

Wines of Portugal: The Art of the Blend Part 2

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Shifting the focus to red wine, the **Quinta Da Fonte do Ouro Tinto 2012**, 100% Touriga Nacional, from the **Dão** region, is a robust wine of plum and blackberry fruit, aromatic with violet floral notes, balanced and complex. It's elegant, with polished tannins, and a long, persistent finish, a stunning wine that retails for \$55. This was followed by the **Mouchão Ponte das Canas 2011**, a blend of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Alicante Bouschet, and Syrah, from the **Alentejo** region, an intriguing red, ripe with black fruit and spice, with an herbal note akin to what the French call "garrigue" in their Rhône wines. With dense tannins, balanced acidity, and a long finish, this wine has lots of life ahead, slowly evolving in the bottle, a value for \$21.

Silvia Maria Canas da Costa of **Quinta da LAPA**, from the **Tejo** region, brought two wines, updating tradition with a modern spin. The Quinta da LAPA Sta. Teresa d'Avila Homenagem 500 Anos Reserva 2013 is a blend of four grapes, Touriga Nacional, Syrah, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. It's intense and elegant, channeling black fruit, spice, and chocolate, with silky tannins that dance on a thread of acidity, and what a finish! The label celebrates the life of **Saint Teresa de Ahumada**, with a picture of her headstone, on the Quinta's property, engraved with a poem of faith. Silvia also brought her **Merlot Reserva 2013**, a beautiful wine that recalls why Merlot can be so wonderful. With ripe aromas of raspberries and plums, and an earthy essence with a chocolate accent, this velvety wine combines acidity and body into a lingering finish.

All of these wines accompanied the second course, a Beef Cheek Stew over red wine risotto, with morel mushrooms and pea shoots, a fantastic pairing! Cafe del Rey's **Executive Chef David Vilchez** created a special Portuguese-themed menu for this tasting, the dishes



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brought out the best in the wines and vice versa, following the tradition of wine with food.

What would a discussion of Portuguese wines be without Port?! Miguel Braga of **Quinta do Mourão** brought three **Tawny Ports**, a 10, 20, and 40 Años, to accompany dessert, with an intense education into the complexity of the blend. There are 48 red and 18 white grapes from the **Douro** region allowed for the making of Port. Brandy is added to the base wine, stopping fermentation, and leaving residual sugars that concentrate the alcohol, and then are aged in used wine barrels. This aging is key, as it concentrates the sweetness, loses alcohol, and gains acidity, what winemakers call the “break of aging”, which is what gives Port its balance and lightness of being. Explosive aromatics, exotic flavors, a rich texture, and interlaced acidity make for complex wines.



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When a Port is said to be a certain “age”, it can be complicated, since not all the wine in the barrel is that exact age, but an average. For example, the **10 Años** is a blend of 15 years, the 20 Años contains a wine from 1984, and the 40 Años includes a base wine from 1948. Confusing mathematics aside, this is what you need to know about these años. The 10 Años is a versatile wine, and can be served as an aperitif or dessert wine, or even chilled, it has a tobacco character to it. The **20 Años** is a dessert wine, with a banana nose, best with sweets. The **40 Años** should be savored on its own, complex with a cigar profile. Mourão’s ports were a revelation, alongside a special dessert, a tart of dried fruit and nuts with vanilla ice cream, with a biscotti and custard side. Serving Port at the end of a meal, either by itself or with dessert, is a habit worth cultivating!

A final treat from Miguel, he brought a **100 Años Port** to share. Holy smokes, this is a hedonistic wine! An equal blend of wines from 1895 and 1927, this viscous wonder almost defies description. Bright aromas of coffee bean, fig, dried apricot, candied orange, and pecan, to oversimplify it, wrapped around a core of incredible acidity, and mouth-filling exotic flavors in perfect balance, that, once swallowed, blooms through all your senses. This is a spiritual experience, a once in a lifetime treat. And when you think about it, this wine was in bottle long before many historical events of the past century, a remnant of a world past, where patience was rewarded, and life and Port slowly evolved.

Wines of Portugal is showcasing these wines, traveling to many US cities for wine events and dinners, educating consumers of all that Portugal has to offer. Exceptional dry wines, red and white blends, offer quality and value, while Port remains king. Portuguese wines spring from tradition, yet embrace modern influences. It’s an exciting time to drink wines from Portugal!

Patricia Decker

Burbank Wine Shopping Examiner



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