



2007 PORT DECLARATION

"It is another beautiful clear day with mild temperatures. We have become so used to this weather over the last 6 weeks that we have almost started to take it for granted..."

Charles Symington, 15th October 2007, Symington Family Estates, Quinta do Bonfim

If ever cynicism over port declarations should be put to bed, it ought to be now with the 2007 vintage. There can hardly be a worse time to declare – and yet how could such an attractive year be overlooked? The wines are lovely. They are not monolithic and impenetrable like so many declarations in the past – a welcome diversion – rather they are inviting, seductive and elegant, poised and aromatic.

Whenever a vintage is declared it is tasted blind and in near silence at Head Office by a team which combines members of C&B with other luminaries in the port world. Results are collated in a historic tome, which has records of these tastings dating back to the 1934 vintage. Last Thursday (21st May), the tasting team embarked on an assessment of the 2007 vintage and its wines. We were delighted to welcome Richard Mayson and Godfrey Spence to join us. The scores below reflect the order in which the wine finished and the overall scores we gave them. Gould Campbell (the lowest priced) "won" for the second declared vintage running. You may notice we have not included a "to" date for the recommended drinking. This is purely because port has such a long "window" of drinkability.

Vintage Report

2007 in the Douro, along with so much of Europe, was a rather gloomy year; one which perhaps would have proved more than difficult for winemakers in the past. Even with all the modern techniques that could be thrown at it, the vintage regularly veered towards disaster, only to come very good – perhaps great – in its final days.

The start of the year was wet and welcomed as such. The Douro often has really hot summers when the vines have a real need for water reserves. (In fact, 2007 broke the series of summers which had heat waves – but the availability of water was nonetheless providential.) Spring was initially warm which, allied to plenty of reserves, made for a healthy, even start to the year. June however brought in rain and this, allied to the prodigious growth afforded to healthy vines, demanded intense work in the vineyard, curtailing excessive canopy to allow for aeration of the bunches and to avoid mildew. The better-equipped estates did exceptionally well.

A glorious Indian summer began in September with good weather continuing into October. This allowed for both sugar and phenolic maturation due to an extended harvest, without threat of rain. Estates were able to wait for full maturity without concern. This was an extraordinary year – so much so that the Symington group, at least, had to amend their habitual picking schedule. Touriga Nacional is a fabulous component in both port and red wines but is often so susceptible to drought and heat stress that its ability to ripen is compromised. In 2007 it was ready to pick before Touriga Barroca – normally the first to mature.

What is clear amongst all of the wines which we have tasted, in-house and further a field is that here we have a wonderfully poised, aromatic and perfumed vintage. It appears that the wines will drink beautifully in youth, for those who favour that ebullient style, but equally they have all of the classical components to age well for twenty years and more.

Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
May 2009

The Wines

Dow's 2007

£175/case of 6, in bond UK

Dow benefited greatly from the success of Touriga Nacional, which so enjoyed the climatic conditions in 2007 and the balance of a good water supply without excessive heat. The blend is 54% Touriga Nacional (sweet and dry tannins, according to *terroir*), 26% Touriga Franca (fragrance and sweet tannins), 8% Tinta Barocca (complexity and volume) with 12% of a field blend of old vines of Vinha Velha which add complexity and intensity. Fermentation is in traditional *lagares*.

Corney & Barrow Score 16-17+

Jet-blue plum in colour, this makes an immediate impact with its concentration. The nose is wonderfully spicy on attack, plum compote and cassis vying for supremacy whilst retaining some characteristic Dow reserve. The palate is sumptuous in texture, silky and sweet with citrus hints constantly lifting the palate and on through a long, layered, peppered finish.

Recommended drinking from 2019

Fonseca 2007

£185/case of 6, in bond UK

The extended growing season did well for all of the traditional grape varieties and Fonseca has benefited in terms of balance. Winemaker David Guimaraens reflects that the year has really seen the benefit of investment during the last 30 years at Quinta do Panascal which contributed particularly opulent, richly textured wines to the final blend.

Corney & Barrow Score 16

Opaque jet-plum with a tight, bright purple rim. The nose presents swathes of exuberant fruit, richly concentrated and intense, cassis and wild blackberry to the fore. There are complementary hints of cedar, wild herbs and eucalyptus, echoed on the palate which is opulent, velvet-rich and sweet. This is a seductive, intensely fruited Fonseca which will give pleasure in youth but has structure and balance to allow for long ageing.

Recommended drinking from 2020

Gould Campbell 2007

£120/case of 6, in bond UK

Gould Campbell is a small specialist producer – an insider's wine which, by virtue of its tiny production, is likely to remain so. The vineyards are in the Rio Torto Valley (a tributary of the Douro) and, for the first time, from a vineyard acquired in 2006 in the rolling hills of the Vilariça Valley, Douro Superior.

Corney & Barrow Score 18-19+

Opaque black-purple in colour, this presents abundant, sweet black cherry and blueberries on the nose, liquorice and spice. There are floral notes too, white pepper and shades of citrus. The palate combines similar elements, darker, spiced fruit with citrus notes and hints of marmalade – a lovely wine.

Recommended drinking from 2023

Graham's 2007

£190/case of 6, in bond UK

Here Graham's also benefited from the success of Touriga Nacional with 40% in the blend and for the first time it includes old vine production from a new acquisition, Quinta do Tua. 25% Touriga Franca, 20% old vine field blend, 10% Tinta Barroca and 5% Tinta Roriz complete the mix – all fermented in *lagares*.

Corney & Barrow Score 18-19

This is an intense purple plum in colour. The nose has an enticing, lifted freshness with hints of violet and eucalyptus complementing rich black fruit, dark chocolate and delicate spice. This is voluptuous in style, silk-textured, elegant and sensual – very fine indeed.

Recommended drinking from 2023

Niepoort 2007

£175/case of 6, in bond UK

Niepoort is produced from several vineyards in the Cima Corgo area from vines of between 60 and over 100 years old. The grape mix is a field blend of many varieties including Touriga Franca and Touriga Nacional.

Corney & Barrow Score 16-17

Fathomless jet-plum in colour, this is densely concentrated. The nose reveals intense black fruit, peppered, dark and brooding, lifted by hints of wild herbs, citrus notes and crushed minerals. The palate is compact, packed with sweet restrained fruit. The structure is impressive with fine firm tannins holding the fruit slightly at bay. This is a very fine Niepoort with decades of potential.

Recommended drinking from 2019

Quinta do Noval 2007

£205/case of 6, in bond UK

Quinta do Noval is an impressive 145 hectare estate in the Cima Corgo, near the small town of Pinhão. The blend is a field blend including Tourigas Nacional, Franca, Francesca and Tinta Roriz.

Corney & Barrow Score 17-18

Inky plum-ruby in appearance, this presents *glacé* cherry fruit on the nose liberally spiced with pepper. Rich, sweet and vinous, this is opulent, with well-rounded supporting tannins, beautifully integrated. Dried violets add to the aromatic character of the mid-palate, giving way to a distinctly savoury finish, with a citrus lift.

Recommended drinking from 2017

Smith Woodhouse 2007

£135/case of 6, in bond UK

The Symingtons added a new property to their portfolio which was included in this 2007 vintage. Ancient plots here produce wines of wonderful intensity, an excellent contribution to Smith Woodhouse – a field blend of assorted old vines.

Corney & Barrow Score 17

Always something of an insider's choice, this punches well above its weight. Opaque inky plum in colour, this exudes dark and primary fruit on the nose, bramble and cassis lifted by hints of violet and roses. Spicy and aromatic throughout, the palate is richly textured, powerful and full - sweet, seductive and wonderfully elegant.

Recommended drinking from 2020

Taylor 2007

£195/case of 6, in bond UK

The grapes for Taylor's benchmark blend come from the finest wines of the company's own estates. There are three *quintas* in distinct geographical locations, properties which each contribute their personality to the final blend. In the field there is absolutely state of the art viticulture whilst in the cellar tradition clearly plays a role with foot-treading still employed.

Corney & Barrow Score 16+

Opaque inky purple, with violet tones, this is vibrant, fresh and stylish from the outset. Summer pudding and cassis vie for dominance on the nose, lifted by violets, roses and wild herbs- with a heady dash of white pepper. The palate echoes these aromatics, complementing a sprightly, energetic palate. This has real Taylor personality, suave and *debonair*, concealing real muscle and power. Sandy tannins are barely perceptible but are there to ensure good ageing potential.

Recommended drinking from 2019

Quinta do Vesuvio 2007

£175/case of 6, in bond UK

Quinta do Vesuvio occupies a magnificent site in the Douro Superior, housing some of the oldest mono-varietal plantings in the Douro. The entire production is foot-trodden. The blend is 55% low yielding Touriga Nacional and 45% very late picked Touriga Franca.

Corney & Barrow Score 18+

Inky purple in colour, the most striking element in tasting this wine was the wonderfully hedonistic aromatics, borne of low yields, cool fermentation and older vines. Intense and concentrated, summer pudding berries and cassis are complemented by violets and hints of eucalyptus on both the nose and palate. The latter is equally perfumed, lifting an impressive opulence, finishing long, with a flourish – a superb wine which deserves its increasing celebrity.

Recommended drinking from 2021

Warre's 2007

£160/case of 6, in bond UK

Warre may be the oldest British Port shipper but there is no room for complacency here. 2007 marks a first for Warre. It is the first year when it was produced 100% from Symington family owned vineyards, following the acquisition in 2006 of Quinta do Retiro Antigo. This had always been a Warre's producer and the wine made by the Symingtons for most of the 20th Century but now they own it outright. The average age of vines is 50 years so yields are low but fantastically intense and concentrated. The blend is comprised of 65% field mix old vines, 23% Touriga Nacional and 12% Touriga Franca, vinified in *lagares*.

Corney & Barrow Score 18+

Fathomless inky plum in appearance, this has instant appeal. The nose is richly concentrated with seductive old vine fruit lifted by fresh primary berry notes and fresh violets. The palate is similarly aromatic, lively with a gregarious personality which almost obscures really impressive underlying power.

Recommended drinking from 2022

To order please call 020 7265 2430 (London),
01638 600 000 (Newmarket) or 01875 321 921 (Edinburgh)