

The wine - rituals and feast

Language

English

The wine is a liquid with alcohol content of cultural and symbolic value, which results from the crushing of the grapes, their chemical fermentation, storage and subsequent processing. It is another one of the natural products included in the “sacred trilogy” of the Mediterranean cultures.

People coming from the Mediterranean, such as Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans introduced the vineyards and the wine in the Iberian Peninsula, carried in amphorae in the ships and used in festivities and rituals.

The grapevine was widely grown in the occupied territories. Dionysius was the Greek God of the wine and Bacchus the Roman’s one. The Roman planted large vineyards in their “*villae*” in the south of Portugal, such as in Milreu in the Algarve, and probably in Balsa too.

In the Islamic period (7th to 13th centuries) the wine was still produced in the Peninsula despite the restrictions of religious nature.

From the Jewish ritual tradition the wine used in the Catholic Eucharist symbolizes the blood of Christ.

The Algarve was famous, for centuries, for the quality of its wines and dried grapes. The production of wines goes through several stages: plantation, treatment or grapevine pruning, grape harvest, crushing of the grapes, deposition and fermentation, bottling. Many Portuguese popular festivities coincide with the period of the grapes harvest and *São Martinho* is commemorated with “*magustos*” (roasted chestnuts) and “*vinho novo*” (new wine) tasting.

Portugal produces many varieties of wine, “*vinhos verdes*,” white, red, sparkling wines, fortified wines. It is nowadays one of the world’s great producers and exporters of wine, its wines being recognised for their quality and being awarded many prizes.