



FOR THE LOVE OF PORT™
COLLECTIVE PORT WISDOM

2020 Vintage Port Report

Article and Photos by Roy Hersh © November 2023



2020 is a year that most of us will never forget. It was the first time that we were stuck in our homes, some in forced lockdowns, with businesses closed, travel overseas non-existent, and some in Douro unable to tread grapes in lagares during the Covid-19 plague. It is mostly in the rear-view mirror nowadays, but the pandemic took its toll and changed (and lost) many lives in the process. That is the backdrop for this wonderful year for Port wine. And now a deeper dive.

While many Single Quinta Vintage Ports were released, and some bottlings that had never been heard of before, so too were some of the very best-known names from the Port trade; declaring 2020 Vintage Ports from this intriguing year that significantly challenged those in Douro. It's not what was called a *Generally Declared* (nor even a *Classic*) vintage, depending on your definition. Nonetheless, it was a very solid year that produced some outstanding Vintage Ports. What is included below, is an unbiased overall assessment of the 2020 vindima, and thirty tasting notes.

2020 Douro Weather Report

The three prior years experienced winters which endured serious drought conditions, starting those growing seasons with *hydric stress*, yet as always, the Douro managed to survive. The plentiful rains which occurred during the latter-2019 months continued through the winter into 2020 and were more than welcome by the Durienses and vineyards. Water tables that had been badly depleted and were in need of precipitation, were finally replenished. February saw much warmer than usual temperatures in the Douro, resulting in bud break beginning several weeks earlier than normal, (early March) where typically it takes place later in the month.

For the moment let's try to forget about what came to the world beyond bud break in March, as spring was well underway, and a *new reality* washed over all of us. Sporadic rain continued and after months of extended moisture, the balance of spring in Douro had not only unseasonably warm weather, but suffered mildew followed by powdery mildew conditions in April and May. This required sulfur treatments and other remedies to protect the vineyards from disease. The warmth caused flowering to begin a couple of weeks ahead of schedule too, in early May. Next up, June started to get hot quickly, and by the end of the month, temperatures spiked to 40°C.

The Douro experienced the hottest July in almost a century, with "pintor" (veraison) and saw record-breaking temps in August too, that caused some early ripening, and a bit of raisining, (location dependent) and greatly concerned growers about phenolics. Fortunately, there was a much-needed rainfall just after mid-month reinvigorating the grapes just prior to the picking of white grapes began, although some properties started picking them right at the beginning of August. The picking of red grapes took place in early September, whereas they often times begin being harvested around mid-month. Managing vineyards is very important in very hot years, especially caring for the canopies that protect and provide much needed shade for the grapes during the spikes in heat or prolonged excessive temperatures, in years like 2020.

There are a lot of 2020 Vintage Port bottlings from Old Vine parcels, as you will read in my tasting notes. Vinhas Velhas and their grapes can handle far more adverse growing conditions, especially heat, than can younger vines. Generally speaking, small yields were the norm and on average the lowest since the 1990s, and production levels in some vineyards were reduced by as much as 30%-50%. Picking was quick, in some properties red grapes were harvested in record time and even some larger properties managed the process in three to four weeks, and the 2020 Douro harvest was over well before the end of September. Properties with vineyards at altitude, where slower ripening and better acidity was found, likely had some vibrant grapes in 2020. I can only think of a couple of examples, (VPs I tasted) where that was the exception to the rule.

Due to social-distancing and safety measures put in place, some grape growers and producers chose to foot-tread grapes in lagares, but from what I can tell, there are quite a few. Others decided not to do so. Vesuvio is the most talked about example, of not doing foot treading and it was the first time that happened since the winery was built in 1827. I don't know where those grapes wound up, but there is no Vintage Port from Vesuvio that I am aware of, even though other Symington properties did declare, (both SQVP and primary shippers, e.g. Warre's and Graham's). The only VP that I am aware of being produced by The Fladgate Partnership was Quinta de Vargellas, but it won't be released until some point in the future. I didn't get to try it.

Fun Fact: Overall, the first nine months of 2020 were the warmest **ever** recorded in Douro!



OVERVIEW

During Covid it was not possible to come to experience the 2020 Harvest by being in Portugal, as I have been for nearly 2 decades (Porto & Douro), but I was doing my Vintage Port Forecasts prior to that. Last year when the 2020 was released and I was going through my personal life “stuff” and moving to Portugal, and as soon as I landed here, my tours began. Unfortunately, there was no way or time to figure out how to possibly taste these 2020 Ports. And so, to catch up I have now tasted the 2020s, and next week begin with 2021s. Next year, I will be ready for 2022s and back on track with current vintage releases. 2020 represents my 12th official vintage evaluation, even though there were 3 other VP years in which I did “practice runs” before FTLOP was launched, (writing for another website).

Now that I am living here in Porto, it is far easier to access bottles of Vintage Port than ever before, in terms of samples from producers for this type of article. In the past, I was always reliant on others for assistance. Before embarking on the journey to taste my way through the 2020 Vintage Ports, (and upcoming 2021s for the end of December issue) I had tasted a few bottles from the earlier vintage during the 2022 Port Harvest Tour. Then I went to the USA last October and had the 2020 Noval Nacional. It was a fabulous young VP, but is not included here.

Those of you who either know me personally, have tasted wine or Port with me, or in the past have read these Vintage Reports ... are aware that if bottles are tasted “sighted” even if it is the ONLY time I will get to taste it, that “snapshot” view won’t make its way into my article. I could easily put the 96+ point Nacional in here from last year but wouldn’t do that! I don’t care who it is, but label bias is real. Those who believe they can rate regions for which they’re well known, and have friendships with ... or can sit looking at a wine and judging it with zero influence ... I don’t buy it. Nor is one single tasting of an infant Vintage Port while visiting a producer, enough time to make an accurate assessment of that Port. These young one’s change, and morph over several days. I will explain more about this when I get into my *methodology*.

Blind tasting multiple times, over several days was something I initiated with Vintage Ports. I don’t care if they are friends, world renowned critics, work for the most famous wine magazines or not. Many came before me and are far more famous and worked for globally recognized magazines/website and still do ... or did a brilliant job. A few of the most famous individuals came later. This has nothing to do with ego, mine is firmly in check and I don’t think I am a great writer by any stretch of the imagination. But I do proper blind evaluations, and if NOTHING else, I am *very* consistent, and do not care if I give my best industry friend(s) the lowest score, or a complete stranger or new producer the highest⁴ score. Nor do I ever change my score after

the flight is over, even when I finally get to see the actual label. And I never read other critics tasting notes or scores, until I have fully completed my own tastings and ratings. I put in way too much time and work to bother playing games like that.

In great years I will do extensive tastings with as many producers as possible, but years where it's immediately known that the weather or other factors complicated things, then I'll reduce the amount of VPs from small, medium, and large producers ... famous or first vintage, or Single Quinta VPs. You've all seen that in the past. I am proud of how many new producers or bottlings have been launched by FTLOP. I am just as happy to evaluate a SQVP that nobody has ever heard of, as I am a big name that everyone knows.

All of that out of the way, this is included so those who are *new* subscribers, realize they can trust ... and that there is zero influence in my tasting notes. No profit motives, no revenue from advertisers, no favors asked or done. It is strictly, what I smell and taste, one man's opinion. One with 40 years of Port loving experience. I began doing these reports "unofficially" 3 decades ago. My 1st official Vintage Forecast was 2000, but I had done a few prior to FTLOP. My methods haven't changed much over the years. Yeap, I purchased fancier bags (instead of paper ones when I first started) but ultimately, it is all about how these are handled, BLIND without bias.

METHODOLOGY

Where I live, not walkable to the Douro River section of Porto, reliable help is harder to come by, so what I was forced to do now, is order bags from Garrafeira Nacional, because my numbered bags are not here yet. I knew there'd be 12 bottles in a flight, and I photographed the bottles to use for promoting on social media or to use in this article. Then I removed the capsules and corks and replaced them with random T-stoppers and Madeira T-stoppers as well. This year was the first time I didn't have help to do the above and what follows next. I taped numbers to the bags, closed my eyes and shuffled the bags like a deck of cards. I then inserted the VP bottles in them and tied them shut with my eyes closed. When they were all bagged and the numbers were facing away from me, I moved all the bottles around. A few hours later, I came back and then lined up all 12 in numerical order. Crazy, yes, I know.

I taste ALL 12, twice in 24 hours. Once late morning, the other at night. Enough hours go by that I do not remember what was tasted or written about the wines. I use 9 parameters nowadays for every single bottle. I pre-print pages with the following parameters for 3 days

worth of tastings. I write the flight # and bottle # and have day/night on each page. The parameters are: NOS, WGT, MFL, STR, FLV, +/-, AGE, FIN, and RAT.

The young Ports are so similar in color with such minor variances that I do not believe anyone really cares about that one aspect. I've asked friends and been told it is a non-issue. Now I don't bother with color anymore (with these infants). Parameters above: Nose, Weight, Mouthfeel, Structure (acid/tannins), Flavors, +/- (significant strengths or weaknesses), Age (worthiness, to later determine the future drinking window ... one of my personal strengths after thousands of bottles of Port), Finish (length, flavors, structure involved) and Rating (the meaning of my + sign is: it represents ANY wine I taste, must have at least another full decade of solid drinkability and the ability to improve as well). So when you read my tasting note section, you will see how they TNs are constructed and why they seem a bit "formulaic" or at the very least, almost always have the same type of information in the same order. It has ALWAYS been this way. I do not feel the need in other articles to always include all 9 parameters though. TMI.

As mentioned, I taste twice a day. I taste a minimum of 3 days, so I have six "time elapsed" tasting notes for each VP. On day 3, IF I am not decided on STR because tannins are gaining or losing power or RAT, I am undecided on a score, because I do not take an average of my six notes, where I have given a range like 91-93 and that night a 92-94 ... it is not a strict average, because I get a feel from my detailed notes, not just scores, whether or not the wine has improved and the final day's range should count more than day 1, as an example. It is not pure math, but it is done with consistency and not just gut feel after many years of using the exact same system.

With 2020 and for the record, there were 11 of 30 VPs retained for a 4th day in total. I keep a list of them, for when I am done. For example: On the 4th day, of flight 2, with 12 bottles, I deem that 4 needed a 4th day, they are tasted together on that last day, turned backwards (eyes closed) so I am not looking at a number on the bag, when I taste. It is simple to feel which side is facing me. I mix the bags up in terms of "shuffle the deck" ... as I don't have helpers anymore. Then do the 4th day. After that 2nd tasting on day 4, ALL 12 bottles are removed and exposed.

I take one day off and use that day to allow my palate to refresh and write up the next flight's pages, with the 9 parameters. Then start the next flight. If it sounds boring, it is not to me. I love doing this. FYI, back in the vintages from 2000-2007 they were tasted 3x a day and always in Porto, as described on my 1st page of this newsletter. In 2007 the tannins eventually caused my tongue to bleed. I had to take two days off between flights, but had a lot less VPs than say a decade later with 2017s tasted in 2019, a decade apart. 2009 was when I decided that 2x a day was plenty and 3x a day was superfluous, if not counterproductive. My ONLY free time was at mealtime, otherwise I'd focus on my tastings when I came to Porto for a month at a time.

Last but not least ...

There is a MAJOR difference in this 2020 report from all other Forecasts, this is the elephant in the room. ALL other reports were with bottles approved by the IVDP, and my tastings were in June of the 2nd year post-harvest. This report is in November of the 3rd year. So there's a major difference. It is why the scores seem less varied than in prior years. These Vintage Ports are FAR more integrated with an extra year and a half of bottle age. Completely different animals.

But for my evaluation process, I stick to my tried and true process of solely writing about what I have smelled, tasted and believe their aging potential (range) is. Also, there are very few of these 30 bottles that were only recently bottled, which is noted in those specific tasting notes where that occurred. It should also be noted that there was not one single bottle with TCA, as that did occur in the past on rare occasions, but it happened *at least* once every single year. All 2020 bottles were clean, and part of that because TCA in **new** bottles of wine (and Vintage Port) have a significantly lower quantity of incidence with being corked. If you haven't noticed that, it can only be because you are fortunate (or not) to be drinking many more well-aged bottles.

As some of you paid attention to the cover page, now living here in Porto, I am able to get the bottles delivered directly to my home. That lack of hassle is incredibly nice. I used to hate to bother my good friend Carlos Macedo e Cunha, who was the person I was crediting for his years of assistance in accepting/delivering the bottles.

A 12-bottle flight took me a consistent 4-hours to evaluate. Part of that was handwriting the tasting notes. Either six or nine times, depending on the number of days. The math boiled down to 20 minutes for each wine, for six notes, or a minimum of 2 hours getting to know each bottle; and even longer when keeping them for a 4th day of tasting.

Some of you may be thinking that this does not sound like fun. For me it is, but it is also a lot of work, and dedication, but ultimate to help educated and promote ... all **For The Love Of Port!**

Next month, 2021s! But first, the 2020 tasting notes:

2020 TASTING NOTES

2020 Alves de Sousa Vintage Port – Now in their 4th generation of the family's operation, Tiago began his winemaking duties in 2003. His sister Patricia is the financial director, but their father Domingos (who is still involved today) took over the modern-day company in 1987 and produced their first vintage of DOC Douro wine in 1992, plus acquired a handful of properties along the way. Today, the family owns six properties with a total of 135 hectares. This 2020 was first tasted "sighted" during our Port Harvest Tour in September. I was very eager to try all 4 of their 2020 VPs blind and mixed in into my tasting. The grapes for this Port come from two specific properties, Oliveirinha in the Cima Corgo and Qta. da Gaivosa in the Baixo Corgo. Plum and floral notes lead the charge aromatically, supported by black licorice, Kalamata, plus a hint of mint, and tar. Medium in weight, this showed more density on day 1, and by day 3 it was less so, a bit unusual. The structure was solid, with generous, crisp acidity and tannins that seemed more potent during our visit in the fall but showed moderate power during this tasting. The fruit was soft, warm and appealing, led by plum and ripe fig flavors with a medium-long finish. The drinking window: 2028-2056. 20% abv. **92+ points ~ 11/16/23**

2020 Alves de Sousa "by Quinta da Gaivosa" *Amphitheatrum* Vintage Port – Limited Edition bottling. Once acquired by Domingos Alves de Sousa, this unique century-old vineyard produced its first single vineyard designated Tinto, in 2003. It is the oldest of the 6 vineyard properties owned by the family, has a large variance in altitude, and sustains more than 30 grape varieties. The name comes from the parcel which stretches alongside a natural amphitheater. With 4 VPs from this harvest, Tiago and his family are bullish on the unique conditions of 2020, and this "Single Plot" Vintage Port delivers the rationale. Glass staining dark inky color. A fascinating smoky woody note, briary blackcurrant, cocoa, and esteva round out this exotic aromatic profile. Medium-full and massively fruited, seductively mouth-filling and impressively balanced by aggressive acidity and moderately grippy tannins that show off after the swallow. A very sweet berry filled entry, quickly turns dry as the tannins take over and put their stamp on a persistent attack on the long finish. If I was 30 years younger ... I'd buy cases! During vindima, the family mentioned that this particular VP will be held for a later release. Now I understand why! 19.5% abv. Drinking window: 2035-2065+. **95+ points ~ 11/16/23**



2020 Alves de Sousa's Quinta da Gaivosa Vintage Port – This is a wonderful place to visit and the hub of activity for the family, with five other properties to manage as well. When first tasting this Port back in September, I learned there is a lot of Sousão in the blend. While I prefer the Douro version of the grape to that of Vinhão from the Minho, (Vinho Verde) it is not one of my “go to” grapes when bottled on its own. That being said, this Port really captured my attention, in a good way. Deeply extracted and one of the darkest of the flight. Black & blue briary berry notes along with black olives and rose petals, provide the aromatic intrigue, and it offers a complexity to be paid attention to. Viscous, round and mouth-filling, with excellent vibrancy of the acidity and ripe, fine grained tannins provide stellar structure here and the reason why this will age so easily. The dry blackcurrant, and ripe fig with a hint of black olive tapenade, together deliver a mildly sweet profile which is what I find attractive in top Vintage Ports. The big berry infused, expansive and enduring finish won me over on day three of the tasting. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2062. **94+ points ~ 11/16/23**

2020 Alves de Sousa's Quinta da Oliveirinha Vintage Port – According to the back label, "Oliveirinha" translates to: *little olive tree estate*. This property was acquired in 2007 and the 12 hectares of vines have been designated letter A. One of four 2020 Vintage Ports produced by Alves de Sousa, which emphasizes their commitment to this specific year. Penetrating bouquet of fresh lavender, blackcurrant, black olive, and cassis were riveting, (even more than I'd thought when first tasting this during our Port Harvest Tour). Chewy and round, medium-full-bodied on the palate with exacting acidity and ripe granular drying tannins. Medium-sweet upon initial sips, filled with boisterous flavors of cassis, anise, and vibrant red grapy flesh, a very tasty young VP with in-your-face character. Delivering intricacy and late tannins on the multi-swallow and juicy persistent finish. Held over for a 4th day of tasting to lock in a *final* score. 20.5% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2060. **94+ points ~ 11/16/23**

2020 J. H. Andresen Vintage Port – A boutique Port producer that was founded in 1845, by none other than Jan Heinrich Andresen of Danish descent who stopped in Portugal, (on his planned journey to America) but never left and wound up settling in Porto. Andresen's Ports come from a Douro property with 40 hectares and this 2020 is from a blend of Touriga Franca, Touriga Nacional and Tinta Roriz guided by Andresen's excellent winemaker, Alvaro van Zeller. What struck me on day 1, the nose of this Port was tight as a snare drum, and it wasn't really until 30 hours later that I was able to coax any semblance of fragrance from it. And then the bouquet exploded with evocative earthy scents of forest floor, wild mushrooms, esteva, brambly blackberry, cocoa, and minerals. It was like someone flipped a switch after my first two of six blind tastings that include this JHA. Medium+ weight, round, warm and granular in texture. The acidity was light but in synch and the tannins were mild mannered and chalky. Tart Damson plum, pomegranate, kalamata and cocoa provide an enticing but rather dry Port flavor profile. The aftertaste of the Andresen is quite long, and the tannins arrive late to the party. A well-made 2020, that is pleasing and will require at least a decade to begin to show what it's really made of, but I don't sense it is a long-term ager. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2035 up to 2052. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Barros Vintage Port – Founded in 1913. Personally, I've always considered Barros' strong suit their wood-aged Ports and therefore even if I was able to see the label, expectations would not have taken me to "this place." The Barros VP was the last wine of my third and final flight. There were some other pretty big players in that flight from what I was tasting, so this did not stand out in my memory as one of the biggest or brightest. I am sure it is the highest rating I've ever had for a Barros VP. Initially the first 3 tastings (1½ days) offered little on the nose, another good reason to do more days than less. Exhibiting an excellent array of aromas that included: lavender, raspberry, spicy note of anise, black licorice, and kirsch. Medium+ weight, viscous and harmonious across the tongue, simply a beautiful mouthfeel from the first day, to the fourth. Structurally, the acidity was crisp and mouthwatering, while the tannins were one of the few things to change over the four days, starting out as refined and dusty and ending as "chiseled, upper-lip-grip, BIG and ripe". On the palate this delivered mostly purple and black fruits, with Damson plum and blackcurrant used twice each and raspberry and chocolate as well. Every day ended with LONG and tannic finish, and also warm and tangy with excellent persistence. In summary, this is a classic VP that I would drink (of if younger: purchase!) any day of the week, with a long decant for now, but this is definitely one to put away in the cellar. As this is the last Vintage Port listed, spoiler alert: in the entire 3 flights, this was **the biggest surprise** of all. Not only were my ratings of the Barros consistent, tasting frontwards and backwards in terms of the numbered bags on the bottles helped to skew any memory I would have possibly had. (I really do everything possible to avoid knowing until everything in a flight is completed, even bottles finished after three days, when a few are left for a fourth day.) Anyway, this is exactly why all individuals or magazines that score for public consumption, should do blind evaluations. There were 5.095 bottles produced. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2055.

94+ points ~ 11/25/23



2020 Broadbent Vintage Port – A last minute surprise, delivered just in the nick of time, and it was appreciated. It was the final blend, but not yet bottled for sale; vinified by the team of Nick Delaforce, as well as Daniel and Dirk Niepoort. Bartholomew Broadbent's first VP was 1994, and it wasn't until the following general declaration (1997) where the Broadbent Ports really hit their stride. I remember both, very well, as if it was yesterday. This 2020, had a fantastic bouquet from the first tasting on day one, yet it did change quite a bit the next couple of days. Initially, a very spicy, mostly red profile with rose petals, cinnamon, red licorice and raspberry. By the third day, there were notes of forest floor, brambly blackberries and boysenberry with the spice changing to a minty overtone. I noticed this change during my evening session on day two and it continued to unfurl the next day as more air space entered the bottle. Medium+ body, with solid density and a mercurial weightiness across the tongue. There was a bit of warming spirit the first day, which fully dissipated by the final tasting. The acidity was profound and put my salivary glands into hyperdrive, while the tannins were drying, granular and a bit aggressive. I found the structural components a net positive, especially for the aging potential. Overall, this Broadbent is approachable, although I'd suggest a significant decant for drinking it while young, and its ripeness level should appeal to all Port lovers. Drinking window: 2030-2058. **93+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Burmester Vintage Port – Exporters initially, a partnership forged between friends and Londoners, Henry Burmester & John Nash, 273 years ago, in 1750. A few generations later, in 1834, Johann Wilhelm Burmester (JWB is still on labels today) took on the challenge of his ancestor's company and turned it into a great success. Today the company is owned by Sogevinus. In my opinion, Burmester is one of the finest old former British Port firms to create exquisite wood-aged Ports, try on the 1890, 1955 or 1963 Colheitas for size! Now to the 2020: This was a rare example of where a nascent VP shows its best on day one of a blind evaluation and never exhibits that same brilliance again. I can't remember another occurrence. That said, this delivered fine fragrant floral aromas of lilac and lavender, and other scents of purple plummy perfume. Medium-bodied, immediately approachable with a soft and elegant appeal, bolstered by balancing acidity and refined, well-integrated tannins. Grapy, plum, generous, and sweet flavors with a briary seductive nature are delightful and the finish is medium-long. Retained for a final evaluation on the fourth day of the second flight. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2031-2048. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Cálem Vintage Port – Established in 1859, by António Alves Cálem Júnior, who acquired Quinta da Foz in 1885. In the late 1990's the property was then sold to Rozes Port, who flipped the company to Sogevinus a half a decade later. Quinta da Foz, the home base of Jose Maria Cálem was sold out from under him circa 2005 and he moved to his other property, Quinta do Sagrado. But within a decade that too was sold a few years back (and I hear he has a new project) but the Cálem firm, which does exceedingly well under the auspices of Sogevinus, also gets its grapes from Quinta da Foz and Sagrado, practically next door to one another in the Pinhão Valley. Today, the majority of the grapes for Cálem Ports come from Quinta do Arnozelo, which belongs to Burmester (I believe) as it is hard to keep this all straight. The well-made 2020 Cálem Vintage Port provides complexity in its aromatics, with lovely rose petal, black olives, graphite, pure grape and a perfumed blend of wild berries. Medium-bodied and round, mouth-filling and warm initially, this put on a bit of weight on day three and was smoother and had lost some of that warming spirit encountered early on. Structurally sound, with bracing acidity and tannins that were firm and had some modest upper-lip grip, especially just after the very long and drying finish. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2028-2057. There were 5.230 bottles produced.

93+ points ~ 11/25/23

2020 Churchill's Vintage Port – Johnny Graham is one of the nicest people you will meet in the Port trade and it was a real pleasure to see him at The Factory House recently. He founded the company originally as Churchill Graham's in 1981 and then changed the name to Churchill's which is certainly intriguing for consumers. There are many solid vintages along the path, and this may be one of the finest efforts in quite a few years! The nose of this Port really protrudes, in a good way and is loaded with fresh aromatics from the initial floral note of rose blossom, to the brambly blackcurrant and ripe strawberry fragrances that exhibit an extra spicy essence of esteva, and a hint of cocoa on the very end. Medium-full weight, by day 3, this put on some extra weight and was creamy in texture and voluptuous across the palate. There was a pretty significant improvement from day one and this Port has gained further complexity and the acid which is vibrant and juicy, along with refined soft and seamless tannins, the structure is a significant strength of this fine VP. Purity is its hallmark, and it starts with the fresh crushed grape flavor, briary blueberry, and some milk chocolate towards the excellent persistent finish, filled with soft yet omnipresent tannins, which show off its approachability and age worthiness. Drinking window: 2028-2054. 20% abv. 3,200 cases were produced. **94+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Churchill's Quinta da Gricha Vintage Port – See above for Johnny Graham's story with 42 years of owning the outstanding Churchill's Port firm. He brilliantly purchased Gricha, a top-notch south bank property in the Cima Corgo, back in 1999. This move allowed Churchill's to further expand production and was able to accomplish that goal with very high caliber grapes. Both Churchill's and this specific vintage of Quinta da Gricha perform admirably. Briary patch black cherry, blackberry and loads of cocoa powder provide a gorgeous and focused aromatic profile. Smooth and unctuous, the mouthfeel is soft and chewy with fine density and a supple structure. The acidity puts the salivary glands into overdrive and the tannins of this Gricha show a little more oomph than the Churchill's itself. This 2020 has not only the stuffing, but fine flavors of ripe plum, boysenberry, spicy olive and a sweet fig note right before the medium-long finish. Drinking window: 2031-2058. 19.5% abv. 600 cs. produced. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Dow's Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port – No need for any introduction here. Located in the heart of the Cima Corgo just a stone's throw from the Pinhão bridge, with vineyard parcels that vary in altitude, and where greatness comes from grapes picked up high as well as closer to the river. On days 1 through 3, there was a marked improvement, and the bar was already set pretty high on day one. The bouquet was full of floral scents: violets, roses and lavender, and then ripe plum and wild blueberry essence added to this intricate elixir. Medium-full, mercurial and mellifluous across the tongue, this was an absolute pleasure to ponder. Blessed with intensity, ratcheted up a notch by the racy acidity and muscular but non-aggressive tannins, the structure here is as good as any Vintage Port encountered from 2020. Complexity entered the frame on the second day with fully ripe blueberry, a touch of tart lingonberry, and pure Welch's grape juice, sweeter than usual for Dow's. Fantastic sips and slurps with an enduring smooth and lively finish that highlighted the length and equilibrium of this fabulous youngster. Simply put, this is the best Bomfim I have tasted, which after having the great pair from 2015 and 2018, is quite the compliment to Charles Symington! Limited en primeur release of 1,200 x 750 ml bottles. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2032-2068. **96+ points ~ 11/16/23**



2020 DR Port Vintage Port – Those Port enthusiasts who recognize the name, are few and far between and in the USA that goes triple ... with some notable exceptions. 😊 Agri-Roncão Vinicola, LDA., the parent company also owns a little known, but excellent property, Quinta de Linhares in Vinho Verde, while the Douro vineyard of DR is known as Quinta da Levandeira do Roncão. To be blunt, I've never really considered this property as making high end Vintage Port, (although 2011 and 2017 were quite impressive) as their niche is as a remarkable producer of some of Douro's greatest wood-aged and White Ports. Onto 2020. Bottled in 2023. Compelling aromas of marionberry, plum, milk chocolate and kirsch initially, and a day later, some spicy herbs which provided freshness and intrigue. It also put on weight from start to finish, medium-full bodied the last two days, unctuous, velvety, and mellifluous. Framed by ample acidity, and cheeky chalky tannins with moderate grip. So far ... so good. The flavor profile is where this DR really shines, with black fig, currants, licorice, grenadine and bittersweet dark chocolate, there is a mix of sweet and dry flavors, but the finish is sophisticated and sustained. The superpower of this 2020 DR is simply its incredibly delicious nature. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2058. **94+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Feuerheerd Vintage Port – For those that care about the history of this prestigious Port shipper, it was founded in 1815, by Dietrich Feuerheerd who headed up one of the great but little-known Port firms a couple of centuries ago. The Barros family became involved a little more than a century later (1927) and Feuerheerd was later merged with Hutcheson, a name now little more than an afterthought, beyond the most serious of Port geeks and historians. Some of Feuerheerd's Quinta holdings included Zimbro, Bom Retiro and Quinta do Roncão too. Sogevinus acquired Barros in 2006 and spun off Feuerheerd a year later to the Barros family which retained ownership of Quinta d. Matilde, still in the hands of Manuel Ângelo Barros. Alvaro van Zeller is the winemaker and along with his brother Fernando, own Feuerheerd's brand nowadays, in collaboration with Senhor Barros. It is not easy to keep track of these old families and their brands, some of which (like this one) has changed hands many times. Feuerheerd's vineyards are located in the Douro's Torto Valley. On to the tasting note: A cunning mélange of explosive fragrances of fresh carnations, black licorice, raspberry and an intense sense of black cherry, spicy and complex overall. Smooth and robust, with medium+ weight, this mouth-filling viscous 2020 was mighty tasty from inception through the final day of tasting. Mouthwatering vibrant acidity maintained the balance, while the chiseled firm tannins provide stellar aging potential. Dominant cherry and ripe blackberry fruit and an herbal streak are sweet and flavorful; the finish is very long and filled to the brim with grippy tannins. Retained for final analysis for a 4th day. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2032-2065. **94+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Graham's Vintage Port – Happy Birthday, as Graham's celebrated their 200th Anniversary with this Bicentenary Limited Edition bottling, (1820-2020). How time flies in the Port trade! Three of the Symington family property's best grapes were blended into this important bottling, from Quinta dos Malvedos, Quinta do Tua (on the opposite side of the Rio Tua's confluence with the Douro), and Quinta da Vila Velha which is privately owned by one of the Symington family members. An expansive nose of enticing and intricate aromas including briar patch blueberry and blackberry, rock rose, cocoa and a hint of menthol/minty scents. Full-bodied and voluptuous from the first sip; rich, warming and hedonistic. The tannins are firm and chiseled, while the acidity provides the remaining balance and age worthiness to this outstanding 2020 Vintage Port. Ripe figs, blueberry and earthy mintiness with a scoche of mocha create the perfect profile for this very special Graham's bottling. The exuberant and persistent end game is long, warming, and multifaceted. Congratulations and best wishes for the next 200 years, to all team members of Symington Family Estates. Charles, you did your family proud! 20% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2070+. Limited en primeur release of 3,000 x 750 ml bottles. **97+ points ~ 11/16/23**



2020 Kopke Vintage Port – For the past 4 decades of my Port imbibing, it's always been my understanding that 1638 and *Kopke* were synonymous as the Oldest Port Wine Company. A handful of other companies have updated their own dates of establishment, and some now make the claim that Kopke has, for centuries. Revisionist history? We'll leave that topic for another day! The 2020 Kopke VP: Exhibiting an excellent array of fragrant plum, grenadine, lavender and strawberry. Medium-bodied, fresh, round, smooth and unctuous; loaded with crisp acidity and ripe chalky tannins. I held onto this Kopke for a 4th day to make sure I was happy with my evaluation, and it really did not change. I inserted it into a flight of 3, pared down from the original 10 it was up against, in my 2nd flight. The medium length finish, which I followed closely was one of the things that kept this from a higher score, but I did like this 2020, albeit I felt it was a bit too tart, even comparing it after the fact, to its Sogevinus stable mates. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2029-2048. There were 6.875 bottles produced. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Niepoort “Bioma” Vintage Port – This 2020 Bioma VP was bottled in 2023, typical of Bioma, which is always bottled late, pushing the envelope nearly a full 3 years after harvest. Naturally crafted from the grapes of Niepoort’s Vinha da Pisca vineyard, produced in a sustainable and “Biologico” manner, with vines of close to 90 years of age and some well past a century. The 2020 Bioma offers dark and earthy aromatics that include smoky blackberry, black pepper, forest floor, olive tapenade, and a hint of menthol, yet this all managed to remain fresh and intricate by nature. Medium-full bodied, from the first day this was massive and rather mouthcoating, concentrated and unctuous. My final comment on day one was a question: “Beauty or the Beast”? Kept a full four days to watch its evolution, it lost some of its big young pup presence in terms of the mouthfeel and became more round, opulent, and graceful, while maintaining its body weight. The sheer vibrancy of the acidity was obvious throughout, and provided balance and harmony, while the tannins were big, chalky, drying and grippy the first couple of days and only *slightly* less so, by the time my 7th tasting note was completed. The flavor profile is similar to the nose, dark and earthy, also seemingly quite dry but that could be due as much to the acidity level as to any perceived lack of RS. Blackcurrant, cassis, licorice and tart, if not under-ripe brambly blackberry flavors prevailed with a long and drying tannic finish. If you plan to drink this young, my suggestion is ... don’t. Otherwise, a LONG decant is strongly advised! I wouldn’t open a bottle for another dozen years, and my sample would have been best off, if tasted again, a week after it was first opened. 20.5% abv. Drinking window: 2035-2066.

93+ points ~ 11/25/23

2020 Palmer Vintage Port – “A tribute to the memory of Samuel Palmer.” This bottling is the fourth declaration of the decade for this *brand* that is atop of the Alvaro & Fernando van Zeller’s Barão de Vilar Port empire. Like a handful of others that I’ve noticed, the Palmer was bottled in 2023. Surprisingly, this was one of the most consistent 2020 VPs in terms of WYSIWYG; my notes and scores were shockingly similar and of course, tasted blind there really was no way for me to remember which Port-in-bag, was which, except by the number and I don’t really focus on that dynamic during tastings. I view that as cheating, which defeats the purpose and all of the time spent in hiding the identity of the bottles to remain fully without label bias. Back to the TN. The bouquet was perfumed by lavender and other scents of fresh flowers, grenadine, ripe cherry and a wisp of mint. The palate went in a different direction, medium-bodied, juicy and vibrant with ample acidity and chalky, ripe upper lip-gripping tannins. Easy to approach right from day one, there was a dry and earthy essence that I found intriguing, with gorgeous symmetry that is the hallmark of this Palmer. Soft, generous and lithe, with plum, grenadine, a hint of esteva and tapenade; the finish was medium in length and otherwise flawless. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2028-2055. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Pintas Vintage Port – Founded in 2001, Wine & Soul, is the parent company of Pintas, whose vineyard property is in Vale de Mendiz, in Douro's Cima Corgo, prime vineyard territory for not only great table wines, but certainly for Port too. The company is owned by Jorge Serodio Borges & his wife, Sandra Tavares da Silva. Both are well known throughout the Douro and realistically throughout Portugal, and many other countries too due to their winemaking acumen. They've had a ton of experience in making wines and Ports for other companies, as well as their own. Their vineyard has lots of old vines, many are more than 80 years of age and overall, it contains at least 35 native grape varieties. The nose of this Port is sophisticated in addition to being spicy and earthy, it exhibits notes of Cran-Apple, black cherry, pomegranate, red licorice, and mocha. Really striking! Medium-bodied and without being weighty, it is soft yet viscous, mercurial, and elegant across the palate. The acidity is succulent and precise, and the structure is reinforced by firm chalky tannins with underlying power. The purity of the medium-sweet fig, black cherry and raspberry fruit flavors topped off with a hint of cocoa, ends with a tour de force super-long finish. It's not easy to find such a young Vintage Port with this degree of overall balance, exquisite approachability, and long-term aging potential without possessing mouth-ripping tannins ... all under a single cork. I'll go out on a limb to say the stylishness of this Pintas exceeds any prior Vintage Port this couple has produced, and I have tasted many, if not most of them back to their inception. A remarkable achievement and this will strengthen their reputation beyond the exceptional level they've already attained. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2026-2072.

96+ points ~ 11/25/23



2020 Poças Vintage Port – Established in 1918 and now in the hands of the family's 4th consecutive generation, Poças is a well-known boutique Port producer of high standing in the trade and with global consumers too. Gorgeous purity of fruit comes across with a bouquet of blackberry, cassis and figs, with perfumed hints of blossoming rose bushes, and sweet grenadine aromas. Medium-bodied, smooth, concentrated, and with a silky mouthfeel, bolstered by crisp, mouthwatering acidity and ripe tannins with a sense of upper-lip grip. In addition to mostly black crushed berries, this 2020 VP exhibits medium-dry flavors with a supporting cast of Kalamata, and black licorice characteristics. This is a very well-made Poças VP that finishes long and tannic, with a dry edge and delicious pure berry essence. 19.5% abv. Drinking window: 2028-2063.

93+ points ~ 11/16/23

2020 Quevedo Vintage Port – By now this should be a household name, as Quevedo has been around with their family's own label since 1993. This Port's grapes hailed from their Quinta da Trovisca vineyard, which I have yet to visit. When first nosing this VP, I could immediately smell the slightly high-toned character of Touriga Nacional. In addition, there is some plum perfume, and notes of briary blueberry, black tea, black pepper and blackberry. Overall, this VP seemed to be in an *odd moment* in its evolution, without any major flaw, just lacking the integration that I found with the other 11 Vintage Ports from within the first flight. This 2020 stood out from the crowd and maybe I need to try another bottle. This Port was seemingly extremely dry on the palate, (which I often love in VP) and had very precise acidity and prominent chalky tannins. The tart cranberry, rhubarb and pomegranate flavors had some warm alcohol showing through on all three days, and the finish was medium in length. 19.5% abv. Drinking window: 2027-2048.

88+ points ~ 11/16/23

2020 Quinta do Crasto Vintage Port – From this renowned Quinta that dates back to 1615, the infinity swimming pool, olive oil(s) and ancient vineyard inspired table wines from the Roquette family-owned property, are what legends are made of. This also happens to be one of the most famous frequently visited and hospitable places in the entire Douro region. On to their 2020 VP. Earthy notes of pipe tobacco, tea leaves, lavender, herbs and yes, ripe grapes too. The mouthfeel is round and seductively silky soft, the structure is also genteel with refined tannins and well-delineated acidity both providing symmetry and elegance to this Port. While the finish is long and berry filled, for me, this Vintage Port was more akin to a solid and berry tasty LBV Port. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2026-2050. **92+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Quinta do Infantado Vintage Port – Founded in 1816 by the royal family of Portugal at the time and later sold to the Roseira family in 1904. João Roseira owns this single quinta property today and his son is also very involved in the business and produced labels for their table wines and I believe he is going to take over as the winemaker too. Former sellers of Port wine to the larger British shippers, Infantado was a rebel (João covets that persona to this day!) and was the first independent producer to vinify and bottle their own Vintage Port, in the late 1970s. The 2020 Quinta do Infantado sample delivered, was the only 375 ml bottle that was received, so it was senseless to pretend this could be tasted blind. Therefore, it was the only Port which was evaluated “sighted”. Thanks to the rebel! 😊 Nonetheless, it was treated as fairly as possible, of course. Infantado produced 1,101 bottles in 375 ml, 5,698 in 750 ml, and 212 bottled in magnums. Intensely perfumed nose of strawberry, raspberry jam, spicy black licorice and floral fragrances. Light-medium weight, Soft, smooth and elegant with an edge of finesse, the acidity was near-perfect and the tannins were soft, refined and drying. João appreciates direct, so to be fair, had this been blind, I would have surmised that someone had substituted an LBV instead of providing a Vintage Port. This is not meant as a slight, just an observation. The flavor profile was exemplary, offering a dry, spicy red fruited entry of marionberry and rhubarb, with a touch of sweetness from juicy pomegranate. The overall balance was undeniable, and the finish was medium-long and very tasty and carried on the shoulders of the acidity. A nice little number, yet it was not quite in the same league as most of what came before it in this flight. 19.5% abv. Drinking window: 2025-2045. **89+ points ~ 11/20/23**

2020 Quinta do Portal Vintage Port – Paulo Coutinho is the only winemaker Portal has had, since it began bottling Port and Douro wine under its own name. Next year will be Portal’s and Paulo’s 30th Anniversary. This was one of the 2020s that I kept for a 4th day to see if it had budged. Aromatically speaking, this immediately captured my attention and only gained further depth as days went by; scintillating notes of rose petals, brambly cherry, milk chocolate, and plummy perfume were intoxicating. Unctuous and mercurial across the palate, not quite full-bodied but close, this Portal exhibited a seductively creamy texture. What was so captivating about this Port? It was the big-boned structure, the concentrated purity of the fruit and overall equilibrium. The firm tannins show their restraint yet obvious power and will enable many decades of great drinking. The flavors are sweet, (I wrote in my notes, I believed this to be Graham’s) and pure, with loads of acid to keep the residual sugar in balance, and fresh. Brash ripe boysenberry and briary black plum dominated, and the sweet ripe fruit was intense and deeply concentrated. An outstanding classic young VP! Drinking window: 2032-2070. 20% abv. **95+ points ~ 11/16/23**



2020 Portal's Quinta dos Muros Vintage Port – Wine has been made here since 1881, but Paulo Coutinho, the original winemaker from Portal, was not on hand back then. However he's been making the Ports and Douro wine at Portal since 1994 and at this new project on the eastern slope of the Pinhão River Valley, since its inception in the modern era. The 2020 Muros (translates to "walls") is a very consistent Vintage Port in that it show similarly throughout all three days of the tastings. Tight on the first day, but the refined nose was far more open by the second day of the tasting. Loads of purple floral notes, lilac, lavender and violets upfront and then plenty of plum, with hints of black pepper, herbs and minerality. Structurally sound with lip smacking acidity and soft gently caressing tannins. A nice combination of succulent, briary red and purple fruit flavors, a touch of grenadine and black licorice add to the complexity of this well made and voluptuous VP. Initially a bit warm, but that calmed down by day 3. Overall, this Muros offered a lot to love, and the best is yet to come! 20% abv. Drinking window: 2033-2054. **93+ points ~ 11/25/23**

2020 Quinta do Tedo Vintage Port – Now in its 31st year of operation, Tedo has grown to 35 acres, with A-rated vineyards and more than two dozen indigenous grapes on their property. Tedo's 2020 was consistent throughout all days of the tasting. Fresh fragrances from day 1 included black cherry, pure grape and herbal scents, together, nicely perfumed. Medium-bodied and lithe, with a smooth and juicy mouthfeel, the tannins are soft and became quite mild by the end of the third day of tasting. Generously fruited with black and purple berry flavors that are sweet and brambly, this 2020 ended with a long finish with tannins that arrived late but were still rather refined. Drinking window: 20-2058. To sum it up, this is the best VP produced by Quinta do Tedo since 2011, which is saying a mouthful. 19.5% abv. **93+ points ~ 11/16/23**

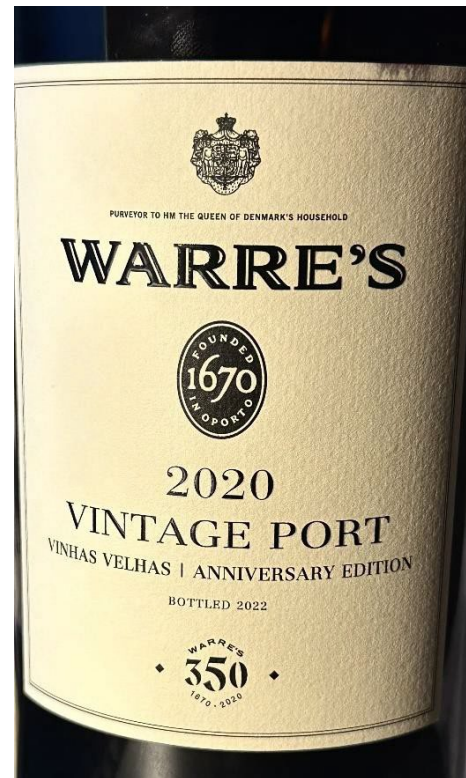
2020 Quinta do Vallado Vintage Port – Cousins Francisco Ferreira and Olazabal share the winemaking duties at Vallado. The property was established back in 1716, and later owned and operated by Dona Antonia Adelaide Ferreira. Initially there was a high-toned fragrance, accompanied by violet, fennel and black fruits. Medium-bodied, a touch of alcohol poked through, and I kept this VP for a 4th day of tasting, but the alcohol was still noticeable, as was its beautifully elegant mouthfeel. The tannins were soft and refined compared to others in the same flight, while the flavor profile delivered sweet ripe cherry, violet candy, grenadine and some warming spirit. The aftertaste offered freshness and a soft underbelly and was of medium length. Drinking window: 2026-2045. 20.5% abv. **90+ points ~ 11/16/23**

2020 Ramos Pinto's Quinta de Ervamoira Vintage Port – Ramos Pinto was founded in 1880 and since 1990, most shares belong to the Champagne House, Louis Roederer Group. From their establishment in the early 3rd quarter of the 19th century, it took Ramos Pinto 37 years to launch their very first Vintage Port, but they'd already been producing single-harvest dated wood-aged Ports in the late 1800s. Managing Director, Jorge Rosas (nephew of Joao Nicolau de Almeida) and his cousin, Ana Rosas the Port winemaker pretty much oversee the operations of the company nowadays. Quinta de Ervamoira was acquired soon after the April 25th, 1974, Carnation Revolution took place in Portugal. This 2020 Vintage Port has a high-toned scent, ("tanky") maybe due to a significant proportion of Touriga Nacional in the blend (?) and also delivers notes of blueberry, violet candy, and beautifully fresh crushed grape. Medium-bodied, smooth, dense, and chewy with a supple spine of acid and moderately ripe chalky tannins. The entry is immediately sweet but then shows an underlying dry if not tart silhouette with briary blackcurrant, rhubarb, cranberry and note of tobacco. A medium length finish accompanies the

drying tannins. 19.5% abv. Drinking window: 2027-2048. There were 9,200 bottles produced.

90+ points ~ 11/25/23

2020 Van Zeller's & Co. Vintage Port – Another birthday party in a bottle. Happy 400th Anniversary, with this *Special Edition* bottling, (1620-2020). "The Oldest Port Wine Family." Who am I to question friends. But these types of claims are springing up everywhere nowadays. I do believe Cristiano van Zeller, because I have never met a Portuguese person from the north of Portugal, who does not claim to be related to he and his family. But I digress. Bottled in Sept. 2022, foot trodden in stone lagares, 2,800 bottles will be released, from old vineyard parcels owned by the van Zeller family. Some bottles had been buried in the Atlantic Ocean, and I believe that Cristiano's daughter, Francisca, recently was going to do a deep dive off the coast to retrieve a trio of them. I do not know how many are in the ocean, but if I get to try one, I promise to report back here! From the very first day, I observed this 2020 was something special. Another one that I kept for 4 full days of tasting. I had to see that last day, (as with others) whether this would fall off the proverbial cliff. It did not. Aromatically, there was complexity from day one. A touch of char, black olive, scent of menthol and pine tar with a brief flirt with roasted chestnut that fit in with the char but was not even around for the second tasting later that same evening. Over the next few days, the fragrances changed a bit and while there were still similarities, (menthol morphed to licorice, for example) I also nosed grenadine, raspberry and loads of milk chocolate. The palate which began as fluid, soft and granular, became more dense, brash and unctuous. The structure was impeccable and driven by crisp underpinnings of acidity and drying, ripe and aggressive tannins, that softened *a bit* by day 3 (and 4). The flavors were delectable: black plum, Cheri-Suisse liqueur, ripe fig, blackcurrant and bittersweet chocolate. This was like drinking a big Porty milkshake, seamless, delicious, and deftly balanced from start to finish. And, that finish was spectacular in length, along with tannins that weighed in big-time with a semblance of upper-lip grip, but it went on and on for minutes, driven by the acidity. From Noval to Quinta de Roriz and Vale d. Maria, to Aveleda to this new van Zeller project; in Cristiano I trust (his cousin Alvaro too, who was a part of this!). And yet my appreciation for this Vintage Port, has nothing to do with our friendship, nor did I know it was his at the time of the blind tasting. It was simply one of the greatest VPs I evaluated from the 2020 harvest. 20.5% abv. Drinking window: 2030-2075. **95+ points ~ 11/20/23**



2020 Warre's Vinhas Velhas Vintage Port – The 2020 vintage had numerous Port houses celebrating important birthdays and *Warre's Anniversary Edition*, is a monumental example, at 350 years of age: “The first British port company established in Portugal, which has been family-owned throughout.” Look at the actual date, 1670 ... congratulations are well deserved by the owners! Produced from old vine parcels at both Quinta da Cavadinha (53%) and Quinta do Retiro (47%). Tight-nosed initially, but once open it offered some beautiful earthy characteristics such as forest floor, fresh cut violets, kalamata, and herbs. Medium-bodied, smooth, and velvety, deeply concentrated and well-balanced, with fine grained tannins and crisp acidity. Voluptuous and densely packed plum and red berry fruit flavors are sweet and juicy on entry, elongated by drying tannins that lead to a lingering finish. Retained for a 4th day of tasting. An outstanding Warre's, and a worthy Vintage Port with which to commemorate such a major anniversary! Bottled 5/22. 20% abv. Drinking window: 2028-2060+. Limited en primeur release of 3,000 x 750 ml bottles. **94+ points ~ 11/16/23**



Third and final flight of 2020 Vintage Ports.

2020 Vintage Conclusions

The extreme heat of the growing season is what the vintage will long be remembered for. It shaped the level of residual sugar that made this an overall sweeter group of Ports, than what is typically found. Most of the bottles that I tasted, started off ripe and sweet, even if they ended up dry. It is a hallmark of 2020 and can't be ignored. The tannins are also something that I noticed were very prevalent from this particular year and again, more than most. Yes, 2003 and 2007 come to mind as other years where the tannins showed a lot of power, possibly even more than the 2020. Likely because the heat forced more old vines to be used, and grapes from the higher altitudes. I wasn't there to witness, nor see lagares, or tread in them, or hear the stories, or taste the grapes from the vines, or Ports directly from lagares in September 2020, like almost every other year. The proof is in the tasting.

Extra time in bottle: It is impossible to overlook nearly 1.5 years longer, to be exact. The integration was greater and there is no underestimating that effect on scores being a tad higher than previous vintages, some ... even better ones, on average. And possibly even great ones like 2011. But 2020, while not up to par with some recent generally declared years (last decade), is a very worthy vintage for Port wine and I believe will be looked back at with respect, similarly to 2001, 2005, and 2015 to name a few years worthy of mention with this exact type of dynamic.

Speaking of dynamics, here are some other tell-tale signs I observed from my evaluation of 2020s. For drinking young, long decants will be required, not for sediment but for pure drinkability. Likely, because of extra time in bottle, there was more overall “symmetry” with what I tasted. There was nothing in the mid-80 point range and very few that were not worthy of a low-90s rating or higher. Then again, I had no 98 pointers and only one 97 and a couple of 96 and trio of 95 ... but the percentage of 95 and up was possibly higher than any vintage I’ve ever tasted. So, for those that may think this was about “score creep” ... sorry, no! It was about consistency. Let’s forget ratings for a moment. Do you want to drink scores or very solid VPs? 2020 offers some real bargains. Before writing this specific page, I did check Wine-Searcher Pro and noticed some stunning prices. But, you can do your own homework. Again, extra time in bottle ... or sheer quality of the hot year? I have my thoughts on which it is, but I will dangle that question and let you decide from reading the tasting notes in this report. Speaking of TNs, all of the VPs included have very solid age-worthiness. That is undeniable!



ROY'S "TOP 6" 2020 VINTAGE PORTS – in random order in the photo above.

**ROY'S TOP 6 LIST OF
2020 VINTAGE PORTS**

<u>RANKING</u>		<u>SCORE</u>
1st	GRAHAM'S	97
2nd	PINTAS	96
3rd	DOW'S QUINTA DO BOMFIM	96
4th	QUINTA DO PORTAL	95
5th	VAN ZELLERS & CO.	95
6th	ALVES DE SOUSA: AMPHITHEATRUM	95

When there were 50, 60, or 70 something Vintage Ports from a specific year, a Top 10 list made sense. But with 30 Vintage Ports from 2020, I decided to limit my top rated wines to **Roy's TOP 6 2020's** seen above. Nothing but greatness, "Generally Declared" vintage ... or not. I can promise you, these are truly stellar bottlings, even if you don't typically know them, or buy them. You're reading this as a subscriber so I assume you trust me. Any single one of these 6 top-rated Ports will do your cellar proud!