger supermarkets at the southern outskirts of Portalegre and **E Leclerc** seems to be best and it has a good layout. Also Pingo Doce at the top of the main park in the centre of Portalegre is good too.

Some of the wines are quite new and not so widespread and you are more likely to find those in **Artesanato** shops. Those are the artisan produce and handicraft shops which are dotted about in places tourists might go. For example, I was impressed with the range in the kiosk shop next to the swimming pool in Portagem below Marvao.

Who would have thought?

## Forget varietals and enjoy recipes.

The world seems a bit fixated on single grape variety wines but in Portugal it is better to **put that concept behind you**. Portugal is blessed with grape varieties which are virtually unknown elsewhere and in the Alentejo at least, they are nearly always combined into blends. It is fun to see what those varieties are yet it is the recipe that you will enjoy.

Some of the new wines include a little Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz alongside the Portuguese varieties like **Trincadeira, Aragonez and Castelao**. I suppose including the world famous varieties adds a little marketing zest to make the non-Portuguese drinker a little more comfortable. Though of course it could also be that the wine makers know what they are doing. The French variety Alicante Bouschet has been common in Alentejo for a long time.

## Good Years

Nearly **all years are good** and some are exceptional with even richer fruit. From the vine's point of view the weather is fairly consistent from year to year and so is the wine. I have heard Serra de Sao Mamede locals say that if you don't harvest by the second week of September you are pushing your luck because of the threat of rain.

What you see on the supermarket shelves is usually the latest release with no overlap from earlier years but if you get a choice and one of them is **2010** then that is the one to go for. You are more likely to find 2010 for the higher priced wines, the lower priced 2010's having sold out.

Some said 2013 should be good because of the wet start to the year with a good long dry summer. However the Serra de Sao Mamede had a couple of rainy days at the end of August so who knows how that will pan out.

## Alentejo White Wines.

A lot of Alentejo white wines are rich, interesting and distinctive blends of unfamiliar grapes. That's a polite way of saying a lot of them disappoint visitors from other countries who are used to lighter clean varietals like Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc.

Most of the wines on my list are red since that is what I prefer. Sorry. I'll put more "effort" into finding good white wines. If you are into searching for yourself, white wines with **Arinto** as the principal grape are more likely to be good.

## Portalegre DOC

The Portalegre sub region of Alentejo is a **Denominação De Origem Controlada** (DOC) which means Controlled Designation of Origin. The Portalegre region is recognised as a DOC because the hills of São Mamede are said to have both Mediterranean and Atlantic influences which creates a micro climate. Some vineyards have granite based soil giving a different in character from the rest of Alentejo.

The red wines are deeply coloured and while still young give off an intensive aroma of the red fruits of summer, backed by a certain sharpness and full body.

Not many wine growers bother with the DOC regulations which limits the grape varieties and they opt for the lower classification of **Vinho Regional Alentejano** which gives more freedom.

## Visit a vineyard

Some Alentejo wine producers have joined the project Alentejo Wine Tours, promoting visits to their wine cellars and wine tasting sessions - by appointment. Around Portalegre they are Adega da Cabeça, Portalegre Co-operative, Monte da Penha and Tapada do Chaves.