

SINGLE-QUINTA VINTAGE PORT: 100 PERCENT TERROIR

Much more than second-best wines from lesser vintages, single-quinta Vintage Ports are the Douro's ultimate expression of place, says Axel Probst



Being German in the world of wine has its advantages and disadvantages. The biggest challenge for a regular German is to understand the nature and potential benefits of blending. The German word for blending, *Verschneiden*, seems necessary only when the quality is not sufficient in the first place, so a blended *verschnittener* wine or Port might not have the merits to be bottled on its own. When less experienced Port drinkers learn that Port in general cannot legally be bottled as a varietal wine and that entry-level Ports are usually blends from different years, grape varieties, and vineyards, I have to point out in reply that this is also normally the case with Champagne, for which everyone is happy to pay at least \$30 or £20 for an entry-level wine. Beyond Germany and Burgundy, most top wines are blends.

According to the rules of the Port Wine Institute (IVDP), single-quinta Vintage Port (SQVP) must be made exclusively with grapes from the quinta named on the label. In other words, if the word “quinta” appears on the label, no grapes from elsewhere can be added. Bottling of SQVP often takes place in years when producers do not choose to make a classic Vintage Port. There are, however, some very prominent exceptions to this rule, since some producers bottle and declare both types of Vintage Port in great years to showcase an individual quinta’s characteristics. Then again, the Vintage Ports of some very prestigious producers—such as Quinta do Noval, Quinta do Vale Meão, and Quinta do Vallado—are always SQVPs, so there is no differentiation on the label other than the year.

Above: The 2021 harvest at Croft’s magnificent flagship Quinta da Roêda.

Photography courtesy of Croft

Port producers nowadays strive to achieve a certain house style and some consistency over the years—even with Vintage Port. When Port started to be exported on a larger scale from the middle of the 18th century, most shippers did not own vineyards in the Douro Valley and so bought wines from farmers. Therefore, early Vintage Ports were always blends from different locations. By the beginning of the 19th century, most shippers knew where to acquire the best Ports, and many of them gradually acquired vineyards there to be in complete control of the production process, including viticulture. Especially after phylloxera hit the Douro in the second half of the 19th century, many estates changed hands and also grew in size, because the land was almost worthless.

Single-quinta Vintage Port first acquired a degree of popularity in the 1950s and ’60s, but the market really took off in the 1980s. Today, it is almost impossible to find a major house that does not bottle an SQVP. Although you can find some Vintage Port bottles from the first half of the 20th century where the name of an estate is mentioned on the label, there was no general tendency to bottle a new type of Vintage Port but rather to highlight the most important quinta. Almost all bottles of Offley’s Vintage Port state only “Offley Boa Vista Vintage Port” on their labels; the absence of the word “quinta” there suggests that the grapes were not exclusively from their flagship Quinta da Boa Vista, but the producer adds a little luster by using the quinta’s name. The oldest single-quinta Vintage Port that I tasted during my research for this article was the Ramos Pinto Quinta do Bom Retiro Vintage Port, which was exactly 100 years old. In all probability, all of the grapes originated from Bom Retiro.

The two leading producers of SQVPs by size—the Fladgate Partnership (Taylor’s, Fonseca, Croft, Krohn) and Symington Family Estates (Graham’s, Dow’s, Warre’s, Cockburn’s, Vesuvio)—both adopt a similar definition of single-quinta Vintage Port. When a year is generally outstanding, only classic Vintage Ports are bottled. In years that are very good but only in certain locations, SQVP is bottled and sold at about half the price of classic Vintage Port. Some smaller producers, such as Ramos Pinto or Churchill’s, have a different strategy. They price their SQVP at almost the same level as their Vintage Port and also bottle the former in classic years but in smaller quantities.

The first offspring of a classic Vintage Port, sold as part of a deliberate marketing strategy, was not a single-quinta Vintage Port but rather Fonseca’s second label, Fonseca Guimaraens, its first year being 1933. The company continued to bottle this second label from then on but rather less than three times per decade to start with. Another exception to single-quinta Vintage Port is Niepoort’s Secundum, which bottled only in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

There are also several single-quinta Vintage Ports that are inherently so: Quinta do Noval, Quinta do Vale Meão, Quinta do Crasto, Quinta do Tedo, Quinta Nova, and Quinta de la Rosa, to name only the most famous. These quintas still have a way of distinguishing whether their wines are made only from their estate’s grapes or also include fruit bought in from local farmers, using the word “quinta” on the label for the former only. If you look closely at the second label of Noval, for example, you will see only “Silval Vintage Port,” the word “quinta” being completely missing. In the 1980s, there were some Noval single-quinta Vintage Ports, from Quinta do

DIFFERENT TYPES OF VINTAGE PORT

- Limited-edition Vintage Port** The best-known and oldest limited-edition Vintage Port is Quinta do Noval’s Nacional. First bottled in 1931, it comes from a very small parcel within the quinta. The same logic applies to Quinta do Vesuvio’s Capela (first bottled in 2007), Taylor’s Vinha Velha (1995), Graham’s The Stone Terraces (2011), Quinta do Tedo’s Savedra (1997), Ferreira’s Vinhas Velhas (only from 2016), and Croft’s Serikos from Quinta da Roêda (only from 2017). Niepoort’s Pisca, Bioma, and Bioma Vinhas Velhas Vintage Ports are made from grapes harvested in a very special area. (Pisca was first bottled in 2007, Bioma in 2008, Bioma Vinhas Velhas in 2017.) Alves de Sousa has just bottled its first limited-edition Vintage Port, Amphitheatrum, from 2020.
- Classic Vintage Port** This is the best blend in outstanding years, when producers take the top fruit from all their sources to bottle the best wines. Until 2011, most houses followed a common (but never official) declaration policy. Great years were normally bottled and advertised by everyone, roughly three times per decade. This led to joint marketing and an intense interest from press and buyers in those years. Since 2011, the declaration philosophy has become more complicated, and producers have bottled whenever they are happy with the quality, sometimes in much smaller quantities and with less production.
- Single-quinta Vintage Port** The grapes must come only from the named quinta if the name and the word “quinta” are on the label. The word originates from the Latin, and refers to the requirement throughout the Middle Ages and beyond that all agricultural producers in Portugal forward one fifth of their production to the Church.
- Second-label Vintage Port** This has a different rationale. Here, the producer can blend grapes from different locations and create a desired style rather than rendering what a specific terroir offers. The best examples of this type of Port are Fonseca Guimaraens, Noval’s Silval (the word “quinta” is missing from the label because there also is a Quinta do Silval), and Niepoort’s Secundum.
- Vintage Ports designed for early drinking** These are designed for Port drinkers who do not want to wait decades for a classic Vintage Port to mature. The grapes for this type of Port are normally picked from younger vines, and the blend is more fruit-driven. Quinta do Portal once bottled a Portal+ from 2003, but the most prominent Port in this category is Sandeman Vau Vintage Port (first bottled in 1996 and not to be confused with Sandeman Quinta do Vau single-quinta Vintage Port, which was bottled only from 1988).

Marco and Quinta do Silval. Graham’s also put the word “quinta” on its SQVP as recently as 1998, before it was called simply Malvedos and qualified rather as a second label.

Last but not least, both of the largest Vintage Port producers hold back some of their Vintage Ports to be released with age. While the Symingtons have been doing this for longer, the Fladgate Partnership also now holds back the entire production of some single-quinta declarations. This is good for many reasons, the most obvious being that the bottles can mature properly with the producers under the right conditions, while they themselves can benefit from the premium commanded by older wine. There is a tendency, even with classic Vintage Ports, for producers to sell direct to consumers wines dating back to the 1960s still resting in their cellars. These wines are checked for the soundness of their cork and other faults prior to release, so consumers have a much lower risk of opening a faulty bottle. Especially nowadays—when few wine buyers have large cellars of their own and consumers in general have little or no patience to wait years for their wines to mature—this might become an even more important business model.

Who should buy single-quinta Vintage Ports?

“Single-quinta Vintage Ports are the perfect vehicle for consumers to explore the category further,” Symington’s former CEO Paul Symington noted a decade ago. Frequently misunderstood as a second label or “not so good,” many producers no longer see single-quinta Vintage Ports as their

TABLE: SELECTED PORT HOUSES' SINGLE QUINTA VINTAGE PORTS AND SECOND LABELS (WITH THE FIRST YEAR OF PRODUCTION AND, IN BRACKETS, THE YEAR THE LABEL WAS FIRST SEEN)

| House | Single-quinta Vintage Port | First produced in |
|----------------|---|---------------------|
| Alves de Sousa | Gaivosa Oliverinha | 2003 |
| | | 2016 |
| Barros | Galeria | 2006 |
| Burmester | Arnozelo Nova | 2009 |
| | | 1992 |
| Cálem | Foz Cheires | 1931 |
| | | 1931 |
| Churchill's | Aqua Alta Fojo Gricha Rio | 1983 |
| | | 1984 |
| | | 1999 |
| | | 2001 |
| Cockburn's | Canais Tua | 1991 (1941) |
| | | 1987 (only once) |
| Croft | Roêda | 1967 (1889) |
| Delaforce | Corte | 1974 |
| Dow's | Bomfim Senhora da Ribeira | 1964 DK only (1948) |
| | | 1998 |
| Ferreira | Seixo Leda Porto | 1982 |
| | | 1990 |
| | | 2015 |
| Fonseca | Panascal Cruzeiro Mileau | 1977 |
| | | 1978 |
| | | 1944 |
| Graham's | Malvedos | 1947 |
| Kopke | São Luiz | 1970 |
| Krohn | Retiro Novo | 1997 |
| Ramos Pinto | Bom Retiro Ervamoira | 2014 (1847) |
| | | 1994 |
| Sandeman | Vau Seixo | 1988 (only once) |
| | | 2013 |
| Taylor's | Quinta de Vargellas Quinta de Terra Feita | 1895 |
| | | 1982 |
| Warre's | Cavadinha | 1978 |

second-best. The Douro Valley varies dramatically in climatic conditions throughout the year, so a closer look at individual terroirs may be rewarding—especially since 2011, when some producers fully declared that year and others did not. These days, a company can decide to bottle a classic brand and the other single quinta/second label in the same year—for example Taylor's Vintage Port and Fonseca Guimaraens from 2018.

If you are looking for complex Vintage Ports with great aging potential, then continue to buy classic Vintage Port. But if you are looking for terroir-driven Vintage Ports that show the characteristics of the year in that particular location in the Douro, which may also mature a little sooner, then you should look for these SQVPs. And from most producers, you can buy them at a much lower price. Especially in years when a general declaration would have been possible in terms of quality but was forsworn so as not to compete with Vintages immediately before or after, SQVPs represent outstanding value. The best years to buy as SQVPs are 1987, 1991, 1992, 1995, 2001, 2005, 2018, 2020, 2021. (1991 and 1992 were split-declaration years—the Symingtons, for example, bottled 1991 as classic Vintage and 1992 as single quintas, the Fladgate Partnership vice versa, while Niepoort declared both as classic Vintage.) ■

TASTING

SELECTED SINGLE-QUINTA VINTAGE PORTS

ALVES DE SOUSA

Domingos Alves de Sousa's family had been selling grapes to Taylor's for decades and did not want to compete with them when the law changed in the late 1980s, allowing them to produce and sell wine and Port directly from the quinta and not via the *entrepoto* in Vila Nova de Gaia. So, in the 1990s, the family focused on still wines and decided initially to bottle a Port in the classic year of 2003 as a (single) Quinta da Gaivosa Vintage Port. In 2016, they also produced their first Vintage Port, from their Quinta da Oliverinha ("little olive tree"). Alves de Sousa was the first producer ever to bottle four different types of Vintage Port from 2020: the limited-edition Amphitheatrum for the first time, classic Alves de Sousa, and the two single-quinta Vintage Ports from Gaivosa and Oliverinha. While the 25ha (62-acre) Quinta da Gaivosa shows a great mix of freshness from the altitude and overall microclimate, the Ports made from Oliverinha are more fruit-driven. Alves de Sousa has no general rule; it bottles single quinta alongside classic Vintage Port, and the price difference of the Vintage Port—except Amphitheatrum—is rather small.

Quinta da Gaivosa Vintage Port 2020

Deep dark-red color, with intense reflections and a purple rim. Rather fruit-driven in the bouquet, with a hint of spice. Cherry, violets, and tobacco. Fine, ripe tannic structure on the palate, perfectly integrated acidity, and red-berry fruit and dark chocolate. Medium-long finish. **91**

Quinta da Oliverinha Vintage Port 2020

Slight reflections in the almost black color. Balanced nose, with strawberry, cassis, and smoky notes. Chocolate, strawberry, and cassis on the palate, with a spicy background. A touch of tannins in the aftertaste. **90**

Quinta da Gaivosa Vintage Port 2017

Deep dark-red color, with prominent violet reflections. Floral notes, blackcurrant, chocolate, and tobacco in the fruity, very balanced bouquet. Supporting acidity and a firm tannic structure on the palate; elegant strawberry and cassis, milk chocolate and violets. Tannins are also present on the long finish. **92+**

Quinta da Gaivosa Vintage Port 2003

Transparent dark-red color. Ripe, red-berry fruit and plums on the already well-developed nose, chocolate and a floral freshness. More chocolate than fruit on the palate, still good tannins and a very well-integrated acidity. Medium-long aftertaste. **92**

CÁLEM

Cálem's Quinta da Foz was produced as early as the 19th century but has been made regularly since the 1970s. Like Croft, Cálem also bottled a single-quinta Vintage Port from 1997. After the sale of the quinta from Sogevinus a few years ago, no Vintage Port has been bottled so far under the new owners.

Quinta da Foz Vintage Port 1992

Barely transparent dark-red color. There is abundant finesse in the complex, floral-fresh bouquet, with its hints of red-berry, chocolate, and mint. The palate continues this happy mix, with perfectly supporting acidity, chocolate, and dark cherry. Long and multilayered aftertaste. A surprising SQVP from this year—and much better than the fully declared Cálem Vintage Port 1991. **93**

Quinta da Foz Vintage Port 1970

Cálem bottled both versions in 1970—the classic Vintage Port and a Vintage Port da Foz. Extremely dark red color. Balanced, floral-fruity nose, with spicy fruit aromas and chocolate. Soft texture on the palate, but a slight hint of a brandy not well chosen for this Port. Green pepper, coffee, and toffee. Medium-long finish. **91**

CHURCHILL'S

Johnny Graham has selected various quintas for the Churchill's single-quinta Vintage Ports since the company was founded in the early 1980s. Churchill's has probably produced the widest variety of single-quinta Vintage Port of any producer. Johnny started with Quinta da Aqua Alta (first bottled in 1983), then Quinta do Fojo (1984), Quinta da Gricha (1999), and Quinta do Rio (2001). Although he also bought high-quality grapes from Quinta da Manoella in the 1980s and '90s, Johnny never produced a single-quinta Vintage Port from this estate. Today, Zoe Graham and Churchill's head winemaker, Ricardo Nunes bottle only Quinta da Gricha (acquired in 1999) as single quinta, in many years alongside a classic Churchill's Vintage Port.

Quinta da Gricha Vintage Port 2021

Black color, with violet reflections. On the nose, a mix of red and black fruits and some rustic notes, mainly coffee, blueberries, blackcurrants, violets, and licorice. On the palate, there is a noticeable acidity, with fine and ripe tannins. Chocolate, blueberry, peppery notes, and fresh coffee. Long and balanced aftertaste, with a hint of astringency. **91**

Quinta da Gricha Vintage Port 2017

Both Vintage Ports have been bottled from this fantastic year. Dark red color, with medium violet reflections. Powerful but balanced bouquet, with cassis, chocolate, tobacco, and licorice. Very well structured, with some acidity and very fine tannins; blackcurrant, cherry, milk chocolate, and fresh coffee. Long finish. The best single-quinta Vintage Port Churchill has bottled so far. **93**

Quinta do Rio Vintage Port 2002

This Port is worth mentioning for two reasons. It is a very well-aged Port from a year of rather poor conditions; and one of two Vintage Ports from Rio that show if one is a capable winemaker. Medium red. Fruity aromas, with a lot of finesse on the nose, mainly raspberry, chocolate, and some cassis. Strong but supportive acidity, with a basket of red berries, white pepper, and chocolate. Medium-long. Perhaps the best Vintage Port of 2002. **89**

Quinta da Agua Alta Vintage Port 1983

Churchill's first single-quinta Vintage Port, from a split-declaration year, when some producers bottled 1982, others 1983, as classics. Completely transparent medium-red color, with light red reflections. Elegant orange-peel, malt, coffee, and floral notes on the nose. On the palate, the acidity is still quite present, with malt and coffee dominating. Medium-long finish. **86**

COCKBURN'S

Cockburn's bottled its first modern single-quinta Vintage Port Quinta dos Canais in 1991. The former team, around Miguel Corte Real, also bottled a Quinta da Tua in 1987, and one older version from 1948 exists, but it is doubtful that this was intended to be a single-quinta Vintage Port to lead the way to this new type of Port. Until the takeover by the Symington family in 2011, Cockburn's produced its Quinta dos Canais (the name originates from the many canals on the quinta) alongside its classic Vintage Ports.

Quinta dos Canais Vintage Port 2021

Bottled for late release and maybe released to the market in 2030. Deep dark-red color, with medium intense reflections. Rather elegant, completely balanced fruit notes on the nose, mainly cherry, cassis, and blackberry, with coffee and milk chocolate behind. Fruit-driven palate, with violets, cassis, strawberry, and blueberry. Fine tannin structure. Medium-long finish. **90**

Quinta dos Canais Vintage Port 2000

Very dense dark-red color. Slightly jammy red-berry fruit on the nose, with floral notes of cherry and plum. Elegant and balanced on the palate, with very well-integrated fruit and a hint of sweetness. Medium-long finish. **89**

Quinta da Tua Vintage Port 1987

Bright red, transparent color, with a light red edge. Tobacco, cherry, and chocolate in the balanced bouquet. Structured and complex palate, with spicy tobacco, some acidity, and a soft and ripe tannic structure. Medium length in the aftertaste. **92**

CROFT

Croft's Quinta da Roêda was first printed on the label of the 1889 Vintage Port, but it is doubtful that the current definition of single quinta was achieved. The "modern" single-quinta version was first bottled in 1967 and is still in use today. Croft's most notable single-quinta Vintage Port was bottled in 1997 and is bottled almost everywhere else as a classic Vintage Port. Head winemaker David Guimaraens noted that, even in classic years, the vast majority of the grapes for Croft Vintage Ports are harvested at Roêda—in many years as much as 85 percent.

Quinta da Roêda Vintage Port 2018

Black color with violet reflections. Fresh, fruity nose with cassis, strawberry, chocolate and a spicy background. Soft tannins and very well-integrated acidity on the palate, chocolate and strawberry. Medium-long finish. **91**

Quinta da Roêda Vintage Port 2004

Dark-red color. Fine and complex aromas of coffee and red berry fruit, mainly raspberry and strawberry, with a hint of tropical fruit. On the palate, there is a hint of sweetness, fresh red berry fruit, perfectly balanced acidity, and a hint of spice. Balanced finish, with medium length. **90**

Quinta da Roêda Vintage Port 1997

Very surprisingly, Croft bottled this Vintage Port from a classic year as a (single) Quinta da Roêda, whereas most others did not. Almost opaque, dark-red color, with some beige tones. Aged, fruity nose, with notes of malt and honey, orange and some raspberry and cherry in the background. Elegant palate, with more developed flavors than you would expect from a 1997 Vintage Port. Toffee, malt, and dark chocolate. Long finish. **91**

DOW'S

Dow's owns two very different quintas that produce single-quinta Vintage Port. Located in the hot and dry Douro Superior, Quinta da Senhora da Ribeira is its traditional "late release" single-quinta Vintage Port, while Quinta do Bomfim is located in Pinhão in the heart of the Cima Corgo, its Ports released after bottling. Where Bomfim produces a more structured, fine, and precise Vintage Port, Senhora da Ribeira shows seductive and complex fruit-driven notes—both very good but different examples of single-quinta Vintage Port.

Quinta da Senhora da Ribeira Vintage Port 2019

Medium violet reflections in a very dark-red color. A surprisingly elegant bouquet of blueberries, violets, and blackcurrants, with lots of finesse. Firm tannins on the palate, fine acidity, and floral freshness. Strawberry, black cherry, and blueberry. Long and complex aftertaste. 12,000 bottles. Stunning for a single-quinta Vintage Port! **94**

Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port 1995

Tasted alongside the outstanding 1994 vintage. Almost opaque, dark-red color, with an intense, dark core. Aged red berries and medicinal notes on the nose. Soft palate, with chocolate, pepper, tobacco, strawberry, and raspberry. Medium-long finish, with fine tannins. **91**

Quinta do Bomfim Vintage Port 1977

This was a surprise, since it was a limited release for the Danish market only, like many other Bomfim single-quinta Vintage Ports, mainly from the 1960s and '70s. Transparent, fresh, medium-red color. Intense and well-aged bouquet, with spicy coffee and malt, fresh and balanced. Perfectly ripe tannins and very well-integrated acidity, with orange, malt, coffee, floral, and tobacco notes. Long finish. **93**

feature / Axel Probst / Single-Quinta Vintage Port

Quinta da Senhora da Ribeira Vintage Port 2015

Strong, deep-red reflections in the dark-red color. Balanced floral freshness on the nose, with fresh cassis, blueberry, cherry, and chocolate. Compact acidity and a ripe tannic structure on the palate, with blackberry and cherry. Medium length on the aftertaste. **91**

FERREIRA

Over the past half-century, Ferreira has used three different locations to source the grapes for its single-quinta Ports. Grapes from Quinta do Seixo were used in 1982 and 1983, from Quinta da Leda in 1990 and 1999, and grapes from Quinta do Porto are now used for the single-quinta Ports, most recently in 2015 and 2017, the latter from an exceptional year.

Quinta do Porto Vintage Port 2017

From a fully declared, fantastic year. Very bright, almost black color, with intense reflections. Fresh and balanced nose, with licorice and a full basket of red berry fruits, especially blueberry, raspberry, and strawberry. The first part of the palate is slightly sweet, but this is nicely balanced by the acidity, alongside the white pepper, cherries, and blueberries. Medium length on the finish. **91**

Quinta do Seixo Vintage Port 1983

Brilliant, medium-red, with orange reflections. Orange, malt, coffee, and a balanced mix of herbs on the nose. Very elegant and balanced on the palate, with orange, strawberry, malt, and toffee. Very good supporting acidity on the medium-long finish. **89**

FONSECA

In very good, but not exceptional, years, the Fladgate Partnership usually bottles Fonseca Guimaraens as a second-label Vintage Port. Although not the subject of this article, these second-label wines are a fantastic alternative to the classic Vintage Ports that are widely used in many other wine regions around the world. Alongside these Vintage Ports, Fonseca bottled SQVPs from its flagship Quinta do Panascal in the Cima Corgo from the 1970s until 2008. While the second label, Fonseca Guimaraens, is bottled in the classic Vintage Port style—and is sometimes better than the first labels of other houses—Panascal often shows a very fruity character.

Quinta do Panascal Vintage Port 2005

Deep dark-red color with violet reflections. Still very fruity bouquet with blackcurrant, raspberry and cherry. Soft tannic structure and good supporting acidity in the palate, with raspberry, cherry, and some hints of coffee. Complex aftertaste with medium length. **91**

Quinta do Panascal Vintage Port 1999

Dark red color, not completely dense, with medium violet reflections. Spicy and fresh nose, with very well-supported, ripe, red berry fruit: pepper, tea, raspberry, and milk chocolate. Fresh strawberry, pepper, and chocolate on the palate, with fine tannins and acidity. Medium-long finish. **91**

Fonseca Guimaraens Vintage Port 1976

Very dense, almost black color, with almost 50 years of age. Spicy bouquet, with floral freshness, and some red-berry and tobacco hints. Soft tannins and perfectly integrated acidity on the palate, complex and fresh, with chocolate, violets, and the first aromas of honey and malt. Long and complex finish. A truly great second-label Vintage Port. **96**

GRAHAM'S

Graham's acquired its flagship Quinta dos Malvedos in 1896, which was then sold, along with the brand, to the Symington family in 1970. The first Quinta dos Malvedos Vintage Port was produced in the early 1950s and then regularly bottled in non-declared years. Since 1998, the label has read “Quinta dos Malvedos,” rather than just “Malvedos,” which previously allowed grapes from outside the quinta to be used. Since the Vintage Port 1999, Quinta dos Malvedos has been held back for later release.

Quinta dos Malvedos Vintage Port 2021

As in 2015, Graham has bottled only the limited-edition Vintage Port, The Stone Terraces, and the single-quinta Vintage Port dos Malvedos, but no classic Vintage Port. Traces of bright violet in an otherwise opaque, almost black color. Balanced, fresh, floral nose, with hints of coffee, cherry, blueberry, and milk chocolate. Well-ripened tannins on the palate, with a very supportive acidity. Extensive fruit complexity, with blackcurrant, blueberry, and cherry. Long, slightly acidic finish. **91**

Malvedos Vintage Port 1987

Very fresh, dark-red color, which makes you think that this Port is almost a decade younger. The nose is also not very developed either: remnants of red-berry fruit, chocolate, and a hint of malt. Balanced on the palate, with very well-integrated acidity and fine tannins, strawberry, raspberry, and coffee. Medium-long aftertaste. **91**

Malvedos Vintage Port 1957

Completely transparent medium red. Very shy on the nose, with some hints of caramel, malt, and honey. Strong acidity on the palate, with toffee and butterscotch and hints of coffee. Surprisingly long finish. But drink up! **86**

KOPKE

In the 19th century, Kopke sourced its grapes from Quinta do Roriz in the heart of the Douro Superior, but when the owners bought Quinta do São Luiz in 1922, the grapes for all future single-quinta Vintage Ports were harvested there. In recent years, Kopke has regularly bottled Vintage Port or single-quinta Vintage Ports from São Luiz.

São Luiz Vintage Port 2021

Made with 33% Touriga Nacional and 67% *vinhas velhas*. Black-violet color. Balanced bouquet, with strong red berry fruit and floral freshness. Structured tannins and very well-integrated acidity; fresh strawberry, raspberry, cherry, coffee, and chocolate. Medium-long aftertaste. **90**

São Luiz Vintage Port 2009

Dark-red color, which has lost a lot of its brightness. Big, ripe, red-berry fruit, with supporting acidity; rasperry, violet, strawberry, and hints of coffee and chocolate. Also fruity on the palate, with balanced tannins. Medium length on the finish. **89**

OFFLEY

Offley began labeling its Vintage Ports as Offley Boa Vista Vintage Port quite early on. Even Ports from the 1960s or earlier have “Boa Vista” on the label, but the word “quinta” is missing, and it was used only in very good years such as 1935, 1955, 1966, 1963, 1970, or 1977. Although Offley owned Quinta da Boa Vista for many decades, it is hard to believe that this was intended to be a single-quinta Vintage Port per se. Offley's winemakers may have used the term in years when the grapes came mainly (or exclusively) from Boa Vista. 2016 is one of the very few classic years not to have Boa Vista on the label. So, by definition, Offley never bottled a single-quinta Vintage Port.

Ramos Pinto

Ramos Pinto's vision of a single-quinta Vintage Port is perhaps the most restrictive. If the top grapes come from only one quinta, it will be a single-quinta Vintage Port. At Quinta da Ervamoira, the winemakers can rely on a large quantity of Tinta Barroca, which pairs fantastically well with Touriga Nacional and Touriga Franca, whereas Bom Retiro offers Tinto Barroca and Sousão with more than 50 years of age. All three Vintage Ports (classic, Bom Retiro, and Ervamoira) have different proportions of grape varieties and therefore present themselves differently. Until 1935, all grapes for Ramos Pinto Vintage Ports were harvested at Bom Retiro. Ramos Pinto is the only producer to bottle its 10- and 20-year-old Tawnies as single quintas—the 10-year-old from Quinta da Ervamoira and the 20-year-old Tawny from Bom Retiro—both spectacular in quality.

Ervamoira Vintage Port 2020

Intense violet reflections in the dense black color. Seductive bouquet of licorice, violet, and cassis with a great balance on a very high level. Acidity and a fine tannic structure on the palate. Cassis, rasperry, and chocolate. Long finish, well supported by the acidity. **93**

Ervamoira Vintage Port 2017

Dark-red color, with hints of violet. Explosive red berry fruit, with tobacco and chocolate. Rasperry, strawberry, and violet. Ripe and fine tannins in the mouth, with strawberry, violets, and milk chocolate. Long, fruity aftertaste. **92**

Ervamoira Vintage Port 1994

This was Ana Rosa's first Vintage as head Port enologist at Ramos Pinto. It was clear right from the harvest that 1994 was going to be a great year: slightly transparent dark-red color, with intense reflections. Big and intense fruit, with cherry, strawberry, a hint of vanilla, and great floral freshness. Some sweetness in the beginning, then the acidity kicks in and nicely balances the palate. Fresh red berry-fruit mix, with rasperry, strawberry, cherry, and chocolate. Long, extremely balanced aftertaste. The decision to bottle this Port was made very late, to honor the memory of Jose Antonio Ramos Pinto, who died in April 1996 and who discovered and planted Ervamoira in the 1970s. **94**

Bom Retiro Vintage Port 2014

This was the first Vintage Port exclusively from Bom Retiro in ages. Intense, bright, violet/dark-red color. Balanced aromas of strawberry, rasperry, vanilla, chocolate, and some tobacco. A touch of sweetness on the palate: chocolate and very well-balanced red berry fruit. Medium length in the aftertaste, still with some tannins. **90**

Bom Retiro Vintage Port 1923

Exactly a century old, this wine shows a fully transparent medium-orange color, with shades of bright red. Elegant coffee on the nose, with very vivid aromas of figs, dates, malt, and nuts. Fresh acidity on the palate. Milk chocolate, coffee, honey, and malt. Very long and fresh (!) finish. **96**

SANDEMAN

As mentioned above, Sandeman only bottled a (single) Quinta do Vau Vintage Port once, in 1988. To confuse fellow Port lovers (or at least me for a while), the company bottled a Sandeman Vau Vintage Port between 1996 and 2011 as an early-drinking Vintage Port (Vintage Vau—the Vintage for now). From 2013 onward, Sandeman bottled its SQVPs from its flagship Quinta do Seixo, right across from Pinhão.

Quinta do Seixo Vintage Port 2017

A real first! The first year in which the two biggest “British” houses, Fladgate and Symington, bottled a classic Vintage Port, and Sogrape only two single quintas. Restrained reflections in an opaque, almost black color. Complex, balanced, spicy-fruity bouquet, with violets, blackcurrants, tobacco, and dark chocolate. On the palate, blackcurrant, cherry, licorice, very well-supporting acidity, and fine tannins. Long, spicy, and complex finish. The blend was 40% Touriga Nacional, 40% Touriga Franca, 10% Tinta Roriz, 5% Tinto Cão, and 5% Sousão; only 10,000 bottles. **91+**

Vau Vintage Port 2011

Opaque, deep, dark-red color, with violet reflections. Balanced, fruity, and fresh nose, with notes of blackberry and cassis. Also fruity on the palate, with a soft tannic structure. Balanced coffee, rasperry, and chocolate. Long, structured finish. **89**

Quinta do Vau Vintage Port 1988

The only true single Quinta Vintage Port from Quinta do Vau ever produced by Sandeman. Light red, very aged color; elegant, plum nose. Also elegant on the palate, but now quite enjoyable, with hints of coffee, honey, and malt. Rather short finish. **85**



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TAYLOR'S

Taylor was one of the first to bottle a single-quinta Vintage Port from its flagship Quinta de Vargellas (traditionally spelled with one “l”) back in the very late 19th century. In 1982, the company decided to bottle a second SQVP from Quinta de Terra Feita in the Pinhão Valley, acquired in 1974. Head winemaker David Guimaraens sees no difference in quality between the classic Vintage Ports and those from the single quintas, choosing the type according to the expected longevity of the Ports. Taylors has only bottled its Quinta de Vargellas SQVP twice in a classic year alongside its classic Vintage Port, in 1955 and 1970.

Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port 2019

Dark-red color, slightly less bright than the Terra Feita from the same year. Balanced, very fruity nose, with a mix of red berries, cherries, and a fantastic floral freshness. Already well-integrated tannins and good acidity. Violets, strawberry, and cassis. Medium-long finish. **90**

Quinta de Terra Feita Vintage Port 2019

Some reflections in the dense dark-red color. A hint of licorice, then lots of blackcurrants, violets, and chocolate. The palate shows silky tannins, strawberry, and chocolate, with a complex, medium-long aftertaste. **90**

Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port 1991

Slightly transparent dark-red color. Coffee, malt, and tobacco on the bouquet, and some residual red-berry fruit, with cherry and blackcurrant. Very open and seductive palate, with fine, ripe tannins, blueberry, tobacco, and cherry. Medium-long finish. **92**

Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port 1970

Perhaps one of the rarest Vintage Ports—and the living proof of what head winemaker David Guimaraens maintains: It is more elegant and developed than its classic sibling from the same year. Completely transparent dark-red color. Very lively, balanced nose, with mature malt, mint, and honey aromas, tobacco, and chocolate. Ripe rasperry and honey on the palate, with a great supporting acidity. Long aftertaste. A great single-quinta Vintage Port, but it will be outlived by the classic Taylor's 1970. **95**

WARRE'S

The first single-quinta Vintage Port from Warre was bottled from 1978 in the rather unspectacular Quinta da Cavandina in the Pinhão Valley. Unfortunately, Warre's has to compete with its sister brands Graham's, Dow's, and Vesuvio, and it sometimes does not get the attention it deserves for its quality. All these brands are owned by the Symington family. Warre's classic and single-quinta Vintage Ports are always a little more precise and elegant than the others.

Quinta da Cavadinha Vintage Port 2021

Almost perfumed nose, with a floral mix of red berries—raspberry, blueberry, cassis, cherry—but with the typical Warre's elegance. Velvety palate, with perfectly integrated tannins and acidity. Fine and precise aromas of rasperry, cherry, and strawberry; a hint of milk chocolate and coffee. Long, fresh finish. This is the best single-quinta Vintage Port from the Symingtons in 2021. **91**

Quinta da Cavadinha Vintage Port 1995

Still almost black in color, with slight reflections. Rasperry, chocolate, and coffee on the very delicately balanced bouquet. Still strong tannins, well-integrated acidity, and perfectly integrated fruit, with blackcurrant and rasperry, tobacco, and coffee. Long aftertaste. **92**

Quinta da Cavadinha Vintage Port 1987

Cherry-red color, which darkens considerably with aeration. Intense fruit on the nose: cherry, chocolate, and red berries. Integrated palate, with noticeable acidity, coffee, and mint notes, plus chocolate and underlying fruit. Medium-long, slightly acidic finish. **90**