Portugal's 2002 vintage

23 Nov 2004 by JR

Richard Mayson, wine writer and Portuguese specialist, sends this report:

> I have just come back from the **Douro** and things are not very good. After a very dry spring and summer (only 60mm of rain fell at Barca d'Alva on the Spanish border between the end of last vintage and the beginning of September), a deep depression settled over Portugal in mid-September (a few days before most people began harvesting on Monday 16th). Up until this time everything looked perfect. In spite of the dry weather which caused some stress in the vineyards there was no extreme heat so the grapes did not shrivel on the vine. Tinta Roriz, a grape which is very uneven in the Douro, ripened perfectly which is always the sign of a good vintage. Those who picked early (mostly in the Douro Superior) manged to make small quantities of good to outstanding wine but, as the rain set in so did the rot. The old interplanted vineyards were particularly badly affected. Those who held off (like Quinta do Noval who always pick late) will not be happy. Weather conditions during the vintage have been warm and unstable with more rain last week and this - perfect for yet more rot. Some growers are not even bothering to pick. For the Douro it has been bad, for **Bairrada** and **Vinho Verde** (where they should be picking now) it is a disaster!