



**CORNEY &  
BARROW**  
INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-1780

## PORTUGAL 2018 & 2019 VINTAGES, EN PRIMEUR

Perhaps during, lockdown, people have been exploring less well-known wine areas. Portugal, our oldest ally, and producer of wines of world renown ought not to fit the latter category but sometimes we can overlook that which is on our doorstep. Portugal produces an enormous range of wines, in every possible style and represents some of the most under-valued wines in the world - the result of extraordinary *terroirs* allied to exemplary skill, in both vineyard and cellar. We are fortunate in being able to showcase two of the very finest producers Wine & Soul and Quinta Vale D. Maria, both estates sited in the outstandingly beautiful Douro Valley in northern Portugal.

With vineyards dating back to the Romans, followed then by the Church, the Portuguese certainly know something about making wine. Seeds have been 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.

When borders are once again open, the Douro is a must. Fortunate enough to visit many stunning vinescapes, I was astounded that the Douro, as a fabulous orchestra, can raise tears, with its extraordinary beauty. In 2001, the region was deservedly made a Unesco World Heritage Site.

The region has its challenges, however. Whilst arrestingly dramatic, it is almost impossibly difficult to work, with vertiginous slopes and hard schist soils which often require the help of dynamite even to plant the vines – yet it is still stunning.

Fascinating in its almost anarchic approach to viticulture, planting in Portugal over the centuries has been based largely on instinct. There is corresponding diversity of grape varieties and a spellbinding, hugely complex, array of high-quality vines.

Critics a couple of decades ago found this diversity problematic – particularly when grape varieties were being seen (albeit wrongly) as brands.

Respecting and harnessing this very individuality has proved to be a game-changer - 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**

July 2021

## QUINTA VALE D. MARIA

We were introduced to Quinta Vale D. Maria by then owner Cristiano Van Zeller, back in the late 1990s. Cristiano has been a tireless ambassador not only for his own wines but for the Douro Valley in its entirety. He has been integral in the considerable 3<sup>rd</sup> party critical acclaim the Douro enjoys today.

At that time, the property had been reclaimed by Cristiano and his wife Joana, the estate formerly having been let out to the Symington family on an extended lease, much of it destined for Quinta do Vesuvio – great credentials!

It 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 vines, 41 varieties identified thus far, have different sun-exposure as well as altitudes – a rich palette from which to choose - based on the vineyards alone.

The Quinta has been divided into separate plots, is sustainably farmed and is all hand-picked.

Thence to the winery: the grapes are rigorously 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. As if the incongruous nature of the vineyard does not suffice, complexity is layered upon complexity. Malolactic fermentation is in oak, followed by 21 months in *barrisques* (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 this rather elegant way to avoid confusion, as there is another estate of this name in the Alentejo.

In 2017, Quinta Vale D Maria merged with Vinho Verde aficionados Aveleda S.A., a venture between friends and cousins. He intervening years have allowed the combined companies time to learn and expand and Cristiano to concentrate more on family enterprises. Dona Maria is in safe hands.

### 2018 VINTAGE REPORT

*“The 2018 viticultural year was out of the ordinary, in comparison to the last five years. ... harvest a smoothly, resulting in great quality musts”*

#### March 2021

We always request vintage reports as, perhaps a surprise for some, there can be considerable vintage differences in the Douro reflecting wine styles and quantities. The growing season of 2017/ 2018 stood in stark contrast to what is considered the “norm”, a cold dry winter, followed by a cool spring with extremely high rainfall. Flowering was delayed but the vines continued to flourish due to high water reserves. Considerable vigilance mitigated the mildew problems arising from the rather unstable weather. Summer brought so much change that there were even potential issues with dehydration and sunburn in August. In the event by harvest time, mid-September, almost three weeks later than 2017, the grapes came in healthy, ripe and rather lovely,



## **QUINTA VALE D. MARIA DOURO TINTO 2018**

Very D. Maria, darkly coloured and black-fruited with fresh herbal notes. Dark chocolate and cherry, with mocha notes. Rich, sweet and velvet textured. Chunky tannins are well-coated in fruit and molten dark choc...benchmark...with both floral sweetness and freshness on the back palate. This is so elegant, positively not the wine one might remember quaffing by Algarve pools or golf courses – unless searched out by those in the know...great food wine.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021–2030+**  
**£120/CASE OF 3 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

**17.5**





## WINE & SOUL

Wine & Soul was founded by Sandra Tavares da Silva and her husband Jorge Serôdio Borges in 2001. They are both independently established and highly renowned winemakers. I was first introduced to Sandra when she was winemaker for Cristiano Van Zeller at Dona Maria and followed her progress as she went on to work with her family's estate, Quinta de Chocapalha, just north of Lisbon. Setting up as a married couple was simply a matter of time and finding the right site.

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

### 2018 VINTAGE

*“All the ripeness cycle was delayed and longer than usual, but the wines are impressive, with beautiful tannins – fine concentration”.*

Here again, also in the Douro, 2018 presented challenges with that rainy spring and late flowering – so different from the previous year - but with the warm summer which ensued, as the harvest drew nearer, the conditions for making outstanding wines were there, with the combination of intense summer heat and good water reserves. By harvest the grapes showed, we had excellent phenolic maturity with elegance and fresh acidity that we normally associate with cooler years. There is a depth of aromatic, multi-layered fruit – elegant.

**Sandra Tavares da Silva**  
**July 2020**



## RED

### QUINTA DA MANOELLA VINHA VELHAS 2018

The Quinta da Manoella was established in 1838 by Jorge's ancestors and has remained with the family for 5 generations. This is from vines of over 100 years old – a field blend – intense, layered, complex and rather lovely. It presents blueberry and cherry compote on both the nose and palate – super peppery fruit – pink, black and white pepper. The palate lingers, revealed waves of fruit, mineral and spice with dark chocolate cherry liqueur as the final, lingering reveal - special.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

**17.5**

**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021 – 2025+**

**£335/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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### PINTAS CHARACTER 2018

In order to meet increasing demand, whilst protecting the integrity of Pintas, Sandra and Jorge decided to source old vine fruit from vineyards surrounding Pintas, also field blends of thirty varieties. The grapes, as at Pintas itself, are treated traditionally, spending 18 months in 50% new, 50% one year old French oak *barriques*. We are becoming rather repetitive in pointing out that this adds gravitas year on year – once again we find something similar as this offers dark compote of fruit on the nose – rather serious- allied to bitter chocolate fruit and nut on the nose. Adult in its overtures, the palate is much more generous, seductive in texture, yet with lovely freshness and mineral focus...cries out for food.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

**17**

**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021 – 2023+**

**£125/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## WHITE

### 2019 VINTAGE

When asked, Sandra was more reticent about the growing season, so marked for her was the actual harvest - the longest harvest period for many years, lasting for 7 full weeks, from the end of August until the beginning of October. Yields were close to average. Winter and Spring had been drier than usually, summer cooler than normal which permitted to have balanced conditions for ripeness, with healthy fruit and great acidity levels. September was ideal in weather conditions with beautiful clear days and moderate temperatures which contributed for smooth maturations, with excellent balance of acidity and sugar levels. Overall, the quality of all wines is impressive with good quantities as well.

### GURU 2019

This sets the scene with a *Pastel de Nata* nose, caramelised pastry and vanilla custard notes - rather lovely. White peach also plays a role accompanied by apricot and quince, complemented by vanilla cream- lovely balance.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

**17.5**

**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022– 2025+**

**£145/ CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK \* very limited availability**

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## **MANOELLA BRANCO 2019**

Gorgeous nose, a blend of orchard, stone and exotic fruit – with old vine fruit intensity – very pure, fine and focused – minerals giving an attractive base. On the palate it is rounded and ripe with refreshing complementary acidity – bright and upbeat.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**  
**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2021– 2023+**  
**£80/ CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

**17.5**

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## **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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