

VERY HIGH QUALITY AND LOWER QUANTITY
- 2024 Harvest Report -

Portugal had a harvest of above average quality and variable production by region, thanks to a mild, rainy year and little instability in the harvest.

Sogrape is Portugal's leading wine company, with around 1,000 hectares of vineyards in six key regions – Alentejo, Bairrada, Bucelas, Dão, Douro/Porto, and Vinho Verde –, and purchases grapes from more than 2,000 growers in the country. The high quality of the harvest reflects the year's conditions, the diversity of the locations and the meticulous work, creating the highest expectations for the evolution of wines.

In July, the IVV-Instituto da Vinha e do Vinho (Portuguese Vine and Wine Institute) estimated an 8% decline in volume compared to 2023 in Portugal due to the unsettled weather that affected various phases of the cycle and facilitated diseases. The forecast of 6.9 million hectolitres is within the average of the past five years [IVV-Previsão Colheita 2024]. The mild summer allowed for balanced ripening, and harvests ran smoothly until mid-September. From 15 to 19 September, dry weather and strong winds caused devastating fires in central and northern Portugal (burning more than 135,000 hectares), while post-equinox rains and instability affected some harvest endings. [IVV final data expected for December 2024]

❖ **Sogrape Highlights**

- **Excellent whites and balanced production in Vinho Verde**
fairly humid year, mild summer, good ripening and concentration, dry harvest
- **Very high-quality whites and lower production in Bucelas**
rainy cycle affected flowering, mild ripening concentrated quality, dry harvest
- **High quality and lower production in Bairrada**
very rainy cycle affected flowering and created pressure from diseases, dry harvest
- **High quality and drop in production in Dão**
rainy year, unstable weather in key moments, challenging harvest
- **Very high to exceptional quality and balanced production in Alentejo**
more rain and cool summer, excellent ripening and overall conditions in the harvest
- **High to exceptional quality and good production in Douro and Porto Wines**
mild and rainy cycle, smooth and perfectly balanced ripening, prolonged harvest





❖ Douro

Luís Sottomayor, the winemaker in charge of Douro and Port wines at Sogrape, is clear – *“it’s a fantastic year!”* The rainy, mild year allowed for smooth ripening and produced grapes of high quality, but required *“patience and knowing how to wait”*. The start confirmed the good prospects and, with the harvest in full force, the grapes were excellent, delicious, with firm skins that allowed great extraction and vinification.

“Practically everything is good”, says Luís, *“whites, rosés, reds, Douro and Port wines”* throughout the entire region and in reasonable quantity. Not surprisingly, the old vines produced great wines, and the diversity of grape varieties and locations was on full display. Of particular note was Touriga Nacional, which *“worked for everything, with great intensity, balance, acidity, fragrance,... extraordinary”*. *“It’s a year of great quality, higher than 2011, more elegant and more delicate”,* with excellent acidity and without very high alcohol. *“The wines are very good, and we’ll see how they hold up, although we are very confident about how they will evolve”,* concludes Luís.

In the Douro region Sogrape has around 600 hectares of vineyards in its care, under a wide variety of situations. The rainy winter and early spring with above average temperatures left good water reserves but required extensive work, canopy and ground cover management, as well as prevention of fungal diseases (powdery and downy mildew) and pests. With some exceptions, due to the region’s diversity, flowering was favourable, and the clusters evolved well. July started out cool, and then the *“summer arrived”,* a mild one. Very hot days (43°C to 44°C on 23 to 24 July and 8 to 9 August) left some scalding, although the stable weather in late August and early September, with pleasant days and cool nights, encouraged smooth, slow ripening.

Sogrape’s harvest ran from 28 August to 19 October. It began with ideal conditions up until the equinox, when rains forced several pauses, but this was followed by dry weather, wind and some heat. Cool autumn nights (below 15°C) and sunny days (below 30°C) – *“a year like we used to have in the past”* – promoted an excellent ripening. The finish was harder, with unstable weather and rains. Sogrape’s own production was up (+23%), together with grapes purchased in the region (+15%) and the number of growers (now more than 850 in total), in a year which was uncertain for many, disrupted by the general situation of supply exceeding demand.

❖ Alentejo

According to Luís Cabral de Almeida, Sogrape’s winemaker in the Alentejo, 2024 is a *“year of very high quality, on a par with 2021”,* and balanced volumes. *“It was challenging for winegrowing”* because of the conditions of the cycle, *“but highly rewarding”* after seeing the results of the investments made in the new 2020 plantations.

Luís says *“it was the best year for whites and rosés”* at Herdade do Peso. The cool nights of July helped everything to turn out very well, especially the Verdelhos, which were *“complete, aromatic, very fresh and full-bodied”*. The Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Syrah and Petit Verdot reds were also of very high quality and consistency. In the new vines, Touriga Franca made a *“strong showing”* in the first separate winemaking, although the main spotlight is on Alicante Bouschet from head trained vines, which was *“fresher, more intense, vibrant and focused”*. Proudly, Luís speaks of the winning bet of *“going back to the past to restore the goblet training system, exceptional, which gives more protection to the fruit and creates truly different wines”*.

In the 160 hectares of Herdade do Peso, Vidigueira, the 2023-24 cycle was rainier and more normal than the previous one. Its weather stations recorded 23% higher average precipitation (534.4 mm versus 433.9 mm), primarily from January to April. The high humidity for the norm and mild temperatures caused high fungal pressure (powdery and downy mildew), effectively controlled by the team at the vineyard. The leaf walls were *“spectacular”* and the *“pleasant”* summer encouraged good development, although some very hot days scalded leaves, and the red spider mite was a constant pest. A cool July, with nights rarely above 14°C, helped the balanced ripening of grapes, which were harvested under optimum conditions.

The harvest went *“very well”,* from 6 August to 24 September, without rain or any days of extreme heat. Sogrape’s volume was higher than in 2023 in own grapes (+40%), mainly due to the new vines that came into full production, and in the grapes purchased in the vicinity (+2,4%). In July, the IVV estimated a 10% decline for the region.



❖ Vinho Verde

Diogo Sepúlveda, head winemaker at Quinta de Azevedo, foresaw a “great, highly promising year”. The plants took full advantage of the higher availability of water, creating and maintaining good leaf walls resulting in longer ripening, without dehydrating, thereby preserving freshness and concentrating fruit. As usual, the Alvarinho grape variety was the first to be harvested, in optimum conditions, and “the first musts were quite good, with good sweetness, good freshness and, above all, good fruit”. These were followed by Loureiro, predominant at the estate. The fairly humid year could have been quite challenging for this variety, but the grapes were “fabulous”, thanks to hard work at the vineyard. These are “fatter Loureiros, more concentrated, with very balanced acidity and higher complexity”. Diogo recalls that, in line with the vision for the new range from Quinta de Azevedo, the demand and rigour at the vineyard and the winery have grown each year, and the 2024 wines are “quite concentrated, with an excellent balance between freshness and elegance”. These are wines that promise extremely high quality.

At Quinta de Azevedo – Lama, Barcelos, on the Atlantic strip of the Vinho Verde region – the year was quite rainy (2,100 mm versus 1,755 mm, the average from the past 10 years), and above average springtime temperatures made the vineyard wake up early and grow quickly. A cool May delayed flowering and resulted in some coulure. Mild, humid conditions encouraged fungal diseases (downy mildew), but vigilant work at the vineyard – prevention, selective operations and timely interventions with the new leaf remover – made all the difference. The summer, without “harsh” temperatures, helped out, and the ripening was quite balanced, resulting in excellent grapes, harvested under optimum conditions. The estate is planted only to white grape varieties, primarily Loureiro (20 hectares) and Alvarinho (13 hectares, now with more established new vines), in different levels and plots. Its harvest, done manually and by machine, ran from 28 August to 20 September, ending right before the intense rains of the equinox. It was a dry harvest, “the first in many years, only raining one night”. The region estimated a volume decrease of 5%. Sogrape production was higher than in 2023, for the estate grapes (up 26%) and purchased grapes (up 14%).

❖ Dão

Beatriz Cabral de Almeida, winemaker at Quinta dos Carvalhais, speaks of “high quality in a year of extremes”. We saw everything – rain, frost, hail, and, during the harvest, days of intense heat and fire, followed by cold and strong rains in less than one week. The end result was high-quality wines that “reveal the terroir of Quinta dos Carvalhais”. The harvest began with Gouveio, “marvellous grapes in terms of ripeness, with the ideal alcohol, acidity, freshness and elegance”. This was followed by “delicate, cheerful and elegant” rosé wines. In their own time, the Encruzados were delightful, “all more complex and expressive from the very outset”. It was also a good year for Tinta Pinheira, “very delicate and elegant”, and for Tinta Roriz, which “matured very well, with great fruit, versatile in rosés and reds”. Without surprise, quality was also high in Jaen and various plots of Touriga Nacional. “It’s an unforgettable year, also because of the coming together of people in the face of adversity”, recalls Beatriz. “It was challenging, but beautiful to see.”

In the 54 hectares of Quinta dos Carvalhais (Mangualde), the cycle was humid, with frost in April and rains during flowering affecting production and causing coulure. The clusters that thrived developed well, thanks to water in the soil and good weather in late spring. In June, a hailstorm damaged clusters and plants, requiring treatments for healing. The end of the cycle was calmer up until the harvest, which ran from 2 to 30 September in stop-and-go mode, following the natural ripening pace of the grape varieties and plots. The harvest was stopped from 16 to 18 September due to the region’s violent fires. It became necessary to protect people, free up resources and coordinate teams to help fight the fire and defend the estate, day and night. Part of the forest and 0.35 hectares of vineyard burned, although the surroundings remind us that it could have been worse. At the winery, tanks were closed to keep out smoke and ashes. Water was sprayed over the vineyards, and then the rain that fell on 19 September finished the “cleaning” of grapes still on the vines. Then, the sun came back, and the harvest resumed in full force, picking the best plots before the strong rains that followed in less than a week. The region estimated a volume decrease of 15% versus 2023. Sogrape’s production declined, in own grapes (-67%) and purchased grapes (-13%).

❖ Bucelas

At Quinta da Romeira, winemaker Luís Cabral de Almeida speaks of a *“very good, promising harvest”*. The estate has 75 hectares of vineyards, primarily planted to Arinto, the region’s emblematic white grape variety. Water in the soil, a mild summer and the proximity of the sea kept the vines very green, grapes yielding *“excellent ripeness which, combined with Bucelas’ main feature – a fantastic, vibrant, crisp acidity – results in wines that age extremely well”*. The completely manual harvest began with base wines for sparkling, which is *“promising”*. Generally speaking, the *“grapes, a bit smaller and more concentrated”*, produced a harvest of very high quality. Luís emphasizes the Arintos from several distinct north-facing parcels, with limestone soils, harvested later, with lots of *“structure, acidity and freshness, that will age very well in the barrel and in the bottle for many years”*. They are responsible for Quinta da Romeira’s great wines and are expected to develop well.

The rain was also a determining factor at Quinta da Romeira, an almost daily event until April (there were only eight dry days from 1 January to 30 April), and then in an alternating but recurring manner (884 mm versus 749 mm in 2023). The poor weather affected flowering, causing coulure and millerandage, with high pressure from diseases (downy mildew), and hampered performing timely interventions at the vineyard. Conditions favoured the growth of vegetation and ground cover, requiring extensive work. June saw heavy downpours and hailstorms, but the plants recovered well. In July and August, dry sunny weather allowed for the good development and ripening of grapes, which were harvested in optimum condition, without rain, from 2 to 20 September. The vast Lisboa region, which includes Bucelas, estimated a total production decline of 15% compared to 2023. Sogrape lowered its own production (down 30% at the estate) and boosted production in purchased grapes, as a result of working with more farmers this year.

❖ Bairrada

Diogo Sepúlveda, in charge of winemaking in Bairrada where Sogrape has been solidly established for decades, points to the year’s *“very good quality”*, despite the drop in production, primarily due to rains during flowering. Quinta de Pedralvites, a Sogrape property in Anadia, is primarily planted to regional white grape varieties, such as Maria Gomes and Arinto, and includes 2.5 hectares of the rare white variety Sercialinho, already with a long track record of excellent wines. All have proven to be quite good, *“with a great balance between concentration and freshness”*. Good ripening is a constant challenge in this region of the Atlantic strip, but this year the red grapes of Baga and Syrah were also outstanding and yielded vibrant rosés. *“More and more in this region, we seek greater volume and ‘weight’ in wines, with an even more integrated natural acidity”*, says Diogo. *“We have achieved these goals brilliantly, and are getting great grapes for making more complex, more ambitious wines”*, concludes.

The cycle began with less budbreak, and rains during flowering caused a drop in production (down 25% in the region versus 2023). There was high pressure from fungal diseases, requiring constant prevention and work at the vineyard, including canopy and ground cover management. Without extreme temperatures during the summer, the grapes developed well, and were harvested in an excellent state of health and maturity. Sogrape’s harvest began on 29 August and ended on 11 October. In addition to its own production, the company purchases grapes, which are vinified at its São Mateus winery, from more than 550 local growers. Here, are vinified wines for Bairrada DOC and for Mateus. The latter include grape musts from the Trás-os-Montes region, obtained at the Sogrape’s own local winery in Bemposta. Here, the harvest ran normally as well, with a higher number of growers (now more than 575) providing grapes of excellent quality and balance, that account for more than 90% of all production in the Planalto Mirandês region.

