



# For The Love Of Port

NOV. 2006

Volume 3, ISSUE # 19

## Dear Friends of Port Wine,



The Douro and its magic captivated the hearts and minds of men, with its serenity and natural beauty. Our **FTLOP 2006 Harvest Tour** was a great success and a diverse group of UK and US guests forged a common bond and many new friendships. Our greatest achievement was in developing more acute palate experience by visiting a diverse cross-section of large well-established Port shippers and small boutique producers as well. The best part of our trip though, was meeting welcoming members of the Port trade who generously allowed us to try a vast array of Port, from 19<sup>th</sup> century Colheita to Vintage Port horizontals, verticals and many LBVs & Tawnies. We tirelessly tasted pre-release bottlings and barrel samples and juice directly from freshly crushed grapes that were still in lagares. Speaking of which, we all “*lost our virginity*” in crushing grapes with our bare feet, side-by-side with a few dozen Portuguese locals. I loved many of the exciting new vintage, Douro table wines and was pleased how well they were received by our guests. The enthusiasm was palpable and we had a most memorable week of immersion into the food, wine and culture of Port and the Douro. You don’t need be a wine expert to enjoy these trips and I hope that in the future, Mario and I can introduce more of you to these types of experiences. We’re in the midst of planning our next trip for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2007, combining visits to the Port & Madeira regions.

This month’s FTLOP issue will feature an exciting tasting of Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Ports that go back nearly a century and also include the particularly rare Vinha Velha bottlings. Although I couldn’t wait to finally visit this historic Douro property; I had a much greater appreciation for Vargellas due to the tasting you will read about here. Also in this edition, you will find a recommendation for the most comprehensive website on Madeira. It is the most outstanding Madeira website I have ever come across and I’m sure you’ll agree. Of course no issue of the FTLOP would be complete without some tasting notes and this month there is a broad spectrum offered. Additionally, a fabulous tasting of Quinta do Noval and Nacional Vintage Ports is recounted (no, this is not a repeat of the 2004 tasting) with detailed tasting notes. Have a look around as there is even more to explore this month!

Speaking of which, there are some improvements coming to the FTLOP newsletter and website by the end of December. An upgrade in our technology has been in the works for some time now and it’s solely a matter of flipping the switch. The website may look different, but the content remains mostly the same, with some significant enhancements. We’ve taken to heart the many suggestions that you’ve sent and will add new areas, including a searchable database for tasting notes, a totally new platform for the website and newsletter and much more. You can read about these changes below. Please feel free to email me with your feedback, suggestions or questions ([roy@fortheloveofport.com](mailto:roy@fortheloveofport.com)) or join us on the FTLOP’s interactive Forum: <http://www.fortheloveofport.com/ftloforum/index.php>

**Thanks to members of the FTLOP FORUM for your continued supPort, we’ve now surpassed 10,000 posts!**

**Roy**

## THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER CONTENTS:

- *FTLOP's Web Site Recommendation: The Madeira Wine Guide*
- *November's Feature Article: Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vinha Velha*
- *My Recent Tasting Notes: A Variety of Ports & a Madeira*
- *Enhancements to the Newsletter & Website: How This All Works*
- *Vertically Speaking: A Retrospective of Quinta do Noval & Nacional*
- *Exclusive Offering of Artwork: Limited Edition Portraits of Port*
- *Upcoming - in time for the holidays: Roy's 2004 Vintage Port Forecast*



VINHA AO ALTA AT QUINTA DO CRASTO © BY ROY HERSH – 10/4/06

---

## FTLOP WEBSITE RECOMMENDATION **MADEIRA**

Are you ready to check out the greatest Madeira website in existence? It is a work in progress, yet as far as I am concerned the **Madeira Wine Guide** simply offers the best and most accurate information on Madeira anywhere on the internet. This quintessential Madeira website makes for a great read for neophyte and expert alike, especially with a glass of your favorite Madeira close at hand. You can literally spend a week learning about Madeira, never leaving this website. Visit <http://www.madeirawineguide.com/> and enjoy!

Dr. Peter Reutter who specializes in internal medicine, lives in Germany and along with his brother Hans, (who runs the website from a suburb of Seattle) they're the creative minds behind this site. Peter has been a Madeira lover since he first visited the island in 1995. Having tasted a 1936 Borges Boal, Peter was hooked, although his passion and taste for great Madeira has continued to evolve. Dr. Reutter's early fascination became a serious endeavor and he continued to explore and learn while keeping a record of his experiences and the information he had gathered in a book written in German. His translation efforts led to the creation of what we now know as the **Madeira Wine Guide**. Hans developed the site in his basement during 2001 and 2002 and has also created some very sophisticated games on his own website.. Today, the two brothers along with a friend in Germany and FTLOP Forum member, Reidar "resident Madeira expert" Andersen, keep the Madeira Wine Guide website growing with extraordinary volumes of comprehensive information on Madeira. Currently they are in the midst of a major update of the site which is being converted to a BLOG format, with three entirely new chapters being added. All this is taking place while Peter and his wife are in the midst of awaiting the birth of their fourth child. That is dedication!

When I asked Peter what was his all-time favorite Madeira, he replied unequivocally: 1846 Blandy's Terrantez. He went on to recount his story about that particular Madeira moment of epiphany: "The bottle was in a rather bad shape and leaking a little from the flight of the Atlantic Ocean, so I expected very little from the wine. When I opened it, the smell of it filled the complete in room in less then a minute. The wine was so concentrated that my father who helped me recorking several bottles at that day started coughing. For me the taste was acidity, richness and concentration in perfection. Until then I had not thought a taste so intense would be possible. I remember that I kept the empty glass as a room deodorant for two more days."

If you enjoy Madeira and have a look at the Madeira Wine Guide I can assure you that you will add it to your "favorite places." Join me in wishing Dr. and Mrs. Reutter, a very healthy new born baby. A toast of great Madeira is certainly appropriate!



# FEATURE ARTICLE

## *Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas & Vinha Velha*

By Roy Hersh © November 2006

Having recently returned from my first visit to Quinta de Vargellas in the Pesqueira district of the Douro Superior a few weeks ago, it brought to mind a Port tasting which I attended a couple of years ago. It was May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and I flew to NY to attend a spectacular tasting and luncheon at the Gramercy Tavern which was led by charismatic **Adrian Bridge, Managing Director of The Fladgate Partnership**. I have been fortunate to attend some remarkable tastings of Quinta de Vargellas' venerable Vintage Ports (June 2002) in Aspen and more recently (February 2004) in So. California; but the NYC tasting in conjunction with Kobrand Corporation, The Fladgate Partnership's U.S. import/marketing arm, provided the distinct opportunity to try some celebrated "Vinha Velha" bottlings and some rare older Vargellas beauties.

It was a select gathering of wine journalists that would be amongst the very first individuals to partake in the new release of the ultra-rare, Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port 3-pack. This was a limited edition boxed set of the 1995, 1997 and 2000 VVVVP (Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Ports) that was being offered in a swank velvet lined, wooden display box for very serious Port collectors. Up until then, the Vargellas Vinha Velha bottlings had never been released in the United States and I had only one previous experience with a 1995 VVVVP, which a good friend brought out to Seattle for my Port tasting in October 2001.



Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas released only 100 of these very exclusive sets in the U.S. at a suggested retail price of \$712.

The Gramercy Tavern put on a fine luncheon providing a first course of Maine Crabmeat Fondue with a sweet pea puree, bacon and pink peppercorns paired with a pleasant 2001 Jadot

Meursault. I won't bother with tasting notes on the wines that accompanied our lunch, as there is much to say about the Ports coming up. Our main course consisted of a roasted loin and braised shoulder of lamb, served with Swiss chard, Jerusalem artichokes and lemon confit. The lamb was outstanding and portioned perfectly for a mid-day meal. Another 2001 Jadot accompanied this course and it was a tasty Burg from Nuit-Saint-Georges. As a post prandial offering we enjoyed an assortment of Farmstead cheeses and to whet the whistle, a glass of Taylor's 20 year old Tawny ... always a welcome dessert in itself.

**Quinta de Vargellas**, located in the upper reaches of the Douro River Valley known as the Douro Superior, is within the Eastern most Port producing area in Portugal, not far from the border with Spain. Taylor, Fladgate & Yeatman bought Vargellas in 1893, after it had fallen on hard times due to the Phylloxera epidemic which destroyed vineyards across all of Europe. There has been much change since those difficult years, yet a visit to the Douro Superior can feel like taking a step back in time. It is hard to imagine just how remote this area really is until you visit it and/or stop to think that there was no electricity at Vargellas, as recently as 1972!

To a skier, the main vineyards of Vargellas look like a "bowl" which extends from about 1,300 feet in altitude down to the Douro's South shore. Its extremely hot summers, Northern exposure and mountainous terrain create an inhospitable environment except for the rugged, low yielding Vargellas vines with roots that creep deep down through vertical schist to find mineral-laden water. They produce deeply concentrated and powerful Port wine with incredible grip. Along with Quinta de Terra Feita, Vargellas is and has been the essence of Taylor's great Vintage Ports for well over a century.

Some writers have made comparisons between Quinta do Noval Nacional and Vargellas Vinha Velha. My take is that they are both distinct and very different from one another, especially in flavor profile. While I understand the need of some to make comparisons, to me the Ports from both properties are unique in their own right. The Vargellas Vinha Velha vines are considerably older than those in the Nacional parcel (Vargellas vines are about 80+ years old while in the Nacional vineyard they average less than 40 years old). The belief is, that older vines are less vigorous and produce lower yields and provide greater concentration to the clusters that are produced. Certainly that is the case with the concept of Vargellas Vinha Velha. Ultimately, it is a matter of whether the relative quality is ample enough to compensate for the reduction in the quantity produced.

I think that old vines are more important for table wine production than Vintage Port, but there are certainly others with far more experience than me that give credence to the old vines theory with Vintage Port. However, one should not overlook the fact that the legendary 1931 Noval Nacional was produced with vines that were only six years old at the time. Replanting had taken place in 1925 in the Nacional parcel. So, is the difference really vine age when it comes to great VP, or is it the terroir itself? The proof is in the bottle and it would be a most fascinating experiment to do a blind tasting between the Quinta do Noval Nacional vs. Vargellas Vinha Velha from the excellent 1997 and 2000 vintages to evaluate the differences. Now back to the topic at hand.



**QUINTA de VARGELLAS "VINHA VELHA" © BY ROY HERSH – 10/5/06**

Just a few weeks ago, while in Portugal, I had the good fortune to taste the fourth release of the Vargellas Vinha Velha (old vines), from the 2004 vintage. It was beguiling to say the least, please look for this story in an upcoming FTLOP newsletter. Without much further ado about grape, here now the tasting notes:

**1912 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port** – From what I can tell this VP was never released commercially, as the 1912 “classic” Taylor Fladgate Vintage Port was a declared VP. Frank Yeatman was the winemaker of this Vintage Port (and all Taylor VPs from 1897-1958, a remarkable feat). To put the age of the 1912 into historical perspective, this Vargellas was vinified in the same year that the Titanic sank. Decanted 45 minutes prior to service this provides panoply of aromas from which to contemplate, offering a complex mélange of toffee, walnut, plum, mocha, orange peel and an herbal essence. The color was worth noting as amber to tawny with a yellow rim. This is probably the oldest Vargellas I will ever experience and the voluptuous body of this wine, along with the rich treacle, elegant and soft plum flavors delivers an aftertaste of thick, velvety crème caramel which is sublime. The two bottles opened, left just 11 of these in Taylor's holdings and I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to enjoy this hedonistic, classic Vintage Port. **94 points (5/20/04)**

**Roy's Note:** *The following assessment of the 1912 growing season was written that year by none other than Frank Yeatman, viticultural genius and Taylor winemaker. This is reprinted with permission from The Fladgate Partnership.*

## **TAYLOR 1912 vintage**

### **Notes on Viticultural Year and Harvest**

There was plenty of rain during the winter and warm weather during the final half of May made the vine decidedly forward and favoured the flowering in the hotter situations, the latter half of May / June was however cold and caused much 'desavinho' in the 'alto'. The summer was remarkably cool so that by the end of August the grapes, instead of being forward were rather backward. Hot weather and an east wind during the first fortnight of September rather shrivelled the grapes up but they were decidedly wanting in sweetness. Thunderstorms and rain on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of September did immense good. The grapes improving immensely and gaining sweetness. Thundery weather lasted until the 22<sup>nd</sup> and many people began the vintage on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Fine weather lasted until the 29<sup>th</sup> but it was then wet until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October; this rain did harm causing some “podre” but not so much as might have been expected. We started the vintage generally on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September but Vargellas and on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Wines picked during the rain were slightly thinner than those picked before or after. Towards the end of the vintage there was a good deal of “podre” but when “escolha” was carefully done wines should be good-Graduation rather high, fermentation in most slow and steady, colour good.

Production in good situations large and rather more than was expected (“altos” small). Wines all round, “altos” and inferior parts of the baixo corgo excepted, should be decidedly good and 1912's are most certain to be shipped.

**Frank Yeatman- 12<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1912**

**1955 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port** – Except for some badly needed rain that arrived in early September, the 1955 growing season was blessed with a long and warm summer. Picking began on September 13<sup>th</sup> and the harvest delivered high yields and sugar levels at Vargellas. The viticultural expert and legendary Port maestro Dick “Smiler” Yeatman made this VP in a declared vintage year (but this was never released to the public), which is just one of the 50 vintages he was personally involved with. This and all bottles to follow had 1.5 hours of decanting. Medium-ruby centered with significant bricking on the edge. Expansive scents of maple syrup, minerals and licorice help set the stage for the sweet and spicy palate, with a creamy texture and superb balance. A seamless beauty with a prolonged decadent finish and just a slight touch of spirit; this Vargellas is likely the finest VP I've enjoyed from the highly regarded '55 vintage. **96 points (5/20/04)**

**1967 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port** – This vintage represents the first in which Alistair Robertson (owner of The Fladgate Partnership) took charge, after the death of his uncle Dick Yeatman, the previous year. Jeremy Bull was the winemaker at Taylor, through 1990 (30 years) and made this brilliant Port just weeks after the picking began on September 26<sup>th</sup>. Following the fabulous 1966 vintage, the very hot summer of 1967 delivered few true winners. My two favorites have always been the Quinta do Noval Nacional,

closely followed by the Vargellas. It shows a vibrant magenta color with slight bricking and fragrances of aniseed, cassis and enticing sweet plums. Superbly integrated with lush prune and raisin nuances, the '67 remains a concentrated and voluptuous Vargellas with a seductively layered, sweet and nutty finish, which is finally at its peak. **94 points (5/20/04)**

**1970 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port** – A remarkably scarce Vargellas as only one pipe of this VP was vinified (approximately 558 liters which translated into 62 cases). It was the first exception that I am aware of, when the Single Quinta, Vargellas Vintage Port was declared alongside a “classic” Taylor's Vintage Port (see: Roy's Recent Tasting Notes section, below). In fact, this was the first time that Port from a specific parcel of Vargellas old vines was bottled separately. It has never been sold and still rests in the Taylor cellar in Vila Nova de Gaia. This particular old vines parcel is now below the surface of the Douro and is gone forever, due to the dam that was built in the 1970s, just up river at the entrance to the Valeira Gorge. Medium garnet color with a light colored rim. Vibrant, spicy fragrances of cinnamon and lavender. Copious quantities of black cherry and succulent plum fruit are supported by a superb structure of lip smacking acidity and gentle tannins. The grapes for this bottling were harvested below the Vargellas railway in a part of the vineyard that no longer exists, due to the flooding caused by the dams built on the Douro, just a few years later. This was a truly fantastic Vintage Port experience. **97+ points (5/20/04)**



**1995 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port** – A very warm spring led to perfect conditions for flowering, followed by a cool summer until the intense heat came in August. Fortunately there was some rain during the first week of September which cooled things down and reinvigorated the vines. Harvesting began on September 13<sup>th</sup> under crisp and clear skies, resulting in high yields and grapes with remarkably high sugar readings. This is the first bottling of VVVVP that was produced for sale to the public, although it took years before it was sold in the USA. Deeply extracted purplish-ruby color. Generous scents of violets and spice with licorice and prunes at the forefront and a backdrop of cedar. Although this was decanted a few hours ago, it is still very tight on the palate and needs far more time to really strut its stuff. This Vinha Velha is all about concentration and power, exhibiting intense almost punishing tannins that are fortunately supported by chewy, ripe sweet plum fruit and a chocoholic's dream aftertaste. Still, this is pretty reticent at the moment and difficult to evaluate. 224 cases were produced and the original release was limited to the UK (and possibly Canada). **92+ points (5/20/04)**

**1997 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port** – The color of this Port almost makes the 1995 look like it is a decade older. Impenetrable black ink is the only way to describe what one sees in the glass, with only the slightest dark purple on the edge. Again there is that requisite violet fragrance that let's you know where this comes from, but there is more: a wonderful hint of eucalyptus intrigues, while black raisins and prunes eventually come to the fore with some coaxing. This too is a tight beast and would benefit from extended decanting. Once it began to reveal itself, I preferred this sexy Vargellas to the 1995 VVVVP as it provides greater symmetry and given its youth, it could even be considered elegant due to its rounder mouthfeel, gentler tannins and medium body. I also sense more of a “true Vargellas character” to this particular Port. Approximately 100 cases produced. The 1997 is a certain winner! **95+ points (5/20/04)**

**2000 Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port** – An aromatic delight with kirsch, anise and dark plums that leap from the glass. This Vinha Velha is no wall flower! While it delivers infused flavors of sweet dark cherry, espresso bean and just picked grapes, the jammy, ripe fruit is absolutely delicious today. Lively tannins pack a puckering wallop on the palate and the admirable persistence on the finish shows the great promise for longevity in the cellar. As much as I enjoy this classy and voluptuous Vargellas, side-by-side with the 2000 Taylor VP, there is no question that I prefer the “classic” Taylor Fladgate bottling. However, this is certainly no slouch and this single Quinta bottling is better than many other 2000 VPs I have tasted. About 2,500 cases worth of juice was harvested from the old vines parcels, yet only 240 cases were vinified as

Vargellas Vinha Velha. The balance became the backbone for the 2000 Taylor Vintage Port. **95+ points (5/20/04)**



**2000 Taylor Fladgate Vintage Port** – Inky purplish-black color. The nose of cassis, violets and pencil shavings need some coaxing here but the aromatics take a back seat for now, (but will be great in a decade or three) as this is all about what takes place in your mouth and mind. Seductive cassis and black currant flavors burst onto the scene

and the densely concentrated juice just overwhelms the senses. Lots of “M” words here: monstrous, meaty, mind-blowing and masculine come to mind. This is one powerful young Port with tannins that take no prisoners. But finally, it is easier to see beneath the layers and understand what lies ahead. In at least a half dozen previous tête-à-tête tastings including the 2000 Taylor and Fonseca, I have always leaned towards the latter VP as it was more harmonious in its infancy. Today, I found the 2000 Taylor the best of all of the young Vintage Ports on the table. If you don't have these in your cellar, so far, you have truly missed the boat. Grab a case while they are still affordable. This is a legend in the making, whether you decide to drink them someday or bequeath them to your grandchildren. Just a stunner! **98+ points (5/20/04)**

**2000 Delaforce Vintage Port** – Dark ruby-purple color. This is still so primary and the essence of grapes with a prune note. The Delaforce has not budged much since my last tasting. Finely knit blackberry and plum flavors in a noticeable drier style, with a generous mouthfeel and it is smooth sailing. This VP is significantly less complex than the other Ports in this tasting, yet it is also softer and deftly balanced. The finish is tasty but lacks some length. Now under new ownership, I have a feeling we'll see major improvements from this venerable shipper. **90 points (5/20/04)**

**2000 Croft Vintage Port** – I will never forget that Croft was sold to the Fladgate Partnership just one day prior to 9-11. But I digress, as this is one of the better Croft Vintage Ports in recent times along with their 1991. I have little doubt that under new ownership and David Guimaraens' care, Croft will once again become a well-known name. Quinta da Roeda has tremendous potential, its vineyards situated low to the Douro and the lagares there (which were removed in 1963) were replaced in 2002. Roeda belonged to Taylor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and this gem is now back in the Fladgate crown. Already 300,000 vines have been replanted which is incredible considering that there are approximately 5,000 vines in a typical hectare and that only about 5-6 hectares are usually planted at a time. The nose is packed with explosive notes of blackberry, mocha and fresh flowers and I will never forget my first time smelling this wine when it was still a cask sample. Medium-bodied, smooth and providing sweet, ripe cassis and primary plum flavors. The core of this wine reveals its beauty, however I don't get the sense this is built for the long term. So buy this Croft with the intent to drink it in the next 10-20 years. **92 points (5/20/04)**

**2000 Fonseca Vintage Port** – Opaque purplish-ruby. It's just too good to be true, can't take my nose off of you ... wow! The aromatics just keep getting better every time I revisit this hedonistic Port, with anise, blueberry and a spicy character to boot. The significant strength of this Fonseca is its extraordinary and seamless balance, rarely achieved in VPs this young. Descriptors just don't do this wine justice, nor do mere point scores. From my very first introduction to this 2000 bottling, it has remained one of the greatest young Vintage Ports I have ever encountered. What more needs to be said? **97+ points (5/20/04)**

---

## ROY'S RECENT TASTING NOTES:

**Ferreira 10 Year Old Tawny Port** – bottled 2006. This is truly one of the finer 10 year old Tawny Ports I've tried in recent years. Ruby-centric with enough evolution and a rim that shows the wine has spent time in wood. Offering a fragrant nose of citrus peel, toasted almonds and brown sugar. This tends toward the fuller side of medium-bodied and provides a rich, smooth and sweet nutty nuance with a ponderous palate presence. An impressive, enduring and elegant finish prevails with just a touch of spirit on the aftertaste. Ferreira “gets it” when it comes to wood aged Ports! **92 points (10- 27 -2006)**

**Ferreira 20 Year Old Duque de Braganca Tawny Port** – Is there a better 20 year old Tawny Port made than this? I was recently challenged while in Oporto by a talented young Manager of a wine shop, to pick the best

of the 20 year olds. He put his favorite up against mine in a blind taste off with our group of guests. I nailed the Duque as my favorite, although his 20 year old was also very good. Actually it was a unanimous vote (blind) for the Ferreira. This is a stellar Tawny with a maple syrup hue and yellow rim. A core of dried apricot, orange blossom, a memory jogging antique-shop-mahogany-scent and bread pudding with raisins deliver a complex aromatic profile that is hard to stop nosing. Each sniff brings new fragrances to the Porto party. The infusion of viscous sweet nectar along with exotic ever changing flavors finishes as long as a romantic good night kiss. **95 points (10-29-2006)**

**1955 Taylor's Vintage Port** – Like anyone else, I don't always wind up drinking perfect bottles of Vintage Port and I feel it is important to include tasting notes on the bottles that do not show properly. This is such a bottle and it was evident immediately upon decanting, just by looking at the color. I was at a friend's home in celebration of his birthday and was asked to decant this VP. It showed a medium depth of mahogany color that became a bit darker by the time it was consumed. There was also a yellowish edge to it, which also set off an alarm in my head, confirmed by smelling the wine in decanter. However, when we did drink the wine it exhibited scents of orange zest, caramelized sugar and lots of spirit. The palate was more enjoyable albeit certainly quite advanced and atypical for a Taylor '55. There were interesting flavors of toffee, pralines and mace with a hot spicity character and tertiary nuances on the aftertaste. **80 points (11-4-2006)**

**1963 Cossart Gordon Bual Vintage Madeira** – My friend generously opened this, his first ever bottle of Madeira and I felt privileged to take part in his inaugural Madeira experience (which he truly enjoyed). The '63 showed a distinct maple syrup hue but was very cloudy in our glasses, which did not bother me a bit, as I have enjoyed other fine bottles of Madeira with a similar appearance. The nose was somewhat straightforward and dominated by the essence of beef bouillon and also offered up some roasted coffee and a gentle dose of VA. It provided a medium body weight with a smooth, unctuous texture that was quite pleasant to roll around in my mouth, supported by tangy acidity that enveloped my salivary glands. I enjoyed the burnt caramel and butterscotch nuance with a backdrop of citrus on the finish that was persistent and lip smacking. Overall this showed drier than what I've come to expect of a Bual, with a seamless mouthfeel (its significant strength) and moderate complexity. But in fairness, we each sipped about six ounces from a freshly opened bottle. Given some time in decanter or a few days in an open bottle, I bet this would have been richer and even better! **91 points (11-5-2006)**

**1970 Taylor's Vintage Port** – In a meeting to discuss the strategic planning for the next six months of the website and newsletter required a very special bottle to come out of the cellar, to be consumed with my wife and Stewart Todd, who serves as Vice President of Technology for FTLOP. My daughter's role now is to decant all bottles of VP and she did so at 11 a.m. I poured an ounce into a glass just for a quick evaluation and found that the color was a very light ruby with a pink meniscus showing a slight bricking on the very edge. Sweet floral and cherry notes along with a big dose of alcohol were present but from past experience, I realized that time in the decanter would cure all. The palate offered an initial sense of full-body weight and density on the palate which was a big tight early on.

At nearly 10 p.m. we started to drink the wine and sadly, the decanter was empty by 11:00. Yes, it was that good! This aristocratic Taylor's had more of a light crimson color, while still showing the light bricking on the rim. Spicy cinnamon scents along with plum, Stewart noted a minty character which was spot on, bolstered by a ripe cherry fruit aroma. This showed a great richness and although it is in its prime and gaining maturity, it delivered fabulous layers of flavors on the mid-palate with plenty of fruit on the fore palate and finish. The tannins were still noticeable yet were quite round and the acidity in this wine offered a great segue to the lengthy aftertaste which was seamlessly smooth and long. This exemplary bottle of the '70, where everything was in synch, gives me confidence that well-stored Taylor's from this vintage will drink at this level for at least another decade. I don't see them getting much better than this in the future, so I would start drinking them if you own a case or more -- or if you have not drank one in some time. **96 points (10-22-2006)**

**1985 Warre's Vintage Port** – Nearly opaque purple-ruby color shows the youth of this wine. An intense spearmint and menthol note dominate the aromatics but there is a distinct chocolate essence too, as well as lots of spirit. A nice full-bodied "drink now style" of Port that will improve significantly with cellaring. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day this developed a strong eucalyptus nose and flavor profile that along with some hot spicity character, had not yet fully integrated with the fruit. I liked this more the first day. Although the finish was quite smooth, the

heat was a bit hard to take. Nonetheless, lurking behind the foreground there was a pretty nice VP overall with round, mostly tame tannins that show that this Warre still has plenty of life left ahead of it. In all honesty, from other bottles I have opened, this one was not in the same class, even though it was from the same case. **87 points (11- 2 -2006)**

**1994 Cockburn Vintage Port** – Dark eggplant color. The nose really had me going with figs, dates and mocha initially and some anise showed up later with a touch of espresso beans. The palate was not as exciting, although solid at this point. The '94 exhibits a medium-body with black cherry, Kirsch and rich dark chocolate undertones. This is a puzzling wine in that I had an impression that this seemed a bit advanced for a '94, yet there were many qualities that showed the youthful if not playful vigor and prospects for cellaring this Cockburn until it peaks around 2015-2025. **91 points (11- 2 -2006)**

**2003 Quinta do Crasto Vintage Port** – I just had this recently at the Quinta and have not transcribed my notes yet, for a forthcoming article on our 2006 Harvest Tour. This bottle was opened around noon and I had a glass and decided that in fairness to this Port, it needed some time to flesh out. Tasted again almost 11 hours later, the Crasto offers notes of violets, raspberry fruit, with dominating black pepper and alcohol early on, that faded with time. Not as big and brawny as the cask sample and this bottle shows more of a medium body weight. Structurally, the bright red fruit now dominates the tannins, which have softened since birth and arrive late on the scene. The finish is of average length with lots of acidity and a bit of spirit on the aftertaste. The prognosis is still solid and this VP is very approachable at this early stage of development. **90 points (10-26-2006)**



TAYLOR DECANTING VP © BY TAYLOR'S DAD – 9/3/06

# Enhancements to the Newsletter & Website: How This All Works

© BY ROY HERSH & STEWART TODD

## I. The Early Daze

In February of 2007, the FOR THE LOVE OF PORT newsletter will celebrate its 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. Back in the humble beginnings of the newsletter in February 2004 and for quite a few months thereafter, each issue was written in the text of an America Online (AOL) email and sent to a few hundred individuals. Later that year, my “major technological progress” was moving the publication to MS Word and attaching my documents to my AOL email and sending it out to over a thousand recipients in a dozen countries. Many of my articles also appeared on: [www.wineloverspage.com](http://www.wineloverspage.com) and Robin Garr helped me promote my newsletter in brief blurbs at the end of the articles. I will always be grateful to him and Jancis Robinson who also made a few mentions of my Port newsletter (and later the FTLOP website) on her own wine website: [www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/purplehome](http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/purplehome). At the suggestion a few of my readers who candidly said that the newsletter presentation left much to be desired, I created it as a .PDF file that would retain all of the correct formatting. I might know a thing or two about Port, but am self-taught when it comes to computers (which is really saying very little), and despite the advances, the newsletter was still amateurish at best.

By early 2005, I was receiving dozens of emails per week from around the globe, asking questions about decanting Port, looking for suggestions on which Ports to buy and where to purchase them advantageously, not to mention sending their digital photographs and requesting me to authenticate and put a value on these “rare or antique” bottles that were unearthed in their grandparent’s cellars. I was spending many hours a week responding to these Port loving strangers (many of whom now are recipients of the newsletter and members of the Forum). I asked permission to include these questions in a section of the newsletter along with my response, so that others could benefit from the exchange. Then I had a brainstorm that has changed my life.

## II. The Light Goes On ...

I casually “interviewed” a few candidates to assist me in the creation of a website. I already had lots of articles, tasting notes and other content that I knew would be of interest. But I wanted to have a way to interact with both Port novice and aficionados, which would also serve to cut down on my time, spent responding to Port related emails so I could concentrate on writing articles; or so I thought. Finally, I found the creative and curious mind that belonged to Stewart Todd, who has become a good friend and integral part of FOR THE LOVE OF PORT. We collaborated on [www.fortheloveofport.com](http://www.fortheloveofport.com) over the course of a few months and at least a few bottles of Port, incorporating the newsletter as well as a Port/Madeira and Douro wine specific, interactive Forum. We launched the website at the end of July 2005 and a dream came true.

## III. “If you build it, they will come”

The FTLOP newsletter was now reaching a few thousand Port lovers in over 50 countries and garnering the attention of the Port trade. They had been receiving the newsletter since the beginning, but were now able to “lurk” on the Forum and gain insight into the perceptions of beginner and expert Port enthusiasts. Less than a year and a half later, there are nearly 500 members of the Forum, (from dozens of countries) who have posted over 10,000 times.

## IV. PROGRESSION

With nearly 20 newsletters, dozens of articles and thousands of hours spent on the website’s Forum, I realize we must take this to the next level. Stewart and I have been planning a significant upgrade to the website and newsletter in terms of the scope and nature, as well as the technological advances that are about to take place. We have invested hundreds of hours apiece in this endeavor and finally it is about to come to fruition. Please read on after my next couple of paragraphs for Stewart’s contribution.

## V. YOUR ASSISTANCE PLEASE

As I have never sought to make a profit from my newsletter, I have refrained from going the route of many other wine journalists and specialists. Simply put, I have never charged for a subscription to the newsletter in the nearly three years of publication. Nor has there ever been a single advertisement on the website. To provide a FREE newsletter, an incredible library of tasting notes, intriguing and educational monthly articles and wine reviews, along with the world's most successful Port, Madeira and Douro wine, interactive community Forum and website ... all the while remaining fiercely independent, has truly been: FOR THE LOVE OF PORT. I hope that my devotion to these Portuguese wines has enriched your time spent reading my passionate words about Port.

Now I must humbly ask *each of you to participate in helping me* maintain and improve the quality and frequency of the newsletter, website and Forum. The time and resources I invest (not to mention Stewart Todd's) and dedicate to maintaining independence and excellence in the product, is something that I hope you value. Instead of charging for a subscription to the newsletter, plying the website with annoying banner ads and open space littered with less than useful advertisements, it is with sincerity that I ask for you to please make a donation to help defray our costs for the investments of time and money associated with the newsletter and website.

As Stewart will elaborate below, our "upgrade of service" will be evident by the time you receive your very next newsletter. He will also provide details of how you can go about making your donation to the continued efforts of FTLOP. For those that are willing to support our efforts, we are creating some areas of "premium content" to reward your loyalty. In addition, we'll provide you with opportunities which will allow you to access some "new" and unique areas of the website and receive buying *insights* solely available to members of our **Premium Port "Partners" Program** for one year. No matter what you decide to donate, please know that your generosity and support is sincerely appreciated!

Respectfully yours,

Roy Hersh

[www.fortheloveofport.com](http://www.fortheloveofport.com)

## Website Enhancements

By Stewart Todd

As Roy mentioned, we have been working hard over the last few months putting the pieces together on a new redesigned website that will offer more features, better administrative capabilities for Roy and me, and a clean, new look and feel.

**Content Management System (CMS):** One of the biggest challenges with the existing site is the sheer amount of manual manipulation of graphics and text when we launch a new monthly newsletter. To help alleviate this, the backbone for our new site, which will launch December 2006 is a CMS that will intelligently (and sometimes automatically) manage the new content we post to the Web each month.

**Donations:** As Roy also mentioned, we are looking to you to help support the real costs associated with the site and newsletter, and all the great content that appears here. When the new site launches in December, it will include e-commerce capabilities that



will allow us to accept your generous donations with a minimum of fuss. More information about how you can donate will be in the December newsletter. Stay tuned.

**Tasting Notes Database:** The new, searchable database of Roy's tasting notes database will allow users to more easily find the reviews that they are looking for. This feature will launch December 2006 with the new website. By the end of the first quarter of 2007, we will also have a FTLOP User's version of this database to house everyone else's tasting notes.


[Review Home / Port](#)

**Reviews (click headings to sort):**

PRODUCER	VINTAGE	TYPE	RATING
DeLaforce	1952	Colheita Port	95.0
Dow	2000	Vintage Port	95.0

[Quinta do Noval](#) [Review Home / Port](#)

**1964 Quinta do Noval Nacional**  
*Reviewed by Roy Hersh*



I have never been a fan of this particular vintage of Nacional. In tasting it blind, I have never scored this over 89 pts. This morning was no exception. More tawny in color than it should have at this point, as it is still a relatively young Nacional. Yes, it had a hard time following the '63 but I can honestly say that did not influence my judgment here. Medium-bodied and showing more mature notes in both aroma and flavor profile, this wine also showed more alcohol than I normally like to tolerate. The '64 Nacional did provide a good dose of raspberry and other red fruits and I detected a high level of acid present. There was a strong cedar note and dryness present on the rather unimpressive finish. This was the least complex wine, or better put...the simplest wine so far. (DRINK) 85 points (2/10/2004)

© Roy Hersh. All rights reserved.  
 Powered by [Simple Review](#)

### New Searchable Tasting Notes Database

The **Forum** will be integrated into the look and feel of the new site, and you will be easily able to see all of your posts from the **New Profile Section** of the site. In the New Profile Section, you will also be able to manage your **Email Subscription** preferences.

**EDIT YOUR DETAILS**

Contact Info
Newsletters
phpBB forum

**Manage Your Newsletter  
 Subscription &  
 Forum Information**

**First Name:**  \* 👤

**Last Name:**  \* 👤

**User Name:**  ! \* 👤

**Email:**  ! \* ✖

**Password:**  ! ✖

**Verify Password:**  ✖

**Country:**  ! \* 👤

**State:**  ! \* 👤

! Field description: Move mouse over icon | 
 \* This Field is required | 
 👤 This Field IS visible on profile | 
 ✖ This Field IS NOT visible on profile

**Sample of Profile Screens**

We are also planning a user's photo gallery so that you can share your Port-related photos, and well as some other functionality that will make the Best Port Wine Site on the Web even better!

Thank you for all of your support and patience as we make these improvements. Both Roy and I know you'll be happy with the results!

Stewart  
[stewart@fortheloveofport.com](mailto:stewart@fortheloveofport.com)

---

V  
E  
R  
T  
I  
C  
A  
L  
L  
Y



QUINTA DO NOVAL NACIONAL VINEYARD AT HARVEST © BY ROY HERSH – 10/6/06

## SPEAKING: **Quinta do Noval & Nacional**

By Roy Hersh © November 2006

There is an expression amongst wine lovers, “an embarrassment of riches” and having had the extremely good fortune to take part in two deep verticals of Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Ports within a 12 month period, epitomizes that expression. In addition to those two tastings which took place in Nashville, Tennessee in February of 2004 and in Miami, Florida in February of 2005, I have attended a Port trade tasting in So. CA where a couple of great Nacionals showed up and subsequently have visited Quinta do Noval in Portugal twice

in the past year. This is not about bragging rights, as I am almost embarrassed by these facts. However, this is truly about the Ports that I tasted and sharing details and tasting notes from that experience.

I had coaxed two of my good friends and fellow Port lovers to join me for the Florida weekend of wine & food decadence, better known as The Great Wine Seminar (I'll use the acronym from here on = TGWS). Nicos Neocleous flew in from London and Paul Napolitano arrived from Syosset, NY. Not only do both of them have serious Port collections, their knowledge and palates for Port are amongst the very finest I have ever come across, outside of the Port trade. Over the years we have consumed many bottles together and even shared in mutual Port buying opportunities. I was very pleased to have these two esteemed gents to share the extraordinary Vintage Ports of Quinta do Noval and Noval's Nacional. Of course there were many other Port lovers in the group and an astounding number of bottles to match.



**CHRISTIAN SEELY AT NOVAL**

© BY ROY HERSH - OCT. 6, 2006

Christian Seely, Managing Director of AXA's diverse wine Portfolio (Château Pichon-Longueville (Pauillac), Château Suduiraut (Sauternes), Le Domaine de l'Arlot (Burgundy) Diznoko (Hungary) as well as a property in Languedoc if I remember correctly) was on hand to lead a vertical tasting of seven Quinta do Noval Vintage Ports dating back to 1931, as well as 10 vintages of Nacional back to 1947. Having Mr. Seely present for this tasting was a great privilege (he also held court in vertical tastings of Pichon Baron back to 1955 and the outstanding Chateau Suduiraut Sauternes also dating back to 1947). He personally oversaw the winemaking and all operations at Quinta do Noval when it was purchased by AXA from the Van Zeller family in 1993.

Seely grew up in Breton, with wine running through his veins, as his father was a wine merchant and he began his own career selling food and wine by mail order after earning his MBA. Christian was very fortunate to apprentice with Jean-Michael Cazes of Lynch Bages fame and then under the tutelage of Antonio Grellos who was very involved as a consulting winemaker and master blender at Quinta do Noval. It should be noted that in most vintages, the Nacional vineyard produces only about 250 cases of Vintage Port for the world. I am still awaiting the first time that this vineyard's decadent juice is put into a Magnum bottle and sold to the public!

It did not hurt Christian Seely's reputation when his very first vintage received a 100 point score from the Wine Spectator and 99 points from the Wine Advocate for his 1994 Quinta do Noval Nacional. But having raised the bar so high with his inaugural vintage, how was Seely ever going to live up to the lofty expectations? Simply by improving the next declared vintage of Nacional, at least in Robert Parker's mind, as it received a perfect 100 point rating. His is a remarkable back-to-back performance that few winemakers have ever achieved anywhere on the planet, especially for their first two releases. But having spent some time with Mr. Seely, he is not one to let his achievements or wine scores go to his head. He has remained a kind, generous and gentle soul with his roots firmly planted in both Bordeaux and Portugal. In fact, his roots have been dug much deeper recently in the Douro, but that is another story for another time.

Scores and accolades aside for the moment, I believe that Mr. Seely's greatest accomplishment at Noval has been in turning the property around to consistently producing outstanding Ports in every single declared vintage since he took over as Managing Director. For example, have a look (or better yet, a taste) of a Quinta do Noval Vintage Port or Nacional bottling from 1994, 1997, 2000 or 2003. Remarkable juice near the apex of each vintage to say the least, but even the vast majority of Quinta do Noval's LBVs since 1994, are amongst the very top tier in the trade. But for my money, look at what Noval has bottled in the undeclared Port vintages like 1996, 1999 and the current (declared/soon to be released) vintage of 2004, to really understand how quickly and significantly the Noval ship has been righted. Clearly the captain is in the right Port!

Now let's get back to the tasting at hand and compare and contrast the VPs of Quinta do Noval and Nacional, with tasting notes to follow. Please do not get me wrong, the Colheitas and Vintage Ports from the previous owners had some great successes as well. After all, Quinta do Noval is one of the finest vineyard sites in the Douro and the Nacional vineyard, sitting atop some very prime Pinhao Valley real estate is considered one of

the greatest parcel of grapes in the world! The 1937 and 1974 QdN Colheitas are ultra fine examples of Colheita's style as you will ever find. The less than heralded vintage of 1962 produced not only a serious Nacional, but even yielded a luscious Crusted Port. And it was the Van Zeller's who created the Noval mystique for consistently excellent 20 and 40 year old Tawny Ports. The Quinta do Noval reputation rested firmly on their wood-aged Ports. Additionally, some of the most exceptional Nacionais ever made were under the Van Zeller's watch.

The wines included in the vertical of Quinta do Noval and Nacional are described below and came from vintages during the van Zeller years as well as from Christian Seely's watch:

**2000 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – Purple ruby in color which was as nearly as dark as the 2000 Nacional. It showed spicy, elderberry and white pepper aromatics. Given its youth, this Noval is very much approachable and its juicy cherry fruit is fun to drink at this stage. The aftertaste was smooth, lingering and delivered some heat. This is a young and brooding monster that possesses extraordinary balance a tender age. Although this Noval is tasty at the moment, two decades of cellaring will really bring out the best in this VP's beauty, for many years to come. **96+ points (2-25-05)**

**2000 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Almost identical in appearance to the regular bottling of the 2000 Noval but slightly more inky. It offered vibrant notes of spicy lavender, grenadine and a minty character on the nose. This was far more tightly wound than the Noval today, albeit there was some spicy cherry and sweet, ripe black currant flavors that were coaxed with lots of swirling. The Nacional is a huge, dense and intense powerful Port with ripe, astringent tannins. I've had this a few times now and it has improved since the earliest impressions I had when it was a cask sample. It is one of the great modern day Nacionais and to open one anytime soon would almost be a criminal act. **98+ points (2-25-05)**

**1997 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – Very dark ruby color. Along with the Niepoort from 1997, this is at the pinnacle of the vintage. It is a bit reticent at the moment with a tightly wound nose that remained in its shell. This is a huge wine with powerful and punishing tannins today that are not easy to get past in order to decipher the delicious black plum and raisin flavors that are present, yet obscured at the moment. Although I preferred the 2000 today, this is a wine for the ages and it is at a difficult stage in its evolution for accurate evaluation, as it had minimal decanting time due to the volume of bottles in this vertical. Revisit later in the decade for a clearer picture, as it currently seems to be in a dumb stage. **95+ points (2-25-05)**

**1997 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – This bottle showed slightly more evolved color than the regular bottling of Noval. My first impression upon swallowing a sip of this nectar was "holy cow", but suffices it to say this is one heck of a youngster. The nose is all about blackberries and cassis but the fabulous fragrance could easily fill a room. Chewy and smooth on the palate with ripe tannins that are not as astringent as the regular '97 Noval, this gives the sense of a more approachable young VP, bolstered by crisp acidity. But don't be fooled by how tasty this is now, as this will be a stellar example of Nacional in three to four decades when this starts to reach its peak. **97+ points (2-25-05)**

**1994 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – Medium dark ruby color with a purplish meniscus. Given enough time in decanter, I'd have no problem sipping an entire bottle of this wine today with my wife as she'd love this style. Even though it is easy-to-enjoy now, the structural components deliver the goods and this will be a stellar wine to keep in the cellar until around 2025 when it should start to reach its peak. Yummy and impressive taste and mouthfeel, with a finish that is long and memorable. **94+ points (2-25-05)**

**1994 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Every time I've had the chance to try a bottle of this Vintage Port, I realize that I am drinking the modern age version of the 1931 Nacional and believe in time the 1994 Nacional will even surpass the legendary 1963 Nacional ... if I am wrong, you can correct me in 30 years. Nearly black with full opacity it is hard to believe this is wine as it shows up that dark. It is about as close to perfection as any wine or Port I have ever tasted. The aromatics were still a tad tight with little more than red fruits and spice coming across and the only issue was not enough decanting time. The palate though was a hedonistic and harmonious delight providing viscous, complex and dense pleasures of ripe raspberries and wonderful juicy boysenberry fruit. The finish literally is huge with chocolate and berry flavors that endure for

minutes, while the salivary glands go into spasm. A mind blowing Vintage Port that will certainly outlive me and my daughter will be fortunate to inherit my stash! **99+ points (2-25-05)**

**1970 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – I can't remember ever having this Port before. I love when that happens! Light pinkish-ruby with moderate bricking on the rim. Sweet strawberry and almond notes are genteel and lead into some sweet caramel and lean red fruits on the palate, which shows fully resolved tannins and a bit too much alcohol. Quite approachable, fully mature but the '70 has seen its better days. I tried a glass from another bottle which was just a tad better and slightly less spicity on the finish, which is what I've based my rating on. It was improving as I took the last sip. I wonder how this would have shown with an extra hour or two in decanter? **87 points (2-25-05)**

**1970 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – One of my favorite qualities of this powerful Port wine was the multifaceted aromatics led by smoky prunes, dates and figs. Incredibly youthful at 35 years of age, it delivered ripe raspberry and cherry fruit that was sweet and succulent, with a fine palate presence. My only reservation was that previous bottles have shown even greater depth and more so, extraordinary length in comparison to the middling aftertaste of this legend-in-the-making which also exhibited a solid dose of spirit. The '70 typically offers *at least* three decades of future drinking pleasure and there is clearly no rush to drink bottles from your cellar anytime soon. **94+ points (2-25-05)**

**1966 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – Pink hue with a light tawny edge. I owned a case of this wine (drank quite a few) and although still enjoyable, it is now a fully mature Port. This bottle was quite evolved to the point of being on the edge of "over-the-hill" but was saved by the fine balance between secondary aromas of brown sugar, toffee and mocha -- and the palate which was smooth, medium-bodied and tasty, however, the prune and maple flavors were already in the Tawny realm from the very first sip. The finish showed promise and fine length but was marred by way too much alcohol on the aftertaste. Drink up over the next five years if you own these. **87 points (2-25-05)**

**1966 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Dark ruby color with bricking on the rim with solid fragrances of Kirsch, toasty almonds and espresso beans. I found plenty of complex and harmonious red fruit, mostly dark cherry and plum flavors and a medium-weight which is atypical of this vintage. The mouthfeel although lighter than usual, was every bit as smooth and this one provided some spice and good acidity too. Additionally, I found this to be a more advanced example of the '66 Nacional, than most bottles I have had. Sadly, one of my favorite Nacionals, the 1967 was missing from this vertical but that has more to do with the decision to declare the 1966 regular bottling instead of 1967. That VP always seems to show more youthful qualities than the 1966 which I typically am very fond of. **94 points (2-25-05)**



QUINTA DO NOVAL FROM ABOVE © BY ROY HERSH – OCT. 6<sup>TH</sup> 2006

**1963 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – Light orange-pinkish hue showing lots of evolution. Christian mentioned that there was too much produced in terms of extraordinary yields from this particular vintage. The 1963 is showing pretty mature, mostly Tawny nuances of figs and caramel with some alcohol on the unimpressive and hot finish that had a medicinal edge to the aftertaste. It was my least favorite wine of the tasting. **82 points (2-25-05)**

**1963 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Pomegranate color with an orange/brick meniscus, as good as this is, I preferred the bottle tasted in 2004, even more. This delivered all the goods with a fun minty character along with black currants, fresh floral notes and a backdrop of hazelnuts. This VP never disappoints and has always been in my top five or ten VPs of all time. Sexy and ponderous at the same time, every sip of this focused nectar is a privilege, considering it will outlive me by a few decades. Honestly, if you own 'em, you have to crack one soon to see what the fuss is all about. The '63 is a lip-smacking liquid treasure and as provocative as catching Scarlett Johansson in a dressing room. **97+ points (2-25-05)**

**1960 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Pale strawberry-pink color with bricking. Spicy, dried leaf/earthy note along with mint again and leaning more towards Eucalyptus, if not wintergreen. A fully mature Tawny, this bottle is showing that it passed its prime a few years ago. That said, there was a distinct elegance to this Port and it provided me with the feeling of a wine that was probably much better ten or fifteen years ago. Despite its evolved state, I enjoyed the gentle cherry flavors and velvety entry. The finish added a point or two as well, with exemplary persistence, albeit with a touch of alcohol protruding late in the game. **89 points (2-25-05)**

**1958 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – Offering a pale pink hue and scents of espresso bean, prune, praline and fig in an exotic yet mature mélange, the nose of which was the significant strength of this nearly 50 year old Nacional. The fruit flavors of raspberry and dominant tart plum are hanging on and show a light weight and stunning balance overall. Solid but besides the unique nose, lacked the depth and layered intricacy that I love in well-aged Nacional bottlings. This should be consumed sooner rather than later, although worthy of a punt if it is your birth year, to celebrate in 2008 **91 points (2-25-05)**

**1955 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – I believe this is my first experience with the '55 Nacional and I'm thrilled to get to try it as I have always been curious. Medium ruby with orange bricking was the first indicator that this would have great promise. Earthy dark fruit notes of prune and raisins with a cherry pipe tobacco nuance. The palate offered mature flavors that were in the cassis and fig range with a nutty aftertaste that lingered for quite awhile. I truly enjoyed this venerable Vintage Port. **93 points (2-25-05)**

**1947 Quinta do Noval Nacional Vintage Port** – I have never had a Petrus from '47, so this first taste of Nacional '47 will have to suffice for now. The color depicted a Port that was going to be lively as the light ruby color showed only slight tawny elements on the rim which I found impressive in a VP with nearly 6 decades of bottle age. Scents of spice, vanilla extract and grenadine syrup provided all the pleasure necessary on the nose. There was a harmony in this wine that I loved and although only medium-bodied, it showed great delineation and finesse which really excited me. The finish is simply amazing. I don't see this getting any better, but I have little doubt that this can hang on this level for another 10+ years and drink well thereafter. **95 points (2-25-05)**

**1931 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port** – There were three bottles of this exalted Vintage Port on hand and I had a nice pour from one and about a quarter ounce from each of the other two, all three of which were (surprisingly) very consistent. Call me jaded, but I've had this wine on enough occasions to realize that although delicious, these bottles did not deliver the incredible knockout punch that it normally is capable of. An orange-tawny hue was enlightening (I have seen medium to dark ruby from most previous bottles). The nose provided gentle hazelnut, aniseed, tar and dates which swirled in the glass and made for a distinctive first impression. The medium weight, ripe red fruit flavors offered layers of soft and sweet raspberry with a chocolate nutty finish that showed too much spirit. Chalk it up to the odds of eventually having a slightly disappointing bottle of this, my all-time favorite Vintage Port. **94 points (2-25-05)**

That ends the saga of my second Nacional vertical within a one year period. My sincere thanks to Andrew Lampasone and his assistant Brian, for their deft decanting of a slew of bottles and removal of very difficult corks, Arlette and Bob Cataldo for their tireless efforts in organizing this outstanding event and the inimitable Christian Seely for showing up in a bow tie and leading us through a most memorable double vertical.

---

## FTLOP EXCLUSIVE OFFERING: PORTRAITS OF PORT

**Note:** *This offer appeared here last month for the first time. As the holiday season approaches, this will be your last opportunity to obtain one or both of these “one-of-a-kind” glicée Port works in time for giving as a gift for the upcoming holidays. See the contact details below and call Suzanne immediately to arrange for delivery.*



For Atlanta based wine artist Suzanne Hughes Sullivan, it is the fruit of the vine that ultimately becomes the subject matter of her canvasses and defines the body of her current work. A classical realist influenced by the Dutch Masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Suzanne’s still lifes in oil feature both Vintage and Colheita Ports and wines.

Painting on a relatively life size scale, most of Suzanne’s oils are 16”x 20” or 18”x 24”. Several hundred hours of masterful detail are invested in each piece. Suzanne produces a very limited number of “Artist’s Renderings” of each of her originals. These high resolution reproductions are printed on canvas, after which she spends about 10-15 additional hours hand painting and embellishing each piece. “I don’t number my renderings,” says Suzanne, “as each is reproduced one at a time, not as part of an edition. With the amount of time I spend painting back into a rendering, each one is in effect an original. I think that I am unique in that regard.”

Suzanne favors reds, browns and greens in her still life paintings, and best categorizes her style as Baroque. “I deeply admire the styles of Caravaggio and Vermeer. They and other Baroque artists painted in a realistic yet dramatic manner that allowed the viewer to feel a part of the tableau, or scene. I’m seeking to recreate that feeling of warmth and intimacy in my paintings. I believe that depicting rare vintages can enhance the timelessness of a painting, and offers greater excitement and appreciation for me and hopefully the seasoned wine connoisseur and collector.” She is quick to add that not all of her paintings feature wines that are difficult to attain. “Rarity can add another layer of complexity, but you don’t have to be an aficionado to appreciate the work. Ultimately it must be able to stand on its own!”

### **Background**

After earning a BFA in 1980 from Parsons School of Design in New York City, Suzanne began her career as an illustrator in a style best described as photo-realism. Her work focused on products for advertising, editorial book covers and sports, particularly PGA events. For personal pleasure, her love was painting Irish landscapes. Along the way were the births of four children and a move to Atlanta resulting from a career change on the part of her husband. Retirement was the right thing when the children were small, but when their youngest child reached school age, she once again picked up her brushes. “It was like a rebirth for me to start painting again, and even more exhilarating was the freedom to paint what I chose, instead of what I was commissioned for. As an illustrator it could sometimes be stressful to meet the demands of other’s expectations. Now, if someone is excited by my work, they purchase it. I believe that is because the passion I feel for my subject shines forth. Before, my illustration work was technically proficient on a high level, but I wasn’t painting anything I truly loved. I confess that there was a certain sterility to my work. I’m all about creating warmth now!”

### **Inevitable Comparisons**

When asked what distinguishes her from the other artists who have chosen to pursue the wine art genre, Suzanne has a ready answer. "There are a few very talented artists focusing on painting wine at present. I am not competing with them, but rather I am always challenging myself to become a better artist. My art has a definite European as opposed to American flavor. The other wine artists' styles I've observed are more contemporary than mine. I paint from a traditional perspective and I am striving to create a subtle, almost smoky atmosphere. My work is realistic but not photographic." Fruit is also a featured element in many of Suzanne's paintings. "Wine is organic. For me, it's not about glass, but about life. I really enjoy painting the reflective qualities of the bottles and the details on the labels, but I feel the need to integrate natural elements into my work. After all, when wine connoisseurs are asked to describe a wine, they may use terms such as 'notes of cherry, apple, pear, fig, currant...' For me, fruit can be a part of the wines' story. I don't believe that my style is better or worse than other wine artists, but it is different. Just as the discerning palate can enjoy a Cabernet or a Burgundy, a Port or a Sauterne, so too can the collector of wine art have appreciation for more than one artist. Everyone will have their particular favorite that speaks more to them, but viva la difference!"

### **The Port of Atlanta (this month's theme in the Featured Article too)**

Suzanne recently completed two paintings of Vintage and Colheita Ports and I am humbly able to say I played a part in their "coming to life," or coming to canvas, so to speak. Having read an article on the web that I wrote about Port, Suzanne contacted me, inquiring if I had photographs of any Nacional bottles of Port. I called to let her know about ***For the Love of Port*** and also shipped to her several precious bottles of exceptional vintages of Nacional from my collection which she used for the VP painting. I also shipped some ancient bottles of Colheita Ports for Suzanne's second masterpiece. Being able to send Suzanne the bottles rather than pictures proved to be beneficial because it allowed her to paint "from life" and to maximize the details in the labels which is one of her amazing talents. The groupings of these rare bottles make the paintings even more spectacular and have more meaning for Port lovers who understand the significance of these bottles, the Shippers and their vintage dates.

Suzanne utilizes a process called "Giclee" (pronounced: zhee-clay), which is a term that correlates these days with "fine art reproduction". Literally, the translation from the French word is "to spray". (As in to spray ink onto canvas or paper.) The original method was done on a giclee machine (copyrighted). For Suzanne and other oil painters, their giclees will usually be reproduced onto canvas. For watercolor painters, the reproduction would be on watercolor paper. Giclee prints are very high quality limited edition reproductions of the original piece of art. It is up to the artist to determine the size of the edition, but the smaller the size, generally the higher the value, due to a limited supply. Suzanne will not be doing an "edition" as these are all going to require many hours of hand painting. This reproduction process is very expensive for the artist, but there are distinct advantages. The artist has a high degree of control over the process. These are NOT lithographs that are just run off on a press en masse and then hand numbered. In fact, the artists have the ability to make giclees one at a time and Suzanne does exactly that and then invests many hours of hand painting, which is why this offering is even more special.

Just in time for the holidays or for that special Port lover in your life ... which may just be the best gift you could give yourself .... While Suzanne's Artists Renderings are available on the gallery market starting at \$1000+ each, after long discussions, she is offering ***For the Love of Port*** subscribers the exclusive opportunity to acquire one or both of her Port portraits for \$750 apiece. Shipping and insurance are additional of course and Suzanne can ship her artwork anywhere in the world. For those overseas, you can order them framed, or unstretched/unframed which is easier to ship and less expensive. Arrangements may be made by contacting Suzanne directly at 404-812-9668 or by email at [sladeatlanta@yahoo.com](mailto:sladeatlanta@yahoo.com). Please note, that this is an exclusive offer for FTLOP members and will not be offered elsewhere this year or anytime in the near future. However, due to the nature of the hand painting, orders will be shipped on a first come, first served basis and if it is a requirement for you to have this in time for the holiday season, my suggestion is that you call Suzanne immediately.



Vintage Port collection – 1963 and 1970 Quinta do Noval Nacional



Colheita Port collection – 1900 Niepoort and 1870 Royal Oporto

---

## FOR THE LOVE OF PORT: LEGAL STUFF

1. **Privacy notice:** I take this very seriously and will NEVER share nor sell my mailing list to any marketing company or disclose it for ANY other purpose, period.
2. Please know that should you choose to be removed from the **FOR THE LOVE OF PORT©** E-mail list, please just reply with 'UNSUBSCRIBE' in the subject line, and I will be happy to immediately comply with your request.
3. My tasting notes, opinions and/or suggestions on specific Ports are just that, and in no way represent the interests of any retailer or Port Shipper ... nor will I act on behalf of, or as their agent. I may occasionally mention a particular "bargain" or offering of a "rarity" that I happen to come across. In this case, "caveat emptor" applies. When purchasing any wine, you assume all inherent risks and liability. I strongly suggest that you do your own homework and ask the retailer questions about provenance and applicable shipping laws.

4. There are no advertisements or subscriptions sold and the newsletter is designed to promote and further the cause of Port, Madeira & the wines of Portugal's Douro Valley, all **FOR THE LOVE OF PORT**©. It is sent to Port enthusiasts in over 50 countries, and growing.

5. Permission to use the contents of **FOR THE LOVE OF PORT**© will most likely be granted, as long as you ask me first. Photos used for any purpose without my prior written permission, will get me really angry ... and you do not want that.

© Copyright 2006 by Roy Hersh.  
All rights reserved.

\* IN PORT WE TRUST \*



Instituto dos Vinhos do Douro e do Porto

When you see this label on a bottle of Port or wine from the Douro, you can rest assured of a high quality product.

---

The best PORT website on the net = [www.fortheloveofport.com](http://www.fortheloveofport.com) \* Email: [roy@fortheloveofport.com](mailto:roy@fortheloveofport.com)