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CULTIVARS OF *VITIS VINIFERA* USED FOR WHITE WINE PRODUCTION: INITIAL CHARACTERISATION OF SELECTED PORTUGUESE VARIETIES

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As a traditional wine producing country, Portugal possesses a long established "appellation" system in which the regional characteristics of wine styles are determined and controlled by official bodies. The varieties encountered within these demarcated regions are considered characteristic and although in some cases certain native varieties have close relatives in other (predominantly southern European) regions, most are apparently unique to Portugal. Many of these varieties can produce wines of high quality and export market acceptability, despite the fact that very little is known about these varieties aside from basic ampelographic descriptions.

The global objective of the study from which the results here are taken concerns the aromatic and chemical characterisation of wines produced from selected varieties form the *Vinho Verde* (Loureiro, Trajadura and Padernã), *Bairrada* (Maria Gomes, Bical, Cercial and Arinto) and *Dão* (Encruzado) regions of Central and Northern Portugal.

Wines from the 1995 harvest were analysed for standard enological parameters, for volatile profiles (GC), selective volatile compounds (monoterpenes, higher alcohols and esters) and were submitted to a rigorous sensorial analysis by a panel of trained tasters.

Concerning those varieties from the *Vinho Verde* region only Loureiro showed high and sensorially detectable levels of free monoterpenes. Of the varieties from *Bairrada* region, Maria Gomes was consisted sensorially differentiated due to fruity and floral characteristics. All of the wines from the Encruzado variety (*Dão* região) were particularly rich in fermentation-derived aroma compounds complicating the identification of the underlying fruit-derived aromas.