

Changes to Vinho Verde

A new wave of drier, varietally-labelled Vinho Verde is boosting international sales for the Portuguese wine, but there's a concern the region may be abandoning its traditional approach too quickly.

“Exports of Vinho Verde have been increasing because of the type of wines now being produced

There has recently been a stylistic shift due to a move towards varietal wines made with Alvarinho or Loureiro, which are higher in alcohol, drier, as well as “more complex” – and driving such change for a region best known for its spritzy, off-dry, high acid and low alcohol blends is a change in vineyard location and management.

In essence, growers are moving away from the old pergola trellis system to wire-trained vines planted on the region's slopes rather than valley floors.

This has led to the replanting on modern lines of up to 800 hectares of Vinho Verde each year – the region covers 20,000ha in total – helped by subsidies from the European Union.

“Before Vinho Verde was 9% abv, a bit sweet and a blend, but now it is 11-12%, varietal, drier and more complex,

The Vinho Verde wine region where growers traditionally trained their vines high on pergolas, a system called vinha de enforcado

However, the success of Vinho Verde's new wave of trellis-trained wines is having a negative effect on the region's appearance. The success they are having renovating vineyards is changing the landscape because the pergolas are fast disappearing,”

Small plots with pergolas are being replaced by linear vineyards, Consequently, the region has now secured EU subsidies from 2015 to protect its traditional pergola-trained vineyards.

Producers are now encouraged to keep a small amount of traditional Vinho Verde that will connect to the roots of the region, so there is a balance between progress and defending the tradition of the landscape.”

The region will further benefit from changes to the legislation for regionally-produced sparkling wine in 2015 the Charmat method will be authorised for Vinho Verde sparkling.”.

Previously, those producers making sparkling Vinho Verde had to use the traditional method.

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