

HIGH-QUALITY, GOOD VOLUME YEAR

- MILD YEAR, FAVOURABLE CYCLE, UNSTABLE WEATHER AT HARVEST -

2023 Harvest Report

The 2023 harvest in Portugal is one of high to very high quality and variable volumes by region, thanks to the overall mild cycle, extreme weather events, and irregular rains during the harvest.

Sogrape is Portugal's leading wine company, with around 1,000 hectares of vineyards in six renowned regions, the birthplace of its DOCs «Alentejo», «Bairrada», «Bucelas», «Dão», «Douro», «Porto» and «Vinho Verde». In addition, it purchases grapes from more than 2,000 winegrowers in the country. Its own production is of high quality, reflecting the year's conditions at its various estates and regions, affording good future prospects for its wines.

In Portugal, the IVV-Instituto da Vinha e do Vinho (Portuguese Institute for Vine and Wine) predicted in July a harvest of good quality and higher in volume than the previous one, as a result of the favourable year [[IVV - 2023 Harvest Forecast](#)]. The mild summer, as opposed to the extreme heat experienced across much of Europe, brought earlier than normal cycles and maturations, with good prospects. Some weather instability and rain on the harvest changed expectations. In several regions, early harvests avoided more significant losses caused by the bad weather. [IVV final data predicted for December 2023]

❖ Sogrape Highlights

- **Whites of high quality, and lower volume in Vinhos Verdes**
humid and challenging year, prompt cycle and early harvest.
- **Whites of high quality and more production in Bucelas**
favourable year, with everything occurring at the right time.
- **High to very high quality and more volume in Dão**
favourable cycle, early harvest before the worst of the rains.
- **Production of very good quality and lower volume in the Alentejo**
favourable and promising cycle, affected by the excessive heat in August.
- **High to very high quality and good production in Douro and Port wines**
favourable cycle and good prospects, extreme weather events, intermittent rain at harvest.





❖ Douro

The 2023 cycle was different from the previous one (very hot and dry) in this “normally atypical” region. Luís Sottomayor, oenologist for Sogrape's Douro wines, recalls that in this year *“we had lots of water, lots of rain, cold nights and hot days: in short, we had everything we haven't had in a long time, and kicked off the harvest with great optimism”*.

As a result, *“the first wines came out quite well”* (whites, rosés and reds), but later we had to be mindful of the rain in September, and adapt to see what was coming next. Our teams are used to challenges and, in the end, *“we have wines with high concentration, good fruit and a lot of intensity”*, together with higher volumes than the previous harvest. The diversity of wine profiles – by estates, plots, grape varieties, old or new vines, harvest dates and winemaking techniques – have convinced Luís that *“we are going to have an outstanding year”* in Douro and Port wines.

Sogrape has several highly renowned and diverse estates in nearly 600 hectares of vineyards under its care. A rainy winter and mild spring provided an optimal environment for the budbreak of the vines and for them to thrive. Despite the lower pressure, it was necessary to prevent diseases (downy mildew) and control longer-lasting pests (green leafhopper). Extreme events and localized storms are becoming increasingly more frequent in the region, and occurred at random. Ex.: Quinta da Muxagata (Sogrape), 15 minutes of hail and intense rain (67 mm) destroyed >80% of production. In July and part of August, the end of cycle without extreme temperatures resulted in good maturations and grapes very well balanced in quality and quantity. The rain was beneficial, benign or harmful depending on locations and intensities. The harvest itself, completely manual, lasted nearly two months from 17 August to 11 October. The production volumes are higher than those registered in the small year of 2022, with growth both in our own estates as well as in the grapes bought by Sogrape from many winegrowers throughout the entire region.

❖ Alentejo

The Sogrape oenologist in the Alentejo, Luís Cabral de Almeida, believes that *“we are going to have very good wines”*. The whites and rosés are *“wines with lots of fruit, very appealing and balanced, with good acidity and freshness”*. In reds, Luís highlights the *“very good Alicante Bouschet, Petit Verdot and Tinta Miúda”* of high quality, validating the choice of long-cycle grape varieties which, by ripening at a later time, benefit from the cooler nights in maturations. The new vines in the traditional goblet system, more protected from the sun, had good results in which *“the fruit is really different, livelier”*, with a flavour that allows for thoughts of making different things.

“It is a truly great year”, of wagers won.

At Herdade do Peso, Vidigueira, the cycle started out dry, with less budbreak and not as much vigour. Cold days (-4°C) and frost in March resulted in some loss, although the warm spring helped the vines to develop properly later, supported by precise irrigation over its 160 hectares. The year was challenging, since it required lots of timely intervention (due to fast-growing plants and weeds), without diseases, but with pressure from mites. A *“spectacular July, out of the ordinary in terms of night-time temperatures”*, rarely >14°C-16°C, resulted in optimum maturations in early ripening grape varieties. The intense heat of August hampered the end of the cycle with *“two weeks that punished the vineyard (and people!)”*, but the detailed viticulture work helped create healthy vines that, in spite of everything, were able to bear good fruit.

The harvest at Herdade do Peso ran from 2 August to 21 September. The volumes of own production and of grapes bought from neighbouring winegrowers are lower than the previous harvest, due to the smaller budbreak and high temperatures that reduced the weight of the grapes.



❖ Vinho Verde

Diogo Sepúlveda, the oenologist for Quinta de Azevedo, calls 2023 a *“highly challenging year for the teams”* at the vineyard and winery. It was demanding and laborious, but it did pay off, and *“we are very happy”*. The grapes, exclusively white, harvested by hand and by machine before the worst of the rains, arrived with in optimum ripening condition, highly balanced between acidity, sugars and aroma. The *“wines turned out to be quite good”*, says Diogo, *“with great aromatic profiles, in line with what was planned for the estate’s Loureiros and Alvarinhos”*.

The rain, humidity and resulting risk of diseases were constant concerns at this Sogrape estate, in Barcelos, located on the Atlantic coastal strip of the Vinho Verde Region. Attention and care were essential, with many preventive treatments and interventions. Water in the soil and mild temperatures accelerated the cycle in the vineyard’s 34 hectares, anticipating harvest. It was one of the estate’s earliest pickings, starting on 28 August and ending on 13 September, before the worst of the rains. Own production was lower due to less budbreak, phytosanitary pressure and some sunburn of Alvarinho grapes caused by very hot days (+39°C) in August. This year, Sogrape selected more winegrowers in the region, growing its production from purchased grapes.

❖ Dão

At Quinta dos Carvalhais, Beatriz Cabral de Almeida speaks of a harvest of extremes and a year of hard work, although she is *“very happy”* with the results. The oenologist highlights the whites made from *“Encruzado, which are very elegant and fresh”*, the *“rosés, with good complexity in aroma and flavour”* and the *“consistency of the reds”* made from Alfrocheiro and Touriga Nacional. The new vines are also *“great!”*, they ripened sooner and are now starting to show their identity. *“It’s fantastic being able to have this diversity!”*, asserts Beatriz.

Located in Mangualde, this Sogrape estate has 54 hectares of vineyards, including 28 hectares replanted since 2020. The balanced cycle boded well for a good harvest, until very hot days in late August and rains in September partially changed these predictions. After a dry summer and days of extreme heat (+44°C), the first rains of September, common to the region, were beneficial to the grapes, which were harvested in excellent condition. The harvest began early, on 23 August, and lasted until 21 September. The succession of rains required constant adjustment and greater selection both at the vineyard and winery. The experience of our teams, coupled with foresight and quick action, avoided the worst of the rains and had good results. Sogrape’s volumes are higher compared to 2022, both in terms of own production and purchased grapes.

❖ Bucelas

Luís Cabral de Almeida, who in 2023 took on oenology at Quinta da Romeira, Bucelas, confirms that *“we have excellent wines, and for good reason”*. A short distance from the ocean and Lisbon, the emblematic estate has 75 hectares of vineyards, primarily Arinto. The favourable cycle created *“delicious fruit, with the region’s natural acidity, truly lively and balanced”*, providing many options for work at the winery in preparing white wines and sparkling wines. *“The wine is promising!”* he says.

Winter rains left the soils with plenty of water and the mild weather along the cycle helped the vines to develop properly. Meticulous work at the vineyard prevented diseases, controlled pests, and managed vegetation cover and canopy. A bit of rain in the summer kept the plants green and healthy, creating exceptional fruit in the estate’s many different exposures. The harvest came a bit early, and ran smoothly, from 22 August to 25 September. Production volumes for Sogrape were higher compared to the dry year of 2022, both for grapes grown at the estate and for those purchased from neighbour farmers.