

Wine & Spirits

MAGAZINE

Year's Best Portuguese Reds

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Our blind panels tasted 277 new-release Portuguese red over the past 12 months. **Joshua Greene**, our critic for Portugal, rated 39 as exceptional (90+) and 26 as Best Buys.

Herdade do Rocim 2013 Reserva Alentejo

Considered a rustic variety in its home in southern France, the red-fleshed alicante bouschet can produce an elegant red in the Alentejo. This one starts off on cracked-black-pepper notes, immediately yielding a sense of fruit purity, of luscious and juicy black plums. It continues to improve over the course of several days, a wine to cellar and enjoy with braised trotters, or other local Alentejo specialties. **(92 points)**

Vadio 2006 Tinto Bairrada

Luís Patrão, who makes the red wines at Esporão in the Alentejo, started this project in 2005 with Eduarda, his partner from Brazil, and his father, Dinis. His family has a block of baga vines, planted sometime before 1932, when Portugal started registering vineyards. They farm it organically, providing the fruit for what is now a ten-year-old wine. It has matured to graceful refinement, taking on the fennel-like notes of an older Barolo, as well as the tarriness of tannins. Those tannins bring a tomato-leaf character to the bright cherry core of fruit. Decant this gentle red for pork roasted with fennel. **(94 points)**

Vadio 2012 Tinto Bairrada

Luís Patrão blends baga from an older block at his family's vineyard with grapes from vines planted in 2007; he and his father, Dinis, farm their vines organically on clay-limestone soils. He lets the fermentation start slowly, waiting to add cultured yeast to finish it. The wine, aged for 18 months in oak, has matured into lush richness, with herbal scents of tobacco and tarry notes of pine. It's full and delicious, needing something as meaty as roast pork with prunes to tame the tannins. **(91 points, Best Buy)**



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