

Iberian Whites Pair Well with Spring

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
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Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

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Iberian wines are very popular right now, and it's easy to see why whenever you open a bottle of Spanish or Portuguese wine. If you're comparing value to price, you can usually get a high-quality bottle of wine from one of these two countries for a low cost.

While Spanish wines have always been relatively popular with the U.S. market, Portuguese wines (other than Port) have been largely ignored for many years, but that is changing. More wines from Portugal are finding a place on our supermarket shelves, and they are worth a try for your next wine night.

A popular Portuguese white is Vinho Verde -- this isn't the name of the grape variety, but of a region for wine production. (It's made from a number of local grape varieties.) The literal translation is "green wine," but it actually refers to a young wine that is usually bottled three to six months after the grapes are harvested. You'll notice that some of the Vinho Verde wines even have a bit of effervescence, making for a refreshing white wine that's perfect for springtime.

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Spanish whites are among my favorite white wines. It's hard to go wrong with an Albariño, Verdejo, Viura, or even a Garnacha Blanca if you enjoy whites that are on the opposite end of the spectrum from an over-oaked American Chardonnay. Spain is a country full of wine regions, producers, and grape varieties to discover, so branch out and try a new bottle next time you're shopping.

Of course, we want to bring you some options at the economical level, so let's identify some Iberian whites to try this spring.

The **2017 Palma Real Verdejo-Viura** is a bright, easy-drinking wine from Rueda in Spain. On the nose you'll notice soft floral scents, lemon zest, and a hint of peach. With decent acidity for a lighter wine, the Palma Real also refreshes with an uncomplicated structure. A wine that's perfect for a springtime boat ride.

For a relatively low-alcohol wine, at only ten percent, try the **2017 Blanka Vinho Verde** from Portugal. A subtle nose of citrus and spring flowers blends nicely into a light wine on the palate. Lemon-orange zest is the predominant flavor in this soft wine, which would be great as a hot afternoon aperitif, or with a citrus ceviche.

Out of Rioja, also in Spain, there's the **2017 Monte Clavijo Viura**, a dry, fresh wine with basic minerality. Easy drinking and clean, this is a very typical Viura, with balanced fruit and a delicate mouth feel. Because this young Viura, also known as Macabeo in other regions, is a humble grape, don't over-complicate it with heavier foods. You could, however, try it with a spicy Asian dish to balance some of the hotness of the meal.

The **2017 Marqués de Cáceres Verdejo** brings some boldness back into the bunch. With a stronger lemon-citrus melon nose and length on the palate, more so than some of the others, this wine may be better suited for those who prefer extra body in a glass. A rounded structure, complete with noticeable acidity and a bit more weight, gives the Marqués de Cáceres Verdejo a robust personality worthy of accompanying a meal.

Back on the Portuguese side, the **Pavão Vinho Verde** is a Bronze award winner from the

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International Challenger competition in 2018, and another lighter wine that needs no accompaniment other than being paired with a good time. This young wine has some effervescence that adds to its refreshing appeal. The citrus flavors and acidity are both strong, and there is a crispness to the softer palate. Additional flavors of stone fruits and Old World minerality greet you in the mouth.

Another bottle with a bit of effervescence is the **2017 Faisão Vinho Verde**, which is a pale wine with much daintier features than the other Vinho Verdes. It has more floral with some sweetness on the palate, and is a light wine with a refreshing zing.

The **2015 Castro Martin A2O Albariño** was the boldest and the only bottle with a real cork. From Spain's Rías Baixas region, which is known for its quality vineyards, the Castro Martin carries all the characteristics of a well-produced Albariño. Clean, crisp, and flawlessly acidic with a touch of honey on the palate, the A2O would be a perfect accompaniment to a Spanish seafood feast.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com