

NEW ARRIVALS
2023 QUINTA DE SAN MICHEL
JANAS & COLARES, PORTUGAL



On Portugal's Atlantic coast, between the Serra de Sintra and the Atlantic, Quinta de San Michel's Alex Guedes has only begun to craft some of the most compelling white wines in the country from the limestone slopes of Janas only a few kilometers from the Atlantic, and his family's newly planted, own-rooted vines in the sands of Colares haven't even produced a wine yet.

Today, San Michel expresses this small stretch of mythical Portuguese coastline through clay, limestone, Arinto and Malvasia in Janas, and tomorrow from deep siliceous sand over limestone in lower Colares, and calcareous coastal sand atop the limestone bluffs overlooking the Atlantic. The 2023 Janas range has finally arrived, and it's as convincing as the first set imported last year.

Inside Portugal's minuscule insider's wine region, Joaquim Camillo purchased the Quinta de San Michel property in 2003 and began planting vineyards a decade later in and around Colares. His vineyards span two striking and different terrains: Janas, inside the IG Lisboa, plantings started in 2013 in clay and limestone around 200 meters altitude between the Sintra Mountains and the Atlantic, and new plantings another decade later on the legendary sandy soils of Colares—some on the valley floor in planted *pé-franco* (true foot—no rootstock graft) meters-deep sands, others above coastal bluffs on calcareous sands and limestone bedrock facing the ocean's salt-rich winds.

San Michel's focus is only on historic local varieties, like the whites, Malvasia de Colares (the dominant variety in the fabled Colares white wines), Arinto, and Galego Dourado, and soon joined by the reds, Molar, Castelão, and the infamous Ramisco—the latter deeply tied to this enchanting viticultural coastline, and the only permitted red variety in Colares. Their wines from clay and limestone echo those of the great vineyards of France's Côte d'Or but carry a maritime salty freshness, stout architectural structure, and a strong cultural distinction. Those from sand promise wines of delicate filigree, resurrecting the past glories of Colares, where Malvasia and Ramisco have thrived ungrafted for centuries.



Alex pulling a recently planted ungrafted Ramisco shoot from the sandy soils of Colares.

After years of learning through experience in other wine regions across the world, Alexandre (Alex) Guedes joined Joaquim Camillo's team, eventually commandeering the project's direction in style and production. Now under Alex's steady, inquisitive hand, and guided by his academic, university-trained mind (degrees in agronomy, viticulture and enology), and one step away from his Master of Wine (as of 2025), Quinta de San Michel is poised to become one of the most promising voices in Portugal's Atlantic wine frontier and a new viticultural voice for the wines of Sintra, especially the fabled Colares wine region.

With documented references dating back to at least 200 BC, Colares holds one of Portugal's oldest vineyard legacies. Throughout the 19th Century, wines from Colares moved through Lisbon's ports, but it was during the phylloxera era in the late 1800s that Colares gained its broader reputation. Perhaps where the wines of the area became more relevant—maybe even mythical, with its proximity to Lisboa and virtually the sole surviving region resistant to the scourge of phylloxera, while the rest of Portugal and Europe's vineyards succumbed to the blight. The vines of Colares were ungrafted and planted in meters-deep sand layered over calcareous clay and limestone, standing outside the pest's reach.

Even at its peak between the 1930s and 1950s, the Colares vineyard area was modest, covering just under 1,800 hectares. By the late 20th century, it dropped to only around twenty. Lisbon's urban expansion into this gorgeous valley, shifting wine preferences from generation to generation, and the effort and costs required to farm these vineyards compared to the vast and easily mechanized vineyards of Portugal's nearby Alentejo contributed to its decline.



Sedimentary bluffs of upper Colares

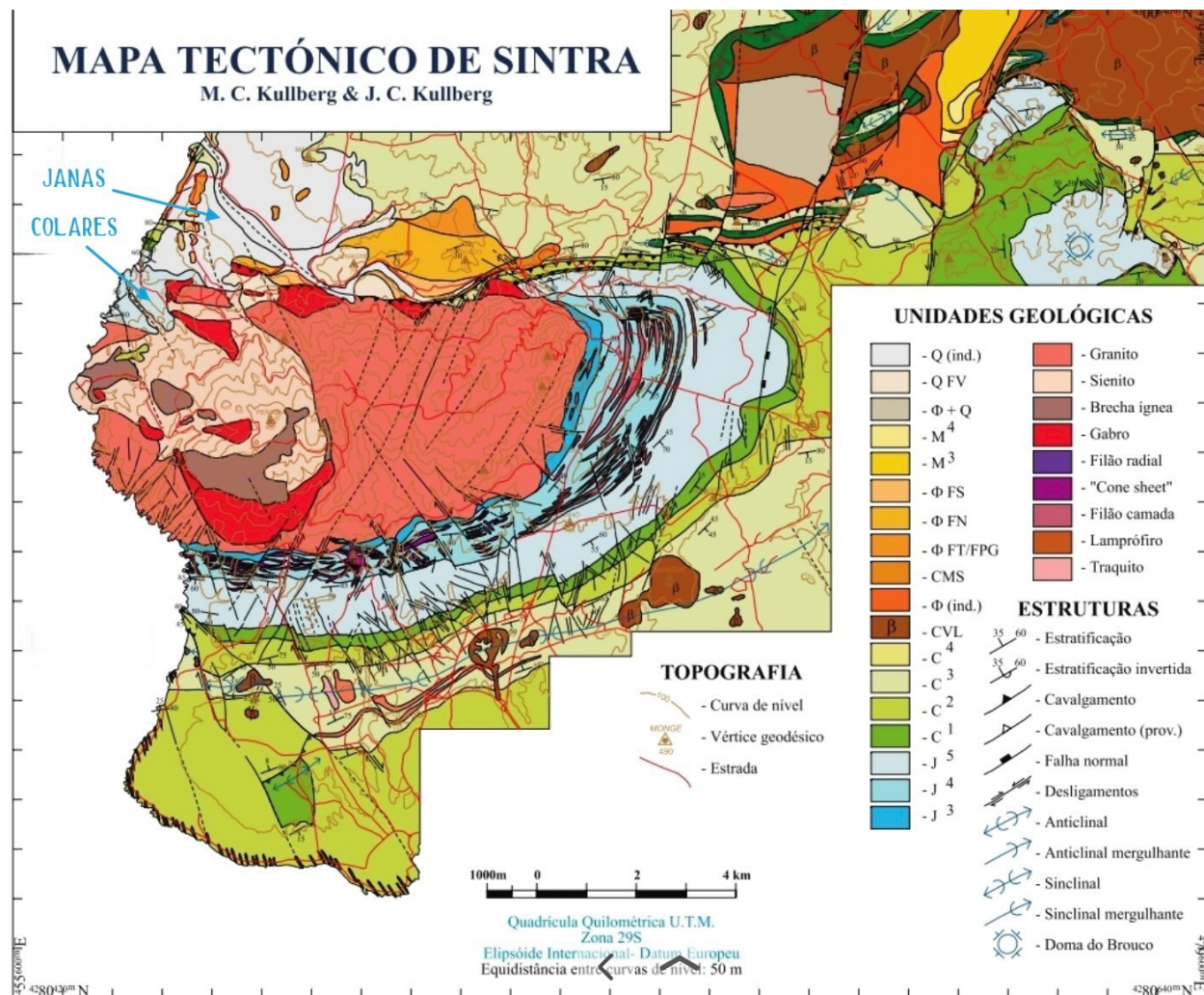
THE GLORIOUS EDEN UNDER NEW THREATS

Just north of Lisbon, over the Parque Natural de Sintra-Cascais, between the Atlantic and the Serra de Sintra, Colares sits in one of mainland Portugal's greenest, most humid oases, a land of fables that attracted Portugal's wealthiest and its nobles and royalty. A subtropical air, with palm trees next to apple, next to protected indigenous pines (*Pinheiro Manso*—Stone Pine) as well as the ubiquitous invasive Eucalyptus brought from Oz to Portugal in the mid-19th Century, dense green layers unlike Portugal's nearby drier interiors dominated by Atlantic fog and its steady moisture with temperatures that swing less than in most Portuguese vineyard zones, require close attention to mildew and rot. With climate change, Alex has seen it all firsthand at San Michel in less than a decade. In 2017, harvest came in October; by 2023, it had already shifted to the first week of September. 2024 was delayed because of dreary, sunless summer conditions, and by 2025, it was again in the first week of September. In normal conditions, summer days average 25–26°C, rarely exceeding 32°C, and nights 16–17°C. Fog dominates mornings, with warmer afternoons moderated by the Atlantic and Sintra mountains.

A GEOLOGICAL TALE

Seen as a whole, the geology of Colares and Janas unfolds in three chapters. Beneath lies the older story: the Lusitanian Basin. Between 200 and 150 million years ago, the Vale de Colares was a small part of a massive shallow sea that laid down limestones, marly limestones, and marls, often dense

with fossils. These layers form the bedrock of the vineyards in Janas and neighboring villages, and it's the underbelly of the lower Colares vineyards that are covered with sand.



At the heart of the area that separates Colares from Lisboa is the Sintra Igneous Complex, born roughly 80 million years ago when magma pressed upward but never erupted; rather, it hardened into concentric igneous rock layers (imagine stone ripples radiating outward from a center): a core of syenite, rings of granite, and outcrops of darker gabbro-diorite. These weathered outcrops form the knuckled hills of the Serra de Sintra. This intrusion “baked” the surrounding Jurassic and Cretaceous beds, tilting and fracturing them into the distorted halo still visible around the massif today.

The final layer is the most recent and the most consequential for the viticulture of Colares: sand. Over the past 2.5 million years, shifting seas and winds piled quartz-rich dunes over the limestones. This sand is what spared Colares from phylloxera, allowing Ramisco and Malvasia de Colares to remain ungrafted. By protecting the roots from the louse, the sand also forced young vines to quickly dig deeply through the sand to the limestone bedrock, imparting greater complexity by the aromatic lift of the sand and deeper body and core from the limestone below.

SAN MICHEL VINEYARDS

Today, San Michel's 7.2 hectares include the 10 to 13-year-old vines first planted in Janas on calcareous clay and Jurassic limestone bedrock. The new sandy vineyards near the Atlantic, located on the lower valley floor, include Malvasia de Colares, Arinto, Galego Dourado, Castelão, and ungrafted Ramisco. Additionally, more Malvasia de Colares is grown higher up in calcareous sand on Jurassic limestone bluffs overlooking the Atlantic.



Janas

Joachim and Alex have chosen a more daring approach for some sites: rather than trenching down to the clay and backfilling with sand, they planted long shoots (ungrafted) directly a meter to a meter and a half into pure sand. The vines sent roots down and quickly grew strong. Ramisco, in particular, already had abundant bunches after the first few years. In Janas, the vines are grafted clones on SO4 rootstock (Selection Oppenheim 4); in sand, all are massale selections.

They practice plowing only once a year—after harvest and before winter rains—then they seed lupin, vetch, and berseem clover as cover crops, which hold moisture, improve soil life, and protect against erosion. Water is scarce, even when the air is constantly humid, and cover crops are more essential than ever.

SAN MICHEL | JANAS: LISBOA IGP — CLAY ON JURASSIC LIMESTONE

Perched on the mild, south-facing slopes above Janas at 200 meters, the estate's parcels in this area share a common geological spine: medium to medium-deep calcareous clay over Jurassic limestone bedrock: a combination that tempers the sun and channels a cool mineral energy into every wine. Across the range, fruit is whole-cluster pressed, naturally fermented, and taken through full malolactic conversion. Each wine is lightly filtered at 1.2 microns (enough to clarify without stripping; not a sterile filtration) and never fined. Alex calls himself a no-lab winemaker; though he runs basic analyses, taste is what always decides.



Upper Colares vineyards on the bluffs overlooking the Atlantic

PREVIEW | COLARES DOC — SAND ON JURASSIC LIMESTONE

Malvasia de Colares is the primary variety permitted in Colares whites. Marked by sharp acidity, salinity and waxy texture with occasional complexing oxidative tones as they age, and its aromas are enchanting—more effusive than stoic. In sand, these wines are lifted and fine; in clay, they are potent and more muscular.

While Malvasia de Colares defines Colares's white wines, Ramisco is its sole red variety. It produces small berries with thick skins and ripens late under the region's steady Atlantic influence. The wines show high acidity, firm tannins, and moderate alcohol (typically around 11 to 12 percent). They require extended aging—often years in barrel and bottle with many excellent examples of well-aged and worthwhile Colares reds from producers like Viúva Gomes. San Michel will harvest their first own-rooted Ramisco from sandy soils in the Colares valley floor in 2025.

The Colares DOC wines of San Michel will likely find their way to our US shores around 2028 or 2029.

SAN MICHEL JANAS WHITES | UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE

The whites of San Michel have many faces, but two notably distinct ones. When these young wines are served colder than usual, they can be more easily mistaken for a broad-shouldered, muscular

style of Meursault—more old-school than new: think 1990s François Jobard and the lovely stout and even hard mineral quality with that pure white Devonshire creaminess. I know the comparison is all too common, but it applies here. We're dealing with the same geological building blocks: Jurassic limestone bedrock and white calcareous clay. The key differences are the Atlantic climate versus the continental, and varietal nuance and cultural taste; the latter, under Alex's nose and hand, is on par with what one might see in a Côte d'Or cellar.

They are closer in spirit to downslope Côte d'Or Chardonnay than upslope: expansive and powerful with a dense core versus lift, angularity, and verticality, respectively, and with similar mineral qualities. Arinto, one of the world's most talented white grapes, displays the same boundless adaptability to a variety of soil types as Chardonnay, but perhaps none more compelling than limestone and clay.

By the second day, the differences become sharper—more cultural and varietally led. The distinctions between texture and aromatic profile are undeniable, though the shape still holds. Arinto seems to maintain a straighter line from where it began, while Malvasia layers on the charm with a distinctive smile often hidden in the seriousness of Burgundy-style whites.

It's a compelling range, one that could unsettle even confident blind tasters. Unlike many that mimic the Côte d'Or in style but not in substance, the congruence here is real and identifiable—at times, uncanny.

MALVARINTO DE JANAS, a portmanteau of Malvasia de Colares and Arinto, is drawn from a single hectare planted in 2013. This marriage of varieties brings both textured muscle and lift. It spends ten months on the gross lees, in an average three-year-old 225-liter French oak barrel, of which 15% is new—just enough to sculpt and frame without intrusion.

The **MALVASIA DE JANAS** comes from a 0.6-hectare plot planted in 2015; its namesake variety expresses itself here with a quiet, saline depth and inviting spice, floral, and soft white fruit nose. It also sees ten months on gross lees, but in slightly older French oak, averaging four years of age, serving as a neutral stage for the grape's intricate aromatics and slightly glycerol mouthfeel.

CURTIMENTA comes from the same hectare as Malvarinto. The fruit spends fifteen days on skins before pressing, then ages for a year in a mix of four-year-old French and Hungarian 225-liter barrels.

From the 0.6-hectare parcel planted in 2015, the **ARINTO** bottling is shaped by twelve months on lees in four-year-old 228-liter French oak, with this middle-aged wood offering a touch more oxygen exchange than much older barrels and a subtle roundness to Arinto's naturally broad and potentially square disposition.

With the expansion to 7.2 hectares and a new cellar in the works, production will soon grow from 15,000 bottles to 35,000–40,000.



2023 JANAS WINES

In all these 2023 Janas wines, you can feel that limestoney/deep clayey effect of a blockier, fresher and expansive wine—no needle-pointed nuances, just a full palate cover with evenly distributed pressure. Like the 2022s, these are again in that old-school François Jobard blockier Meursault style laced with subtle nuances—immense, like looking into the eye of a blue whale surrounded by its massive, majestic body. After dozens of pours, tastes and three days before finalizing my notes, it's clear that they need a long time open or cellared to let you fully in. They're indestructible.

All wines were tasted at ~12°C/54°F, and I suggest, based on my tasting, that they should be served colder. It somehow serves the mass of the wine initially by tightening it up a touch before it really unfolds.

The first nose of the **2023 MALVARINTO** shows wet wool, light, false-flag oxidation and an intense but almost shapeless palate. My first thought was that I hope it goes back into itself in a minute because it shouldn't stay on the initial oxidation note. The palate quickly evolved with a textural display of austere acidity and soft, cat-tongue tannin, and an aromatic sherry vinegar-like twang which seems to play with that earlier oxidation note—though not at all volatile acidity, nor oxidation. This doesn't surprise me. This range of wine is from southern Portugal, and I often find aromatic similarities to the Jerez and Madeira nose in some still wines in southern and western Iberia.

The second pour after ten minutes tightens, thankfully, and the mouth takes a turn toward what I first expected but didn't find. The wet wool is still there but it needs more time to open and maybe a slightly cooler temperature. Somehow juicy and lean at the same time, the body seems less blocky than the 2022 but also subtler. It's an unexpectedly savory start with more focus on yellow grass, salt, and dried oats. After the second pour, I tossed it in the fridge for an hour and that, along with the slow micro-aeration, really did the trick. On the third pour, it's much better—like the marine layer opened into a full star-lit sky. At this stage, it's more like lower slope Chassagne-Montrachet, with chanterelles, warm gold metal feeling, grittier but chalky tannic texture, old vinyl—an occasional shooting star.

If the **2023 MALVASIA** is an Aztec Pyramid emitting rays of sun and flavor, the **2023 ARINTO** is a cold, hard Stonehenge. It's hard to describe the Malvasia at the start because on this day it was unusually charming but also neutral—not the same spirit of the 2022. It shows more subtle creamy coconut

aroma of a fig leaf, and a lot of subtleties poking up just above its blocky frame. The Arinto is, not surprisingly, more forceful, textured and drier. In the first moments, the fruit is timid, but after its hour of slow aeration and cooler temperature, it, like the Malvarinto, is heading down that Côte d'Or, old Jobard-stonewall structure that makes the taster earn its best by practicing patience.

Unlike the other three, the lightly orange-tinted **2023 CURTIMENTA** smelled great from the first nose and never let up. A wine made with extensive time on the skins, beautiful Sercial Madeira notes and even dried plump raisins draw you into a wine with a pressure-filled front palate and a welcome staining finish. Rich but slightly tannic, enough to keep it from being guzzled, the warm spice, sweet yellow grass, and taut acidity also keep it from being excessive. The second pour arrives with more tea notes of chamomile and sun-dried orange peel. Never a dull moment here, this lucid Rastafarian of the group still plays on the academic and intellectual side than pure hedonism.



TAKE TWO

As with all wines tasted on the second day, I pour a touch out into the glasses to prime them, rinse the glasses with the wine, toss the pour and let the bottles alone for about ten minutes before my first “official” pour. This consistently gives a more correct micro-re-aeration before tasting instead of just pouring in the glass and swirling the heck out of it—letting it warm up instead of shaking it out of bed. It seems to pick up better with those ten minutes from where it left off the previous day.

MALVARINTO is much better on day two and with much colder temperatures to start; the cold seems to lock it into focus. Back on the old-school Meursault train with an Atlantic, southern Portuguese climate. Devonshire cream more than butter, acacia flower, and a pretty and fresh wood note like the outside of a dry, newly unpackaged French oak barrel. It is truly beautiful on the second day, but the slight bitterness on the finish keeps it from a full smile. I’m not sure if this is some newer wood influence, or higher pressure at the press. Or these varieties?

It’s a pity that **MALVASIA** has the name malvasia. It’s aromatic but not the pungent perfumy sort of Malvasia from some parts of Italy. Malvasia in Portugal does have some perfumy character, but it’s so much subtler than what those familiar with wines that carry this name evoke. A similar second day to Malvarinto, it’s much more open and focused. Malvasia’s x-factor makes it the bright eyes in the room no one can miss. I think this wine and Curtimenta can also handle a warmer serving

temperature compared to the other two. It shares the same lovely discreet coconutty fig leaf aroma as the Malvarinto. I guess now we know what variety that note comes from in the blend.

Immediately, the **ARINTO** has more attractive minerally firework reductive elements in the nose and palate—a Coche-corn/popcorn palate without the flamboyancy of Meursault under new wood and excessive reduction. A similar bitterness in the finish as Malvasia, it's a little more sour, like first-pick-of-the-season oranges. There is an oxidative aromatic note in the empty glass the others don't have, while the others maintain that Devonshire cream and the fig leaf empty glass notes. A gastronomic (and nostalgic) finish of *tamal*, or fresh corn tortilla from Santa Barbara's La Super Rica welcomely rests in the finish.

I think I understand this wine much better on the second day. Many of the Arinto I taste aren't so closely grown to the Atlantic (three kilometers), but rather more in Portugal's continental climate/mountain/semi-Atlantic (like Bairrada). This ocean-influenced wine perched up nearly within sight of the ocean and on deep calcareous clays keeps it tighter longer and it really needs a patient drinker. I think this wine needs to be opened early, shared with fewer people, or hanging out in your fridge for days when you just need a little nip throughout the week without fully committing to opening a new bottle.

CURTIMENTA simply isn't designed to have an unexpressive moment. However, instead of expanding further where the first day left off, its dreads are pulled back, legs crossed, its big brown eyes and warm smile inviting you to tea—adult tea, of course: lavender and thyme purple flower nose, black tea, bergamot. This is super sexy, super classy orange wine.