

Esporão Reserva Branco 2007 Alentejo

1 Jul 2008 by JR

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Full-bodied, oaked, perfumed whites from Portugal are not ten a penny. The highly unusual **Esporão Reserva Branco 2007 Alentejo** tastes more like a Rhône blend from the south of France than a typical Portuguese white, but I suspect it would cost quite a bit more if it came from France instead of from southern Portugal in the heart of cork-growing country. (I once asked David Baverstock, Esporão's Australian-born winemaker, who cut his teeth with the Symingtons in the Douro Valley, whether he had ever contemplated using screwcaps. He gave me a memorable look in response.)

The grapes in this handsome blend are from 15-year-old Antão Vaz, Arinto and Roupeiro vines (all of which can be looked up in your online *Oxford Companion to Wine*) and the overall effect is pretty full on the palate – it's 14% alcohol with 3.4 g/l residual sugar – but the acidity, over 7 g/l, is quite high enough to keep it from being flabby. The soils here are both schistous and volcanic but I cannot claim to be able to taste this. The overall impression is more floral than mineral with just a hint of the new American and French oak barrels in which it was matured. If you cannot bear even the slightest hint of oak, this wine is not for you, but I found the fruit flavour certainly overpowers the oak at this stage in its maturation. On the other hand, I would not risk ageing it. It's drinking beautifully now.

David Baverstock thinks 2007 was his best vintage for whites since 2004 because it was relatively cool. It would certainly make a great wine for a dinner party – and virtually un-guessable if served blind, I would have thought.

Below are the UK stockists according to importer Charles Hawkins.

Cambridge Wine Merchants
2 Mill Road, Cambridge. Tel. 01223 568991

Irvine Robertson Wines
10/12 North Leith Sands, Edinburgh
Tel. 0131 553 3521

Great Northern Wine Co.
The Warehouse, Blossomgate, Ripon
Tel. 01765 606767

Morgonrot- Chevaliers
Agecroft Commerce Park, Swinton, Manchester

Christopher Piper Wines
1 Silver Street, Ottery St. Mary, Bevon
Tel. 01404 814139

Savage Selection
Market Place, Northleach, Cheltenham
Tel. 01451 860896

LVF Wines
Leicestershire. Tel. 01858 545295

Sommelier Wines
St Peter Port, Guernsey

Madeira Café & Patisserie
London SE1 7TL. Tel. 0207 820 1117

Wine Society
Stevenage, Hertfordshire

Edward Sheldon Ltd
Shipston on Stour, Warwicks. Tel. 01608 661409

Grape Vine Co
Cockermouth, Cumbria. Tel. 01768 788807

St Martins Vintners
Station Wine Cellars, Brighton. Tel. 01273 777788

Robin Greatorex Wines
Coggeshall, Essex. Tel. 01376 562863

Halifax Wine Company

Prescott Street, Halifax Tel. 01422 256333

Bowland Vintners

Field and Fawcett of York

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