

HISTORY

Porto: a wine with a history

For almost two millennia, a unique viticultural landscape rose on the schistous hillsides along the Douro River valley and that has produced an exceptional wine. More than a gift of Nature, Port Wine is at heart the expression of this history, a collective cultural heritage of work and experience, know-how and art, that has built up from generation to generation. Port Wine was, and is, a key product for the national economy and even more, a symbolic asset that represents Portugal throughout the world.



The history of vineyards in the Upper Douro is a long and ancient one. There is no lack of archeological discoveries and documented references to witness the cultural persistence of viticulture from past eras.

Remains of stone treading tanks and casks dating back at least to the 3rd and 4th centuries can be found throughout the region. The designation Port Wine, however, only appears during the second half of the 17th century at a time of the expansion of Douro viticulture and rapid growth in wine exports.



During the last third of the 17th century, at a time of great rivalry between the maritime empires in the North, the Flemish and the British increased their demand for Iberian wines, to the detriment of wines from Bordeaux and other regions of France. England imported increasing quantities of Port Wine. In 1703, the Treaty of Methuen put the diplomatic seal of approval on this trade by exchanging privileges for

British textiles on the Portuguese markets.

Production of Douro wines, stimulated by the rising British demand and very high prices, tried to adapt itself to the new requirements of the market. However, as it has occurred with all great wines, active trading instigated rivalries that often gave rise to fraud and infractions.

It then happened that, as of the middle of the 18th century, exports stagnated although production continued to grow. Prices dropped like a stone and the British decided not to buy any more wine as they accused the farmers of doctoring their wines.



Consequently, the great Douro farmers, desirous of protecting their interests, petitioned the government of the future Marquis of Pombal to create the Companhia Geral dos Vinhos do Alto Douro. This new institution, established by Royal Charter on 10 September 1756, was directed at ensuring the quality of the product, avoiding fraud, balancing production and trade, and stabilising prices. The first "demarcation of the mountains" was implemented. The borders of the winemaking region were delimited by 335 stone markers bearing the Feitoria designation which indicated the best quality wine, the only one that could be exported to England, commonly known as fine wine. The concept of a register of vines was defined.

During the second half of the 19th century, a series of factors came together to mark the turning point from the Douro of the time of the Marquis of Pombal to the Douro of today. The destruction caused by oidium during the 1850's was followed, a decade later, by the ravages of the phylloxera that destroyed most of the vineyards in the demarcated region. In 1865, the new trading freedom regime that was extended to the region led to the opening of the line of demarcation, thus enabling vineyards to expand rapidly to the area of the Upper Douro where the effects of the phylloxera appeared later and less violently.

This was followed by new methods for preparing the land, new planting techniques for vines, the selection of the best regional species of vines for grafting, the rational use of fertilisers and pest control, the perfecting of winemaking procedures.

By the end of the century, the impact of the phylloxera was clearly evident in the manner by which the land was forced to become reorganised.

At the end of the 1880's, whilst the vineyards were slowly being rebuilt and spreading over a wider area than before, the Douro was faced with another crisis, one that would prove more destructive than the diseases of the vine, fraud. Imitations of Port Wine were invading our main markets where such as French Ports, Hamburg Ports and Tarragona Ports were being sold at prices far below those of authentic Port Wine. And the market suffered.

Trade was declining, farmers were destitute, the Douro was a picture of misery.

The Portuguese dictator, João Franco, upon assuming office on 10 May 1907, signed a decree that was to regulate the production, sale, export and control of Port Wine, based

on the principles applied by the Marquis of Pombal 150 years earlier in defence of the name. New lines of demarcation were drawn around the area of production which now included the Upper Douro. Once again, exports of Port Wine had to be shipped across the bar of the Douro River or from the harbour at Leixões and the Porto denomination of origin was reserved exclusively for fortified wines from the Douro region that contained a minimum of 16.5° of alcohol. Responsibility for defending and controlling the denomination of origin was given to the Viticultural Committee for the Douro Region.

On the other hand, the decree of 27 June of the same year that regulated the brandy trade prohibited the distillation of Douro wines and forced producers to buy the spirits they needed for fortifying their wines, from other winemaking regions, a measure that was violently contested. The excessive enlargement of the demarcated region was also the subject of heated debates, so much so, that the following year Admiral Ferreira do Amaral's government (Decree of 27 November) preferred a demarcation by parishes which resulted in a total area similar to the one that exists today (Decree-Law of 26 June 1986) which, in turn, corresponds to the one established by decree on 10 December 1921.

Exports rose at a totally unexpected rate to more than one hundred thousand pipes in 1924/1925, a volume of trade that would only be surpassed at the end of the 1970's.

In spite of all the above, however, the situation in the Douro villages suffered little improvements. Poverty and hunger worsened as taxes and the cost of products rose at the end of the monarchy and during the First Republic. The political and social unrest of the first quarter of the 20th century proved to be one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the Douro, with violent demonstrations, political meetings, riots, the burning of trains carrying brandy from the South of the country, attacks on City Halls and Public Offices.

The new regime that was born with the military uprising of 28 May 1926 enforced new changes to the organization of the Port Wine trade and to Douro agriculture and brought about stricter government control.

In 1926, the government created the Bonded Area, or *Entrepósito*, in Vila Nova de Gaia, an area that was to act as an extension of the demarcated region. All companies connected to the Port Wine trade were forced to build lodges within this area if they wished to age their wines. In practice, this was the end of all trade direct from the Douro.



In 1932, the associative regime created the Farmers' Guilds, consisting of owners of land who were heads-of-households, on which local trade unions held a seat. The Guilds that were formed on a county level then associated themselves to the Syndicated Federation of Farmers of the Douro Region - the Casa do Douro, the entity responsible for protecting and disciplining production. Later regulations (Decree of 30 April 1940) granted this entity the power to prepare and maintain the register of vineyards, to apportion the licenses for fortified wine among producers, to supply grape brandy to winemakers, to supervise the wine made in the demarcated region and to issue the documents that had to accompany all wine transported to the Gaia Entrepósito.

The Port Wine Shippers' Guild was created in 1933 as a sectorial association that would endeavour to discipline the trade.

The activities of the Casa do Douro and of the Port Wine Shippers' Guild were coordinated by the Port Wine Institute, an entity created that same year with a mandate to study and promote the quality, control and dissemination of the product.

The register of vineyards was updated. Each year, according to the location, the nature of the soil, the varieties and age of the vines, the Casa do Douro apportions licences amongst all the registered farmers to produce a set amount of fortified wine, according to their classification (from A, the best, to F) for a set price. This is the benefício system.

The associative, or cooperative, movement began to gain strength in the 1950's and by the beginning of the next decade represented about 10% of all growers and all regional production.

This form of organization was extinguished following the 1974 Revolution, although the Casa do Douro and the Port Wine Institute retained their basic responsibilities for defending the quality of the denomination. In turn, the Port Wine Shippers' Guild became the Power Wine Shippers' Association and, more recently, the Association of Port Wine Companies.

Most Port Wine shippers have joined to form groups of companies. At the same time, some of these larger companies have invested heavily in production by purchasing their own estates and vineyards and in replanting. On the other hand, some farmers have, since 1978, decided to enter the commercial sector to sell their own production directly, thus returning to a custom that ended in 1926. 1986 saw the birth of the Association of Producers-Bottlers of Port Wine, directed namely at the sale of this wine directly from the Douro estates and under the respective farmers' own labels.

WINEMAKING

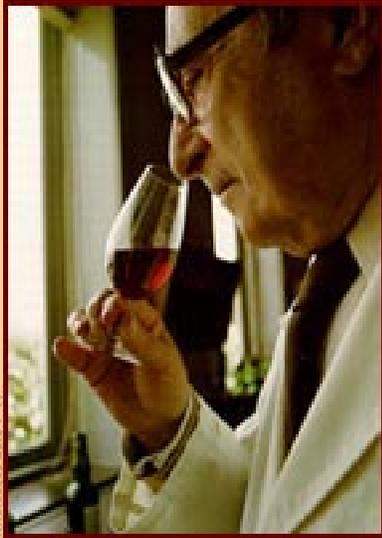
AGEING

STORAGE

GLOSSARY

ENOLOGY

Winemaking throughout the ages



Until about 1756, the making of *shipping wines*, as Port Wines were called in those days, followed the so called "ancient winemaking" techniques. The addition of brandy (and only in very limited amounts) only occurred after fermentation was over so that wines that were made were dry.

In 1820, a new method for adding brandy the so-called *modern winemaking* technique was applied whereby brandy was added to stop fermentation, thus creating a sweeter wine in the mouth. This method only became widespread in 1852 when the Ports began to take on the characteristics of the Port Wines we know today.

WINEMAKING

AGEING

STORAGE

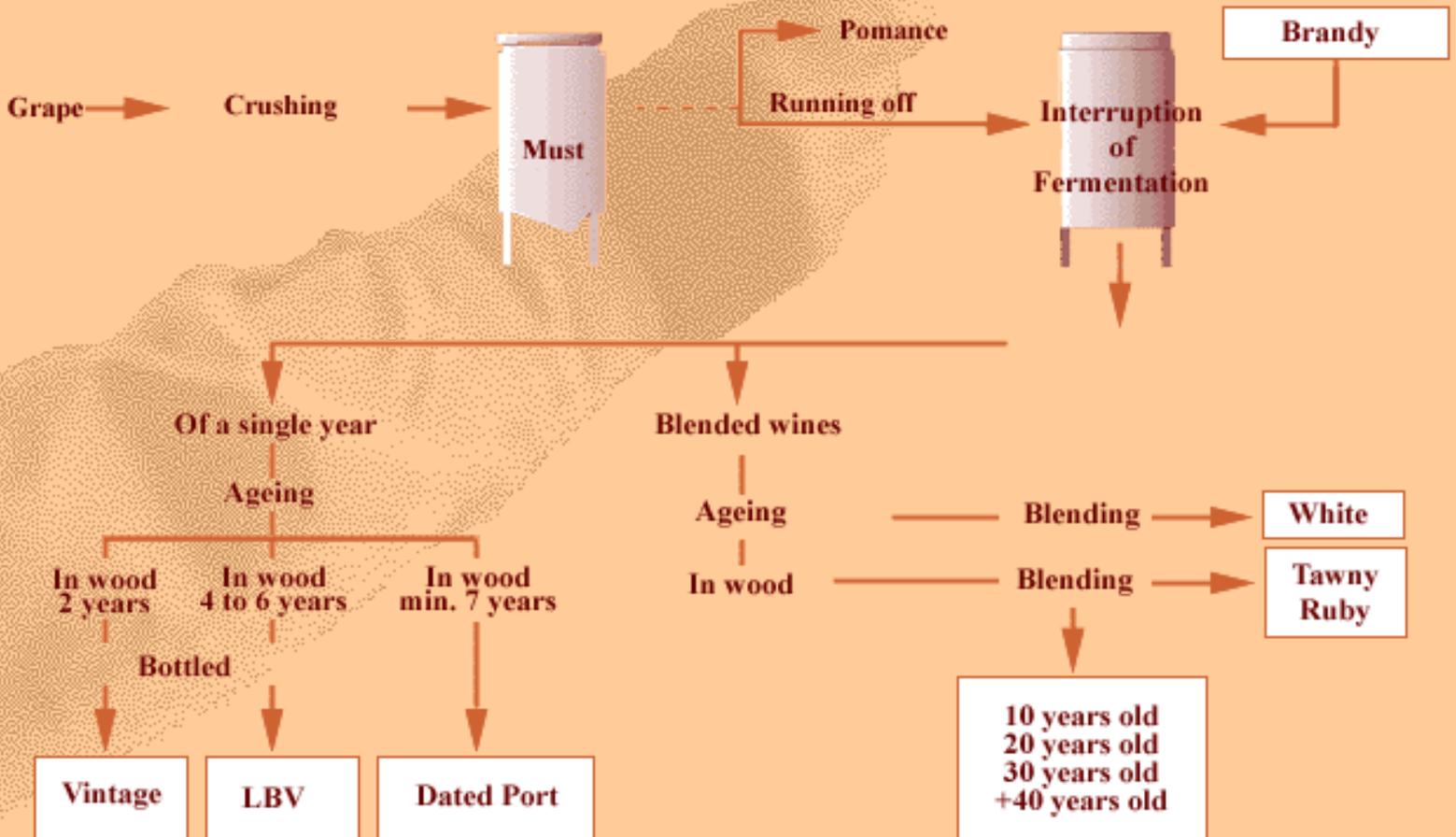
GLOSSARY

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ENOLOGY

Making and ageing Port Wine



Winemaking

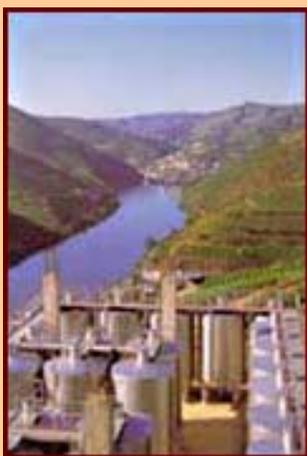


Port Wine is a fortified wine, whose making differs from the methods used for table

wines painly because it is left to ferment and the macerate for a very short period of time (2 to 3 days). Furthermore, the addition of brandy has to respect certain rules that have been fine-tuned over the years by tradition and practice.



According to traditional winemaking methods used for making certain types of Port Wine, after the grapes have been destemmed (separated from the stalks), they are crushed in lagares (open stone treading tanks with a maximum height of 60 cm). This operation, the treading, is traditionally performed by men and women although it may also be done with mechanical devices that simulate the action of the feet. After the first such crushing, the fermenting must is left to rest for some hours, after which it is again crushed until such a time as the fermenting must is separated from the solid matter in the juice (running off) and the brandy is added.



Today, most of these wines are made in highly technical wineries that associate quality with profitability. In these wineries, most operations are mechanised. Once the grapes have been fully or partially destemmed, the grapes are crushed and pumped into vats where they ferment for 2 to 3 days. During this period the juice is pumped over several times to extract the maximum of colour from the skins.

White wines may be made differently. According to the traditional methods, it is made with some maceration and in these cases it ages in conditions that lead it to oxidate. The time of maceration is reduced for wines in which the winemaker wishes to keep a pale colour and the fresh aromas.

Fortification with Brandy or Benefício

Fortifying the wine with brandy gives the wine specific organoleptic characteristics, improves the chemical stability and at the same time helps control the final degree of sweetness of the wine. Thus, fermentation must continue until the amount of unfermented sugars in the wine gives it the desired sweetness. The fermenting must is then separated from the solid matter (run off) and pumped into vats where the fermentation is stopped by adding grape brandy in set proportions.

The Table below shows some values that help in understanding just how the winemaker determines when to add the brandy to the fermenting must. Thus, to obtain a Port Wine

with 19% alcohol by volume and with a sweetness corresponding to 2° Baumé (Bé), brandy must be added to stop fermentation when the fermenting must reached a volumetric mass (p20) of 1.0296. At this moment, 83 litres of brandy are added to 467 litres of must; the resulting semi-sweet fortified wine then presents values of 76 grams of residual sugars per litre of wine.

Examples of Port Wines with varying degrees of sweetness
Characteristics of the must: P20 = 1.0986; Sugars = 231 g/l (12.9° Bé)
Degree of alcohol = 13.6 % by volume

Final Wine			P20 before brandy is added	Proportions (litres)		Fortified Wine	
Alcohol	p20	°Bé		Must	Brandy	Alcohol from fermentation	Sugars g/l
19	1.0259	4	1.0526	448	102	4.6	113
19	1.0186	3	1.0405	458	92	6.0	94
19	1.0116	2	1.0296	467	83	7.4	76
19	1.0046	1	1.0191	476	74	8.7	58
19	0.9997	0	1.0092	486	64	9.8	41



It is essential that the type of brandy that is to be added to the fermenting must be very carefully chosen as its chemical composition and aromatic potential are fundamental to making a high quality Port Wine.

The Port Wine Institute has a very rigorous system for controlling all the lots of grape brandy that will be used for making Port Wine. Control of the quality of the brandy is carried out through laboratory analyses and through tastings.

WINEMAKING

AGEING

STORAGE

GLOSSARY

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SPECIAL
CATEGORIESOTHER
DESIGNATIONS

COLOUR

SWEETNESS

GLOSSARY

TYPES OF PORT WINE

Special Categories

The various types of Port Wine are all duly regulated and correspond to the following designations:



Vintage

These are wines of superior quality, produced in exceptionally good years from select areas within the region. Made from wines produced in a single year, they are kept in wood for two to three years before they are bottled.

Presenting outstanding organoleptic characteristics, they must be very full-bodied and deep in colour when they are declared (two years after they are made). Ageing in bottle endows them with the smoothness and elegance that gradually takes over from their initial astringency. As they age, their bouquet becomes balanced, complex and highly distinctive. Vintage Ports that have spent some years in bottle are associated, on the nose, with toasted aromas (chocolate, cocoa, coffee, cigar boxes, etc.) and with spices (cinnamon, pepper) and occasionally, fruits.

L.B.V. (Late Bottled Vintage)

These are also wines from a single year. They appear in years of excellent quality and are aged longer in wood than in the case with Vintage Port. They are bottled between the fourth and sixth year after they are made.

Red in colour, their organoleptic characteristics endow them with elegance and distinction. Full-bodied, smooth and with a more or less fruity bouquet, they may

develop to a certain degree depending on how long they are kept in wood. Usually these wines are less astringent and full-bodied than Vintage Ports of the same year, yet equally harmonious; their smoothness and elegance varies according to the individual style of the producer.

Dated Ports

These are wines from a single year that age in wood for several years and can only be sold after they have attained 7 years of age.

Whilst they age in wood, their young, fruity and fresh aromas develop through oxidation to create a bouquet marked by the aroma of dried fruit, the distinct and pleasant hint of ethyl acetate and aromas of toasting, wood and spices. As they age they acquire an increased smoothness and their bouquet becomes more harmonious and complex. They become golden in colour, with greenish tints in very old wines.

Port Wine with an Indication of Age

These wines are similar in style to Dated Ports but, unlike the latter, are blended from wines of different years. The age that is given on the label expresses the nature of the wine as regards the characteristics that are conferred on it through ageing in wood. Thus, a "10 years of age" wine has the colour, aroma and typical taste of a wine that has aged in wood for 10 years. The authorised age indicators are: 10 years, 20 years, 30 years and more than 40 years.

As with Dated Ports, their bouquet is characteristic of the oxidation process: dry fruits, toasting, spices and the characteristic hint of ethyl acetate that is more marked in older wines. In the mouth they are smooth and harmonious and their bouquet lingers greatly in the mouth.

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CATEGORIES

OTHER
DESIGNATIONS

COLOUR

SWEETNESS

GLOSSARY

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CATEGORIESOTHER
DESIGNATIONS

COLOUR

SWEETNESS

GLOSSARY

TYPES OF PORT WINE

Other Designations

In addition to the aforementioned categories, there are Tawny, Ruby and White Ports:



Tawny

This is the name given to blended wines whose characteristics vary considerably between them. These may be wines whose bouquet is that of a wine that has spent 3 or 4 years in cask, with some traces of the young wines, to very old wines with many of the characteristics of Dated or Ports with an Indication of Age.

Ruby

These are younger wines with a more or less deep colour, fruity on the nose and with the vitality of young wines. They are an average of 2 years old.

White

There are several styles of White Port, namely those associated with different degrees of sweetness and the manner by which they are made. In addition to the traditional styles, there are those with a very floral and highly complex nose and a minimum alcohol content of 16.5% (Light Dry White Port), of interest to those who are looking for a less alcoholic Port.



vines per hectare.

Before the advent of the phylloxera that first appeared in the region in 1862, vineyards consisted of 1-2 rows of vines planted along small, irregularly-shaped terraces. These terraces were "torn in strips", from the top to the bottom of the hillsides, their retaining walls were built with stones and rocks, their height depended on the slope of the land and little earth had to be worked to prepare the soil for planting. The planting density was 3000 to 3500

Phylloxera is a microscopic insect - a nematode - that attacks the roots of European vines, causing serious damage to vineyards. Chemicals are not very effective in the fight against this plague. Although in the past carbon sulfide was injected into the soil with some result, it has proven ineffective in most vineyards. The only way to overcome this situation is to use phylloxera-resistant rootstock (American vines) upon which European vines are grafted.



After the phylloxera epidemic, the devastated small terraces, or mortórios, were abandoned and new, wider and steeper terraces were built, with or without supporting walls and allowing for a greater planting density (approximately 6000 vines per hectare). It was then, too, that vineyards were planted according to the natural slope of the land. Mechanization is impossible on these terraces as there are no or few access roads and the steeper vineyards are heavily planted. Because

of this and the high costs of labour that this type of terraces implies, these have little by little also been abandoned.

The introduction of mechanisation to the region at the end of the 60's and early 70's led to the appearance of a new system.

These are horizontal terraces with earthen supporting walls, each bearing 1-2 rows of vines planted far enough apart for a small tractor to move between them and with a low planting density of some 3000 to 3 500 vines/ha. Given the





The types of vines that may be planted in the Region, as is the case in all demarcated regions, is regulated by a Decree-Law that lists the authorized varieties, those that are recommended, and the percentage percentage according to which each may be planted.

Today, winemakers have chosen to plant fewer, carefully chosen varieties in the new vineyards. The most noteworthy red wine varieties are: Tinta Amarela, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, Touriga Francesa, Touriga Nacional and Tinto Cão; predominant white grape varieties are Malvasia Fina, Viosinho, Donzelinho and Gouveio.

As regards productivity, the vines grown in the Region are not known for their high yield. The maximum authorized yield is of 55 hl/ha (approximately 7 500 Kg/ha). Average yield is of approximately 30 hl/ha (4 100 kg/ha).



White Grape Varieties		Red Grape Varieties	
Minimum 60%	Maximum 40%	Minimum 60%	Maximum 40%
Esgana Cão	Arinto	Bastardo	Cornifesto
Folgasão	Boal	Mourisco Tinto	Donzelinho
Gouveio ou Verdelho	Cercial	Tinta Amarela	Malvasia
Malvasia Fina	Côdega	Tinta Barroca	Periquita
Rabigato	Malvasia Corada	Tinta Francisca	Rufete
Viosinho	Moscatel Galego	Tinta Roriz	Tinta Barca
	Donzelinho Branco	Tinto Cão	
	Samarrinho	Touriga Francesa	
		Touriga Nacional	

Rootstock

The most frequently used rootstock following the phylloxera invasion was the Rupestris du Lot. Later, hybrids of Berlandieri with Riparia (420-A, SO4) and of Berlandieri with Rupestris such as R99, R 110 and 1103 P, and also 196-17, were introduced. The former are used in deeper and cooler soils and the latter in hot, dry and rocky slopes.

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Seppelt Trafford Tawny D.P. 30

Established in 1851, the Seppeltsfield Winery has a long and proud history as one of Australia's leading wine companies. At Seppeltsfield, the strength of Seppelt winemaking expertise, viticultural knowledge and technical experience has led to a great fortified wine tradition. The Cellars have 18,000 small oak casks of fortified wines, including some of the oldest and best in Australia.

Vineyard Regions: Seppelt Vineyards, Barossa Valley, South Australia.

Grape Varieties: Grenache, Shiraz and Mataro

Maturation: A blend of port vintages, fortified with brandy spirit and matured in oak casks. Seppelt Trafford Tawny Port has an average age of five and a half years.

Winemaker James Godfrey's Comments:

Colour: This classic wine is tawny in colour tending to olive green at the edges, an indication of age.

Nose: The bouquet shows elegant fruit and attractive rancio character.

Palate: On the palate, the wine is rich and complex in flavour with a lingering brandy finish. A wine of great style, the complex flavour characteristics of Seppelt Trafford are enhanced by the component of older wine in the blend.

wines as Australians shift from a cheap, wholesale product to a more refined, quality-oriented market. This shift is a result of a keener focus on vineyards planted in cool-climate districts, such as Coonawarra and the Adelaide Hills. Aussie winemakers have realized the need to concentrate on wines with more elegance, clarity of fruit flavor, and complexity in order to satisfy discriminating palates worldwide. Areas once abandoned because of their inability to produce ripe fruit are now back in production, as winemakers use the strengths of this continent's diverse growing regions.

Wine production in Australia is concentrated in four states: South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia. Some of the more famous regions—such as Hunter, Barossa, Coonawarra, Yarra, Padthaway, and Adelaide—are producing the majority of its world-class wines. The most famous and consistently best Australian red wine is Penfolds' Grange Hermitage from South Australia. It's also the most expensive. Produced from the shiraz grape (the Australian name for the syrah grape) and capable of aging for decades, it's one of the most sought-after red wines in the world. The 1990 (\$100) is probably the best Grange to date, exhibiting dark cherry, berry, and plum fruit flavors in a firm but round tannin structure that will carry it for many years in the cellar.

Another Australian wine definitely not to be overlooked is port. Particularly noteworthy are the Seppelt "Trafford" Tawny Port and the Yalumba "Clocktower" Tawny Port. The Seppelt "Trafford" is an incredibly smooth, superbly crafted wine displaying classic peach, praline, butterscotch, walnut, and molasses flavors wrapped in spice, brown sugar, and oak. The Yalumba "Clocktower" is a smooth, spicy, slightly hotter wine with more nutty, dried fruit characteristics in a beautiful long, full finish. Both are sure candidates for your cellar.

SOUTH AFRICA: A TASTE OF EUROPE

South Africa has been a major wine producer for more than 350 years, and its wine-producing regions centered around the Cape of Good Hope are what many believe to be some of the most picturesque in the world. With mountains jutting straight up more than 1,600 feet from valley floors, South Africa's 10 proclaimed areas of origin (wine-producing regions) are home to more than 4,500 wineries. The country currently ranks eighth in the world in total wine production, but it wasn't until the recent abolition of apartheid that the country's wine market was opened to the United States. Even so, only 70,000 to 80,000 cases of South African wine are imported into the United States per year.

In general, South African wines are more European in style than other New World wines, because many South African winemakers study viticulture and winemaking in France. In addition, South African wines have been favored throughout the world for their style, as they incorporate finesse and charm rather than brawn and forwardness like their Australian counterparts. Their fingerprint is a cross between Bordeaux and Tuscany, with red wines, generally, exhibiting slightly lower alcohol levels, higher acids, and firm, ripe tannins. They are also less opaque in color and tend to age very gracefully.

Of South Africa's 10 areas of origin, Stellenbosch is considered the center of gravity. Situated east of Cape Town and bordered on the south by False Bay, wines from this area reflect the fertile soils and coastal influence needed to produce a world-class product. With the highest concentration of wineries and widely diverse microclimates, Stellenbosch consistently produces this country's best wines. Three to stock in your cellar are the Rustenber 1992 Gold, a red blend exhibiting ripe red and black currant fruit flavors with soft, rounding tannins; the Thelema 1992 Cabernet Sauvignon, with its black cherry and currants set against some mint and soft, approachable tannins; and the Meerlust 1991 Rubicon, a rich, concentrated blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot,

FICKLIN Vineyards

NV Tinta Port



"Wine of the Year, Ficklin Vineyards Tinta Port... the one California wine that has pleased my palate consistently for the 30-some years I've been a serious wine fancier."

"Spicy, dark, ripe plum fruit flavor, with the beginning of complexity - perfectly balanced fruit, to sweetness, to alcohol... I really don't think you can buy a more satisfying bottle of Port anywhere for less money."

- Jerry Mead, "Mead on Wine"

Retail price of \$13.99 per 750 ml. bottle.

NV Tinta Port

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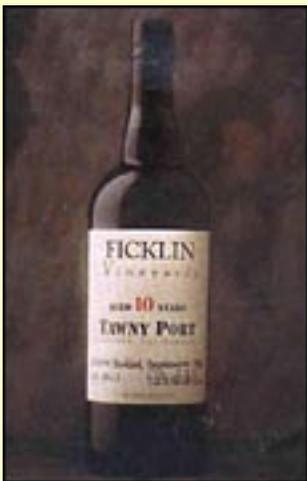
by Fred McMillin
for February 5, 1999

Winery of the Week

Ficklin Plays to Win

Prologue

1941 - "The superior Port wine grapes of Portugal's Douro Valley have been extensively described and recommended by the faculty [at U.C.-Davis]. It is unquestionably true that California Port as good as much of that shipped out of Portugal could be made from these grapes if grown in the warmer districts of the state."



...by the legendary Frank Schoonmaker in
American Wines

1948 - "Tucked away at the end of an uncertain road southwest of Madera in the hot Central Valley is the small Ficklin Winery. Partly in response to a University of California challenge to import and grow Port grapes from the Douro Valley, the Ficklin family has embarked on a Port-only program from those grapes, obtained from the University."

...from *California Wine*, Sunset Publishers

The Rest of the Story

[WineDay Annex](#)

More articles by
Fred McMillin



Welcome to WineDay, the *electronic Gourmet Guide's* daily update. Monday through Thursday, WineDay presents a wine profile. Then on Fridays we present the *Winery of the Week* to take you through the weekend.

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Was Schoonmaker right? Here's what the critics said. 1955 - "The first winery in the United States to make Port entirely from choice Portuguese varieties, Ficklin Port is unsurpassed in quality and character with a full richness of flavor."

...Author John Melville, *Guide to California Wines*

1982 - "The Ficklin family has consistently made, with supreme skill, over more than 30 years, absolutely the finest port-type wines in the United States."

...Roy Andries De Groot, *The Wines of California*

1984 - "David Ficklin knows every cask, oval, and barrel as a parent knows his children, and like children, some day they would mature and be married into a blend that will rank with the finest. David's son Peter, now in his twenties, is the third generation to continue along the winemaker's path."

Robert Lawrence Balzer, *California Wines*

Just the Facts

Name - Ficklin Vineyards

Location - Madera, California

President and Winemaker - Peter Ficklin

Vice President and Vineyard Manager - Steve Ficklin

Founded - 1946 (Walter Ficklin Sr. arrived in California in 1911 and planted his first table-grape vines in 1912. He and his wife Mame purchased the present 30-acre vineyard in 1918.)

Production - It has deliberately been limited to around 12,000 cases a year to maintain top quality.

The Wines - Tinta Port , Ten-Year-Old Tawny Port, and Special Bottlings once every three to five years...and prices are well below most imports.

Ways to Serve Ficklin Port - Phone Mira Bieler at (800)497-3376. She can tell or send you plenty of good ideas.

Postscript

How tastes change. When Ficklin was founded, Americans drank three bottles of Port and Sherry for every one of table wine such as "Pinot Chardonnay" or Zinfandel.

[1998 WineDays](#)

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CALIFORNIA PORT TRIBUTE

by Jerry D. Mead

When I was a young man, learning about wine pretty much on my own (my family was from the Midwest and south and tended to drink beer and whiskey), one of the first California wines that I read about, then tried, and as a result have enjoyed a 35-year love affair with, was Ficklin Port.

I'm sorry to say that what brings Ficklin to mind today is the recent passing of the winery's original winemaker, University of California-trained David Ficklin. Ficklin was 80 when he died on March 20, and is survived by his wife and partner of 48 years, Jean, and two sons, David and Peter. He is also survived by the brother who co-founded the winery with him in the mid-forties, Walter Ficklin, Jr. Peter assumed winemaking duties in 1983, and Walter's son Steve manages the vineyards.

Ficklin is important to the history of California wine on a number of levels, but most importantly for being the first California winery to strive to make world-class, super-premium Port, and to do so employing traditional Portuguese varieties.

Prior to Ficklin, most wines called "Port" in California were primarily prized for their sugary sweetness and their high alcohol, by the derelict populations of America's "skid rows." Ficklin gave California Port a new legitimacy, and deservedly so, that had connoisseurs pouring it purely for its sensory attributes, the way they would the wines of "Oporto" from Portugal.

The Ficklins, David, Walter, Jr. and their father, Walter, Sr., were also among the first in California to plan their vineyard and winery based on what varieties would do best in their soil and climate. Based on then new university studies, it was a toss-up between Port and Sherry varieties. We should be forever grateful that they settled on such top Portuguese varieties as Tinta Madeira, Touriga (my personal favorite Port variety), Tinta Cao and Souzao.

Ficklin makes both Vintage Port (very limited production and not inexpensive) and non-vintage Port labeled "Tinta," which is widely available and moderately priced.

BEST BUY WINE OF THE WEEK

Ficklin NV "Tinta" Port (\$11) This consistently delicious, ruby-style Port, can often be found on sale for even less. It is wonderful to drink right off the shelf, but this is a \$10 price range wine that will improve in the bottle for many years to come, developing increased complexity in both bouquet and taste. Speaking of taste, were talking mostly ripe plum, some boysenberry and a sweetness level that makes it suitable for serving for dessert all by itself, or as a companion to some fruit and cheese as a way to cheer up a dreary winter's midday. It's available nationally at everything from upscale supermarkets, to fine wine shops and many top restaurants. Rating: 90/95

BLATANT PLUG

I'm participating in a wine cruise this coming September that sounds like a "doozy," and yes, I'm working for my passage, conducting several seminars during the 10-day event. Also on board will be representatives of Beaulieu Vineyards and IDV Wines (French and Italian imports).

It's on Norwegian Cruise Lines, Sept. 18-28, 1998 and the price includes roundtrip airfare from the West Coast to Honolulu. It's one of those deals where you fly to Hawaii, get on the ship and immediately visit Kona. Then it gets different. You spend two days at sea...destination Christmas Island(aka The Republic of Kirabati)...and then two more days coming back. That's when the series of four wine seminars will take place.

Then it's back to Hawaii for visits to Hilo, Maui, Molokai and Kauai, before eventually heading back to Honolulu and wherever home is. Note that I've been on two other cruises with this organizer, who is a real pro and does everything first class. Price for outside midship cabin with window is the in the \$2600 range including airfare and all meals.

If you want more information call (800) 845-9463 and we'll have the organizer send a brochure.

MORE WINNERS

The judges at the New World International Wine Competition (NWIWC) got really stingy in the Merlot class. I'm going to have to speak to them about that!

There were no gold medals awarded in the up to \$10 price range, though there were a number of silvers and bronzes, many of them to wines of Chilean origins. To order the official awards book containing all winners, send \$6 to: NWIWC Winners, Box 1598, Carson City, NV 89702.

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Page	(1)			

Winery: **Osborne**

Wine: **1994 Late Bottled Port**

Score: **90**

Here's an excellent alternative to vintage Port. This LBV is rich and concentrated, with fresh berry, cherry and plum character. Full-bodied and medium-sweet, with a long, sweet fruit finish. Outstanding for this producer. Better in 2001, but who can wait? Drink now. (JS)

Highly Recommended

Price: \$15

Country: Portugal

Region: Portugal

Issue: Jul 31, 1999

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Winery: **Osborne**

Wine: **1995 Late Bottled Port**

Score: **85**

A Port with grapey, peppery character. Medium-bodied, medium sweet, with a fresh, fruity, spicy finish. Drink now. 13,330 cases made. (JS)

Price: \$20

Country: Portugal

Region: Portugal

Issue: Feb 28, 2001

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[Wine Basics](#)

[Vintage Charts](#)

[Collecting](#)

[Wineries](#)

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[Forums](#)

[Calendar of Events](#)

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Jan 10, 2002



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Wine: OSBORNE LATE BOTTLED PORT 1994

- This stuff tastes like head cheese strained through my grandma's gym socks. Absolutely marvelous.
- This is an incredible port for the price. My second favorite next to the Whiskers Blake. I have a case to keep on hand.
- "Better in 2001?" Durn, I already emptied 3 bottles. Only 1 left, and these are becoming scarce. Best LBV I have ever had.
- Tax day ~ April 15th, 2000. Bought one from Wine Club @ \$13.
- bought for 1st wine dinner but never got to it (too drunk). Opened at Phils 30th and was too drunk again to rate it. Had again two nights later and liked it but not heavenly. 10/20/00
- Plummy, rich and sweet. A lovely port for after dinner with chocolate and or berry desserts. Purchased 1x at Nugget. Will not hold, but drink to consider buying more and cellaring a few.
- 2\$12.99(TB)11/99 (7,500 cases produced) Like it without Cigar, thank you.
- 1 bottle
- Delicious berry flavors. Less hot than other LBV's I've tried.
- Excellent wine. Seriously underpriced
- 4/30/2001 \$16.79, Pop's Wines & Spirits (NY).

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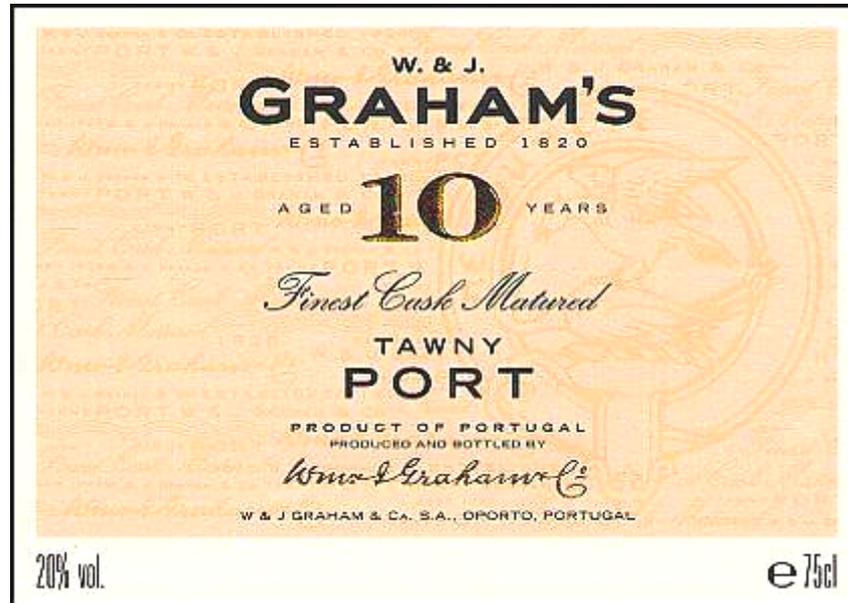
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GRAHAM'S TEN YEARS OLD TAWNY

Graham's Ten Years Old Tawny is a wonderful soft rounded wine, following its long ageing in oak casks, this softness is balanced by a rich, subtle, mature fruit.



GRAPE VARIETIES

The grapes used in the production of Graham's 10 Years Old were a blend of traditional Portuguese varieties from the Douro Valley, such as Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz and Tinto Cão.

VINIFICATION

Graham's 10 Years Old was fermented with natural yeast at between 24-28°C. Once the must had fermented to the desired degree of sweetness (usually within 48 hours), fortification took place with grape brandy at 77% v/v (generally 80% must / 20% brandy).

AGEING

Graham's 10 Years Old was aged in oak casks at our lodges in Vila Nova de Gaia.

TASTING NOTES

Fine Tawny colour, with a lovely fragrant nose of dried fruits such as orange peel. On the palate intense nutty flavours well balanced by some fresh mature fruit, and with delicious length on the finish.

SERVING TIPS

- Does not need decanting.
- The wine is ready to drink when bottled, but will maintain its quality with bottle age.
- Serve at room temperature 18°C, or slightly chilled in hot weather.
- Superb with cheese, nuts or dried fruit after a meal.

Finest Ten Year Old in the tasting:

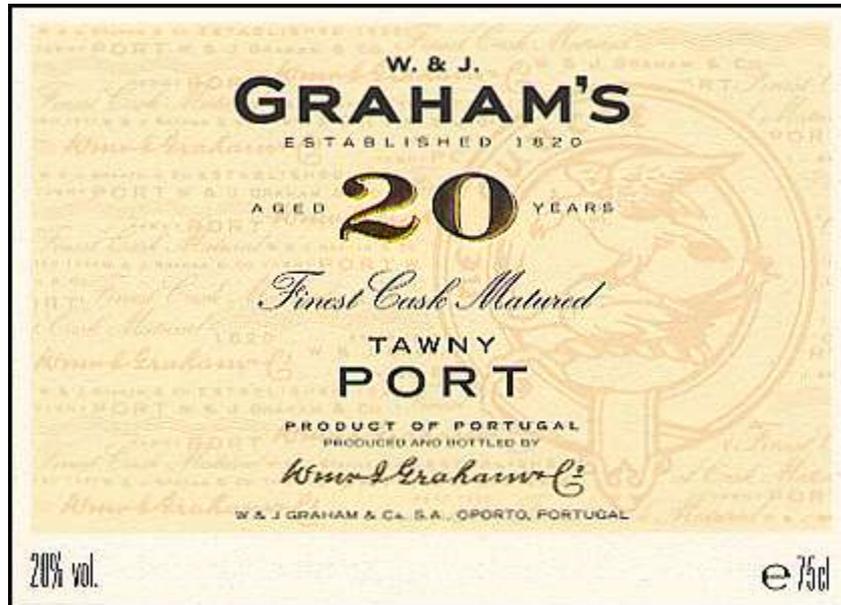
"Very good quality, lovely flavour, top quality origin and very good ageing"

Decanter Magazine.



GRAHAM'S TWENTY YEARS OLD TAWNY

During their long maturing period in oak casks, Old Tawnies undergo subtle colour changes. The deep red hue which characterises a Port's purple infancy gradually gives way to a paler red. It then becomes amber – paler still – and eventually takes on a delicate brown, orange tinted colour.



GRAPE VARIETIES

The grapes used in the production of Graham's 20 Years Old were a blend of traditional Portuguese varieties from the Douro Valley, such as Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz and Tinto Cão.

VINIFICATION

Graham's 20 Years Old was fermented with natural yeast at between 24-28°C. Once the must had fermented to the desired degree of sweetness (usually within 48 hours), fortification took place with grape brandy at 77% v/v (generally 80% must / 20% brandy).

AGEING

Graham's 20 Years Old was aged in oak casks at our lodges in Vila Nova de Gaia.

TASTING NOTES

Light amber colour, showing mature raisiny fruit aromas with hints of honey. The palate is rich and nutty, with a wonderful balance, a clean crisp finish and a soft lingering aftertaste..

SERVING TIPS

- Does not need decanting.
- The wine is ready to drink when bottled, but will maintain its quality with bottle age.
- Serve at room temperature 18°C, or slightly chilled in hot weather.
- Superb with cheese, nuts or dried fruit after a meal.
- Excellent with a cigar.

"Superb Graham's 20 Years Old. In fact sheer perfection. Very sweet, full, smooth harmonious".

*Michael Broadbent.
Decanter Magazine.*



Wine Spectator
Home

Sign In

Wine Ratings

Daily Wine News

Dining

Travel

Archives

Wine Issues

Vintage Charts

Collecting

Winefest

Wine Retailers

Forums

Calendar of Events

Classifieds

Wine Jobs

Gift Shop

Advanced Search

Full Access

Help

Jan 10, 2002

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Found	5 ratings		
Sort	Score	Price	Vintage Winery
Page	(1)		

Winery: Graham

Wine: NV Tawny Port 10 year old

Score: 91

Complex orange peel, cedar and plum aromas and flavors are the hallmarks of this tawny. It has medium body and sweetness with a crisp, clean finish. Absolutely delicious to drink. Pure honey. (JS)

Spectator Selection

Price: \$24

Country: Portugal

Region: Portugal

Issue: Jan 31, 1996

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Winery: Graham

Wine: NV Tawny Port 20 year old

Score: 88

Not as balanced as the 10-year-old. Really vibrant masses of honey, butterscotch and crème brûlée flavors. Medium-bodied, very fresh, long honey and orange peel finish. Slightly hot. (JS)

Price: \$45

Country: Portugal

Region: Portugal

Issue: Jan 31, 1996

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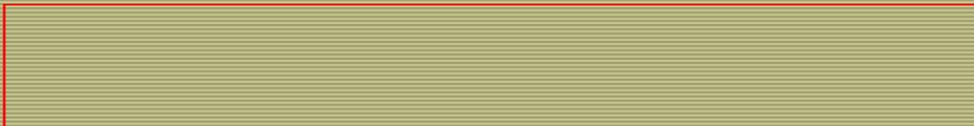
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[Wine Guide](#) > [Encyclopedia](#) > [Graham](#)

Selected Wines for Graham

Graham's 10-year-old Tawny Port ●

Producer: [Graham \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Francesa](#), [Touriga Nacional](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#)
 Style: Medium-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Fruit-rich tawny with ripe plum and prune notes. Full, quite sweet - a relatively youthful, vigorous example of the style - the 20-year-old is more developed and nutty.

Graham's Late-Bottled Vintage Port

Producer: [Graham \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Francesa](#), [Touriga Nacional](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#)
 Style: Medium-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Very forward fruit-emphasized style. Spicy black fruits; sweet and well-balanced, but light and without the depth or complexity of the best traditional examples.
 Best Years: 1994

Graham's Malvedos Vintage Port ●●

Producer: [Graham \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Touriga Francesa](#), [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Nacional](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#), [Tinta Amarela](#)
 Style: Heavy-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Rich, full-flavoured off-vintage port; sweet, concentrated, intense fruit, consistently impressive.
 Best Years: 1998 95 92 90 87 86 84 82

Graham's Vintage Port ●●●

Producer: [Graham \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Touriga Francesa](#), [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Nacional](#)
 Style: Heavy-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Big, rich, sweet style with backbone, depth - supremely complex flavour and lush texture with age.
 Best Years: 1997 94 91 85 83 80 77 75 70 66 63 60

[Atlas: Portugal](#)
[Vintage Chart: Portugal](#)

Browse ▶ [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

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Quinta do Bomfim (meaning 'good end') was purchased in 1896 by George Warre at a time when he thought that a shipper should take a closer interest in the production of Port, a move that was somewhat unconventional at the time.

The building of the lodge and the house began in 1896 and was finished a year later. The vineyard continued to expand and by 1930 was producing some 100 pipes of Port (1 pipe = 550 litres) per annum.

The extending of the *adega* (winery) began in 1964 to make way for eight concrete autovinifiers. 1972 saw a third phase in the extension of the *adega* and an increase in the storage capacity to over 3,000 pipes. Today the winery is capable of producing approximately 7/8,000 pipes of Port during the vintage and continues to be updated and modernised in order to maximise the production of quality Port wine. 1997 saw the building of a new reception area and investments during 1998 include a new storage facility and weighing gantry.



The upper terraces at Quinta do Bomfim

In 1970 a gradual programme of replanting the old terraced vineyards was started. This transformation focused on two objectives: firstly, to replace the old vines where production had fallen to negligible levels; and secondly, to obtain a 'fresher' style of wine from the higher vineyards to complement the more structured wines of the lower terraces. All the new vines have been planted in blocks of the traditional varieties to suit the altitude and soil.

The vineyard itself extending to 35 hectares produces some 350 pipes of Port and is split into the following grape varieties:

Roriz

Touriga Francesa

Touriga Nacional

Barroca

Tinto Cão and Tinta Amarela

A single quinta wine was launched in 1988 with the 1978 vintage. **Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port** is only produced in 'un-declared' years, as in Vintage years the wine from this quinta goes to produce the core of Dow's great Vintage Port.

The property situated within a short walk of the winery is based on a design taken from an Indian tea-planter style of house. Surrounded by a wide veranda and filled with many old family photographs the house has a very friendly atmosphere. This property has not escaped substantial investment over the years with the building of a new dining-room in 1986 and the refurbishment of the kitchen and various rooms during the later half of 1997 and early part of 1998.

[Back](#)

QUINTA DO SOL



This new state of the art winery was officially inaugurated by the Minister of Agriculture, **Sr. Eng. Fernando Gomes da Silva** on 15th September 1997.

tannic structure.

The wine is aged for some 18 months in the Quinta's oak vats, before bottling in the spring of its second year.

Quinta da Senhora da Riberia Port is presented in a six-bottle oak case, also containing a specially-designed corkscrew made to a 19th-century pattern.

[Back](#)



Quinta do Bomfim, Dow's finest vineyard, acquired and planted by the firm in 1980, is situated in perhaps the most favourable location in the Upper Douro.

This quinta classified 'A' grade, forms the core of Dow's famed Vintage Ports. In 'non-declared' years, the quinta produces wines of consistently high quality, which are selected and bottled as Dow's Quinta do Bomfim. These wines are treated in all respects as Vintage Port and therefore should be stored lying down and decanted before serving. Quinta do Bomfim wines are normally ready to drink from about its tenth year but will also benefit by keeping for many more years.

[Back](#)

Steven Spurrier
Decanter, October 1998

1995 Quinta do Bomfim

‘Very good colour. Very splendid nose. Rich, concentrated, very ripe and complete. Splendid fruit here. Fullish on the palate. Fine grip and intensity. The tannins are ripe, the wine crammed with fruit and it is nicely dry. This is very fine, a classic. A keeper.’

18.5 out of 20
Clive Coates, May 1998

1998 Quinta do Bomfim

"Deep, dark colour; floral in character with violets both on the nose and in the mouth, lacking a steel girder in terms of structure but peppery tannins rise towards the finish. Elegant".

Richard Mayson
Decanter, June 2001.

1998 Quinta Senhora da Ribeira

"Very deep blue-black colour; closed but luscious (still closed two days later), with an intensely sweet, almost New World character. Not as powerful as some, but certainly the most elegant and gently harmonious wine of the vintage".

Richard Mayson
Decanter, June 2001.



[Top of Page](#)

Dow's Vintage Port

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[Collecting](#)

[Wineries](#)

[Wine Retailers](#)

[Forums](#)

[Calendar of Events](#)

[Classifieds](#)

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Sort	Score	Price	Vintage	Winery
Page	(1)			

Winery: Dow

Wine: 1995 Vintage Port Quinta do Bomfim

Score: 90

Price: \$38

Country: Portugal

Region: Portugal

Issue: Apr 30, 1998

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Slightly heavy but impressively concentrated, this is a very ripe young Port with plum, raisin and spice aromas and flavors. Full-bodied, very sweet, with sugar-coated, thick tannins. Best after 2004. (JS)

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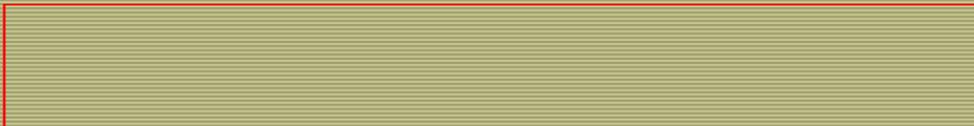
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- Dining & Wine Home
- Wine Reviews
- Wineries
- Wine Guide

[Wine Guide](#) > [Encyclopedia](#) > [Dow](#)

Selected Wines for Dow

Dow's 30-year-old Tawny Port ●●

Producer: [Silva & Cosens \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Francesa](#), [Touriga Nacional](#)
 Style: Medium-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Dry, elegant, mature, nuts and rich dried fruit characters in a remarkably complex flavour. The 20-year-old and 10-year-old versions combine good richness with freshness and elegance.

Dow's Crusted Port ●

Producer: [Silva & Cosens \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Touriga Francesa](#), [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Nacional](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#)
 Style: Heavy-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Solid, dark, powerful - drier than some - an expansive, complex flavour.

Dow's Late-Bottled Vintage Port ●

Producer: [Silva & Cosens \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Touriga Nacional](#), [Touriga Francesa](#), [Tinta Roriz](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#)
 Style: Medium-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Perfumed and more complex than most - certifiably Dow. Reveals good depth of flavour and fine tannins. Ready on release.
 Best Years: 1994

Dow's Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port ●●●

Producer: [Silva & Cosens \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Touriga Francesa](#), [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Nacional](#), [Tinta Barroca](#), [Tinta Cão](#)
 Style: Heavy-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Rich, powerful single-quinta port, very concentrated with plenty of tannin, somewhat approachable young but better with ten years or more. The 1984 and 86 are drinking well now.
 Best Years: 1995 92 90 87 86 84

Dow's Vintage Port ●●●

Producer: [Silva & Cosens \(Symington\)](#)
 Appellation: [Port DOC](#)
 From: Douro, [Portugal](#)
 Grapes: [Tinta Roriz](#), [Touriga Francesa](#), [Touriga Nacional](#)
 Style: Heavy-weight, sweet dessert fortified wine
 Tasting Notes: Solid, powerful - drier than some - multi-dimensional, revealing tremendous flavour, complexity and a superb perfume with long aging. The 1983 and 85 are elegant, but lighter than is typical.
 Best Years: 1997 94 91 85 83 80 77 70 66 63 60 55 45 34 27 08

a [Atlas: Portugal](#)

i

s [Vintage Chart: Portugal](#)

o

Browse ► [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

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