

## Luis Pato, Vinhas Velhas 2006 Beiras Branco

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Looking for a dry white wine with real personality? One that inhabits a different firmament from that populated by the Chardonnays, Sauvignons and Pinot Grigios of this world? Renowned Portuguese producer Luis Pato may have just the thing for you.

Pato is the guy who put Bairrada on the modern map and then quarrelled with the authorities there who he thought were being too lax with the rules, allowing non- traditional grape varieties and the like, so now prefers to use the general appellation Vinho Regional Beiras rather than Bairrada.

Although his reds have arguably had more press, he is a very fine white winemaker too, as this blend of 50% of the Bairrada white grape Bical, 30% Cerceal and 20% Sercialinho (these last two bearing some relation to the Sercial of Madeira) proves. All of them old vines, or *vinhas velhas*.

This is very serious wine, grown in Pato's own chalky- clay and sandy soils and aged in new Allier large 650- litre barrels, it is clearly meant for ageing (see my recent notes on his white Vinha Formal 1998 [here](#)) but is already drinking well. All the relevant grape varieties make wines that are famously long- lived so I would recommend this for the cellar as well as for the table now with substantial food – a good roast chicken perhaps. (Not perhaps the duck, *pato* in Portuguese, which has been cut out of the label here, and of the red Vinhas Velhas.).

This has the weight and density of a good white burgundy but only 13% alcohol and much more Atlantic refreshment – very fine acidity plus hints of minerals, smoke and nuts. The texture is fantastic – really creamy – and this would certainly be a wine to torture any wine bore with in a blind tasting.

In the UK the wine, distributed by Raymond Reynolds, is available from at least five different outlets including Arthur Rackham stores, can be bought online, and used until recently to be available from Noel Young.

For some crazy reason Luis Pato's wines do not appear to be available retail in the US according to [wineseacher.com](#), although according to the slightly out of date [www.luispato.com](#) the Portuguese specialist Aidil Wines of New Jersey (website under construction) is the US importer. He is a strong personality. Perhaps he had a disagreement with his previous importer? Or perhaps this is one of the few great wine producers yet to be discovered by the growing band of American wine lovers thirsty for novel wine experiences.

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