



PORTUGAL

2016 & 2017 VINTAGES, EN PRIMEUR

Once again I am flying the flag for our oldest allies, our friends in Portugal. They ought not to need a flag-bearer as their wines speak for themselves but we all need a reminder from time to time of just how good these wines are.

Portugal produces a cornucopia of wines of every style. Here we showcase just two of the country's producers as we were fortunate to work with two of the very finest, Wine & Soul and Quinta Vale D. Maria. Both estates are in the staggeringly beautiful Douro Valley in northern Portugal.

The region enjoys a long and varied history, dating back to the Romans who planted the first vines. The Church, as elsewhere, then played a significant role.

There have been seeds discovered aged between 3000 and 4000 years old – so clearly today's growers have ancient foundations on which to build the reputation of their modern wines.

In 2001, the truly magnificent Douro Valley was deservedly made a Unesco World Heritage Site. Arrestingly dramatic, the region is almost impossibly difficult to work, with vertiginous slopes and hard schist soils. Planting having been based on instinct, there is extraordinary diversity of grape varieties and a spellbinding, hugely complex, array of high quality vines.

Respecting and harnessing this individuality has been key to the Douro's renaissance. The best producers are inspired by the ingredients they nurture throughout the growing season and by the *terroirs* they aim to translate.

The new generations of talented winemakers which have emerged, combine the best of tradition and modernity to produce slick, rich, balanced wines with a classical feel.

These are world-class wines, by anyone's standards.

ALISON BUCHANAN
September 2018

2016 VINTAGE REPORT

“The viticulture year of 2015/2016 was the year of the conductor and the strike of his baton. The timing to pick had to be just right. A deep knowledge of the vineyard, a careful study of the weather predictions and patience were the key factors”

CRISTIANO VAN ZELLER
July 2018

The winter of 2015/ 2016 began with warm and rainy weather, the rain always welcome for replenishing diminished water reserves. 2015 had been very dry. In fact, looking back 30 years, there was 80mm more rainfall than average during this period. Initially welcome, these conditions continued through April and May which demanded strict vigilance in the vineyard. The rain encouraged grass growth amongst the vines. This had then unexpected and welcome consequence of inhibiting mildew.

The harvest was therefore healthy but, with fewer bunches per vine, quantities were down. Whilst unfortunate, this had a positive side, with the aromas intensifying within the grapes. June and July then passed without incident and then August brought in extremely hot weather. This caused stress in the vines, slowing down maturation. Thankfully some rain on the 24th and 26th of the month facilitated the final ripening process and the eventual harvest was in peak condition.

QUINTA VALE D. MARIA

Cristiano Van Zeller is a tireless ambassador not only for his own wines but for the Douro Valley in its entirety. We have been working together for a great many years and have witnessed the evolution of Cristiano's portfolio first hand, as wine after wine is regaled on the world stage.

Dona Maria is the flagship – a property formerly owned by Cristiano's wife Joana's family. The estate had been let out to the Symington family on an extended lease, much of it destined for Quinta do Vesuvio.

Cristiano, having parted with Quinta do Noval in 1993, bought Vale Dona Maria in 1996. This is a wonderful, spectacularly-sited property, overlooking the Rio Torto, a tributary of the Douro. South/southeast facing, there are 17 hectares of vines ranging between 60 and 80 years old, 10 hectares of 30 year old vines and 5 hectares of new plantings.

The Quinta has been divided into separate plots, is sustainably farmed and is all hand-picked. Grapes are selected before being de-stemmed and foot trodden in granite *lagares* for one to three days. Each parcel is fermented separately either in the *lagares* or in stainless steel tanks. The resulting wines are racked into 225l new Allier oak casks, from various coopers. Malolactic fermentation is in oak, followed by 21 months in *barriques* (60% new, 40% one year old) All of the fermentations are kept separately until the final blending, just one month before bottling. A word of explanation - 'D' in D.Maria is like our 'St', we see St. and say 'saint', they see D and say Dona. Cristiano decided on his rather elegant way to avoid confusion, as there is another estate of this name in the Alentejo.

QUINTA VALE D. MARIA 2016

Intense plum ruby, a lovely colour, this offers quintessential Vale Dona Maria charm, a harmonious medley of berries and cherries with a sensation of wild herbs and minerals – pepper-spiced. The palate is beguiling in combining generosity with elegance and poise – a truly fine wine, supported by silken tannins and maintaining a sense of direction and focus throughout – rendering it ideal for food-pairing. Bravo to Cristiano and his team – another lovely vintage.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

17.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019–2030+)

£240/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

QUINTA VALE D. MARIA VINHA FRANCISCA 2016

From 1996, Cristiano and his team had been plotting the Dona Maria vineyard, identifying individual parcels of exceptional quality. In 2004, when Cristiano's daughter Francisca reached 18, they planted a new plot, with a number of varieties, including Tinta Francisca. Jet-ruby in colour, intense and brilliant, this is rather lovely and certainly a fine ambassador for this vineyard. A flourish of fruit, flowers and herbs on the nose, is complemented by a dusting of pepper and some background smoky, savoury appeal. The palate is similarly aromatic, underpinned by minerals and cocoa tannins. Combining a sense of nobility with such fragranced appeal is rather special – refined through to a long, layered, harmonious finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

17.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019–2030+)

£275/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

CV CURRICULUM VITAE 2016

The grapes for CV, Curriculum Vitae come from very old vines which, year on year, surpass expectations. From north-facing parcels, around 86 years old, a field blend is produced, foot-trodden before fermentation, 50% in *lagares*, 50% in stainless steel vats. Thereafter the ageing is for 22 months in 75% new French oak, 25% one year old. Intense jet-ruby to a bright, tight rim, this has a seductive nose, layered, with dark fruit and earthy complexity, floral lift, chocolate depth and mineral focus. The palate continues to tantalise with a bright strings section complementing the bass. The tannins are ripe and rounded adding to the considerable complexity, black cherries, cherry liqueur, mocha and vanilla cream – a hedonistic brew – lovely wine.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

17.5 to 18.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020–2032+)

£315/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

WINE & SOUL

Wine & Soul was founded by Sandra Tavares da Silva and her husband Jorge Serôdio Borges in 2001 – both established and renowned winemakers. Sandra was formerly winemaker for Cristiano Van Zellar at Dona Maria, which is where we met.

Sandra and Jorge bought an old port lodge in Vale de Mendiz, rebuilt the *lagares* and painstakingly selected grapes from the Pinhão Valley. Pintas, their iconic wine, was launched in 2001 and then, in 2003, the couple bought the vineyard, seriously tying their colours to the mast. Given their combined talent the wines, unsurprisingly, won accolades from the outset.

The vineyard is very special, south-facing, a steeply sloped two hectares of eighty year old vines, covering thirty different Portuguese varietals. The age of the vines and their sheer variety both contribute to the hugely complex palette of aromatics. They also however set challenges which are not seen in other wine producing regions. Ruthless sorting is essential

2016 VINTAGE

"We believe that 2016 is a great vintage and was very surprising because we were a bit nervous after all the problems we had to fight during spring. The ripening cycle was longer than usual"

Sandra Tavares da Silva July 2018

Sandra's comments on the vintage echo Cristiano's. It was indeed the most rainy and cold spring she has ever encountered, with a lot of disease pressure, which they fought using organic methods – a huge challenge in terms of viticulture. As at Dona Maria, the cool weather effected flowering adversely and yields are consequently 10-15% down. Then with a warm, dry summer warm and fine conditions in September and October they achieved great phenolic ripeness. At Wine & Soul, the 2016 wines are intensely coloured, alcohol levels are not too high and there is lovely, balanced acidity. Picking started on the August 31st (whites) with the reds on September 16th.

RED

MANOELLA 2016

The Quinta da Manoella was established in 1838 by Jorge's ancestors and has remained with the family for 5 generations. This is their entry level wine and unusually we are able to be precise about the blend. It is 60% Touriga Nacional, 25% Touriga Francisca, 10% Tinta Roriz and 5% Touriga Franca – 36 year old vines. Deep plum ruby in colour, this presents blueberries and cherries on the nose, both fresh and slightly caramelized, red liquorice and floral notes – violet and rose. The palate is supple and endearing with plump red and black fruit supported by rounded, ripe tannins and a mineral undertow. Rich and lithe this has an elegant sensuality about it which lifts the palate through a protracted finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 – 2023+)
£80/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

17.5

PINTAS CHARACTER 2016

In order to meet increasing demand, whilst protecting the integrity of Pintas, Sandra and Jorge now source old vine fruit (51 years) from vineyards surrounding Pintas, also field blends of thirty varieties. The grapes, as at Pintas, are traditionally foot-trodden and fermented, spending 18 months in 50% new, 50% one year old French oak *barriques*. A very bright, intense plum, jet-shot, this presents very pure fresh fruit, less of the candied cherry character found in previous vintages and with a floral edge and an earthy intrigue. The palate is pepper spiced and rich in dark and red fruit, warm *pain aux raisins* and Bakewell tart. This has real character, silken whilst retain tannic form and edge – fabulous wine with grilled and roasted meats and char-grilled vegetables.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 – 2023+)
£125/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

17

PINTAS 2016

Deep plum-ruby. This is a very beautiful colour, intense and shimmering with jet-lights. The nose, captivating, exudes heady ripe fruit, slinky spicing and earthy minerals, fully-rounded with a dash of pepper. The palate, if anything, is more aromatic, bringing violets and roses to the fore, rather profligate in its charms. Pintas always surprises with its measured elegance - in harmony with understated power – a wonderful expression of Douro personality in all its complexity.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18.75

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 – 2027+)

£165/CASE OF 3 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

QUINTA DA MANOELLA VINHA VELHAS 2016

This is from vines of 106 years old – a field blend. It is a beautiful deep ruby in colour, bright and inviting. The nose is sweet and spiced, vanilla-rich and characterful with fresh herbs and dark fruit compote – intense and focused. The palate is sumptuous and rather decadent with abundant fruit, layered with crushed graphite minerals. Seductive certainly, it retains grace and control throughout, poised throughout a long, complex finish – rather fine.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18+

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 – 2025+)

£325/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

WHITE

Guru made its debut performance with the 2004 vintage. It comes from what is now a 56 year old vineyard in the Cima Corgo, planted with four varieties: Gouveio, Viosinho, Rabigato and Códaga do Larinho. The wine is fermented at low temperatures in new French oak before being aged for 6 months, with *bâtonnage* (lees-stirring).

2017 VINTAGE

The growing season of 2016/2017 was both hot and dry. June, July and August were extremely hot causing hydric stress. Despite this, quantities were up versus 2016 – those quantities curtailed by relatively cold weather. The quality of the fruit was excellent, with little sorting required. The grapes were concentrated and intense, making for wines of impressive complexity.

GURU 2017

Confuse friends by decanting Guru and allowing it anonymity. Guru is a very special wine. From vines treated with the precision and care ordinarily confined to the very finest *crus* in Burgundy – a wine with a soul. Relatively pale in colour with faint green lights, courtesy of youth, it presents an astonishingly vibrant nose, complex, eluding being pigeon-holed, Apples and pears throw down the gauntlet, to be countered by stone fruit, melon, physalis and citrus – all embellished by vanilla and warm brioche. The palate echoes the aromatics presented on the nose, set within a luscious, seductive frame. Rounded and lithe there is such refreshing acidity and minerality which give focus – stunning wine – a real *tour de force* from Sandra and Jorge

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

18.5+

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018– 2021+)

£140/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

VINTAGE PORT

Vintage port is such a lovely way in which to end a meal and gently to set the world to rights. Here we have offer one from each estate. They are both complex, fresh and extraordinarily welcoming, even at this early stage in their development.

QUINTA VALE D. MARIA PORT 2016

Dona Maria always delivers a fresh vibrant style whether in table wine or, as here, port. This presents a floral, upbeat nose – deliciously aromatic. The wine is generous yet elegant, perfumed, with brilliant, ripe fruit underscored by fresh and dried violets. Although built to last, this is positively ebullient at this early stage. “Harmonious, with good length.”

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE	17.5
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2025)	
£245/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK	

PINTAS PORT 2016

Jet plum in colour, essentially opaque, this coats the glass. The nose is darkly fruited and peppery, with the freshness of new must. Rounded and fleshy, bright and ripe, this is a lovely port which, in current fashion, is very tempting now, in this embryonic phase but has substantial capacity to age.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE	17.75
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2025)	
£275/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK	

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

Wines are scored out of 20. Customers seem to like it and it has the benefit of simplicity.

We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a ‘+’ is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine.

A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

TO ORDER

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