



FOR THE LOVE OF PORT™

COLLECTIVE PORT WISDOM

The holiday season is upon us and this newsletter has been completed just in time for your reading pleasure during quiet moments, hopefully with a glass in hand, to sip while you read!

2014 saw three of the top four wines in the Wine Spectator's "Top 100 List" awarded to bottlings originating in the Douro region: the 2011 Dow's Vintage Port honored as **#1**; Symington Family Estates 2011 Chryseia **#3**; and 2011 Quinta do Vale Meão as **#4**. This is huge news for Portugal and shines a very prominent spotlight on Port and Douro wines; virtually touted in wine circles globally. Not only will this focus greater attention on the region's wines, but it will likely create even more buzz for oeno-tourism, after Porto was selected as *2014's Best European Destination* by the citizens of Europe. If you haven't been to Porto recently, the question remains: Why not?

Another extraordinary year, with much to be grateful for; especially having spent three weeks in Portugal this year; two in Porto / Douro and a full week in Madeira during FTLOP's very first *Madeirathon*. I've taken part in many wonderful tastings and seminars across North America, Portugal and Denmark, meeting lots of people who love Portuguese fortified and still wines.

Issue #83 provides you with a lot to chew on. Bite into a **blogsite recommendation** of a Port-centric blog from Porto, available in English. Loaded with great info, this will likely become a regular read for many. Next up, we *announce dates* for our expanded lineup of **2015 Tours**. Not only will we have the notorious "Fortification Tour" and *Port Harvest Tour*, but we've added two brand new itineraries. If you want to further explore Portugal's wine scene, come and join us!

In a *special report*, **Julian D. A. Wiseman** presents a brief on a splendid historical achievement. Without his involvement, no Port lover would ever be able to purchase LARGE format bottles of Port. A true case study in perseverance! FTLOP co-Forum Moderator, **Glenn Elliott**, fresh off his return from Portugal reports on a pair of visits to one of the Big 5 producers. You'll understand why I call Glenn, "Mr. Tawny" in a fine read on wood-aged Ports; his 1st **Guest Corner article**.

Additionally, there's some off-the-radar selections reviewed in **Roy's Recent Tasting Note** section. The **Feature Article** revisits a bunch of well-known shippers' 2011 Vintage Ports at a fine event in Edmonton. And last but not least, **A Question for the Port Trade** examines the views of the trade on cork quality, TCA and alternative closures, etc., as they relate to Port wine.

As 2014 draws to a close and Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's Eve festivities are being celebrated around the world, may your glass be filled with the best of Port or Madeira!

Thanks for your sup**PORT**!

Roy

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Coming in Issue #84: **Stewart Todd on the Record; The 1994 Vintage Port Report – Nearly 40 Tasted in Denmark; Port Personalities – In Focus; and more!**



PORT BLOGSPOT RECOMMENDATION

Written beautifully in Portuguese and English, congratulations go to **Hugo Sousa Machado** from Porto for his excellent achievement with this new bi-lingual blogsite. Hugo has been drinking Port passionately for nearly 20 years and in 2013, decided that he'd launch a Port-centric blog and this past summer he achieved his goal with ***Port to Port Wine***.

Looking through Hugo's blog, you will find recent posts that show that this is a man really serious about Port wine. I know that he is also an avid collector of books on Port and is a hobbyist photographer of Port bottles and a wide scope of wine scenery in the Douro Valley.

Hugo's recent project: publishing the most comprehensive list of all the approved 2011 Vintage Ports, (commercially released) speaks to his willingness to do the heavy lifting. By the way, I counted 80 of the 2011s in his list. While this blog is still a fairly new work in progress, it is one of the best I've found in terms of *fact checking* and providing content that is of interest to those looking to learn more about Port wine. I will certainly be reading Hugo's work in the future too.

Have a look at his excellent analysis of the 2014 harvest in the Douro, which I found to be very interesting. It's nice to be conveniently located in Porto and have easy access to Port shippers in Gaia and have close proximity to the Douro too. Hugo's new blogsite is certainly one to watch!

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<http://porttoportwine.blogspot.pt>

SPECIAL REPORT

Roy's Note: For many years the Port trade was handcuffed from selling any large format bottles beyond a magnum. The IVDP strictly forbade such a practice and only with a special dispensation could a producer present a larger sized bottle at a tasting or celebration outside of Portugal; but they remained unable to sell them to the trade or consumers. The author of this article, Julian D. A. Wiseman, took it upon himself to challenge the regulations, and his story below explains his plight and persistence. Port lovers everywhere, owe Julian a debt of gratitude and while Port books in the future may not pick up on this grand historical achievement, FTLOP does want to recognize and thank Julian by having him share his story with Port lovers globally.

Big Bottles: Ending the Prohibition

Article by Julian D. A. Wiseman © December 2014

The end of the big-bottle prohibition started with a picture posted on FTLOP. It had been taken in the cellars of Taylor Fladgate, and purported to be double-magnums of Fonseca 1985, at least 27 of them. I lusted. They were actually imperials, which didn't lessen the lust.

Much of the story is told by re-telling correspondence, which starts with a letter to Adrian Bridge on 20th August 2007:

Hidden in bin 116, in your personal cellars in Vila Nova de Gaia, are (at least!) twenty-seven double magnums of Fonseca 1985. I am writing to beg to be allowed to buy four or five of them—perhaps, before saying more, this letter would work better if you were told why.

The modern game of Tiddlywinks was invented in January 1955 in Cambridge, in England. The foundation of the Cambridge University Tiddlywinks Club (CUTwC) dates from then, and in January or early February of every year the Club has an Annual Dinner to give thanks to the Founders. The 60th Anniversary Dinner will be in early 2015, and as I usually provide the port for the Dinner, appropriate bottles are already being gathered.

... It is planned that the bulk of the port will be 1985, the year in which the Club was thirty, being half of 2015's sixty. And what could be better than double magnums of Fonseca, for taste and for dramatic affect?

... please, is there any combination of love, money, an invitation to the Dinner, or even a promise of secrecy, that would persuade you to part with some of those precious double magnums? Please sir?

Adrian replied on 26th September 2007:

... Fonseca does not have any double magnums. We do have some imperials but only 12 and these cannot be sold under IVDP regulation. ... Magnums are the largest format our regulator allowed to sell — the imperials are destined for tastings.

So in January 2008 a letter was sent to Jorge Nicolau da Costa Monteiro at the IVDP, Cc people at the Ministro da Economia e da Inovação and at the Ministro da Agricultura. Some of the major Port companies were Bcc'd. The letter was in two columns, the left in English, the right a translation into Portuguese. Yes, it contained some minor errors of fact—at this stage I was learning.

The IVDP currently forbids the port houses from selling port in bottles larger than a magnum. Please, why? Other wine regions don't impose similar constraints on their wine producers.

On 28th February 2007, in New York, Sotheby's sold one Nebuchadnezzar of 2000 Mouton Rothschild for US \$100,000. That is \$5000 per bottle. Mouton Rothschild make good wine, but so do the best port houses. Surely the best port names would like to have sold their product at a hammer price of €3850 per bottle.

[Omitting some economic comments aimed at the MEI]

... please expand the list of allowed bottles sizes to include the following:

- 2¼ litres (tregnum);
- 3 litres (double-magnum);
- 4½ litres (half a case);
- 6, 9, 12, 15, or 18 litres;
- Any size larger than 18 litres, however big;
- Any bottle \geq 2¼ litres that was bottled before this change in the rules (so the port producers may profit from the old large bottles in their cellars, some of which I want to buy).

Of course, these allowed sizes would not be compulsory. If any particular house wants to bottle only the ¾-litre or 1½-litre sizes, then that would be perfectly fine. But if a house wants to sell a larger size, and a customer wants to buy, that would also be perfectly fine.

And yes, there are bottles sitting in cellars in Vila Nova de Gaia that I want to buy. I want to pay money; producers want to take my money; and for no good reason at all the IVDP says that this is not allowed. Please, either tell me why (and tell it to the Ministro da Economia e da Inovação), or let me buy what Portugal wants to sell.

Jorge Monteiro replied on St Valentine's Day 2008:

Relating to the European Union Market, we would like to take your attention to the fact that the bottles sizes, between 5 ml and 10 l, must comply with the Council Directive of 19 December 1974 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the making-up by volume of the certain prepackaged liquids (75/106/EEC), last amended by the Council Directive 89/676/EEC of 21 December 1989. According to this Directive, and for the liqueur wines, the largest bottle allowed is 5 litres. This Directive also establishes the several sizes allowed below 5 litres.

... However article 8 of the IVDP regulation n.º 23/2006 ... determines that the largest bottle allowed is 150 centilitres, except for Aged tawnies, Crusted, Late Bottled Vintage, Single Year Vintage and Classic Vintage Ports for which the largest bottle allowed is 300 centilitres. It also determines that in certain cases, duly justified, namely for promotional purposes, IVDP may allow the use of larger bottles.

We must underline that these rules were approved by a Council that is composed by representatives of the Port wine Growers and Port houses.

However, we must underline that the use of very large bottles may be dangerous for the protection of this prestigious appellation of origin, as it may allow the practice of frauds.

Splendid: the field of battle had been chosen, and was to be 75/106/EEC[†]. My turn, on 24th February 2008:

Thank you very much for your letter of 14th February, which helpfully details the IVDP's stance and the reasoning behind it, and even does so in English. Before tackling the substance of your letter, I happily accede to your request: yes, please do send a copy of my letters (the previous one, and this one) to the Port Wine Shippers Association, and also to the IVDP's legal advisers.

Your letter raises four points that are discussed in detail below. In summary:

1. Even if the IVDP's understanding of 75/106/EEC is correct, the IVDP's rules should be as unrestrictive as possible.
2. The IVDP's understanding of 75/106/EEC is incorrect: port actually lies within 1.(a) of 75/106/EEC, and hence allowed bottle sizes are, in litres, 0.10, ¼, 0.187, ⅜, ½, ¾, 1, 1½, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and anything ≥10L.
3. Even if my reading of the rules is wrong, it doesn't matter: Brussels wants the rules to be as liberal as possible (Lisbon Agenda 2000), so will not criticise a more generous reading.
4. Even if that is wrong, there are other loopholes in EU rules, in which case the IVDP should be explicitly permitting the use of those loopholes.

...

Your letter also says:

However, we must underline that the use of very large bottles may be dangerous for the protection of this prestigious appellation of origin, as it may allow the practice of frauds.

This claim appears to be nonsensical. Forgeries happen to below-the-radar stuff. If a house bottled only 24 imperials of its 2007, an auctioneer can easily check provenance. And if Château Mouton Rothschild 2000 can be bottled in 5L and 15L sizes (and sold at an eye-watering price in New York), the more restrictive rules clearly aren't needed "for the protection of this prestigious appellation".

Omitting detailed technical tiresome arguing about which rules do and don't apply to port...

Hence, in the Common Customs Tariff, port really isn't 22.05. Hence in 75/106/EEC port is not 1.(d); port is 1.(a). Hence EU rules allow port to be bottled 0.10L, 0.25L, 0.375L, 0.50L, 0.75L, 1L, 1.5L, 2L, 3L, 5L, 6L, 9L, 10L, 0.187L, 4L, and 8L (in the order given in 75/106/EEC (as amended)).

Re-reading six years later, perhaps I should have restrained my sense of mischief. My letter continued:

3. It doesn't matter if I am wrong.

Lets say that the IVDP's lawyers discover that, though port isn't 75/106/EEC 1.(d) in English, perhaps it might be in Finnish or Hungarian or Irish. It doesn't matter. Brussels understands that rules can help markets function, but that excessive rules just get in the way (Lisbon Agenda 2000). Hence if there is any reading of the rules that allows a 6L bottle, even if it is an unreasonable reading that is obviously wrong (not my reading!), you will be allowed to get away with it until the rules are 'clarified', that is, changed to be less restrictive. It is a political decision, and Brussels wants Italy to stop such needless regulation of everything.

Please, instruct your lawyers to be non-paranoid. The IVDP really can allow all bottle sizes permitted under 75/106/EEC 1.(a), including 6L.

4. Even if your lawyers are unnecessarily paranoid, there are other loopholes.

75/106/EEC (as amended) doesn't actually regulate bottle sizes, though it might look like it does. It regulates labels, saying that they can have only certain values, and that the value must not be larger than the actual volume (with some small statistical inaccuracy). So it would be perfectly legal to put a 500cl label on a 600cl bottle, and add to the back label words such as:

This bottle, before being filled with port, was able to hold 600cl of liquid. EU regulations (75/106/EEC, including amendments up to 89/676/EEC) do not allow a bottle of port to be labelled as containing 600cl; hence the inaccurate "500cl" written on the front label. But we are confident that customers understand: before being filled with port this bottle could hold 600cl of liquid.

Nothing in 75/106/EEC prevents the labelling and sale of such a 'pseudo-Imperial'. And, in the Eurosceptic British market, such a wording would please many customers. The IVDP's website should blatantly describe this practice as a "necessary circumvention of silly bureaucratic rules".

[†] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1975L0106:20040501:EN:PDF>

In short, if the IVDP's lawyers insist that port is 75/106/EEC 1.(d), the IVDP should then explicitly allow and facilitate such pseudo-labelling.

The letter ended optimistically:

This letter contains an interpretation of a Brussels Directive. I'm not a lawyer—otherwise I would be charging you thousands of euro for this letter. Instead it is free. But if you act on it, as you should, please encourage the port houses to believe that they have a moral obligation to sell me some interesting bottles at a price somewhere between fair and generous. UK delivery, despite the US postal address. Thank you.

I confess to having enjoyed writing the letter, both the technical legal interpretations and the cheekier sections.

Jorge Monteiro replied on the last day of March 2008.

... Going directly to your comments, we will not make any observations concerning points 3 and 4 of your letter.

Oh. That's a shame. It could have been so much more fun.

There followed two paragraphs re-stating a wrong interpretation of 75/106/EEC, and re-stating that the matter had been decided. It was just like a civil servant using many words to express a two-word reply, imperative verb then preposition. This was going badly.

However, I had included the Ministro da Economia e da Inovação in this correspondence, which had sent a cursory response. So, on 18th March 2008, to the "Cabinet of Secretary of State for Trade, Services and Consumer Protection":

Dear Dra. Martins,

... Thank you for your brief note in response to my letters of 22nd January and 24th February. Please could I ask you for a tiny additional thing: a single phone call.

Most ways of improving the efficiency of the Portuguese economy would displease somebody. A union, a special interest group, a *de facto* cartel, somebody would strike and protest. Even if there would be long-term gains for the economy, the short-term price, political or economic, might be too high. But I am asking for a regulatory change that would cause no strikes. No protests. No bad headlines. No political cost. No economic cost. And in return for not paying any costs, Portuguese exports would increase, even if only slightly. That must be pleasing to the Ministério da Economia e da Inovação.

I have worked in the British public sector, where there were some people who wanted to do it right. And there were others who wanted never to admit that it was being done wrongly — even if that never-admit behaviour meant that it continued to be done wrongly. I was very unimpressed. If the IVDP is of the former type, great, my arguments alone will cause the rules to change. No problem. But if the IVDP is of the latter type, never admitting to being wrong, then the arguments will be ignored. I don't know which type is the IVDP, but if they are the wrong type, a quick phone call from the Ministério da Economia e da Inovação to the IVDP might cause a rethink.

I am imagining a British civil servant firmly asking questions such as the following. They might need to be converted to a Portuguese style, but, please, any similar conversation would work.

We have received a copy of a letter about the regulation of port wine bottle sizes, explaining that port is subject to 75/106/EEC 1.(a) not 1.(d). It is interesting.

Do the port houses have any vintage port in bottles larger than 3 litres?

Are the port houses allowed to sell these large bottles?

If this were Bordeaux rather than port, would they be allowed to sell them?

The letter dated 24th February explains that port, like Bordeaux, is subject to paragraph 1.(a) of the EU directive, not 1.(d). Does your lawyer agree? If not, may we see your lawyer's opinion?

Of course I am sure there is a good reason for this prohibition, but the Minister wants to know why Bordeaux but not port may be sold in larger bottles, and for lots of money. Please send the MEI a formal letter, either explaining why port may not be sold in bottles larger than 3 litres, or saying that the rule will soon change.

Thank you.

And, Dra. Martins, thank you as well.

...

PS: If it is allowed, after the call, please do tell me that it has happened. Thank you again.

It wasn't friendly to the IVDP, but the gentle possibilities seemed to have failed.

Did the MEI telephone the IVDP? Did the recipient of the call need to change his armour?

Nobody told me.

Another attempt—yes, blatantly transparent—was a failure:

20th October 2008

Dear Mr Bridge,

I am writing to learn whether The Fladgate Partnership sells much Fonseca port to Lesotho and Botswana. If your sales are currently small, and our research suggests that they are currently miniscule, would it be possible to become your distributor in these two countries? Both have a growing middle class, and we believe that we would be able sell port during the southern-hemisphere winter—particularly in large formats. Exclusivity of distributorship would not be required.

Naturally The Fladgate Partnership would not want the harassment of handling customs at Maseru and Gaborone airports (each reached via Johannesburg), so the easiest course would be for bottles to be delivered in bond at Heathrow or elsewhere in southern England, allowing us to merge with other shipments and handle the administration. Labelling requirements in Lesotho and Botswana are not at all stringent: it suffices to label as for any English-speaking rich-world country and the authorities will be happy.

...

Yours sincerely,

Julian D. A. Wiseman
Sales Manager (Africa)
The Wiseman Partnership

Understandably, Adrian chose not to hide behind this sham.

Next there was a meeting with the IVDP, on 25th June 2009, at the start of a trip to Portugal with Port-drinking chums. The document sent in advance to the IVDP included:

Finally, a request about timing. Please could this rule change be done soon, before the entire 2007 declaration has been bottled.

Originally the meeting was to be with the IVDP's new president, Luciano Vilhena Pereira, but was substituted by the IVDP's lawyer, Almeida Ribeiro. He and I went through the relevant pages of the Common Customs Tariff, and after half an hour the argument ended. My letter of 9th July 2009 giving "double thanks for my brief trip to the IVDP" included:

First, hurray!, the IVDP's new president does not object to large bottles. I am asking various people in the industry to ask that *the IVDP put before the Conselho Interprofissional a motion to change the rules such that any legal bottle size not exceeding 18 litres is then permitted. In particular, the new rule(s) should allow any of 0.1L, 0.187L, 0.25L, 0.375L, 0.5L, 0.75L, 1L, 1.5L, 2L, 3L, 4L, 5L, 6L, 8L, 9L, 10L, and any size that is both $\geq 10L$ and $\leq 18L$.*

This is the full range permitted by 75/106/EEC (with amendments), subject to a no-bulk-export cap of eighteen litres (a Melchior). Even if the wine-makers forget to ask for some of these sizes, please could your motion permit them all?

Second, the trip to the IVDP was itself of great interest. ... You might recall that we discussed the IVDP glasses: if ever there should be a version 2, I'd be more than willing to assist the testers.

Anyway, thank you again for your time, and most of all, your non-disagreement.

Then, later, quietly, without my noticing, the battle was won. I've forgotten how the news reached me: it might have been from Dominic Symington. However it did, hurray! Proper-size bottles had become legal. Argument ✓; battle ✓. Hurray! (The actual rule change⁺ is dated 15th March 2010.)

A letter was sent to Adrian, explaining that his concerns of September 2007 had now been fixed, and that now he could legally sell imperials. Please would he do so? From memory his email said something like "No. I do not wish to sell any."

Oh. Argument ✓; battle ✓; war ✗. Oh. Not happy.

In April 2011 Adrian was guest of honour at a vertical of Fonseca Guimaraens (1933 to 2005), for which he paid the price of sitting next to me. At a minimum, the seed was re-planted. And then in November 2013 another letter was sent, starting "Please allow a third and final attempt." And he did. And he really did.

... I was delighted that you were able to bring the Port Wine Institute into line and that we can now sell imperials.

... We own 11 of them and 2015 is the 200th anniversary of the foundation of the house of Fonseca. Young Guimaraens started working for the company in 1821 and moved to the UK in 1822 to sell there. He became owner in 1863.

You have been persistent and focussed.

Yes, I will sell you an Imperial of Fonseca 1985. The remaining 10 will be used for various events celebrating our anniversary.

... What we can also do is sell some Fonseca magnums ...

And at a very generous price (doffs hat): thank you Mr Bridge. Argument ✓; battle ✓; war ✓.

Hurray!

All of which is how I will be opening, on 17th January 2015, the only imperial of Fonseca 1985 not owned by The Fladgate Partnership.

No trouble at all.

A draft of this article was shown to Adrian Bridge, who suggested a postscript showing bottling numbers: "Much of these were sold. There is good demand from collectors for large bottle formats. A commercial success and a boost to Portugal's exports. Happy drinking". That data, and more, follow.

⁺ Article 20 of <http://ivdp.pt/pt/docs/legislacao/357.pdf> which allows sizes up to 3 litres, and bigger if pre-authorized by the IVDP. A better rule would have allowed bigger without needing IVDP approval, but the practical result is what I wanted, so won't argue.

Shipper	Brand	Vintage	Double-Mag, 3 l	Imperial 6 l	Salman-azar, 9 l	Balthazar 12 l
S.F.E.	Dow	2007	✓	✓	✓	✓
S.F.E.	Graham	2007	✓	✓	✓	✓
S.F.E.	Vesuvio	2007	✓	✓	✓	✓
S.F.E.	Warre	2007	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quevedo	Q.V.D'A.	2008	30	30		
T.F.P.	Croft	2009	100	10		
T.F.P.	Fonseca	2009	300	10		
T.F.P.	Taylor	2009	300	10		
T.F.P.	T.V.V.V.	2009		3		
S.F.E.	Vesuvio	2009	✓	✓	✓	✓
S.F.E.	Warre	2009	✓			
S.F.E.	Ribeira	2009	✓	✓	✓	✓
S.F.E.	Vesuvio	2010	✓	✓	✓	✓
T.F.P.	Croft	2011	100	10		
T.F.P.	Fonseca	2011	250	25		
T.F.P.	Taylor	2011	450	40		
T.F.P.	T.V.V.V.	2011		10		
Quevedo	Quevedo	2011		60		
S.F.E.	Cockburn	2011	✓			
S.F.E.	Dow	2011	✓	✓		
S.F.E.	Graham	2011	✓	✓		
S.F.E.	Vesuvio	2011	✓	✓		
S.F.E.	Warre	2011	✓	✓		
S.F.E.	Malvedos	2012	✓			
S.F.E.	Ribeira	2012	✓	✓		
S.F.E.	Vesuvio	2012	✓	✓		
		Totals:	≥1546	≥221	≥7	≥7

So two things have happened. Bottles bigger than three litres have become *de facto* legal. But as importantly, the idea of large bottles has gone from exotic to almost ordinary — for the IVDP, for shippers, and even for some consumers. Before the change double magnums were legal, but very rare. Since the change production of double magnums has become standard, even if not quite yet everybody's basic home-drinking size.

However a comment of Dominic Symington should give some pause: "If a very large bottle is lying horizontally, there is excessive constant pressure on the cork, and for a long time. Additionally the greater the diameter of the neck the larger the cork has to be, compromising its ability to compress and create a decent seal. There is also the problem of capillary action. Which is why SFE has recently decided no longer to bottle larger than an imperial." I wondered whether bottles could be stored at 45°, but Dominic observed that it might still be "too much of a risk, particularly in transit when the wine is sloshing around inside the bottle".

There was one bonus piece of mischief: the back label of large format Quevedo Quinta Vale D'Agodinho 2008. The picture speaks for itself, legal weaknesses and all. (As yet, no invitations.)

PORTO
Quevedo

**QUINTA VALE D'AGODINHO
VINTAGE 2008**

Almost all wine is sold absolute: the purchaser may do as the purchaser pleases. This is not so for Quinta Vale D'Agodinho 2008 Vintage Port in 6L Imperials and in 3L double magnums. For these the owner must invite Oscar Quevedo to the opening, giving reasonable notice, and allow him to taste the Port. If the bottle should have a new owner, whether through sale or inheritance or otherwise, the same condition binds the new owner.

If Oscar Quevedo dies and is survived by living descendants, this 'right to be invited' passes to his legal heirs. If he should die without living descendants, this right passes to Julian Wiseman, the author of this contract.

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LOTE: V0910



Produzido e engarrafado na propriedade por
VINOQUEL - Vinhos Oscar Quevedo, Lda.
S. João da Pesqueira - Douro
Produto de Portugal / Produce of Portugal
Contains sulfites

Engarrafado em 2010 / Bottled in 2010

  600 cl. 19,5% vol.

Announcing FTLOP's 2015 Tours



With a decade of experience guiding captivating oeno-tours in Northern Portugal and the island of Madeira, it is time to broaden our horizons.

Having developed a loyal following amongst our guests and extraordinary relationships with the Port, Vinho Verde and Madeira trade ... in 2015 we will offer new itineraries to explore a variety of wine regions throughout Central Portugal as well.

JOIN US FOR A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE!

A brief bio on your two hosts:



Mario Ferreira: Mario is from Alcobaca, Portugal and majored in Social Communication and Marketing. From 1998-2004 he worked for the Port wine industry while living in the USA: having spent one year as “Sandeman Port Wine Ambassador” and followed by five years in the marketing department of the Port Wine Institute (IVP/IVDP).

In 2005, Mario decided to further explore adventures on the African continent and seek out business opportunities there as well. Nowadays, he spends most of his time traveling throughout a variety of countries in Africa, while consulting for a Spanish-based company (non-wine/beverage related). Also in 2005, Mario partnered with Roy to develop and co-host bespoke Port, Douro and Madeira wine and food explore-vacations that have begun to branch out to other regions of Portugal. Mario remains committed to FTLOP’s oenotourism program and together, he and Roy have brought nearly two dozen groups to visit his country.



Roy Hersh: Roy's experience in food and wine industry management has spanned more than three decades and includes consulting for restaurants, country clubs, casinos, and a variety of wine-related ventures. Since 1999, he has worked as a professional judge at prestigious wine competitions throughout North America and in Europe. Roy started drinking Vintage Port in 1983, and finally realized his dream to visit Portugal in 1994, after which he started writing articles about it. Considered a leading authority and journalist on Port wine and Madeira; in June 2003, Roy was one of just two Americans selected for induction into the *Confraria do Vinho do Porto* (Port Wine Brotherhood). To honor his oath to the Confraria, Roy quit his day job and began writing FTLOP's newsletter in February 2004 and mid-2005 the website was born. Today, opt-in newsletter recipients and subscribers hail from 76 countries.

Roy is a passionate student of wines from around the globe. He has taught classes and written hundreds of articles on Port and Madeira for FTLOP, other websites and wine magazines such as *Sommelier Journal* and *The World of Fine Wine*. He travels extensively throughout North America to promote the wines of Portugal, presenting educational wine tasting seminars to consumers, private organizations and members of the wine trade. Roy and Mario's annual adventures guiding small groups on exclusive *once-in-a-lifetime* "insider's tours" to discover the authentic food and wine culture of the Douro Valley, island of Madeira and other Portuguese wine regions has gained media attention and a loyal following. When not involved in vinous escapades, Roy relaxes at home with his wife Dorene and daughter, Taylor.

Our Tours

The FTLOP group tours which began in 2005 typically range in size from 10 – 14 guests, plus **Mario Ferreira** and **Roy Hersh** are involved in guiding every tour. Our long established connections within the Port, Douro, Vinho Verde and Madeira wine trade enable us to present singular and exclusive “insider’s” adventures for our guests. Every single fun filled vacation provides different wine and dine destinations surrounded by the awe-inspiring natural beauty and serenity of the Douro River Valley, the historic sibling cities of Vila Nova de Gaia and Oporto, and the volcanic mountainous terrain and sub-tropical warmth of Madeira, as well as the Vinho Verde region to the north of Porto.

We are thrilled to combine a handful of *new* wine regions to our repertoire in Central Portugal this year. It will enable us to provide a fresh realm of possibilities for first time guests, as well as the ability to offer innovative itineraries for our many repeat clients who would like to discover more of Portugal’s wine and food cultural experiences. This year we will add two new tours; dates and details below.

Our unique point of difference is not only the high caliber of wines or educational aspect of these bespoke week-long explorations, but stems from the pride we take in researching a wide range of authentic regional cuisine, top chefs and restaurants to delight the palates of the most discerning gastronomes. Additionally, we introduce our guests to the esteemed individuals from the wine trade who greet us with a warm welcome and wisdom at every destination. The result is magical.





It is our mission to exceed the grand expectations of our guest's year in and year out. We shall explore small new upstart producers that show great promise, charming mid-sized properties that are gaining market share by producing fantastic quality Port and non-fortified wine, as well as the large and renowned stalwarts that have been around for centuries. In Madeira, we know and virtually have visited every producer left on the island and also share some "off the radar" family-owned hidden gems whose wines typically remain in cask or demijohn and are not commercially released.

While the focus of our tours has always been Northern Portugal and Madeira, we began discussing expansion into other regions several years ago. During recent tours and email surveys, we asked some of our guests if they would consider joining us to explore wine regions in other parts of Portugal. The feedback was quite positive and we set the plan in motion for 2015.

Remaining flexible right up to show time, we literally tailor our itineraries to the wish list of our clientele. This is just one of the many reasons we've developed such a loyal following. We are honored to have these guests join us on their annual vacation and we take this responsibility very seriously, trying to raise the bar each and every year. Finding great new epicurean experiences and changing up our hotel selections on occasion, delivering some "off-itinerary" surprises on each excursion, planning deep horizontal and/or vertically themed tutored wine tastings and maintaining very small guide-to-guest ratios enables us to consistently deliver memorable experiences for guests whether they're joining us for their first time or eighth.

2015 FORTIFICATION TOUR

May 17th – 24th

LISBOA – SETUBAL – MADEIRA – PORTO SANTO

Our **FORTIFICATION TOUR** is a completely new adventure this year. We change the scope, nature and venues of this tour every year, but the itinerary always includes Madeira, (e.g. in 2014 we ONLY visited Madeira and spent an entire week there, and on our prior Fortification Tour we divided the itinerary between Gaia/Porto/Douro and Madeira). And now for something completely different!



In 2015, for the first time, we will instead meet in Lisbon and explore some of the more interesting landmarks in Portugal's capital city. We follow this up with a visit to the fortified wine region of Setúbal. If you're unfamiliar with Setúbal, it is set on the beautiful Setúbal peninsula an hour's drive outside of Lisbon. We will visit the two best quinta properties in the quaint hamlet of Vila Nogueira de Azeitão that produce some of the world's greatest Muscat wine; in this case a Portuguese wood-aged fortified wine called *Moscatel de Setúbal*. Those who know of this extraordinary nectar are reading this and cheering. ☺ The Moscatel producers in this area also vinify still wines and one of the quintas we will be visiting is known as the oldest table wine company in the entire country, established back in 1834. It is not only a historic property, but one of the more beautiful wineries in Central Portugal.

The following day, we will fly from Lisbon to Funchal and upon arrival; you will be met at Madeira's Funchal International airport and brought directly to the luxurious property where we'll be spending the next five nights in this tropical paradise. Enveloped by the warmth of the oceanfront breeze and striking natural beauty, the attentive hospitality of your two hosts will ensure your comfort during your whole stay. Madeira will exceed your expectations and deliver extraordinary opportunities to spend time with and learn from the heads of Madeira's wine trade.



Madeira is located slightly less than 600 miles Southwest off the coast of Morocco, in the Atlantic Ocean. It's a striking archipelago that I fondly refer to as, "The Hawaii of the Atlantic". Our guests have truly enjoyed their experiences when joining us to discover Portugal's other fortified wine region, Madeira. Steeped in tradition and surrounded by ocean, Madeira provides a combination of rugged terrain and some of the most long lived wines on the planet. Whether it is your 1st time joining us, or you've been on our tour(s) in the past, we change up the venues we visit, as well as the wines, restaurants etc. You will never forget this vacation unless you simply don't like to drink Moscatel, Madeira or enjoy fantastic food!



We spend the rest of our vacation focused on learning about and tasting sensational Madeira wines of all types and ages, on the most captivating wine producing island on the planet. You are guaranteed to enjoy bottles even older than your parents ... in all seriousness ... we will taste some oldies from the 19th century.



There will also be a full-day excursion to the adjoining island of Porto Santo which is about 42 miles from Madeira's coastline. The ocean going boat ride will be a memorable one, so bring sunscreen for this adventure! Once on Porto Santo, we'll check out the pristine 9 km long beach, discover some local hidden gems, a museum and two specific ultra-rare grapes: Listrão (which some of you may know from our visit to the Olim Brothers) but also the little known grape, Caracol. Afterwards we will visit a vineyard or two, taste some wine of course and then will be joined by a well-known local expert on Porto Santo that will provide great insight. That night we'll return back to our hotel in Funchal in time for a well-deserved sleep.



Our Fortification Tour package includes everything ... except airfare:

- Renowned Port and Madeira expert Roy Hersh is joined by Mario Ferreira to personally customize and host your luxurious weeklong vacation to Lisbon and Madeira
- Transfers to/from Lisbon International Airport and (Funchal) Madeira Airport and Transportation throughout your stay with us in Lisbon, Setubal, Madeira and Porto Santo
- 8 nights' accommodations at an impeccably chosen luxury property in Lisbon & Funchal
- 21 Meals include all breakfasts (8), lunches (6) and dinners (7) ... w/ the exception of one lunch *on your own* (the first Sunday)
- All tips & taxes; there are never any hidden or added fees such as “single supplements”
- Inclusion of all wine during our VIP tastings and throughout lunch/dinner
- Introduction to the key players within the Moscatel & Madeira trade at every stop!



FIVE REGION DIVERSITY TOUR

(Central Portugal)

June 14th – 21st

ALENTEJO – BAIRRADA – LISBOA – SETUBAL – TEJO

Our **FIVE REGION DIVERSITY TOUR** is a completely new adventure for us this year. For the first time we will be exploring a handful of wine regions in the center of Portugal. We have very solid contacts here too, and it is time to introduce first time guests and those who've traveled with us in the past, to something completely different. This trip is not only for lovers of Portuguese wine, but we've been doing our homework on the great chefs and restaurants in these wine regions too! Designed to be less intense than some of our other tours, yet the priority remains quite focused on oeno-tourism and fine dining, but will also provide the flavor and diversity of these five regions by offering distinctive cultural experiences along the way.

Although Mario and I have been to these wine regions, separately, we have been in contact with the owners of quintas that we've either been to before, or one's that have great reputations for both the quality of their wines, as well as extraordinary hospitality. Next year when we do this 5 Region Diversity Tour, we will explore other new properties, and I will be able to use my own photos both here and on FB for promotion. There are "stock" photos that could be used, but the photographer in me will not allow that to happen! 😊

Mario and I realize this would be a *leap of faith* on your part, but anyone who has ever joined us for a wine excursion knows, "we always have under-promised and exceeded expectations." The same will be true on this particular oeno-vacation. How can we be so sure? It is very simple, unless we deliver a remarkable tour the first time ... we can destroy our impeccable reputations built over the past decade. Since Mario and I are fully committed to success in expanding our coverage of Portugal's wine regions; we can assure you, this first tour is going to be exceptional. If you do take that leap and are willing to trust us this year and come along for an exceptional tour, (*help create our success*) we will ensure that there will be great perks for doing so!

What our clients have said about their excursions with us:

"The tour was top notch and Roy and Mario provided an experience that was far above what I had expected. This is a trip you do not want to miss. I plan to go again as this was the trip of a lifetime."

"Every day was an incredible learning experience and the things I learned about Port and Madeira will never be forgotten. I have already decided to start planning to go on the trip next year."

"I try to temper my expectations so as not to be disappointed, but this was hard not to describe as 'over the top'. At one point Roy said, 'We try to under promise & over deliver'. If that is your goal, I thought this tour was a tremendous success."

"Roy and Mario provided us with the opportunity to meet people, see places and taste wines that independent travelers and other wine tour companies simply do not have access to. If you are passionate about Port and Madeira, put your trust in these guys to give you an experience you will never forget."

"I learned more in one week than the last several years combined. Truly an educational experience that even a knowledgeable Port or Madeira drinker would love, yet perfect for a novice at the same time."

"The producers and shippers treated us as honored guests. It was a Port and Madeira-lover's dream!"

"I think a lot of people might shy away from these tours if they think they are not 'into' Port or Madeira enough. I definitely found myself questioning whether I was 'ready' for such an immersion (literally), but in the end I am very glad I did."

"Your generosity and the quality of care from both of you were excellent. It was obvious that you were entirely at our service, and that you had done everything in your power to provide us with peak experiences. I can't imagine kinder and more professional tour guides."

Our Five Region Tour package includes everything ... except airfare:

- **Renowned Port and Madeira expert Roy Hersh is joined by Mario Ferreira to personally customize and host your luxurious weeklong vacation to experience five distinct wine regions.**
- **Transfers to/from Lisbon International Airport and transportation throughout your stay with us**
- **8 nights' accommodations at an impeccably chosen and centrally located luxury property**
- **21 Meals include all breakfasts (8), lunches (6) and dinners (7) ... w/ the exception of one lunch *on your own* (the first Sunday)**
- **All tips & taxes; there are never any hidden or added fees such as “single supplements”**
- **Inclusion of all wine during our VIP tastings and throughout lunch/dinner**
- **Introduction to the key players within the Portuguese wine trade at every stop**
- **A keepsake gift for every individual who puts their faith in us this year!**



PORT HARVEST TOUR “1”

September 20th – 27th 2015

VILA NOVA DE GAIA – VINHO VERDE – PORTO – DOURO



The 2015 **PORT HARVEST TOUR “1”** represents our 1st time creating this once-in-a-lifetime bespoke Port excursion for those who are seeking a **LESS** intensive and fun experience revolving around Port and the Douro during the frenzy of the harvest. How does this differ from the PHT “2”, which is the type of tour we’ve successfully delivered for the past decade? Well, the PHT “1” is designed to be an actual oeno-tourism vacation for those travelers who would like to join us for the very first time, or would prefer a far more relaxed, less harried experience. This tour provides our first time guests the same quality of Ports and table wines, and visitations ... *in moderation*. There will be a few less visits and a couple of meals where you will be able to dine (or not) at your own discretion during the week, and enjoy some scheduled down time. Not everyone enjoys or wants to “handle” the type of long hours and sheer quantity of Port and Douro wines that *assault* guests on our other PHT. Here you will feel like you’re on a relaxed vacation; with more time to sleep in and later start times for our visits. You’ll also have time to exercise, “smell the coffee” and further enjoy the beauty that surrounds you.

Beyond the aforementioned differences, virtually everything else is the same, except we stay in excellent “tried and true” 3 and/or 4 star hotels in Porto and Douro region. That along with a few less overall visits during the tour will also make the Port Harvest Tour “1” more appealing for those looking to have a very similar experience as PHT “2” at a more affordable price. Relaxation has its benefits!

Another advantage to choosing PHT #1 is that you’re virtually guaranteed the harvest will still be in progress and you will be able to tread on grapes, pretty much regardless of weather conditions. So, if this sounds like it is more in your wheelhouse, (or a better fit for your budget) please read the rest of the story on the following pages, that will provide greater detail. This type of tour will work for either singles or couples and we assure you that you will be drinking the same quality level and age of Ports that we deliver on the other tour, as well as restaurants you’ve read about here over the years.

The 2015 Port Harvest Tour “1” includes everything except airfare:

- **Renowned Port expert Roy Hersh is joined by Mario Ferreira to personally customize and host your exclusive weeklong Port and Douro wine immersion**
- **Transfers to/from Porto International Airport**
- **8 nights’ accommodations at impeccably chosen Porto/Douro luxury properties**
- **19 Meals include all breakfasts (8), lunches (5) and dinners (6) explained when booking**
- **All tips & taxes; there are never any hidden fees such as “single supplements”**
- **Transportation throughout your stay with us in Northern Portugal**
- **Inclusion of all wine during our VIP tastings and throughout our scheduled lunch/dinner**
- **Introduction to the key players within the Port and Douro wine trade at their lodges, Quintas & homes**



11th Annual **PORT HARVEST TOUR “2”**

September 27th – October 4th 2015

VILA NOVA DE GAIA – VINHO VERDE – PORTO – DOURO



Our 2015 **PORT HARVEST TOUR “2” (PHT “2”)** represents our 11th consecutive year of creating once-in-a-lifetime bespoke Port excursions for those who are seeking an intensive yet fun experience revolving around Port and the Douro (and Vinho Verde) during the frenzy of the harvest. From learning the history to tasting nearly every category of Port, we gain loads of satisfaction in planning the itineraries for these extraordinary annual trips. You will encounter wood-aged Colheitas spanning decades (even centuries on some tours), to unparalleled horizontal and vertical tastings of Vintage Ports, LBV’s, Aged White Ports and more. This is our 11th harvest season of hosting guests from around the globe and introducing them to Gaia/Porto, Vinho Verde and the Douro, one of the greatest wine regions in the world; and we plan to do so in grand style. Come join our harvest adventure!

We present the best of the established Douro producers and also focus on acquainting guests with some of the up and coming stars of Douro wine production, (and Port, of course). We then pursue innovative culinary artists in Porto, Gaia and the Douro Valley in order to pair both food and wine to create to create sumptuous meals. Our guests stay in first class accommodations which provide respite after long days-into-night of sheer hedonistic pleasure. Have you ever tread on just picked grapes in a stone lagar? Not just a photo opportunity, it's actually a time-honored tradition and there's nothing like feeling grapes squishing between your toes and beneath your feet. Pictured below, is For the Love of Port's most recent experience during the 2014 Port Harvest. You will never forget your first time!



PHT “2” proviso: Port Harvest Tour “1” explains some of the basic differences in these two tours. In order to “qualify” to come on PHT “2” guests (A.) will have either joined us on a prior tour, where they fully understand the rigors of what is going to come at them in terms of the number of hours per day. This is not for “casual” oeno-tourism vacationers, it is far more like a fun but intensive Port and Douro wine seminar for serious and hearty enthusiasts, or (B.) guests who work in the wine biz / foodservice trade as a Sommelier, where the guest would have no issue with the quantity of Ports and non-fortified wines per day and night. We typically do not return to the hotel for 14 hours (+/- 90 mins.). I am NOT trying to discourage potential guests from joining us, but I do want to make sure everyone knows what to expect, in advance of coming to Portugal!! Also there is a LOT of food that comes our way and of course you control what you put in your mouth. There is a 3rd option, if A & B above do not apply to you. You can choose (C.) which would allow you to join PHT “2”, but ONLY if you have a personal phone screening with me, so we can both be on the same page re: expectations of the tour



During the harvest of 2014, six of our 13 guests had previously joined us for at least one other Port Harvest Tour. As we strive to satisfy the needs and desires of first time guests every bit as much as our “frequent fliers” the bar must be continuously raised to keep these tours fresh for our guests and the two hosts. Delivering new and unique oeno-touristic experiences for all, this is a great challenge, and a dynamic that we thrive on. After all, necessity is the mother of invention. I believe all of the six veterans on the 2014, would say that this year was the best ever, as they did last year too. I am not sure how long we can continue to raise the bar, but that’s what makes the tours so much fun!



Our guests loved their 2014 vacation and enjoyed dining at several new eateries and discovering a number of Port and Douro wine producers for the first time. Some of the producers we visited (for our) 1st time with a group, have been around for many years, while others were growers-turned-producers and are amongst the ongoing renaissance in the Douro. We remain committed to try as many of the brand new and highly regarded 2011 Vintage Ports as possible and they were eye opening in contrast with a number of old Ports we tasted, even a couple from the 19th century.

Like all of our Portuguese wine travel, the *Port Harvest Tour* is an all-inclusive vacation and once you've disembarked from the airplane, you will not touch your wallet/purse again unless buying wine or gifts. We ensure every detail of your experience is well considered and maintain small group sizes, as well as providing our guests with singular opportunities to meet the winemakers, owners and/or Managing Directors of every Port house we visit. Besides being remarkably fun, you will learn a ton!





Whether you're joining us to learn about Port and/or Douro wines for the first time or are seriously involved in consuming and collecting these incredible wines, we can promise that you'll exponentially expand your knowledge and tasting experience. You'll learn the viticulture and the difference between vineyards situated with old socalcos terracing, vinha ao alto, patamares plus vineyards planted to old vine field blends and some that are block planted. If you arrive not knowing the difference between pipes of Port, or toneis or balseiros, we can assure all of these things will be clarified for you. That's just the beginning, as you will depart with a deep understanding of both viti and viniculture as well as the various categories of Port and all shades of fantastic Douro wines. Nobody does it better!





Our 2015 Port Harvest Tour “2” includes everything except airfare:

- Renowned Port expert Roy Hersh is joined by Mario Ferreira to personally customize and host your exclusive weeklong Port and Douro wine immersion
- Transfers to/from Porto International Airport
- 8 nights’ accommodations at impeccably chosen Porto/Douro luxury properties
- 21 Meals including all breakfasts (8), lunches (6) and dinners (7) w/ the exception of one lunch *on your own* (the first Sunday)
- All tips & taxes; there are never any hidden fees such as “single supplements”
- Transportation throughout your stay with us in Northern Portugal
- Inclusion of all wine during our VIP tastings and throughout lunch and dinner
- Introduction to the key players within the Port, Douro and Vinho Verde wine trade at their lodges, Quintas & homes



THE ULTIMATE PORT EXPERIENCE!

For more information or reservations by email: roy@fortheloveofport.com

PORTRAIT OF PORTO



FROM PORTO TO GAIA

GUEST CORNER ARTICLE



Two Visits to Sogevinus

Article by Glenn Elliott © December 2014

The Kopke Tasting Room

Prior to the 2014 Port Harvest Tour, some of us paid a visit to Kopke's tasting room in order to help us get in the proper mood for the upcoming tour. Not that a bunch of Port geeks really need that sort of encouragement, right?

This particular visit was coordinated for us by Stefano Marello, the Business Development Manager for Sogevinus. Lisa Stevens and I independently talked to him while picking up our orders from the recent FTLOP buying opportunity from Sogevinus' importer in Seattle, which Stefano just happened to be visiting. Stefano is a dynamic and charismatic person - we talked about Port, sports, the growing season in the Douro, and expectations for the harvest. I also mentioned the superb tasting we'd had with Sogevinus during the 2010 Port Harvest Tour, which was one of the more memorable stops in 2010. Lisa picked up her order later, and the two of them set up a return trip for us.

Kopke's tasting room is right on the waterfront in Vila Nova de Gaia in a typically narrow but relatively modern 3-story building. The ground floor contains their shop where you can purchase Colheita Ports dating back to the early 1900s, including the legendary 1937 and 1952. Unlike most other producers, Kopke has and bottles Colheitas from most years so the selection on display in the shop is quite impressive.

The tasting room is on the 3rd floor and has windows looking out over the waterfront that provide plenty of natural light. We were provided with water, milk chocolate, and dark chocolate to enhance the flavors. It's a fantastic room for serious Port and serious Port lovers!

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We began with two of Kopke's most recent offerings – the 2009 LBV and the 2012 Sao Luiz Vintage Port. Kopke's LBVs are very good Ports, but it's the SQVPs from Quinta Sao Luiz that are the real secret. They can be difficult to find, but are definitely worth the effort.

We then tasted the 10-year old and 30-year old white Ports in order to get an introduction. Kopke produces all four categories (adding a 20-year old and a 40-year old to what we sampled) and is one of the few Port houses to do so in White Ports. Most people think of White Port as an aperitif or as the base of a summer cocktail, but they're much more than that as Kopke's lineup clearly showed.

A 2003 Colheita and Kopke's 10- and 30-year old Tawny Ports rounded out the "introduction" to their ranges. Tasting the 2003 Colheita alongside the 10-year old Tawny allowed us to see the difficult distinction more clearly. Colheitas are typically more focused than Tawny Ports with an indication of age (often abbreviated TWAIOA to save space), but also typically need more age to really show their character. TWAIOA typically have a rounder and fuller flavor profile, but lack the intricacies that can be found in old Colheitas.



Having the 10- and 30-year old from both the White Port and Tawny Port lines showed just how good an aged white Port can be. Kopke's 30-year old tawny Port is one of the best in the business, and the 30-year old White Port easily kept pace in this tasting.

I suspect that was intended to be the end of the tasting, but we were having so much fun and were obviously much more knowledgeable than the average tourist, so they opened a 1965 Colheita for us as well. Kopke's Colheitas are stellar across the board, but their older ones are simply in a class of their own as a group. Few companies can match Kopke's Colheitas in any given year, let alone year after year like Kopke has produced. 1965 isn't known as a good year for Port, but this 1965 Colheita just might change your mind all by itself.

Then the real surprise came out. Lisa and I had been talking about plans to open her 1940 Colheita and my Kopke 375 (which is also a 1940 Colheita) at the same tasting some time, so our host opened a 1940 Colheita to give us a preview. Wow! It was incredibly generous, and also an incredible Port. A magnificent way to end our first full day in Portugal! A big thank you to Stefano Marelo and the staff at the Kopke shop in Vila Nova de Gaia!

Kopke Tasting Room, September 26, 2014

2009 Kopke LBV - bottled 2014, unfiltered. Deep, opaque red with purple overtones. Lots of bright, purple brambleberries such as loganberry and mulberry on the nose. Some faint VA, but not enough to be distracting in any way. Very smooth palate full of rich, sweet purple berries. Great structure with firm tannins and well-integrated acidity. An excellent LBV that will improve in bottle for at least 15 years. **91 points.**

2012 Quinta Sao Luiz Vintage Port - Very opaque and very purple, though not inky-dark. The nose exhibits rich purple and black fruit, particularly mulberries, blackberries, and blueberries. The palate is different, with deep and rich red fruits almost like an overripe raspberry rather than the purple and black notes from the nose. Excellent tannins and juicy acidity. Sao Luiz Ports have always impressed me, and this one is no different. **95 points.**

NV Kopke 10 Year Old White Port - bottled 2014. A lively look in the glass; blonde color with light orange highlights. The nose hints at tropical fruits with banana and mango being the most prominent. Not too tart, not too sweet. Great acidity and a fresh tropical finish that goes on and on. **90 points.**

NV Kopke 30 Year Old White Port - bottled 2014. Golden honey in color with a tan overtone and rich orange highlights. The nose exhibits spun sugar, almond, vanilla, and a lightly fanciful honey note. Very smooth and very rich in the mouth with a darker honey flavor such as what you'd get from a buckwheat honey. The finish is very long and smooth, lingering in your mouth for minutes. Superb. **94 points.**

2003 Kopke Colheita - bottled 2013. Medium dark tawny-orange color. It looks older (more tawny) than its age. The nose is pleasant but nondescript. There's a bit of spirit, but that might blow off with time in the glass. Very smooth and very soft in the mouth with a confectioner's sugar-style sweetness and echoes of high-toned vanilla. Very mellow fruits. **90 points.**

NV Kopke 10 Year Old Tawny Port - bottled 2014. Medium tawny color with orange highlights. Again, this looks older (more tawny) than indicated. The nose is a bit spirity, but mildly fruity (soft semi-dried apricots) and pleasant. Smooth and soft in the mouth, but with a bit of apricot to give it some punch and distinguish it from the 2003 Colheita. Slightly bolder and more rounded than the 2003 Colheita which allows it to give a richer impression. The finish is somewhat short, but still good. **90 points.**

NV Kopke 30 Year Old Tawny Port - bottled 2014. Deep tawny color with brown tones and blood-orange highlights. The nose immediately makes me think of a dark library or reading room with old leather and wood furniture – paraffin, faint lemon, and some walnut. Smooth, rich, and full-bodied in the mouth with great acidity to balance being on the sweeter end of the Port spectrum. Closes out with a very nice finish. An excellent sipping Port for a snowy night by the fireplace. **93 points.**

1965 Kopke Colheita - bottled 2014. Dark tawny color with brown tones. Just enough sparkle to catch your attention. The nose is tangy with mellow tangerines and lemons, followed by some bright apricot. Very rich, concentrated, and full in the mouth. Lots of coffee and toffee notes. Leather and mahogany also come to mind. Superbly balanced acidity. The finish is very long and smooth, echoing the palate. An outstanding Port that will impress any gathering. **96 points.**

1940 Kopke Colheita - bottled 2014. Lisa and I both enthusiastically discussed the 1940 Kopke Colheita with Stefano in Seattle, and the subject came up again while we were gathering at Kopke in the downstairs shop. We have both the 1940 and the Kopke 375 between us, and will probably open them together to see if we can tell them apart. Our host at Kopke decided to open this bottle for us so that we could have a preview, and it was magnificent. Very dark in the glass, more brown than tawny. Red or dark orange highlights shine through with back light. The nose is dusty and hints at age, with some lemon and lime to go with leather and something I can only describe as old parchment. Powerful, rich, and elegant in the mouth all at the same time. Very smooth and full-bodied. Dark brown sugar caramel and rich toffee blend with a deep butterscotch-like flavor. Pipe tobacco leads off the finish, which is incredibly long. Absolutely brilliant. **98 points.**

The Kopke Lodge and the Burmester Tasting Room

Three days later was the first full day of the 2014 Port Harvest Tour, and it began bright and early with a visit that would set the tone for the rest of the trip – a tour of Kopke’s lodge and bottling facilities followed by a tasting of Sogevinus’ Ports across 6 decades. The Sogevinus brands are renowned for their tawny Ports, but Kopke in particular.

When we arrived at Kopke we were met by Carla Tiago. Carla has been the winemaker for Kopke's Quinta São Luiz since 2007, and if such a cliché can be tolerated, is a rising star in the Port trade. After a brief introduction, she led us into the lodge for a tour.

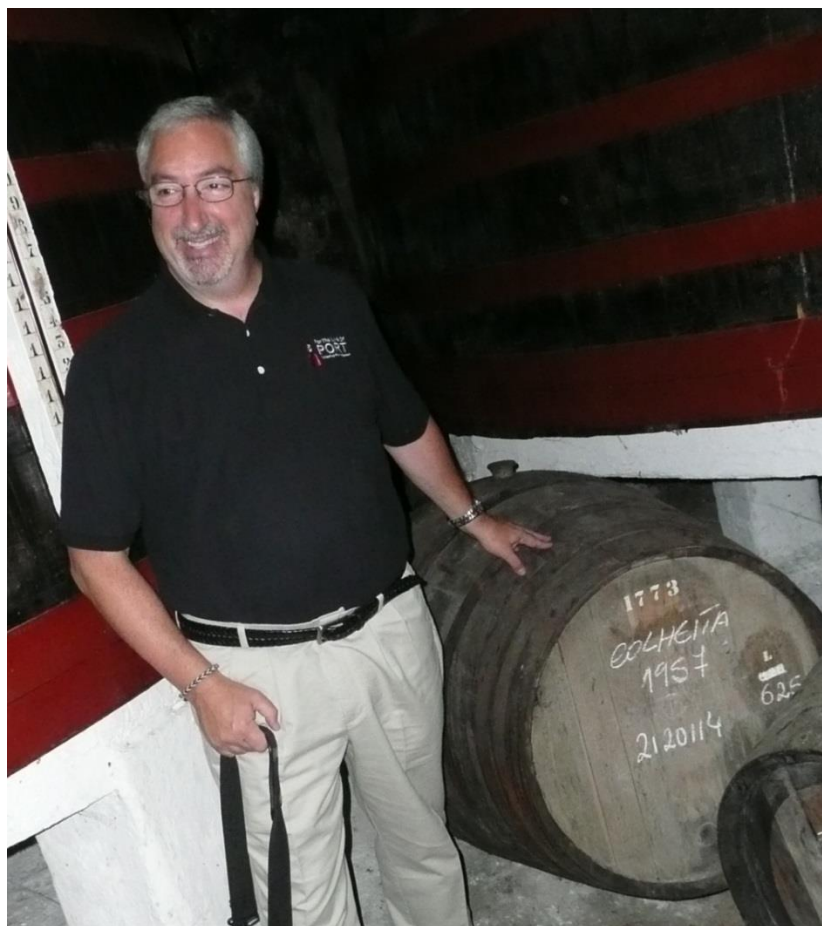


Unlike most Port producers, Kopke has stocks of Colheita from what seems like every year of the 20th century. This not only gives them more opportunities to take advantage of anniversary years, but also significantly greater flexibility when blending their tawnies with an indication of age. There are barrels (pipas) everywhere in the lodge, some seemingly left sitting somewhere random and forgotten, though all are carefully labeled. During the tour we saw barrels and barrels of legendary Colheitas – 1957, 1952, 1940, 1937, and quite a bit of my personal anniversary year 1964 as well.

Glenn Elliott with just one part of Kopke's supply of 1964 Colheita.



Roy Hersh posing with a barrel of an age appropriate Port.





After touring the lodge where the Port sits aging, we switched to the other end of the production process and got to see the bottling, labeling, and boxing in action with Tânia Branco Oliveira, Sogevinus' Director of PR and Communications. She took us on a tour of the labs and internal tasting rooms before showing us the production line. Kopke's line is very modern and efficient, and is used for all Sogevinus Ports. Filling, labeling, and boxing are all automated for their Douro wines and basic Ports. At the other end of the building, though, their premium products are still packaged by hand. Stenciling the bottles, filling them with Port, waxing the capsules, and packaging the finished bottle into the instantly recognizable Kopke wooden boxes are all still manual processes. Several of us tried stenciling, and let's just say that we should all keep our day jobs and let the professionals do their work.

Part of Sogevinus' bottling line at the Kopke lodge.





Lisa Stevens trying her hand at stenciling a 1953 Kopke Colheita bottle.



After the tour we enjoyed a pleasant walk along the riverfront in Vila Nova de Gaia to the Burmester tasting room, which is situated right on the river on the Gaia side of the Ponte Dom Luis I (bridge). The views are spectacular and really helped set the mood for the tasting we were about to enjoy.



Sogevinus owns 4 traditional and historic Port wine shippers that are renowned for their tawny Ports: Kopke, Burmester, Barros, and Calém. Each has a distinctive style and has produced some of the very best Ports available. Our tasting included 4 that could be considered legendary – Kopke’s 1935 Colheita Branco, Kopke’s 1937 and 1952 Colheitas, and Burmester’s 1941 Colheita.



Our tasting consisted of seven Colheita Ports from four of the Sogevinus brands, and spanned six decades from 1935 to 1984.

Burmester Tasting Room, September 29, 2014

All Ports were bottled the week before the tasting.

1984 Burmester Colheita - Medium tawny tending toward brown. Red-orange highlights. Tangy dried apricots, vanilla, and faint butterscotch on the nose. The palate is very rich and viscous with lots of torrefacted notes like coffee and toffee. A faint savory note adds complexity. There's a faint note of some rich grain or possibly popcorn in the finish which is very complex and lingers quite a while. The rich grain note turns into an impression of toast mid-way through the finish. **94 points.**

1984 Calem Colheita - Medium tawny color with a brown tint. Very slightly darker in the glass than the 1984 Burmester, though not enough to be able to tell without the glasses side-by-side. The nose gives a general impression of citrus along with a faint cracker-like note. Saltines? Rich and round in the mouth, with notes of caramel, vanilla, and gentle dried fruits. Fresh for a 30-yr old Port. More fruit than the 1984 Burmester, but of a simpler variety. **94 points.**



1976 Barros Colheita - Medium dark tawny with both brown and orange notes. The nose is very rich and luscious – lots of caramel, butterscotch, and vanilla. Intense almost to the point of being sharp in the mouth with very bold flavor. Very rich and very powerful; would probably pair very well with strong cheeses. There's a crème brûlée undertone, both in the form of the custard and the toasted sugar, but the primary impression is one of tart dried fruits. **93 points.**

1952 Kopke Colheita - A legendary Kopke. In my opinion very possibly the best Colheita they've ever produced, though certainly in the top 2-3. It can sneak up on you, though, because there's nothing terribly special about the way it looks in the glass. It looks pretty much like any other old tawny – fairly dark tawny with some brown or mahogany tones. The nose, though, lets you in on the secret. It's gorgeous and shows amazing balance with both perfumed or floral spirit and subtle dried fruits. There's also a hint of kettle corn that is intriguing. The palate is sublime; brown sugar, dried fruits, and faint Christmas spices (but with the allspice/clove de-emphasized). The finish is crazy long and echoes the popcorn from the nose. Magnificent. **99 points.**



Oenologist Carla Tiago, talks about the Sogevinus Colheita brands.

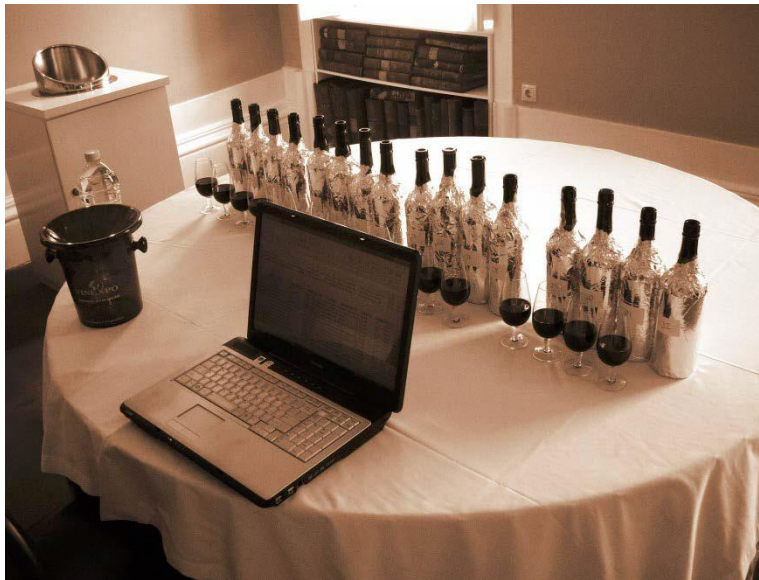
1941 Burmester Colheita - Looks much younger than the 1952 Kopke – tawny with tan and orange tones. The nose has some initial fragrant spirit followed by mellow citrus and an almost bready note. In the mouth it is full, sweet, and very creamy. Good acidity balances out the rich, dark brown sugar. Somewhat dry finish that makes it seem a bit clipped compared to the other Ports in this lineup. **95 points.**

1937 Kopke Colheita - Another legendary Kopke. Many would argue that this is the best Colheita that they've ever produced, and other than personal taste I would have a difficult time arguing the point. Very dark tawny with lots of brown tones, but not to the point of looking leathery. Aromatic spirit, faint tart lemon, and some blood orange along with bright apricot. The palate is incredibly rich, full, and sweet, but still manages to be bright. Shows significantly more age than the 1952 Kopke both in the mouth and in the finish, which is crazy long and very rich. Comes on strong with time in the glass, so might be a candidate for a couple of hours of decanting before serving. **98 points.**

My notes indicate that while the 1937 came on strong, the 1952 seemed to remain unchanged and that when comparing the two directly, the 1937 won out. My scores reflect the impressions made during the tasting, though probably would have been reversed had I done my scoring later while everyone was just chatting.

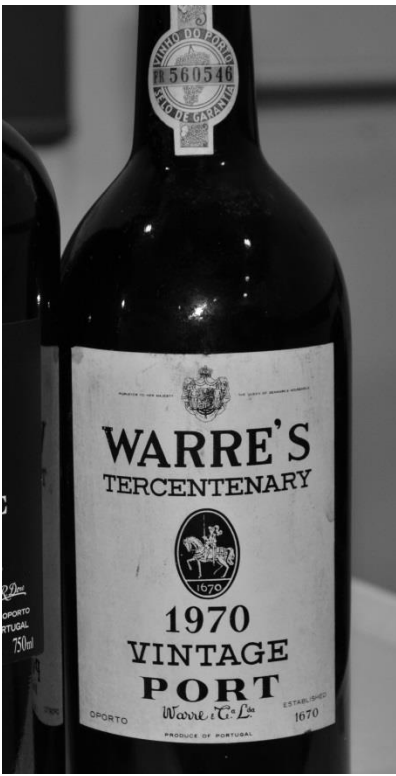
1935 Kopke White Colheita - Light honey color in the glass, almost golden. Given the age I expected it to be darker – closer to the 1952 Dalva Golden White, just as an example. The nose seemed rather closed, but that might have been a side-effect of the powerful tawnies that it followed. Easily the driest palate of the tasting by far. Crisp and clean. I expected tropical fruits like banana and mango, but found none. I also typically get paraffin from white Ports, but found none here. Some lemon, some simple syrup. Would make a superb aperitif. Puzzling and difficult to rate after the array of epic tawnies. **95 points.**

ROY'S TASTING NOTES



PORT

1963 Warre's Vintage Port – Opened the night after Thanksgiving, I was concerned when the cork was fully saturated, but with no sign of past seepage. I've experienced lots of bottle variation with '63 Warre's, and the color initially was very light pink. It remained in decanter for the next five hours and evolved to a medium cherry red color with a light pink edge. Fragrant sweet hints of watermelon, cocoa powder and rose petal with spicy underpinnings. Medium weight, smooth, suave and a slight warming spirit sensation, this succulent Warre's was about as good as any I've had from this vintage. While slowly sipped with my brother and our wives, this continued to deliver layers of flavors; ultra-velvety caramel along with refined strawberry fruit character and mild mannered tannins. The finish was absolutely sublime and complex. Bottles of this ilk will certainly show well for another fifteen years or so. I can only hope the rest of my W63 bottles show this well! **94 points 11/28/14**



1970 Warre's Vintage Port – At the end of our tasting of 2011 Vintage Ports in Edmonton, one of the participants brought this bottle to share with our group. It should be noted that this “Tercentenary” bottling represents Warre’s 300th anniversary, as they were the first of the British Port houses to enter the trade. Watermelon red, with pink edge and a very fine meniscus showing some bricking. An exotic spicy bouquet swirling with cinnamon, nutmeg, menthol and a modicum of spirit, followed by strawberry and a hint of toffee. A good showing for this VP which has never won me over but this is a very solid bottle. Medium weight and well into its secondary phase, bordering on tertiary; the ripe raspberry and aniseed flavors are sweet and refined. The modest acidity and delicacy of this Port with fully resolved tannins, tells the tale of a Warre’s bottling that is nearing the latter stage of its long plateau. Its admirable persistence and elegant nature, finishes warm and sweet. Fully mature at nearly 45 years old, this ‘70 likely has just another decade left to enjoy before turning tertiary or tawny. Drink sooner rather than later! **92 points 11/14/14**

1952 Graham's Vintage Date Tawny Port – bottled 2012 in commemoration of QE2 taking the throne. Walnut-amber color with a broad golden edge. Smoky, toffee, baking spice, date n’ nut and gingerbread aromatics. The palate presents medium-full weight as it unfurls in glass and excellent acidity provides the requisite structure of the focused and sweet styled Port. Delicious flavors of candied almond, mocha, nougat and orange peel with a long, smooth and vibrant finish. An outstanding effort by Graham’s and this was the best showing of this Port I’ve experienced. Sheer elegance! **95 points ~11/15/14**

N/V S. Leonardo 30 Year Old Tawny Port – Bottled 2013. I've popped corks on at least four or five of these since the last time I've put a note into the newsletter, but this bottle was shared with my brother on his recent visit and was a very recent bottling. Medium dark orange-amber color with deep golden meniscus. This exotic tawny presents a stunningly evocative nose of tangelo, caramel sauce, blanched almond, nectarine and very mild VA, which added a classy overtone to the fragrant silhouette. Mouthwatering, medium-bodied and acid laden; the S. Leonardo has the “wow factor” that puts it in the upper echelon of all 30 year olds. Unctuous and alluring with a seamless consistency, the flavors morph with every sip, framed by pure maple, orange, praline and toffee. The finish is sultry and long-lasting. An irresistible Port that never disappoints, one can never own enough bottles of this.

95 points 11/25/14

N/V Quinta do Mourão 60+ Year Old Tawny Port (cask sample) – A nice way to finish off Thanksgiving with my family. It was my third time having this Port in the past six weeks, a great privilege. What I wouldn't give to have a pipe of this in my cellar. After several white and red Burgundies this Port was just what the doctor ordered with pecan and pumpkin pie. Actually, the pecan pie paired perfectly! This producer seems to fly under the radar, but makes some of the finest wood-aged Ports in the entire Douro region, in my opinion. The 60+ is certainly no exception. Dark chestnut color with a golden rim. Its ethereal aromatic profile is sublime and Madeira-like, beginning with high-toned mahogany stain, candied praline, coffee, roasted nuts and singed caramel. It is chewy, warm and sweet, and stained the glass golden brown with its gobs of glycerin. It's dense and smooth as the best of Pedro Ximenez, but far more balanced and less linear due to the piercingly tangy acidity that provided extraordinary balance. The palate is on a par with many of the renowned old Single Harvest Tawny Ports that have been released and luxury priced in recent years. The flavors of raisins, molasses, crème brûlée, hazelnut and dried apricots linger about as long as any wine I've ever had. I saved about six ounces and waited two weeks to try it again. The only real difference was an increase in viscosity and even at room temperature this held up admirably and both the fragrance and flavor was consistent with night one. It's a spectacular Tawny with a mind numbing, orgasmic aftertaste. My score may be a bit stingy, but I chalk that up to Burgundy that came before it.

~ 98 points 11/27/14

N/V Quinta do Mourão 60+ Year Old Tawny Port (cask sample) – The first time I had this Port was during the Port Harvest Tour the month before sharing this particular bottle in Edmonton. Four of us were having a festive wine luncheon at a private club in celebration of my friend Richard Beeken's birthday. To give you an idea of what was on the table; the first red wine opened was an extraordinary 1972 DRC Romanée Conti. My contribution was this bottle of Port to enjoy at the end of the meal. Segue back to Portugal for a moment; I sat and literally watched two of our guests start crying when they drank this Port, one of which was "Mr. Tawny" Glenn Elliott, who had an epiphany and awarded his first ever 100 point score. As there is another TN on this wine to follow, I will just say that the nose was nothing short of heavenly. The mouth coating sweet nectar showed its impeccable pedigree, with exquisite precision and cut of the acidity. Followed by a finish that the birthday boy stated, ended, "with a powerhouse finish that just kept going. We were still after-tasting the final pour of this after the stemware had been packed and we were on our way home." A fun discussion ensued whether this Port was deserving of 99 or 100 points. I sat quietly and listened, as the difference was superfluous. Either way, this was a perfect ending to Richard's birthday celebration and a truly wonderful wine experience that none of us will ever forget. **99 points 11/15/14**

DOURO

2005 Quinta do Crasto Old Vines Reserva Douro Red Wine – My last bottle (recently) taught me this must have a solid two hours of decant time to fully integrate, so I followed that path and this 2005 showed very well. Expressive blackberry and raspberry notes along with some smokiness / pipe tobacco, leather and vanilla. Obviously the oak has not fully melded almost a decade hence. Medium weight and still tannic, though softening more each time I open one, this is a fairly youthful red that delivers distinctive flavors of plum, tar, char, leather and crushed rock. There is a smoky, earthy presence in the background that adds depth to the middle and makes it particularly food friendly with just about any grilled meat dish. This Crasto Reserva is just beginning to gain some secondary nuances and offers a hint of crème de cassis on the lengthy finish. The decant time allowed the oak to seem less obvious this time around and I believe this version will be at its best circa 2018 to 2022, and will continue on for a few years beyond that point. **93+ points 12/9/14**



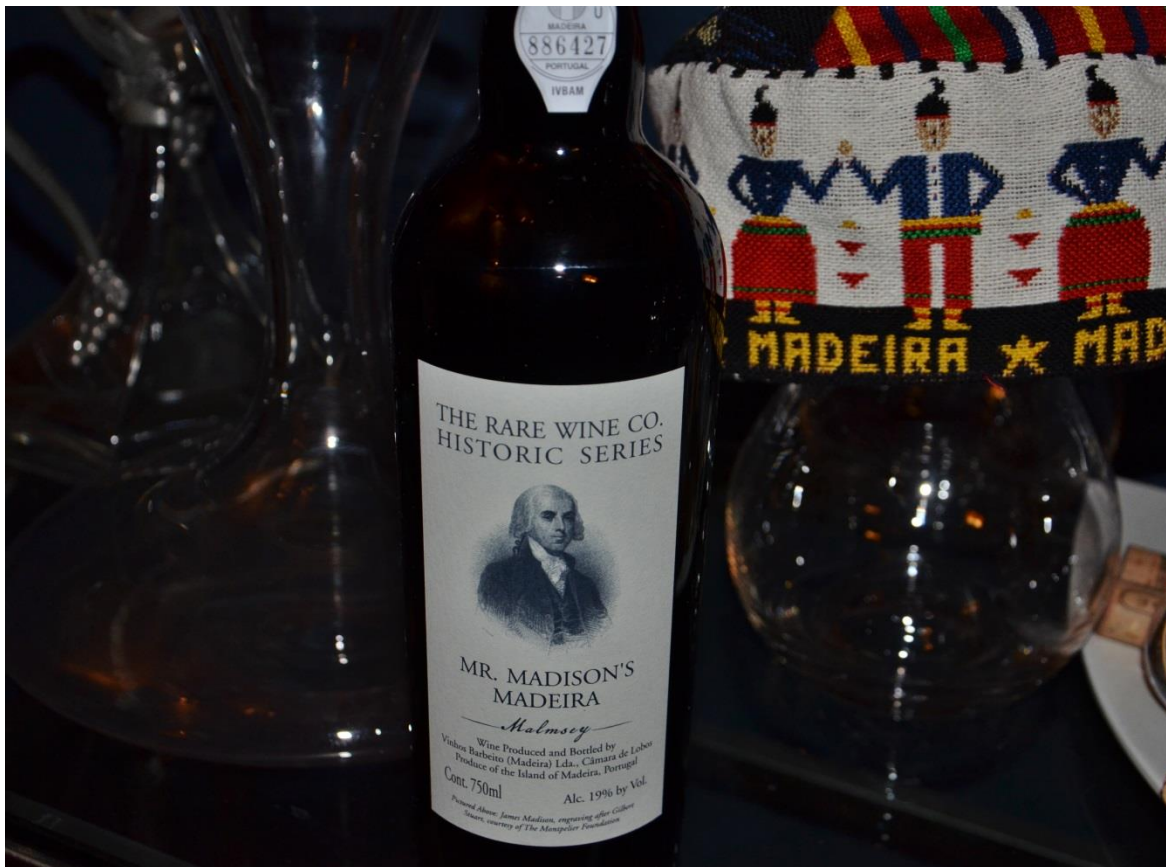
2011 Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo Mirabilis, Grande Reserva Douro Red Wine – This estate grown Douro red is produced by the winemaking teamwork of Jorge Alves (Quinta do Tedo) and Sonia Pereira from grapes grown on Quinta Nova’s 85 hectares of vineyards. It is a blend of 35% old vine mixed plantings, 15% Touriga Franca, 10% Tinta Cão, 10% Tinta Amarela and a whopping 30% blended from the top barrels available. This interesting bottle, a modified Burgundy shape, offers a hint of what’s inside. Modern in style, with subtle hints of its Douro roots, but just a scooch. Way different than the rest of the 2011 Quinta Nova vinho tinto lineup. This is a fruit forward, spicy and smoky wine with the softest and smoothest texture of the group. Blackberry and black plum fruit with a couple of turns of the pepper mill offer a delicious and approachable wine that is round and balanced. While it remained aging in new French oak for a year and a half, (and another half year in bottle prior to release) the oak seasoning is already well-integrated and the crisp acidity enables the fruit to shine. I hope to taste this again in another five to ten years, as it will certainly be even more layered and idiosyncratic with time in bottle. It is classy juice, but not inexpensive as it sells in the EU at €60-75. It should age well and will be in its prime from 2016-2024. **93+ points 12/7/14**

2011 Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo Referencia, Grande Reserva Douro Red Wine – A mix of grapes from old vine field blends and Tinta Roriz provide terroir driven aromas, distinctly Douro in character with blackcurrant, minerals, smoky notes of creosote/char and a dollop of oak. Young even for 2011, the concentrated dry blackberry fruit took time in glass to meld with its distinctive oak and showed more grace after it had been open for a few hours, yet it is quite tart. Medium-bodied, multi-layered and well-structured with plenty of acidity and lively chalky tannins to enable this wine to age beautifully. If the oak mellows with time in bottle, this should become a very intriguing wine. The following day, the oak was not as prominent and the fruit retained its freshness, while slightly softer. For now, keep it in the cellar for another year or two and it should drink well through 2028 or so. **91+ points 12/7/14**

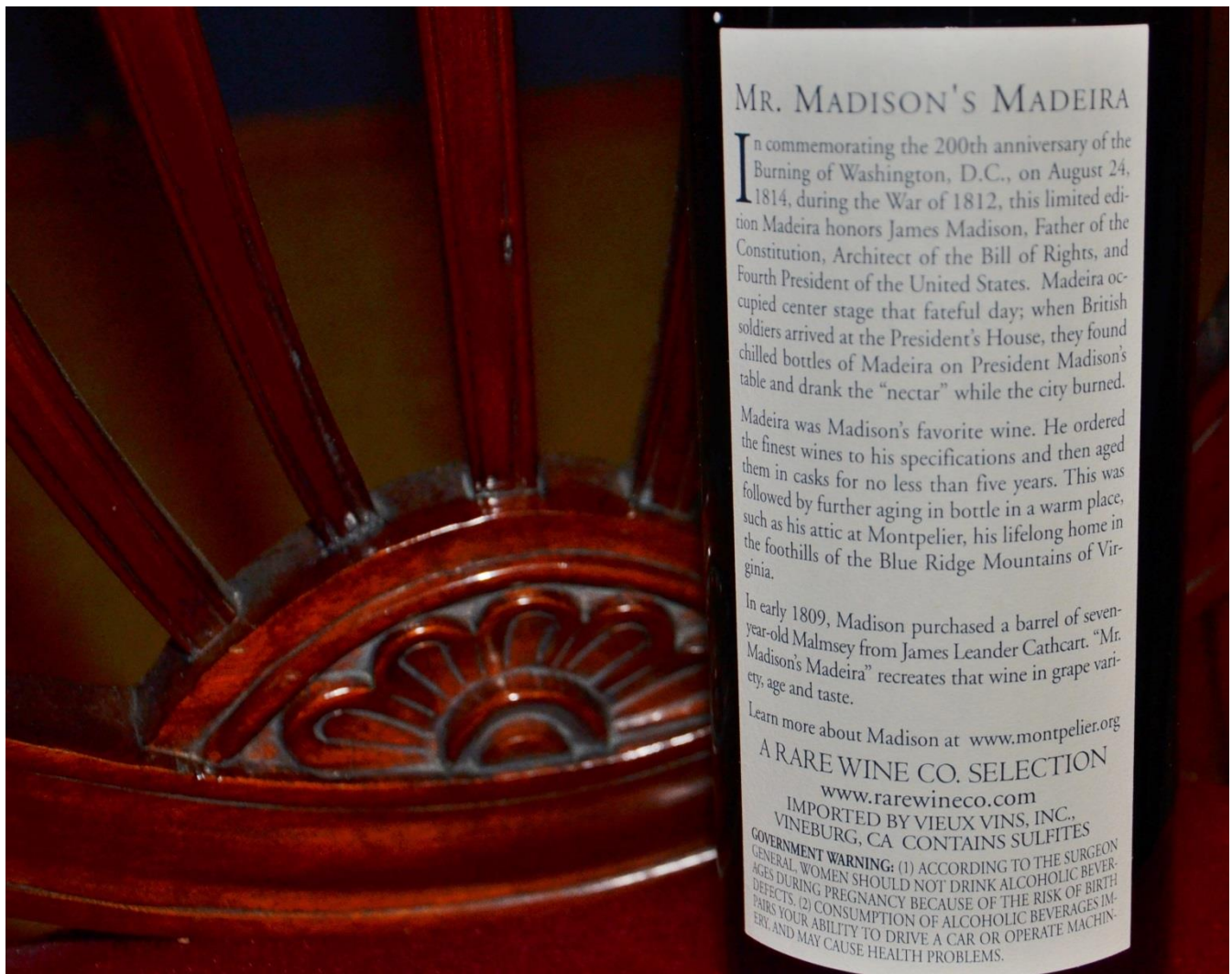
2011 Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo Reserva Douro Red Wine – A blend of 25% each: Tinta Roriz, Tinta Amarela, Touriga Franca and Nacional. The nose seems more red fruited than the Referencia Grande Reserva, but otherwise similar in its smoky nature, with redcurrant and pomegranate notes, saddle leather and spice. Surprisingly this seems “bigger” than the Referencia, more full-bodied, greater tannic grip and even a longer finish. I’ve saved some of each to sample and compare on day two. While this may not have the mid-palate complexity that the Grande Reserva does, the fruit seems a bit brighter and the oak is not as dominant, at least on day one. The follow up the next evening, this 2011 Reserva showed its pedigree and was fabulous. While the Referencia is the more expensive big brother, I preferred this wine. The vibrancy, layers of bold flavors and depth that developed on day two were really impressive, the finish was significantly longer and with luscious fruit. Drink now or up to 2030. **94+ points 12/7/14**

2011 Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo Grande Reserva Classico Douro Red Wine – It *required* a long decant of five hours. The hallmark dark and earthy nose of Quinta Nova: intense smoky and spicy bouquet with black truffle, tar, black cherry, and vanilla. The palate replicates the aromatics with similar flavors, but the earthiness is relentless and adds complexity; interplay of Douro meets Burgundy. In the same vein, the mellifluous mouthfeel of this dry red is reminiscent of a fine Gevrey Chambertin and structurally they’re similar too. This Classico is impeccably balanced and puts forth assertive chalky tannins. Dry, dark and brooding; it is a complete wine that is built for aging and provides a memorable finish of fine length. It is another beauty in a very strong stable of 2011 Quinta Nova thoroughbreds. This Grande Reserva Classico should age well for 15-20 ... decanting ... essential. **93+ points 12/17/14**

NEW RELEASE



N/V The Rare Wine Co. Historic Series Mr. Madison's Malmsey Madeira – Bottled by Vinhos Barbeito. The story appears on the back label, (see photo below). No advance decant took place; a pop and pour scenario to provide a similar impression to what other Madeira consumers will experience. A dark golden hue with a clear meniscus. My initial sniff screamed Sercial; proffering a mesmerizing bouquet of honey, lemon custard, wood varnish, vanilla extract, cinnamon baked apple, beeswax and toasted macadamia. Albeit it was not what I'd expect from Malmsey, throw that notion out the window, as what it lacks in typicality, it made up for in spades with incredible intricacy and verve. Mr. Madison's is decadently rich and unctuous from the very first sip, possessing a lovely caressing texture. It's sweet yet not overtly so, with a mild rancio quality that adds distinction and is framed by near perfect acidity. Idiosyncratic to the core, the woody medium sweetness is accented by blanched almond, mahogany, light VA, golden raisin and wisps of dried apricot flavor. It finishes with a long, tangy medium-sweet butterscotch after-taste. It's my favorite Historic Series release since the original *New Orleans* was bottled in 2006.
94 points 12/19/14



1966 Leacock's Bual Vintage Madeira – bottled 1992. Medium maple optic with broad golden rim. Offering expansive spicy notes of cinnamon, clove, iodine, maple bars. Soft and silky medium weight and vinous, propped up by suave flavors of espresso, maple glaze, lime zest and caramel corn. The modest acid level detracts from the overall balance. Later, flavors of orange peel and spice emerge, ending with a smooth savory lingering finish. **92 points 11/16/14**

1957 H&H Bual Vintage Madeira – Purchased at the source in May 2014 after having sampled it at our H&H tasting. Medium-dark iced tea color with just a bit of cloudiness. Effusive fragrant roasted coffee aromas dominate the landscape, followed by hints of mandarin orange. Light to medium weight and uber smooth with vibrant, almost sharp acidity; the nose neatly translates to the palate revealing a balanced, harmonious and slightly dry Boal of medium intensity. It's delicious and easy to drink now, with excellent Bual typicity; while the razor etched precision of the acidity led to a long, tropical fruit driven aftertaste. **94 points 11/16/14**

1906 Leacock's Malvasia Vintage Madeira – Medium dark cherrywood with a wide amber edge. A pungent deeply penetrating bouquet of molasses, Sultana, glove leather, nutmeg and mahogany. The piercing acidity cuts to the chase and right through the sweetness of this Malvasia. Medium-full bodied yet viscous with extraordinary synchronicity and sublime texture and focus. It exhibits a “*meio doce*” profile with less RS than is typical of the genre. There are far more spicy characteristics than fruit flavors initially, but an exotic melding of citrus and tropical flavors emerge before swallowing and the 1906 finishes extremely long. It's a sensuous Madeira (my 1st time tasting it) and I liked this Malvasia a lot! **96 points 11/16/14**



1880 Barbeito Malvasia Vintage Madeira (component / cask sample) – After tasting the 1875 Malvasia, Ricardo poured this 1880. It is a *component* of Barbeito's recently released, **Over 40 Years Old "Mãe Manuela" Malvasia**, paying homage to winemaker Ricardo Freitas' mother who loved old Malvasia. The 1880 has a whopping 25 more g/L. than the 1875. For every 60 liters, 5% of the 1880 was blended into the *Mãe Manuela*, but upon our visit, only 20 liters of 1880 remained. Dark amber/fig tint with a lime green edge. Flamboyant fragrances frame the silhouette offering tea leaf, white pepper, clove, smoky charred wood, lemon drops and honey. A thrilling roller coaster ride ensued as this stylish Barbeito pulled out all the stops. Upon first sip, the fullness, suave texture and panoply of flavors were as exciting as a coaster's initial cliff-like drop. Sublime notes of butterscotch, dark-roast espresso, salted caramel, blood orange, molasses and smoky sandalwood lingered until the X-Acto blade edged acidity provoked such mouthwatering freshness on the ethereal and persistent finish ... that it was hard to believe this singular component was nearly 135 years old. Barbeito's 1880 is a marvelous Malvasia and memorable Madeira; the best wine during our entire "Madeirathon"! **99+ points 5/13/14**

FEATURE ARTICLE



Revisiting 2011 Vintage Ports in Edmonton

Article and photos © November 2014 by Roy Hersh

Walking off the airplane, I could feel the temperature drop substantially as soon as I entered the jetway and immediately felt like I was in my element. Edmonton never disappoints. In nine of the past ten years visiting this Canadian city in mid-November, there's been snow on the ground and freezing temps. I wouldn't have it any other way. Within two hours of touching down on the tarmac, an educational Port tasting seminar was under way in this Port-savvy Albertan city.

Fortunately, Edmonton's airport is extremely user-friendly and it is a pleasure to fly in and out of this place. Coming from Seattle, it offers a major change in climate, but one that I welcome, typically leaving rain and clouds behind. In addition to presenting a Port seminar each year at this time, I spend an elongated weekend at my friend Richard Beeken's home and enjoy several vinous birthday celebrations along with his family and other good friends.

We headed directly for the Port seminar being held by deVine's Wines & Spirits, at The Royal Glenora Club, which has spacious and well-appointed banquet rooms available. Richard is a member and the Glenora staff ensures that the tasting goes off without a hitch. That said, two of the owners from deVine's, (Dirk and Annabelle) take care of all the decanting, glassware and pouring duties. Annabelle is from southern Portugal and she's also one of the key buyers at the shop in addition to co-owner duties. Thus, deVine's likely has the widest selection of Port, Douro and other Portuguese wines, in all of Canada. In other Provinces, wine stores are all run by the government and subject to considerably stricter regulations and higher taxes than Alberta shops.



Upon arriving, everything was well under way in terms of the organization. My presentation that night was a single "blind" horizontal tasting of 2011 VPs, including 8 well-known shippers; and providing factoids about the growing season, harvest, yields and an in-depth Q&A session. All but one of these Ports was available for sale at the conclusion of the evening as the owners offered up advantageous sale pricing solely for participants of this event. These clients had the opportunity to taste and then decide exactly which bottlings they preferred, before buying in.

As mentioned, there are a lot of Port wine enthusiasts in Alberta, both in Edmonton and Calgary. That makes it rather easy for deVine's to quickly fill all seats for this annual Port tasting. In fact, many of these same guests partake every year. It's gratifying to see so many familiar faces and I've enjoyed getting to know quite a few of these individuals and the group has gained rather sophisticated Port palates and a strong knowledge-base over the years. Most of their questions are way beyond what I am asked when presenting similar types of seminars. I am not quite sure why deVine's hasn't doubled or tripled the number of guests they allow to attend, but guess they prefer to keep this more exclusive. Nonetheless, it would be great to share Port passion with even more Edmontonians in the future!



There were two flights of four 2011 Vintage Ports served blind; each of which had been decanted for eight and ten hours, respectively. The first flight was poured by Annabelle shortly after my arrival. Observing her pour Port two-handed in perfect synchronicity, quickly and accurately, was wild to watch and I took a bunch of photos of her extraordinary talent. Ms. Evaristo perfectly filled about 80 glasses in well under ten minutes, with nary any spillage. Really impressive!

As the guests arrived, I was taking photos of the 2011 bottles, table arrangements and a few of the food items on the buffet table, all of which were selected with young Vintage Port in mind. I stopped to greet several of the guests. Dirk, (deVine's co-owner) everyone took a seat and the introduction took place. It was fun to see the focus on the faces as well as their efforts to restrain the urge to start drinking the nectar before them.



The fun began with flight number one, all served blind:

2011 Cockburn's Vintage Port – Mostly from Touriga Franca and Nacional grapes with about 15% of old vines blended in, from Cockburn's duo of Douro Superior vineyards. Earthy, blueberry infused flavors with medium-weight, juicy and symmetrical in its structure. Ripe, sweet and harmonious. A great way to kick off this event. It possessed a medium length and smooth finish, filled with lip-smacking boysenberry. This should reach prime-time at age 25-30.

93+ points 11/14/14

2011 Croft Vintage Port – Enticing bramble berry and plum notes with a lovely scent of cinnamon and violets delivering an extraordinary whiff. Roêda old vine fruit adds distinction and loads of chalky tannins with lush, harmonious blackberry and plum flavors. I like this every bit as much as early cask samples and believe this may have even greater upside potential than I originally thought. A solid Croft Vintage Port that has plenty of stuffing for decades of cellaring. **93+ points 11/14/14**

2011 Quinta do Portal Vintage Port – This was a crowd pleaser, and before anyone knew what it was, many guests said this was their favorite of the first 3 Ports. Fragrant anise, dried rose petals, figs and black pepper notes prevail. Medium-full, big bold and ripe black-currant and blueberry fruit is in synch with the massive grippy tannins and excellent length of the finish. I do have concerns whether the tannins are a bit overblown and how this will ultimately flesh out. In the meantime, enjoy it now to 2038 or so. **92+ points 11/14/14**

2011 Warre's Vintage Port – It is rare that my ratings will increase from my earliest evaluation, but this VP was for me ... not only the finest Port of the first flight of 2011s, but one of the top wines of the entire evening. It is brash, bright, harmonious and so very approachable at this stage; it would've been easy to drink several glasses of this seductive youngster. Black fruits, smooth but delicate mouthfilling sweetness with lots of definition in the midsection and plenty of acidity and tannins that feature enough grip to carry this for 3-4 decades. A superb Warre's! **95+ points 11/14/14**

Between flights we shared impressions and as I walked around the room to gain insight from the participants, it was fun to hear which was their favorite Port so far. The Warre's was the winner by a small margin. Only then did we remove the bags covering the bottles and some of the guests seemed quite surprised by the outcome, others, not so much.



My notes from the second flight:

2011 Fonseca Vintage Port – I loved this Port from the very first time I tried it in San Francisco, even before two more bottles which were evaluated blind, June and July 2013 in Porto. The sweet essence of this Port emerged from the glass and while it can be a bit austere aromatically, the long decant time of this bottle allowed its verocity to attack. Fragrant notes included plum, an herbal-minty edge, exotic black tea and hints of youthful spirit. Black and earthy fruit flavors of fig and currant with a touch of black licorice melded beautifully along with early signs of complexity developing in the mid-palate. Loaded with grip and extraordinary persistence late in the game. This will drink well mid-century and beyond, although it'll be hard to keep hands off of this one early on. Another in a long line of fantastic Fonseca Vintage Ports.
96+ points 11/14/14

2011 Graham's Vintage Port – I thought it would be hard to follow in the footsteps of Fonseca, but this Port admirably did exactly that. Exhilarating, intense, bold brambly and lavender aromas come roaring out of the glass with immediacy. Full-bodied, concentrated and succulently ripe flavors of pure briary grape with an underpinning of pine and great warmth. It's blessed with a focused, smooth, very tannic and long-lived finish. Loved it and given its fortified structure, this 2011 will drink beautifully for eons. It reminds me of a young 1985 Graham's VP.
96+ points 11/14/14

2011 Taylor's Vintage Port – Another fabulous nose with fresh floral fragrance, ethereal potpourri, then cracked black pepper and black cherry provide a spicy and multi-layered profile. Full throttle flavors of jammy crushed blueberry and boysenberry pulp, offset by sublime acidity and a velvety texture. But just after swallowing, the lively tannins explode and exhibit the 2011's ability to hang with any Port from this vintage, in terms of its sheer depth and ageability too. The ultra-long finish is incredibly soft and smooth. A brilliant Taylor VP that's uncharacteristically easy to sip on this early in the game; but make no mistake, this has a very long life ahead of it!
97+ points 11/14/14

2011 Dow's Vintage Port – Coincidentally this was the same day that the Wine Spectator announced Dow's 2011 was the #1 wine of the year in the magazine's annual "Top 100" list. As this TN will depict, it is deserving of that honor. The mélange of lavender, fig, tobacco and an essence of sweet grenadine prevail. A glance around the room and all I could see was people nosing their glass, seemingly almost reluctant to even taste it ... and I was in the same boat. The palate is framed by ripe black plum and kirsch flavors, acid galore and imposing, chiseled tannins sculpted for the long haul; and by that I mean a half century and possibly several decades beyond. The hallmark of this young Port is the overall harmony between structural components and gorgeous fruit; but also the beauty and perseverance of the finish. Simply put, this is one of the greatest young Ports I've ever experienced and when tasting this in 2013, it was my favorite of nearly 70 Vintage Ports, all tasted blind. If you're expecting this to be a dry style of Vintage Port, (Dow's "house style") the 2011 version certainly breaks that mold. The 2011 Dow's is a nearly perfect expression of young Vintage Port! **98+ points 11/14/14**

In conclusion, the 2011 Vintage Ports we tasted were delicious across the spectrum and remained fruit forward for the most part. Some a little better than others, a couple with shining elegance, others with big bold flavors and in retrospect, not that different than impressions gained twelve to eighteen months ago. While a few of these appeared in my Top 10 of the vintage, it should be noted that the eight 2011s we tasted blind here, appealed widely to the participants, and me. My observation was that the outward enthusiasm for this vintage even surpassed that of the 1994 horizontal we visited previously at this same venue. In comparing only eight 2011s, I am certain that it was very clear to all tasters that this vintage is deserving of all the media attention and lofty ratings bestowed on these Ports. For those that sat on the fence trying to decide whether or not to make a purchase, this tasting cemented my earlier belief that it is a "must have" vintage for the cellar, regardless of your age. It is not too late. You can enjoy these 2011s at any point in the future and not worry about them being reticent or in need of several decades in order to be enjoyed; although that never hurts. While I really liked the first flight of Ports, the 4 Ports in the second flight were extraordinary. ☺

A comprehensive listing of all declared 2011 Vintage Ports can be found in this issue's **Port Blogsite Recommendation** on page 3.



Our blind lineup after the bags were removed, in order of service.

A QUESTION FOR THE PORT TRADE

A Question for the Port Trade has alternated this space with **Port Personalities, In Focus** for many years now. In this issue we asked a non-controversial question about cork quality and its future and have included fifteen responses from esteemed members of the Port trade. They provided some excellent insight and empirical evidence regarding cork as it applies to Port. We hope that you will enjoy the read!



The question is:

Q: How much improvement have you seen in the quality of corks used for Port over the past decade or two, and do you find it is still the best closure available for Port wine?

Jorge Moreira; Winemaker at Quinta de la Rosa and Real Companhia Velha

We have seen big improvement in the cork industry over the past years with the development of new ways of eliminating the TCA from corks. It is not perfect yet, but the percentage of problems with corks is really decreasing.

We still believe that cork is the best closure that is available for Port wine.

Dirk Niepoort; Proprietor and Winemaker at Niepoort Vinhos, S.A.

I believe that corks were very good in the past, until around the 1980s.

A lot of change took place in the 1990s; some things for the better, but also some things were worse. A definite change came from 2000 on. The cork industry noticed that their monopoly situation had pushed them into lots of bad behaviours and a huge drop in quality (they also noticed that the world was getting sick of the bad quality and the huge TCA problems). The quality of cork in this day and age is very good, (but TCA problems do happen still). I have no doubt that cork is still the best closure for wine, and of course, Port.

Most of the problems that arise nowadays is not really due to TCA in the cork, (but also indirectly) but because of too much chlorine in our environment. The combination of chlorine (which does get into the wines or Ports one way or another, due to cross-contamination created in different ways through lots of industries that use chlorine in anything they can, just to get rid of it the cheapest way) with certain cellar fungus, (natural fungus that has been in the cellars for centuries) produce a sort of TCA through the cork. The whole matter is a lot more complicated than just bad corks. Again, I have no doubt that cork is still the best closure.

Oscar Quevedo; Export Manager, Quevedo Port Wine

The cork industry suffered a dramatic change during the last few decades. The arrival of the alternative closures such as screw cap, plastic cork or glass closure took the cork industry into a large and generalized convulsion. The TCA (cork taint) has always been present in cork and little was known and done to avoid it. Only with the arrival of alternative closures, cork producers finally decided to tackle what has been scaring winemakers for so many years.

The quality of the corks used nowadays ensures a longer life to the bottle and, what was a bigger concern for everyone, a lower probability of spoiling the wine through a contamination coming from the cork.

The other closures mentioned above were never seen as a real alternative for Port. Port may live a very long life and screw cap or plastic closure technologies are too recent, without a valid track record that would leave winemakers confident they would keep their bottles perfectly closed. With the improvement of TCA detection technology, cork solidifies its quality as being the best solution to seal a bottle of wine and certainly the one that lasts longer.

Bartholomew Broadbent; CEO, Broadbent Selections, Inc.

I am a huge advocate of screw tops closure. I would prefer that 98% of wine made in the world be closed with screw tops. I am not an advocate for any other synthetic closures or even glass closures. I am, however, still in favor of corks being used on wines which are designed for very long term aging, especially Vintage Port, Burgundy and Claret, along with a few other collectible wines from around the world.

I think the cork industry has shot itself in the foot by not addressing the TCA issues before they became such an issue that screw tops managed to gain the traction which is now irreversible. Frankly, I have never had an issue with corks in Vintage Ports. In the 30 years during which I have been specialized in the sale of Port, I can probably still count on two hands the amount of bottles of Vintage Port which have been "corked", tainted by TCA.

Is this partly a function of the high alcohol? I cannot be sure, but I think it is also the fact that the cork producers have been extremely careful to look after their local market. There is no question that the Port producers and Douro table wine producers receive favorable stature among the cork producers of Portugal's customers. The Port producers can, and many do, select the corks by personally visiting the manufacturers and they also, now, receive guarantees which I am not sure get offered to all customers. I believe the corks supplied to Vintage Port producers has always been the top of the line and is probably even more so today than ever before.

I am perfectly in favor of cork being the preferred method of closing Vintage Port bottles but I do not think that the T top corks are the best closure for basic Ruby, Tawny, White, or even aged Tawnies. I think screw tops would be far preferable for all of these. I wish, too, that some of the Portuguese table wine producers would not use cork. At home, currently, I have two wines which are my every day drinking wines. One is Esteva, from the Douro, the other is The Curator from the Swartland in South Africa. The majority of time I will open the latter for one reason alone: it has a screw top. I recently mentioned to George Sandeman from Sogrape, which owns Ferreira, the producer of Esteva that I would like to buy Esteva with screw top closure. His reply was something like "good luck to that, not a chance".

Continued ...

The fact is that the Douro producers are too loyal to the cork producers. They won't opt for screw tops, even if the market demands it. I think that will and must change. There is no way that a brand like Esteva will ever realize the market potential for a wine with that price point unless it changes to screw tops. There are too many restaurants in America who won't pour a wine by the glass unless it is in a screw top because it wastes too much of the bartender's time.

Paulo Coutinho; Oenologist, Quinta do Portal

The cork industry definitely has made major improvements in the past 20 years. For a long time, cork was the only proper stopper for wine. With the introduction of glass stopper, synthetic cork, and screw tops that appeared on the scene to combat TCA and other issues, the entire industry has increased their control and quality of cork. The competing products forced the hand of cork producers.

But we know that producing cork takes a lot of time and patience. We know about the diseases that afflict the cork trees; as well as the devastating fires in the forests.

We know that to have a high quality cork, we (wine producers) will have to pay properly! So, we have to open our minds to other possible solutions, especially for inexpensive wines. For some kinds of wines the cork is not the ideal stopper. This is especially true for wine intended to be consumed shortly after the purchase, or fruity wines.

The major problem with cork is that before we identify the problem (TCA), the tainted wine is already losing freshness and aroma. Consumers blame the wine producer or the brand. If we (wine producers) can identify the TCA; we know that the problem stems from the cork producer.

But to combat this problem, there are other solutions now in the cork industry; but sometimes the consumer does not want technical solutions. I think that the young consumers are more open minded these days and we can start to utilize other solutions that we can find in the cork industry.

Was TCA already a more controlled substance? Probably, as I think we have taken some steps backwards. The level of TCA found in wine seems to have increased. As for using any other type of closure on Port wine ... I don't think so. Not even for Pink Port! At the moment, I cannot imagine any type of Port with a screw top. Please don't! Please ...

Miguel Roquette; Director Sales & Marketing, Quinta do Crasto

I do agree that the cork industry and cork quality went through a difficult time a few years ago. Many lines were written about this important matter and avid discussion took place regarding the overall quality of this important product for the wine industry.

I have witnessed a very significant improvement and great investments made in the quality of corks produced in Portugal. But as with any product in the market, quality has its price and a premium cork can be quite expensive.

For our Vintage Port and Unfiltered LBVs we have always invested in top quality corks. But as cork is a *natural product*, it is obvious and acceptable every now and then to come across a poor quality cork in our wines, even though this happens very seldom today.

In my personal opinion, cork is without any doubt the very best closure available for Port wine. I would not want to live in a world without corks!

Ana Rosas; Oenologist; Ramos Pinto

I think in general, the quality of corks has improved a lot over the past years. In the nineties we had severe problems with cork quality, but the cork producers really made an effort in research and subsequently, investment in their production. In the past decade we started to really notice the improvements.

In addition to the cork's problem with TCA and other mouldy flavours, (which is considerably better now, even if sometimes we still get it) is the problem cork has with oxygen and the way it changes the aromatic profile of wine, especially in the whites.

In the case of Port wine, I still strongly believe that cork is the best closure for wines to lay down, even if the contribution of oxygen when aging is not standard or controllable.

Carlos Flores dos Santos; Co-owner, J. H. Andresen, Suhrs. Lda.

I still remember by the end of the eighties, fortunately not so often, hearing about TCA problems with some Port bottles. Fortunately, and for sure luckily, we have never had serious problems with it, but here and there the problem appeared in a bottle or within a specific case.

Quality has indeed improved a lot, for sure because of the efforts our suppliers made in R&D and significant investments in equipment, and also by the Port producers very significantly improving control of and attention to cork quality. As an example, our corks that remain in stock for three months are sent to our suppliers to ensure they keep the necessary characteristics to avoid problems (TCA on top). The fact is, that in recent years I can remember not more than a half dozen bottles where we found or were alerted to problems due to cork.

Is it still the best closure available for Port wine? We think so, though we are aware that it can be controversial. One thing is for sure, and specifically for Ports that can age in bottle ... the result is not exactly the same. Especially for those Ports (like Vintage) that can age in bottle for decades, I am convinced that we will have to wait and see what happens in the long term. For the time being, and until clear evidence is obtained, we shall stick to cork. Obviously, there is also the market to be considered, and probably there are good reasons for it being so difficult (if possible) to find premium wines that utilize other types of closures than cork.

Miguel Braga; Owner & Winemaker, Quinta do Mourão

I prefer to use cork in my wines, because they are alive and they need to breathe. I don't want them in a coffin. But realistically, what does a wine producer want from a cork? Simply, that they don't spoil the wine, and will safeguard it from "time" (clock and weather – in Portuguese is the same word), and will provide a nice presentation to the consumer.

If you talk about the entry-level wines, the cork problem occurs more often and the market-place won't understand that it is not the wine producer's fault. In this "value segment" perhaps the most important development was the creation of amalgamated corks and the ability to treat them for TCA, which lowered the percentage of defective corks that prevailed with cheap corks.

I'm not well-versed in cork treatment techniques, but I know that they have evolved in recent years, because the percentage of defective corks has decreased, not as much as we would like, but the effort has been made. At this moment, I don't see anything better than cork.

João Ferreira Álvares Ribeiro; Proprietor, Quinta do Vallado

Regarding your question and starting in reverse order:

Yes, I still think cork is the best closure available for Port wines. Concerning improvements, yes, there have been some improvements, although, for an entry level Port, the type of TCA control that is made does not provide a 100% guarantee. For the top Ports, where more expensive corks are used, and individual control can be implemented, risk can be eliminated.

Cristiano van Zeller; Owner & Winemaker, Quinta Vale D. Maria

There has been a very clear improvement in cork during the past two decades, with a critical decrease in TCA affections due to a much improved and careful cork forest management, cork extraction from the tree, cork bark storage, the discovery of different scientific methods to prevent TCA, (and other problems) and an extraordinary improvement in quality control in most, if not all cork producers and suppliers.

The quality of the closure in Ports is crucial, as it is for all wines, but Ports are not, if at all, very susceptible to TCA or other eventual cork defects due to the high alcohol level it has. Only if there is a very high concentration of TCA, or other cork problems may affect a Port.

Most Ports are bottled with stopper corks: a small cork with a plastic top. These can more easily be controlled for any technical defects and so it is very rare indeed to find any problems in Ports coming from a defective stopper cork. For bottle-aged Ports with more traditional corks (i.e. Vintage Ports), the ones used are always of the highest quality and quality control standards, as it happens in every top wine around the world. In these, the quality control is so strict that any eventual and very rare problem that may occur due to cork, is reduced to an infinite minimum (and Port has very little susceptibility to any) that it only "bares" the traditional and proven extraordinary advantages of wine ageing in bottles duly closed with a cork.

Being Portuguese, a forest and environment lover and protector and looking at all history of cork, I cannot but say that cork is the best closure for any wine!

Paul Symington; Joint Managing Director, Symington Family Estates

There have undoubtedly been improvements in the quality of corks over recent years with reduced levels of TCA being detected. However corks remain an area of some frustration to us as it appears to be impossible to eliminate all faults and as producers we want our Ports and our Douro wines to reach the consumer in absolutely perfect condition, without any harm caused by the cork of any nature whatsoever.

The increased research undertaken by the cork manufacturers that started some 15 years ago, is very welcome and we look forward to further elimination of risk.

We ourselves have invested very substantial sums of money in employing highly specialised external laboratories to quality-control all the corks that we use. This is in addition to our internal Quality Control team which is highly skilled in the drive to eliminate cork faults. We maintain our target of the total elimination of all cork risk.

With regard to cork being the best closure for Port wine, I would agree wholeheartedly for all bottle-aged Ports. The case is certainly not made for an artificial closure being adequate for wine that is destined to age for many years in bottle. With regard to wines that are bottled and intended for relatively quick consumption, it is up to the cork manufacturers to give the producers the necessary guarantees to allow us to deliver to our consumers the wine as we intended it to be enjoyed.

José Maria Calem; Owner & Winemaker, Quinta do Sagrado – Vinhos, S.A.

I am sure that cork is the best closure for Port. However as Port is by nature a very stable wine the quality of the cork is traditionally low. That's certainly true for Vintage Port but also for LBV. I believe that Port (Vintage and LBV) should, generally speaking, have a better quality of cork as DOC wines do.

Part I

If we define quality as "expected utility grade verifiable through the form and the constituent elements of the same and the result of its use", the quality of cork stoppers used in Port wine is increasing, at least in the last decade.

The quality corks should be measured by:

- a) Physical function of keeping the wine in the bottle
- b) Function to allow controlled gas exchange between the interior and exterior atmosphere of the bottle
- c) Aesthetically attractive, showing the value of a natural product
- d) Harmless with odorants molecules or other molecules considered detrimental to the wine or the health of consumers.

Part II

Quality control and quality analysis in the cork industry is increasing; new techniques of laboratory, new equipment (GC, HPLC, GC-MS ...) have helped in the quality control of raw materials and are absolutely necessary in decision making about the use of cork (i.e. for or stoppers for other products e.g. insulation, automobile industry, construction industry etc.).

Statistical methods help in the interpretation and establishment of quality levels.

The development of new techniques of cork treatment have resulted in an increase in the quality of cork stoppers - example - ROSA treatment at Amorim - with a huge reduction to the level of incidence of TCA, TTA, PCA, TBA, and PBA in natural cork stoppers and agglomerated corks and micro-cluster.

The emergence of new cork alternatives, (plastic, screw caps, glass) has led to innovations in the cork industry, and the quality of cork stoppers has improved due to market pressure.

At the same time, the reduction of the cork market as a result of alternative closures has led to a lower pressure on the cork forest, thus leading to the production of better quality cork.

Part III

At Quinta do Tedo in 2014 we opened about 1600 bottles of Port wine for tastings, we detected 12 bottles with cork problem (0.75%); when compared to 2004 where we opened 840 bottles and 18 had cork problems (2.1%).

Yes, cork is the closure for the Port Wine!

Bento Amaral; Director of Technical & Certification Services (and Tasting Panel), IVDP

At the IVDP's tasting chamber we noticed a decrease in the number of rejections of wines due to having a mouldy fault. This means, in my opinion that the quality of the corks have increased, even if this fault is not the only one to be associated with cork problems.

The regulation regarding Vintage Port, that has been approved by the interprofessional Council, suggests that vintage ports should be bottled in dark bottles with "real" cork. Which means that the trade thinks this is the best way to keep a Vintage Port

Paula Sousa; Marketing & Tourism Manager, Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo S.A. / Grupo Amorim (the world's leading producer of natural cork)

No doubt natural cork is the best option; in fact, many will tell you it is the only option if a producer wants to extract all the wonders existing in such a noble wine as Port. The quality of the stoppers, as with any other product or service in the world, is always a function of the supplier used. As such, if wine producers select the best cork suppliers their level of satisfaction is going to be high. Having said that, it is also undeniable that the investment made by the leading cork companies around the world has delivered consistently higher quality and reliability. So no doubt cork is here to stay.



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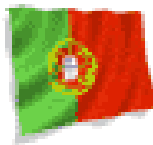
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