

Roy's 2005 Vintage Port Forecast



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Tasting through cask samples as well as recently bottled Vintage Ports can certainly be challenging for the best of palates. Although I feel privileged to have access to these youngsters, I have come to truly enjoy this annual ritual and take pride in doing so. Whereas many other wine journalists solely focus on the “generally declared” vintages, (such as 1994, 2000 and 2003) that tend to occur about three times per decade, I believe there’s a need and a responsibility to evaluate the “lesser” vintages in which lots of Vintage Ports are produced. The 2005 Vintage Port Forecast was written with that purpose in mind.

With the 2005 Vintage Ports, the finite line of generally declared vintages continues to blur, as small growers that used to sell their grapes to the larger shippers in the Port trade, decide to bottle and market their own Vintage Ports under Single Quinta labels. Whereas the more traditional and long established members of the Port trade, have long held onto the custom of

declaring their classic Vintage Ports on average just three years in ten. Those that make Single Quinta Vintage Port (SQVP) and growers-turned-producers do not necessarily share the same view of making Port declarations that infrequently. The dynamic of continued financial viability within the smaller companies, tends to provide them with a very different agenda.

Consolidation persists within the Port trade's "Big 5" as they seek out new opportunities to develop depth in their real estate holdings and through the procurement of Quintas, vineyards and brands that are being added to their stables. It must be a nerve wracking time for smaller Port companies who do not possess both quality products and positive cash flow. Darwin's "survival of the fittest" theory is playing out in the board rooms in Vila Nova de Gaia and the weak are perishing. From where I sit, small family operated Port companies that have either run into financial trouble or receive an offer they can't refuse (to relinquish control); often times the Ports produced by the new owners will improve in dramatic fashion and rather quickly at that (e.g. Noval, Croft, Burmester).

The 2005 vintage shows that there is a counterbalance to consolidation; with continued growth in numbers and improvement of the independent SQVPs along with the sustained increase in the quality and popularity of the Douro table wines being produced today. The Douro was fortunate, as 2005 introduced the third consecutive high quality harvest and both the DOC wines as well as the Vintage Ports benefited.

I've engaged in discussions with a broad representation of Port producers and there seems to be no consensus about the 2005s. Some mentioned that the innate quality was good enough for a general declaration, while others stated that they believe 2004 was even better and a few have decided to just wait and see how the Vintage Ports from 2007 turn out. Although the jury may still be out, having evaluated a couple of dozen VPs from across the Douro, the answer seems a bit clearer to me.

It is important first and foremost, to understand the growing conditions and harvest dynamics that took place during 2005 even before exploring the specific Vintage Ports or the 2005 harvest as a sum of its parts.

GROWING CONDITIONS

We first have to look back to 2003, as the dry winter led into 2004 and the rest of the seasons that year did not do much to create any real significant precipitation. Drought conditions took their toll, but there was relief on a few rare occasions. The dry winter conditions of 2004 then led into 2005. They were severe and showed ever more serious symptoms of drought, which prevailed throughout most of the '05 growing season. Even with the lack of any measurable moisture, the flower set was said to have been very good

For those that follow the harvests in Portugal the summer months were fraught with wild fires throughout the country and burned a large swath of hectares, especially in the Southern half of Portugal. Yet during the early part of the summer there was still little to no precipitation whatsoever and with the heat that is typical of August, the vines were not happy campers and took a respite. Expectations of good quality Port seemed low and yet there was an innate optimistic spirit that I sensed during my visit to the Douro at harvest time. Some growers felt that with less than half of the average annual rainfall of the past decade, balance and normal yields would be difficult to achieve. With similar concerns, some grape farmers decided to start picking much earlier than usual based on their experience. That was all about to change.

Early in September there were two significant rain showers that fell just a few days apart. These storms made all the difference and provided much needed nutrition for the vines as well as the individual grapes. Fortunately, it cleared up for the remaining days of the growing season and the '05 harvest took place under near perfect, azure skies. The warm sunny days and cool nights had a positive effect on acidity levels which was a key factor for overall balance. Phenolic ripeness which had been a serious concern just a few weeks earlier resulted in grapes with RS levels and anthocyanin extractions that brought smiles to the

faces of growers and portmakers alike. This, in spite of the fact that the 2005 crop yields were about 20% lower than in 2004.

Overall impression of the vintage and when to drink the 2005 Vintage

Ports

The 2005s share a few common threads which are interwoven through the majority of the Vintage Ports included in this Forecast. Similar to its forerunner the '04 vintage in that 2005 shows a narrower range of highs and lows than I typically find in the “big” vintages like 2003, 2000 and 1997. Overall, there are some well made VPs, but only a handful that really captured the imagination. There were two or three examples from the '04 vintage that really zinged my happy zone while in 2005 possibly a handful, as well as one or two real surprises.

I am not sure where pricing is going to wind up with these youngsters, but to generalize, the 2005 Vintage Ports are built for early consumption and should be priced accordingly. That's not to say they should only be enjoyed while they're mere youngsters, as a handful of '05s have enough grip and backbone to improve for the next 3+ decades. Speaking of common threads, one that stands out in comparison to the young Ports of a year ago, is the ease in which the wines can be approached, (unlike 1997 and 2003) with the softer and round nature of the tannins.

It is difficult to make sweeping generalizations about two successive vintages, however, again making direct comparisons to 2004, I found there to be brighter acidity levels in the 2005 Vintage Ports. Whether that was directly a result of the cooler nights at the end of the growing season or not, I remember finding some of the 2004s lacking the degree of vivid crispness that many of the 2005s seemed to ante up.

Additionally, the extraction levels seem to be even darker and denser with nearly every 2005 showing fully opaque dark red/purple color. Also, there is a distinct ripe, sweet and fruit driven nature to many of the 2005s, where structural components seem to take a back seat.

In many cases, the gentler nature of the tannins in the '05s VPs seem obscured, at least for now, by the dominating concentration of the fruit.

Some suggest that this is a stylistic change in the practices of the portmakers, yet I see and hear no evidence of this being the case. In fact, I believe it is simply an example of the difference in Mother Nature's influence from one vintage to the next. That said, I have heard this opinion before, most notably with the 1994s at this same period in time and for a year thereafter. Now at 13 years of age, there is no question that the structure of most '94s have risen to show their well structured nature and are in synch with the fruit. 2005 is no different and please do not read into this that I am making any other type of comparison with 1994 VPs.

Across the spectrum of the 2005 class of Vintage Ports, I believe the key factor is that they exhibit equilibrium in spades. The 2004s showed some fine symmetry too, but I believe the majority of '05s possess not only more vivid acidity and extraction, but late arriving lush tannins which created harmonious young Vintage Ports with lots of ripe fruit flavors. Put into strictly numerical terms, the two dozen VPs I tasted from 2004 averaged a rating of 91 points. Comparatively, in 2005 the overall average is up only slightly to 91.5 points, not a very significant difference. However, there are a few particular producers who rose to the occasion in 2005 and made alluring and gorgeous Vintage Ports that showed their inherent ability and also the quality of the vintage.

So should we invest our hard earned dollars in the 2005 VPs?

Beyond those with children born in 2005 or anniversaries, there are reasons why some 2005s deserve space in the cellar. First of all, there are a number of intriguing VPs that will deliver plenty of drinking pleasure. The prices for a vintage such as this will seem quite inexpensive compared to the next classic and generally declared vintage. Like the 1995s from a decade earlier have proven, solid VPs made in an ultimately drinkable style, reward those with the insight to drink them at 10-20 years old while the great vintages remain untouched in the cellar. It is all about planning your cellar's depth.

As I mentioned earlier, only a select few of the 2005s are going to improve for more than a couple of decades. Understanding that this is a vintage in which most Ports won't go the long distance route, a buying strategy can take advantage of the best values available, for near and mid-term drinking. Price will ultimately dictate what many consumers decide to shell out for 2005s, while at the same time; Shippers may decide to hold back a considerable quantity of their Ports to realize greater margins when the bottles have matured for a decade or so. Nonetheless, with 2007 looking like the next possible general vintage declaration, we won't see any new "classic" Vintage Ports until at least 2009 or 2010.

Whether consumers decide to devote cellar space and financial resources for 2005 VPs or not; there is no question that it is a solid vintage. Some Port collectors will want to include '05s to maintain their verticals, while others simply will enjoy drinking young Vintage Ports. Given how well these drink in their youth, restaurant buyers will probably be diving in to sell these by the glass and bottle. In reality though, we'll have to see the retail pricing before deciding if 2005 is worth dedicating money and cellar space. I'd suggest seeking out the cream of the crop and looking for where the values lie within your own Port collecting stratagem.

Tasting regimen

My evaluation routine from year to year has varied little in the way I approach cask samples and pre-released finished bottlings of Vintage Ports. Whether my overall analysis and ratings given to specific 2005 Vintage Ports vary from other journalists and critics, my tasting regimen remains consistent and has been employed for over a decade's worth of vintage critiques.

Whenever possible I try the wines on several occasions. Like last year with 2004s, I was fortunate to be in Portugal during the first half of this year, to assess a broad spectrum of 2005s while they were cask samples. This was followed up by retasting and documenting the same VPs, (as well as a bunch of others) during the first two weeks in October in Gaia and the Douro during harvest. Those experiences are what I consider to be "snapshot views" of

the young vintage Ports. Some find this an adequate way of assessing a vintage and solely base their reports on their momentary glances reflected in tasting notes.

I have included a select few 2005s which I only tasted during a pair of visits to Portugal. A number of VPs that I tasted over there were not included in this report because I felt it imperative to spend more time with those specific Vintage Ports as it would have been unfair to report those very brief impressions. Nevertheless, the vast majority of what appears in the '05 tasting note section that follows, were "finished bottles" (unless noted otherwise) that I spent numerous days with in single blind evaluations. Given the challenge of obtaining enough samples to adequately portray an infant vintage at large, I find it advantageous to use an amalgam of my own tasting notes, (on the same VP) from both *snapshot views* and adding in the multi-day assessments too. This approach provides me with a significantly more focused, comprehensive viewpoint and enhanced acuity in prognosticating drinking windows.

My typical tasting regime is to choose five to six bottles that have been allowed to settle, while stored in my cellar and including them in a blind flight. I believe that tasting a range of young Vintage Ports by flight rather than individually, enables me to achieve greater precision and a broader view of the vintage as a whole. The bottles are then opened, neck capsules removed and decanted for twelve hours. Once the VPs are poured back into their original bottle, my wife positions each one into numbered bags.

I scribe detailed tasting notes during each approach over a three day period. The first day, I normally taste them at 4 or 5 hour intervals at least twice, but usually three times. On the second and third day, I make sure to try them twice. In the past (unless a generally declared vintage) I only re-tasted a few specific bottles on the third day. Beginning with the 2005s, I made a permanent modification to my methodology, as every bottle was kept and re-tasted twice on the third day after it was opened. Typically, over the years I haven't found much of a change between day two and three, but this year I learned the importance of re-evaluating in this way, when I noticed a couple of VPs that had improved quite dramatically between my appraisal on day two and three.

THE 2005 VINTAGE PORTS

There are currently twenty-three VPs that made this report in time for release. There will be a section added on with between 3 and 10 more Vintage Ports, as some bottles were held up by US Customs while a few producers were not able to get their bottles into the USA at all. After tasting this final grouping and writing up my TNs, I'll incorporate them back into this original article which is loosely laid out in alphabetical order. Here now the 2005s:

2005 ~ Barros ~ Vintage Port – Inky purple and opaque. I am a fan of Barros' Colheitas and they make scintillating Tawny styles of Port. I must admit, I have never been a fan of the Barros family's Vintage Port efforts ... until now. Tasted blind -- up against some big names from above, this was the standout of the flight. The concentration here provides for colossal palate presence which is quite approachable as although the plum and dark cherry fruit is in your face, the structure is subverted to it. Over several days this continued to improve, gaining complexity and showing its grace and delicious plum flavor. The tannins are a bit grainy but otherwise the chocoholic aftertaste is sublime with a textural pleasure which won me over. Possibly the biggest surprise of the entire vintage for me, my jaw literally dropped when I removed the bottle covering. I would definitely put this in the "must buy" category. Drink 2009 – 2025. ~ **94-96 points** ~ **11/22/07**

2005 ~ Calem ~ Vintage Port – I was pleased to be able to add Calem into this report as I typically have not had access to their pre-release or cask samples of VP. Now under the control of Sogevinus, (purchased recently from the wonderful folks of the Calem family) there is a renewed emphasis on the quality of their Vintage Ports. Violet purplish color with full opacity, the nose delivers intense perfume of apple blossoms and Kirsch. There is some citric flavored acidity here that is pronounced and adds to the overall intricacy of this generous VP with a pleasing smoothness that makes this so much fun to drink. Grapy, spicy with a light to medium body, this has gentle tannins that will make it a candidate to drink early and often. Although it would make for a more classis LBV than a VP, it is very easy to enjoy with a finish that is a standout! Drink 2008-2018. ~ **86-88 points** ~ **11/22/07**

2005 ~ Croft's Quinta da Roeda ~ Vintage Port – Inky purple and fully opaque. As a cask sample first tried in mid May, it was a sweet and demure feminine expression of Port. It still shows a similar playful naughtiness, say, Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's. After decanting for 12 hours this started to really flesh out. Full of glycerin and a chewy, full-bodied style which I very much enjoyed. The palate has a grenadine syrup component and offers up a smooth sexy texture with enough aeration. The Roeda follows up on the superb effort by Croft in 2003 and exhibits all the makings of a truly fine SQVP that should drink well over the next three decades. The finish is a blockbuster with boisterous tannins that rush in and take charge, but its a very harmonious multi-faceted Port, in the top tier of 2005 VPs. ~ **94-96 points ~ 11/22/07**

2005 ~ Dow's Quinta Senhora da Ribeira ~ Vintage Port – This property sits upon 21 hectares of vineyards with 62,000 vines planted, the Ports of which are then foot trodden in the seven small lagares. Fully opaque ruby color leads to vivacious violets, cherry tobacco and brown sugar which round out the fine fragrances with a light spirituous character. This SQVP seemed medium-bodied right out of the gate with a snappish attack of acidity, and an off-dry style. Senhora's '05 provided ripe blueberry which dominated the profile, but I enjoyed the mid-palate which showed dark cherry and cassis interspersed with round tannins that gained power towards the finish, yet remained mostly mild. Bright, vibrant and yielding at the moment this VP certainly should be easy to enjoy in its youth. The medium finish hinted at light chocolate and an alcoholic presence, but plenty of fruit too. Drink in 2008-2023 ~ **90-92 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Fonseca's Quinta do Panascal ~ Vintage Port – As a young cask sample back in May, this was primary and plummy with a memorable finish and last month while at Quinta do Panascal I was pleased to try this again. I opened a bottle last night and it showed little love straight away. A full on 12 hour decant helped and today it shows a magenta color and fully opaque. I made my through a few more sessions the following day too, to ensure that I'd fully appreciate the lineup and not miss any of the development. This shows spicy plum and primary pomegranate nuances with expressive floral fragrances and a dose of heat on the nose which was gone by day three. Black currant, tar and tobacco flavors evolved as did its

viscous richness which put on significant weight. Plenty of length on the finish which also delivers some astringent tannins that need a few years to really integrate. Drink 2009-2028. ~ **91-93 points ~ 11/22/07**

2005 ~ Kopke ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) – Whatever I used to think of the Vintage Ports produced by Kopke, since Sogevinus took over, it is an entirely new ballgame. Both their 2003 and 2004 VPs were quite good and the 2005 is no exception. Dark opaque purple consisting of 50% Touriga Nacional and 50% old vine field blends (with an average age of 40 years) from the Douro Superior. Fine acidity, very long finish, good balance with rounded tannins that arrive in time for the aftertaste. The 2005 is an even better Kopke than the two previous vintages and shows great promise. A truly harmonious VP and the best young Kopke VP I've ever tasted. Drink 2008-2030 ~ **93-95 points ~ 5/14/07**

2005 ~ Malvedos ~ Vintage Port – Fun to try this while visiting the beautiful Quinta dos Malvedos and having plenty of time to enjoy it. Deep purple and fully opaque color with primary blueberry, violets and cinnamon spice that is very fragrant. The Malvedos is *almost* syrupy but is slightly lighter and juicier than that. Grapey tank flavors persist, with a touch of anise. This was bottled just five months earlier and I was impressed by how balanced this was already. A well constructed and solid structure and overall fine effort, I suggest drinking it from 2008-2028. ~ **93-95 points ~ 10/5/07**

2005 ~ M. Champalimaud ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) – Floral, cocoa powder nose with a light-medium weight. Much more lively and better structured than the 2001 we tasted just before it. Bright and fresh dark berry flavors, lacking any real mid-palate complexity at this point, yet it shows a lengthy finish. Very approachable and easy to enjoy today it would have been my preference to spend a couple of days to see how this would evolve. The Champalimaud is made in an early maturing style with little sign of tannins present. Drink 2008 to 2020. ~ **87-89 points ~ 10/1/07**

2005 ~ Niepoort ~ Vintage Port – I have seen the evolution from my initial cask sample and two follow ups, in addition to this bottle which I evaluated over three days. Dirk stated that he

prefers his 2005 Douro wines and Port to his 2004s. He produced 35,000 bottles of '05. Dark purple and fully opaque with violets, floral notes and a boysenberry aroma. I found this quite soft and Dirk mentioned it was racked less often. The more I've tried this Port, my impression is that Dirk is headed in a very different stylistic direction than with his previous efforts in 1997, 2000 and 2003 and even his 2004. Whether that is winemaker or climate influence remains to be seen, but I believe the former in this case. The 2005 is far easier to approach and not created with the same level of massive, astringent tannins that one expects and this is more reminiscent of a fine Secundum VP. Niepoort's 2005 delivers a more approachable and rounder style, if not a deceptively elegant manner with fresh blueberry flavors. A reaction to some journos that criticized the tannins in his '03? Doubtful knowing Dirk. Drink this between 2008 and 2030. ~ **93-95 points ~ 10/4/07**

2005 ~ Quinta do Crasto ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) - Dark crimson color with a clear rim. Smells like a walk through a rose garden with inviting sweet scents of blueberry, tar, black licorice and cinnamon spice followed by a hint of alcohol. This will be a crowd pleaser in the near term, as it is quite approachable and enjoyable now. The finish was modest in length but fruit filled and over the next two days it gained heft. The '05 showed a smoother texture, added richness and was even more fun on days two and three. The Crasto is quite sweet in style, almost too much so, with a pretty purity of blueberry that dominates the palate. There is modest acidity along with pretty mild tannins (subverted to the fruit for now) which sneak up late, upon swallowing. Even though you can enjoy this now, and especially for the mid term, I suggest peak drinking pleasure will be from 2008-2020.

~ **89-91 points ~ 11/4/07**

2005 ~ Quinta do Noval Silval ~ Vintage Port – Made from 100% Quinta do Noval fruit, so it really could have been a full on declaration for Q d Noval, but give credit to Mr. Christian Seely for offering consumers a delicious bargain instead. Vibrant and inky ruby/purple from core to meniscus. My first impression was that I was sniffing liquid Tootsie Roll, but there was also some tobacco, cedar and the essence of cassis. This Silval is a deeply concentrated and big boned, full-bodied VP, which offered ripe, sweet and approachable fruit. The plush velvety texture here is as good as the blackberry and black currant flavors and this VP from

the folks at Noval, exhibits a classic framework with a deft balance between acidity and fruit. This might just be the most tannic Port of the vintage, with ripe and almost punishing tannins. Grip city! The aftertaste is a bit tart and the finish only medium in its duration, otherwise this would have scored even higher. It'll easily serve a 30-40 year sentence in the cellar or can be enjoyed while young, with the proper decanting regimen.

~ **93-95 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Quinta da Pacheca – A newcomer in that the 2000 VP was their first, having sold grapes to others for many years. The 2005 shows smoky, spicy, dark raspberry and mocha with alcohol notes. Deeply extracted and yet it shows a very light elegant style. Soft and approachable with a bigger profile and better balance than older but recent Pacheca Vintage Ports that I've tasted from this house just prior to this one. It exhibits a more gentle style reminiscent of a fine fresh LBV. It was the best Pacheca Vintage Port I tasted during my recent visit. You will really enjoy this and it will drink well immediately and through 2020. ~

89-91 points ~ 10/9/07

2005 ~ Quinta do Portal ~ Vintage Port – Dark garnet with a magenta meniscus. Fragrances of Framboise, cocoa powder, herbs and black licorice exhibit exotic nuances in a dark aromatic profile. It was very tight initially and demonstrated a light to medium body which changed considerably over the next two days. After more decant time, the Portal evolved big time and it was extremely smooth in the mouth and just short of full-bodied. Rich cherry, some very sweet plum juice with a hint of cedar and vivacious acidity. The aftertaste was quite perseverant with bright berry flavors and a chocolate laden finish endowed with a prominent tannic force. From my chair, the 2005 is not up to the level of the finer Portal VPs and delivered a straight forward mid-palate and lacked the intensity that I normally love in vintages like 1999 and 2003. Drink 2012-2028. ~ **92-94 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Quinta da Romaneira ~ Vintage Port – Dark garnet right to the edge and fully opaque. The nose was quite reticent at the outset, (and the palate angular as well) this youngster required significant air time to start to strut its stuff. Highlighting Bing cherry and a pure note of grenadine up front, with red licorice and herbs in the background. This was a

standout effort against the majority of 2005 VP competitors in terms of fine aromatics, structure and delectable flavors. It is gentle dense, chewy and very well put together. Fabulous layered off-dry flavors of fresh berry pie, currants and tart plums with a fine mid-palate that showed the intensity of this infant. It is impossible to ignore the impressive long finish and gripping, chalky tannins that will make this a candidate for long term cellaring. If this classy effort from 2005 is any indication as to the promise of this little known producer, I'd be willing to bet that Quinta da Romaneira will become a household name for Port lovers inside of the next decade. But why wait? Drink from 2010-2032 ~ **93-95 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Quinta de Roriz ~ Vintage Port – Dark eggplant color with full opacity. I was not fond of the bouquet from the get go as it presented “tanky” notes that I find unpleasant. With time this blew off and in its place there was a most expressive nose with dark fruit compote, smoky plums, underbrush and black licorice. Sweet, juicy and feminine in style, packed with cassis and ripe blackberry fruit flavors and an earthy quality which added some depth although I found the mid-palate simple. Nonetheless, this was quite tasty with a medium body presence, both smooth and ultimately approachable, which resulted in a mouth pleasing texture. A solid effort from this single Quinta, the '05 ends with a long yet spirited finish and I believe this will integrate with further bottle age. The tannins are mild and showed up just in time for the final act. Drink 2009-2023. ~ **92-94 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Quinta do Vale Dona Maria ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) - Eggplant in color and fully opaque with a purple edge. Lagar like aroma, with earthy notes, pipe tobacco and lavender. There was a distinct yet slight off putting “tanky” note which never did quite blow off. Initially the fruit dominated the tannins but over the course of several days, the tannins grew in prominence and were quite powerful by day three. They were seemingly deceptive until they appeared on the lively finish. The Vale Dona Maria offers smoky, stewed prunes, sweet Concord grape flavors and zippy acidity which adds balance. There's just enough body to provide a round, mouth filling presence. Overall, I found this VP rather straight forward with few surprises and it showed more like a nice LBV than a VP. I'd like this even better if the nose was more inviting. Drink 2015-2027 ~ **86-88 points ~ 11/4/07**

2005 ~ Quinta Valle Longo – Just 4,000 bottles produced from Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz and Franca. I noted smoky, tar and pomegranate fragrances which were very enjoyable. Medium bodied and a bit simple and straight forward. The mid-palate was a bit hollow for me, but I did not get to see this evolve and in fairness, it was popped and poured at the Quinta with no prior decanting. That is why I am not fond of “snapshot views” of Vintage Ports. The tannins are not shy and the moderate length of the finish could also be due to lack of aeration. The selling price is expected to be 25 Euros. ~ **86-88 points ~ 10/5/07**

2005 ~ Quinta do Ventozelo ~ Vintage Port – Very dark ruby and full opacity with some fine sediment in the bottom of the bottle. Fragrant floral scents with raspberry, red licorice and grape Lifesavers make for a really bright and expressive nose. Initially a light weight, it put on more weight than Anna Nicole Smith with a gallon of ice cream during the ensuing 48 hours. Ripe, juicy purple fruits with primary plum, good acidity and finely knit tannins that show some chalky grip on the medium length finish. The Ventozelo should age nicely and is worth the punt if the price is right. It showed its best on day three with additional richness and a longer finish. Drink 2012-2023.
~ **88-90 points ~ 11/4/07**

2005 ~ Quinta do Vesuvio ~ Vintage Port – Dark inky purple extract, speaking of which, I smell the color purple and the nose drove me crazy with potent purple fruits that continued to change and evolve each time I took another whiff. This was the only 2005 that I “nailed” when drinking it blind. Explosive and complex from the moment the cork was pulled, this is the real deal with captivatingly concentrated, almost brambly boysenberry and blackberry fruit that was a viscous VP that overwhelmed my palate. The structure is more typical of what I found in 2003 cask samples, rather than other examples of this vintage, with enormous ripe tannins that are powerful and astringent. Excellent balance, with a multi-layered mid-palate that led to the tour de force finish with a touch of heat at the very end. A tasty number which should be able to drink well young, (with extended decanting) but will go the distance too and I’d suggest enjoying this from 2012-2040+. The ’05 Quinta do Vesuvio is in another stratosphere altogether, it’s the finest VP I’ve tried from this vintage to date.
~ **95-97 points ~ 11/6/07**

2005 ~ Ramos Pinto's Quinta de Ervamoira ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) – The magenta center and ruby edge was brilliant and allowed no light to pass. Initially there was a green herbal streak and a “tanky” note that was quite unpleasant. The following morning with more time, it offered light cherry and leather aromas with a backdrop of that “tanky note” (SO2?) which was no longer as dominant. Unfortunately, it never did fully integrate. The medium-bodied tart rhubarb and pomegranate off-dry flavors come to the fore with ripe tannins that are not shy and grew more powerful with time and eventually dominated the finish, which otherwise was pleasing and long. Drink 2016-2027. ~ **85-87 points ~ 11/4/07**

2005 ~ Royal Oporto ~ Vintage Port – (CASK SAMPLE) – Jerry Luper is doing wonderful things with the old Real Companhia Velha wines and Ports. This is a solid effort and is putting Royal Oporto on the map for their Vintage Ports, always better known for their Colheitas. Bright strawberry and lavender aromas with an added dose of spice. Although light in weight and feminine in style there is some very good black cherry, blackberry compote flavors here with significant tannins and a generous finish. I bet this would have improved a bit had it been decanted further ahead of time. Drink 2010-2025. ~ **89-91 points ~ 10/1/07**

2005 ~ Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas ~ Vintage Port – When I first had this as a cask sample back in May, this was hot and spicity and quite sweet with a dry finish. It had improved significantly by the time I had it again in Oct. while visiting The Fladgate Partnership and it showed a lot more symmetry. Dark garnet and nearly opaque. I opened this particular bottle and it was thin, tight and showed little. My brother was way underwhelmed, but I told him to be patient. After 12 hours of decanting, this was a totally different young Port than what he tried yesterday just after opening. A full day later it really came into its own with fresh scents of lavender, mocha and ripe, dark cherries. The '05 Vargellas is no shy flower with medium-full weight, crème de cassis and blackberry fruit that shows tasty juice with a touch of black licorice on the prolonged finish. Early on, the tannins were quite mild but three days in, this offered far more powerful tannins that hinted at where the Vargellas will be heading. Drink 2012-2035. ~ **93-95 points ~ 11/22/07**

2005 ~ Vista Alegre – Made from the Touriga Nacional and Souzao grapes as well as some field blends from vines that are more than 60 years old. Bright and fresh, grape essence with some stylish perfume, expressive aguardente (not heat!) and plum notes. The Alegre is a full-bodied, round and chewy VP which provides balance and lovely fruit flavors of blackberry and plums. The tannins show up late and are powerful, yet not overtly so. This '05 delivers a finish with medium-long length with a pretty berry juice aftertaste that is quite pure. Overall, it is a classically styled young VP. Worthy at 35 Euros where available. ~ **90-92 points** ~ **10/5/07**

2005 Burmester Porto Vintage Port – Opaque purple color. Nose of rose petals, cranberry, and red licorice. Ripe dark cherry and red currant fruit, with bracing acidity. The Burmester portrays a smooth and full-bodied VP with non-aggressive tannins which meld into the background. A gentle and medium finish is more “polite” than enticing. Drink now through 2020. **89-91 points** **12/21/07**

2005 Cockburn's Quinta dos Canais Vintage Port – bottled by the Symington Family Estates. The back label states, “Unlike regular vintage Ports they tend to be produced each year and are approachable at a much younger age. 75% Touriga Nacional, 25% Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz and Tinta Barroca.” Miguel Corte-Real is the talented winemaker behind the Cockburn's Ports. Earthy undertones infused with leather and huckleberry and some spirit showing on the nose. Fleshy, full throttle concentrated black currant and cassis flavors and stacked with lots of cleansing acidity and a firm tannic backbone that strikes late. The finish is modest but with good fruit purity. Drink now through 2025. **91-93 points** **12/21/07**

2005 Dow's Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port (cask sample) - Fully opaque purplish ruby complemented by a great nose that improved each of the three days during evaluation. Featuring a subtle overlay of red and purple tones accented by earthy scents of cocoa, pine resin and a touch of spirit. The '05 version of Bomfim is soft and easy to approach with a seamless presence which started off light and put on weight, exposing its full body and a core of crushed blueberry and boysenberry fruit. It evolved into a dense juice laden drink with a super mouthfeel that borders on creamy; the tannins are present but round and exhibit

enough grip to provide for a reasonable aging curve. Drink now through 2025. **92-94 points**
12/17/07

2005 Guimaraens Vintage Port - CASK SAMPLE – This was my initial tasting note taken at the Gaia Lodge back in May. I have not had the luxury of spending three days with this wine and it is more like a snapshot view which I am not fond of, however it is my only note on this wine. Dark and opaque purplish/ruby. Smoother, more balanced than the Panascal. Excellent with brighter dark berry flavors and even a good amount of complexity at this very early stage. Big, ripe and chewy. Succulent great long finish and lively tannins to carry it for a few decades. **93-95 points 5/14/07**

2005 Poças Vintage Port – Inky purple and fully opaque. Smoky creosote and freshly crushed raspberries. The palate provides medium-bodied boysenberry pancake syrup which starts off sweet but finishes off on a drier note. The tannins are brawny and slightly chalky, just the way I like them. A slightly bitter note on the medium length finish. A good showing but although well made, the excitement eludes me here. Drink now through 2027. **87-89 points**
12/21/07

2005 Pousada Porto Vintage Port – produced by Manoel D. Poças Junior. Opaque purple with a pure essence of raspberries and spice. After three days, this really fleshed out and was much more in synch compared to when it was first popped and decanted. This VP is straightforward on the palate and very soft yet full-bodied with plum, raspberry and a dollop of herbs. The finish is medium in length and bolstered by genteel tannins. Drink now through 2017. **86-88 points 12/17/07**

2005 Quinta dos Malvedos Vintage Port (cask sample) – Opaque garnet color with dark raspberry, cocoa powder and fresh floral fragrances. It started out thin but gained considerable weight over the following two days. Medium-full bodied with such sweetness that it was by far the standout in terms of ripeness and residual sugar. Soft and silky smooth, with expressive black currant and pure grapy nuances. Chalky tannins come rushing in late to

crash the party and leave a lasting impression on the lingering aftertaste which hints at milk chocolate. Drink now through 2022. **90-92 points 12/17/07**

2005 Quinta do Nova Vintage Port – Quinta do Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo (owned by Amorim, the cork producer) was established in 1764. With 85 hectares planted, the 2005 came from an old vine field blend plot with 30 varieties of grapes. This sultry youngster with a dark magenta color. Heady aromas of rose petals, blackberry, cassis and tobacco reveal a smooth and medium-bodied VP. Gobs of plump ripe fruit which bursts out of the starting gate seemingly sweet, then tends toward the drier end of the purple spectrum, with plum and cranberry flavors and an admirable textural pleasure. The finish is pretty straightforward as is the mid-palate; the drying tannins are kept in check by fine acidity and copious amounts of fruit. Drink now through 2020. **88-90 points 12/17/07**

2005 Smith Woodhouse's Madalena Vintage Port (cask sample) – Deeply extracted maroon hue with full opacity. Red overtones with perfumed pomegranate and strawberry scents. The Madalena earns style points for its soft, fresh and boisterous lingonberry fruit flavor and fine acidity. This '05 is full, chewy and quite smooth, yet lacks the intricacy in the middle and on the finish. Its significant strength is the length of the aftertaste and stylistically it's reminiscent of a solid LBV. A bit monolithic at this stage but really delicious and much more to my liking the third day it was open. The tannins are powerful enough for this to be cellared for a couple of decades and will drink well through 2030. **91-93 points 12/17/07**

2005 Taylor's Quinta de Terra Feita Vintage Port - CASK SAMPLE – This is a raw tasting note that was from my only impression, received in May in Gaia at the Lodge. Tanky but otherwise reticent aromatics. Smooth and with a fuller weight than any of the others from TFP currently. More density and concentration and this could be a big baby. The tannins are punishing and the balance is a bit out of whack at this moment in time. Revisit this fall with lots of time in the decanter, maybe 24 hours. **91-93 points 5/14/07**

2005 Vale de Abraão Vintage Port – produced by the folks at Quinta da Pacheca. Although I enjoyed the Quinta da Pacheca 2005 VP, I preferred this bottling. The new upscale Aquapura Hotel is located on land owned by the original Quinta da Vale de Abraão. The Quinta's vineyards consist of 53 hectares. Dark purplish-ruby, showing a gentle roasted note and smoky prune essence. What I enjoyed most about this Port was its great sense of purity with a richness that was just shy of being jammy and extraordinarily concentrated. It is created to be consumed early, like Sandeman's Vau Vintage, but given the ripeness and astringency of the tannins, it should age for at least two decades if not three. The finish is moderate in length and ends with a solid whack of spirit, but to be fair, this sample had not been decanted. Drink now through 2023. **90-92 points 10/10/07**

2005 Warre's Quinta da Cavadinha Vintage Port (cask sample) – This ooze monster is one of the better VPs of the vintage and both the 2004 and 2005 SQVPs from the Cavadinha property have impressed me and I look forward to seeing how the next full-bore Warre's VP is going to present itself. Deeply extracted dark purplish-crimson color and fully opaque. Classy from the first sniff its vivid violet, licorice and plum notes offered a sexy scent. Initially it showed a medium body and later joined the ranks of heavy weight contenders. Big, bright and massively structured with an intertwined marionberry and pomegranate profile, the fruit tannins are enormous and will make for a long lived Port. It's a harmonious wine that may not be a blockbuster, but it exudes complexity on the mid-palate and possesses a sound foundation, firmly based in its superb balance and has excellent prospects for aging 2-3 decades. Drink today, tomorrow or through 2030. **94-96 points 12/17/07**