

Dão

Surrounded on all sides by mountains, the Dão region is protected both from the direct influence of the continental climate, and from the chill and rains from the ocean.



This is high country, rising from 200 metres above sea level at its lowest spots to 1,000 metres in the Serra da Estrela, the high mountain range to the south and east of the region. High altitude makes for cool nights, slower ripening, good acidity and aroma, and the potential for great elegance in the wines, both red and white.

Dão wines can usually age well. Vineyards, often very small patches of vines, are scattered at various altitudes amidst pine forests. Soils are very poor and granitic, with some schist to the south-west. For red wines, Touriga Nacional and Alfocheiro perform very well here, with the help of Tinta Roriz (also Known as Aragonez, or, in Spain, Tempranillo), along with the traditional Jaen, Baga, Bastardo and Tinta Pinheira.

Star white grape is the Encruzado, making styles ranging from light, fresh whites to richer, barrel-fermented versions. Supporting white varieties are Bical, Cercial, Malvasia Fina, Rabo de Ovelha and Verdelho.

Lafões

This tiny, granitic region is tucked between the north-west corner of the Dão region and the southern tip of the Vinho Verde region. Style-wise, the wines are more like Vinho Verde, with high acidity a distinguishing feature. Arinto, Cerceal, Dona Branca, Esgana Cão and Rabo de Ovelha are the white grapes, with Amaral and Jaen dominating the reds.

Dão and the Discoveries

This region's wine was served at the luxurious celebrations organised by Infante D. Henrique in Viseu before the Portuguese embarked on their journey to conquer Ceuta.



Phylloxera

When phylloxera struck European vines there was a great demand for this region's wine, which would be used to replace Douro's (since the Douro region had already been invaded by phylloxera) and sell table wine to the French market. Between 1883 and 1886, phylloxera reached the Dão region.