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# Wine & Spirits

## The New World of Syrah



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blend, its bright floral spice drives the scents and flavors. Think of it as a dry muscat, with a cool, zesty briskness, and pour it with a platter of fried fish, or with grilled sardines. *Metrowine Distribution, White Plains, NY*

## 87 | Quevedo \$14

**2017 Douro Oscar's White (Best Buy)** A floral blend of local varieties—gouveio, viosinho, rabigato, arinto and fernaõ pires—this is a mild-mannered white with sweet green-grape flavors hinting at pineapple and stone fruits. Chill it for a seafood stew. *P.R. Grisley, Salt Lake City, UT*

## 86 | Quinta dos Murcas \$12

**2017 Douro Assobio (Best Buy)** A blend of local white grapes, this is crisp and clean, with ripe pineapple scents and notes of peppermint and petrol. It's a spicy white for pulled pork. *Aidil Wines & Liquors, Newark, NJ*

## RED

### BAIRRADA

## 94 | Niepoort \$22

**2016 Barraida Drink Me Nat'Cool (Best Buy)** This is Dirk Niepoort's latest love letter to Bairrada, the coastal plain south of his hometown of Porto. The region's clay-limestone soils and the бага grape have captured his imagination, leading him to buy the Quinta de Baixo in Cantanhede, where he makes Lagar de Baixo, as well as this, the first of his Drink Me Nat'Cool wines. It comes from 80- to 100-year-old vines and lived for nine months in stainless steel, fermenting with carbonic maceration, then undergoing malolactic before resting until June, when it was bottled, unfiltered. This wine's transparent rose-garnet color and oceanic freshness reminded me of some mythical, old-fashioned Portuguese red, while it took Mariarosa Tartaglione of *Marea* in NYC to Ligurian rossese. It's stemmy, with notes of crushed roses and tomato leaf adding complexity to the tart raspberry flavors. Mouthwatering, cold and refreshing, I could drink this forever. *Polaner Selections, Mount Kisco, NY*

## 92 | Vadio \$25

**2015 Bairrada** This austere, chalky red hides its lovely raspberry rasp of fruit behind some stinky reduction; that fruit needs a day of air to show itself. Soft and lithe, this is tangy coastal juice presenting its fresh Atlantic provenance with elegance. Pour it with *arroz de pato*—Portuguese duck rice. *Grape2Glass, Newark, NJ*

## 91 | Vadio \$45

**2014 Bairrada Grande** Dark and tannic, this wine's deep raspberry intensity is girded by an austere structure. The cool, foresty tannins have the flavor of cloud-ear mushrooms, and a cold, iron-like grip that needs years of cellar time to mellow. This is ambitious бага, built to age. *Grape2Glass, Newark, NJ*

## 90 | Filipa Pato \$32/1L

**2017 Barraida Post-Quercus Baga** Filipa Pato and William Wouters farm their 30 acres of vines in Bairrada using biodynamic principles, harvesting the fruit for this wine on the early side, then fermenting and aging it in amphorae. It's complex and layered, with zesty flavors of raspberry and strawberry, rhubarb and Rosa rugosa. Bright and cool at 11 percent alcohol, this is remarkably easy to drink—but, regrettably, difficult to find, as there are only 276 bottles in the United States. *Skurnik Wines & Spirits, NY*

## 87 | Filipa Pato \$15

**2017 Barraida FP Baga (Best Buy)** There's a simple clarity to this бага's cool green spice and straightforward black-raspberry flavors. The fruit is gently sweet while the structure is taut and angular. Serve it chilled. *Skurnik Wines & Spirits, NY*

## DAO

## 91 | Quinta de Saes \$19

**2014 Dão Tinto** Alvaro Castro ferments this as a field blend, equal parts tinta roriz, touriga nacional, alfocheiro and jaen. He allows it a long cold soak, lets it ferment spontaneously, then ages it in neutral barrels. It's a substantial Dão, full and juicy, with resinous tobacco scents and clean cherry flavors. Spicy and supple, it will brighten roast duck. *Olé & Obrigado, New Rochelle, NY*

## 88 | Pedra Cancela \$10

**2016 Dão Seleção do Enólogo (Best Buy)** This is a blend of touriga nacional, alfocheiro and tinta roriz aged six months in French oak, where it developed notes of star anise over its berry flavors. There's nothing ambitious about it, just a tight, firm Dão, completely Portuguese, and a steal at \$10. *LusoVini USA, Union, NJ*

## 87 | Cabriz \$15

**2014 Dão Reserva (Best Buy)** Bright with scents of anise and mulling spices, this wine offers sweet black-cherry flavors over all that lasting spice. It's a blend of touriga nacional, alfocheiro and aragonez, suited to braised meats. *FJN Fine Wines, Cumberland, RI*

## DOURO

## 94 | Quinta do Vallado \$55

**2015 Douro Sousão** Francisco Olazabal and Francisco Ferreira are both descendants of Dona Antónia Adelaide Ferreira, who owned Vallado in the 19th century. Today, the cousins make the wine at this family-owned quinta straddling the Corgo River near its confluence with the Douro, just east of Regua. It's not traditional to bottle sousão, an immigrant to the Douro from Vinho Verde, where this tintereira grape is called vinhão. But Olazabal and Ferreira take it through a traditional fermentation, treading it by foot in open stone lagars, and then treat it to a year and a half in French oak (40 percent new). The grape's penchant for retaining acidity, which can be challenging in the cool reaches of Vinho Verde, is a major asset in the heat of the Douro, where it helps capture the wine's purple fruit, violet florals and underlying delicacy. Mariarosa Tartaglione of NYC's *Marea* described its scent as "beguiling, mysterious aromatics falling in the bloody, gamey camp." The scents touch on ripe black fig and brighter cranberries, along with a fruity forest-mushroom character that gives the tannins a bosky, woodland feel. Those tannins carry a schisty edge that makes the wine compellingly drinkable. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*

## 93 | Maçanita Vinhos \$27

**2016 Douro Tinto** António and Joana Maçanita are the brother-and-sister wine-making team behind this project. They source the fruit for this red in the Cima Corgo, focusing on touriga nacional, with one-quarter of the blend coming from an 80-year-old mixed planting, and another fifth from sousão. They ferment without added yeasts and age half the lot in stainless steel, the other half in French barriques. What's impressive about this wine is its tightness and restraint, its tart fruit allowing space for complexity to show through. You might find notes of sour plum, crushed roses and fresh tobacco. And if you give it time to open, the bright spice reveals a web of root and fruit flavors, the earthy tannins interwoven with the sunny, floral, schist-dusted fruit of the Douro. *Olé & Obrigado, New Rochelle, NY*

## 93 | Quinta do Monte Xisto \$70

**2016 Douro** João Nicolau de Almeida planted this vineyard with his sons, Mateus and João, while he was still running Ramos Pinto. It's sited on a ridgetop in the Douro Superior, with 25 acres of vines in rows cascading down either side of the hill, the prop-

erty tended under organics using biodynamic principles. They ferment the wine in granite lagars, then age the blend of touriga nacional, francesa and sousão in 600-liter barrels for 18 months, where it develops into a silky, sophisticated wine with structure and detail. Tart black fruit drives the flavors, bringing to mind fat blueberries and dark blueberry skins, with schist tannins underscoring that fruit. A firm, lovely vintage from this estate, this is suited to aging for a decade. If you open it sooner, decant it for a pork roast studied with rosemary. *David Bowler Wines, NY*

**93 | Luis Seabra Vinhos** \$24  
**2016 Douro Xisto Ilimitado** Luis Seabra focuses this wine on the schist soils of the Cima Corgo. It's a field blend of varieties that he ferments as whole clusters without added yeasts, some of it in lagars, some in stainless steel; he ages it in neutral barrels for a year, followed by five months in tank. This wine wins the award for most improved with air, as it starts out with a schist stink and notes of stewed fruit, both green and superripe. A day later, the wine is light and airy, showing the poise of its restrained ripeness (it clocks in at 12.5 percent alcohol). The fruit is tangy and cool, with notes of tar and roses; the tannins are fresh, black and quiet. It's well worth the wait for a Douro red that presents itself without excessive fruit or alcohol, giving full voice to the region's distinctive mix of varieties and schist soils. *Olé & Obrigado, New Rochelle, NY*

**93 | Quinta do Vallado** \$60  
**2015 Douro Touriga Nacional** Francisco Olazabal and Francisco Ferreira ferment this in stainless steel, then rack it after malolactic to age for 16 months in French oak barriques. They've captured the delicate side of touriga nacional in this 2015, its formidable power checked by cool notes of orange zest and *esteve*, the rockrose that grows on Douro hillsides. Juicy and vibrant, with schist tannins lasting in the wake of the fruit, this is a wine to enjoy young, with duck braised with prunes, or to cellar for five years. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*

**92 | Churchill's Estates** \$53  
**2011 Douro Grande Reserva** A field blend from estate vineyards with an average age of 50 years, this wine spends a year in new French oak, where it picks up spice-box scents and notes of black walnuts. Behind that, there's a heady Douro red with intensity and earthy tannic drive. It's powerful and sleek, with blueberry and plum syrup notes sweetening the fruit, yet it retains a savory

balance from the schist tannins. A classical Douro red with the energy to sustain it as it ages. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

**92 | Prats & Symington** \$85  
**2016 Douro Chryseia** A dynamic vintage of Chryseia, this wine takes Douro fruit toward silkiness without shedding the spicy schist distinction of its tannins or the dark flavors of the local varieties. Floral freshness lives in the silky texture, pointing up the blue and juicy black raspberry flavors while tannic freshness carries the wine's power, structuring it for development over the next ten years. Charles Symington and Bruno Prats select the fruit for this wine from two estate vineyards, Quinta de Roriz and Quinta da Perdiz, including fruit from another Symington family property, Vila Velha. It's destemmed and crushed, fermented in stainless steel and aged in new 400-liter French oak barrels, a winemaking regime that brings a Bordeaux perspective to Douro fruit. *Premium Port Wines, San Francisco, CA*

**90 | CARM** \$20  
**2011 Douro Vinha da Urze Reserva** This grows at an organically farmed vineyard in the Vale do Côa, in the far-eastern Douro Superior. It's immediately luscious and juicy, with some leesy, reductive elements that fade as the wine opens, gaining elegance and lengthening into firm freshness. The texture is supple, honeyed and racy; still youthful, this will benefit from some time in a decanter before serving with seared duck breast. *Aidil Wines & Liquors, Newark, NJ*

**90 | Delaforce** \$16  
**2013 Douro Tinto (Best Buy)** The vines that provided the touriga nacional, touriga franca and tinta roriz for this wine date to 1973. Those grapes provide a tart, fragrant buzz of juicy green fig and persimmon scents, the wine high-toned and layered, its substantial fruit matched by vegetal tannins and firm acidity. Pour it with duck confit. *Signature Imports, Mansfield, MA*

**90 | Lavradores de Feitoria** \$39  
**2014 Douro Grande Escolha Três Bagos** This is a field blend aged in new French oak, with plenty of fruit density to stand up to that oak. Warm notes of black olives and shishito peppers accompany the smoky wood tones. Alcohol drives some volatility, even as the texture remains silken, integrating what may seem like disparate elements into an intriguing whole. A few years of bottle age should encourage that integration. *Polaner Selections, Mount Kisco, NY*

**90 | Quinta do Vallado** \$65  
**2015 Douro Reserva** This is a selection from a mixed planting of centenarian vines, its 45 varieties focused mainly on tinta roriz, tinta amarela, touriga franca and tinta barroca. After 18 months in French oak barrels, half of them new, the wine is more directly about fruit and schist than oak. The flavors are black and purple, with red-raspberry highlights; the blueberry-skin tannins have a dark schist depth that lends the wine a quiet elegance. The only distraction is the wine's sweetness, which may well integrate into the tannins as it ages. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*

**88 | Borges** \$13  
**2016 Douro Quinta da Soalheira Vinhas Velhas (Best Buy)** This wine's pretty red fruit is concentrated and focused, meeting the hard edges of grape-skin tannins in the end. Made without oak, it emphasizes freshness and supple simplicity—a clean and juicy red for any grilled meats. *JMV USA, Newark, NJ*

**88 | Quinta da Cassa** \$15  
**2016 Douro Reserva (Best Buy)** This quinta is on the left bank of the Douro, just above the Cachão da Valeira. It grew a luscious, black-fruited wine in 2016, the supple texture enriched by a portion of the blend aged in older American oak barrels. Generous and toasty, it's a simple wine for steak. *M.S. Walker, Somerville, MA*

**88 | Ramos Pinto** \$15  
**2016 Douro Duas Quintas (Best Buy)** Duas Quintas blends fruit from two estate vineyards in the Douro Superior, one planted in schist by the Côa River, another at cooler, higher altitudes where granite soils predominate. In 2016, the blend is supple and clean, the purple fruit lasting on scents of roses and purple basil. The tannins are tarry and austere; they would benefit from a year in bottle, or the company of braised duck. *Maisons Marques & Domaines USA, Oakland, CA*

**87 | Castello d'Alba** \$11  
**2017 Douro (Best Buy)** Youthfully grapey, this is a tight, floral red with crunchy black-currant flavors that are bright and honeyed. It's clean and gentle, a versatile wine for anything from charcuterie to grilled eggplant or roast meats. *M.S. Walker, Somerville, MA*

**87 | Quinta do Portal** \$13  
**2016 Douro Reserva Mural (Best Buy)** While I found this wine supple and rich, with bitter, schisty tannins, others described it as elegant, with an interplay of red and black fruit, built for charcuterie. *M Imports, NY* ■