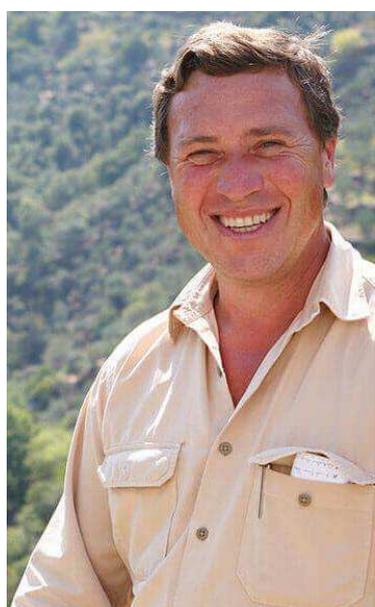




**Tutored Wine Tasting  
Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018**



# **DECONSTRUCTING VINTAGE PORT**

**Speaker:  
David Guimaraens  
Technical Director and Head Winemaker at TFP**



# Indicações Geográficas e DOCs Geographical Indications and DOCs

## Portuguese Islands

### Madeira

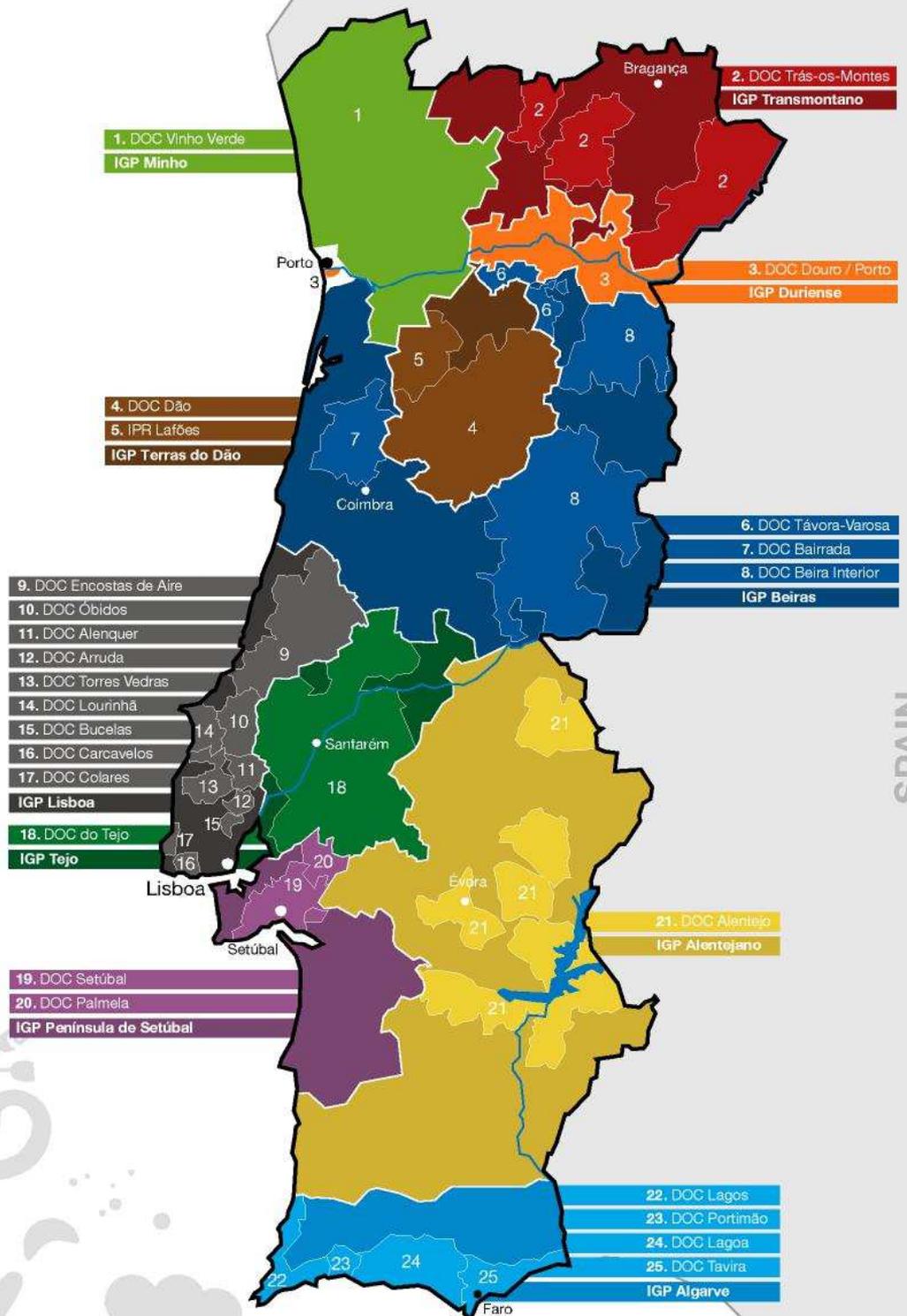


26. DOC Madeira / Madeirense  
IGP Terras Madeirenses

### Açores

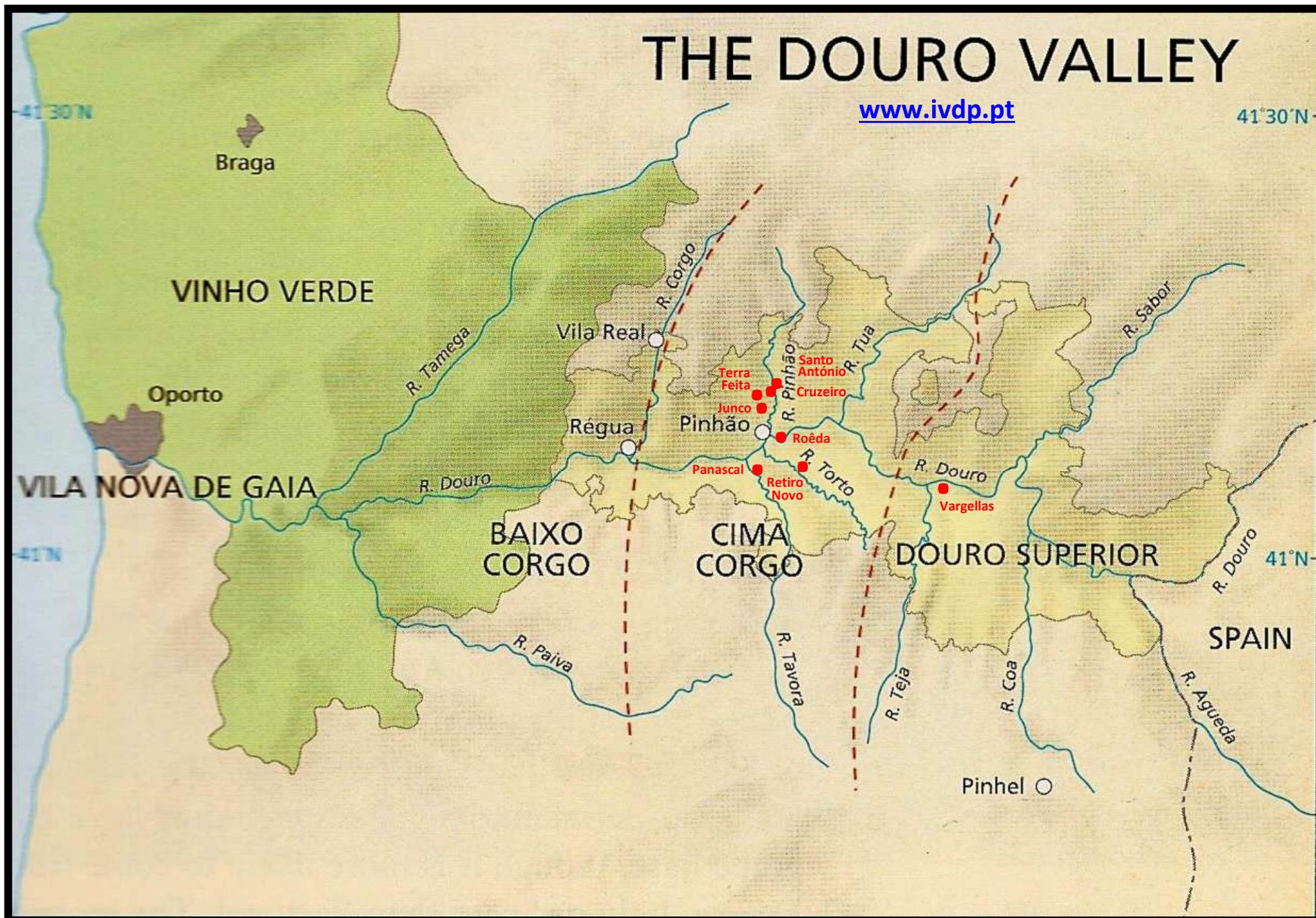


27. IPR Graciosa  
28. IPR Biscoitos  
29. IPR Pico  
IGP Açores



# THE DOURO VALLEY

[www.ivdp.pt](http://www.ivdp.pt)



## **INTRODUCTION:**

Port is one of the great fortified wines of the world. It actually has two things in common with the rest of the fortified wine family. First of all, Port was created by the British for the British and most fortified wines found success on the export market thanks to the trading know-how of British shippers. Secondly, to ensure it reached its target market in drinking condition, Port, like Sherry, Madeira, Marsala and Muscat, was fortified. By elevating its alcohol content through an addition of raw grape spirit, wine does indeed become stable and less prone to spoilage.

One will probably wonder why David Guimaraens carries such a fundamentally Portuguese name but speaks in a distinctly British voice. David is the sixth generation of the Guimaraens family to be in charge of Fonseca since the creation of the Port house in 1815. Having sided with the liberal reforms of King Pedro IV of Portugal during the Liberal Wars of 1828-1834, David's ancestor found himself having to flee the country hidden in an empty barrel of Port (so the legend has it) after the absolutist party had eventually put Pedro's brother Miguel on the throne. David's ancestor took refuge in England and married into an English family. It is in England that the headquarters of the house of Fonseca would be based till 1927. Nowadays, Fonseca is part of "The Fladgate Partnership". TFP was founded in 1962 when Dick Yeatman of "Taylor, Fladgate & Yeatman" gave partnerships to David's dad, Bruce Guimaraens of "Fonseca Guimaraens". The partnership was actually known as "Taylor Fonseca SA" until Croft was bought from Diagio in 2001. With that new acquisition the partnership was renamed after John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda. The latter was a famous shipper who had historic associations with the three firms in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP's Port houses form part of the tightly knit community of British Shippers. That community gathered voluntarily under the umbrella of an institution known as "The Association of British Shippers".

Port takes its name from the city of Porto whence the wine has been exported for some 300 years. Whilst the Lodges of the shippers are situated in Vila Nova de Gaia, across the Douro River from Porto on the Atlantic coast, the region of production itself is located miles away upriver in a remote area beyond the mountains in the eastern part of Northern Portugal. The deep Douro Valley was demarcated in 1756. As such, the Douro is one of the oldest demarcated wine regions in the world.

In the Douro, grapes are grown on very poor soil formed of schistous rock with little organic matter. The steep terrain has been painstakingly shaped into terraces by man over the ages. The Douro is indeed a spectacular example of mountain viticulture. However, the Douro has one singular characteristic amongst other mountainous wine regions and that is its climate. If most fortified wines are made from white grapes, Port is made from black grapes, for only black grapes can withstand the baking-hot continental climate of the Douro. In that extreme environment, vines give very low yields of very small, intensely sweet berries with a high potential of alcohol. The wine made from those grapes display intense fruit concentration but they are also heady and incredibly tannic. If those qualities make light-wine production very difficult, they seem to have been designed for Port production. David Guimaraens likes to draw comparisons with Champagne, where the only high-quality product that can possibly be grown in its very marginal climate is sparkling wine. Port and Champagne are two very individual styles of wine that emerged from the demands of their respective terroirs at the two opposite ends of the climatic spectrum.

## **TWO DISTINCT STYLES OF PORT WINES:**

Before we come to present the different sorts of Vintage Port wines, it is important to understand the specificities of the category. To that effect, one must contrast the two main styles of Port wine that the industry makes; wood-matured Tawny Port and bottle-matured Ruby Port (the king style of which is Vintage Port). Both categories are solutions to the question of how to render Port approachable to consumers. As mentioned above, the terroir of the Douro yields wines with a huge structure. As much as that huge structure makes Port strong with a tremendous potential for ageing, it also makes Port rather difficult to enjoy young. Port actually requires either labour-intensive manipulation in barrel or a very long time of maturation in the bottle to become ready to drink.

### **TAWNY PORT:**

Tawny Port is achieved by deliberately subjecting Port wine to intensive oxidative ageing in barrels of seasoned wood called pipes. The longer the wine spends in pipes, the more developed its aromatic profile grows and the less tannic its structure becomes. More specifically, the wine gradually loses its opaque ruby colour as the sediment is eliminated with every racking (racking being how the process of decanting the wine from one barrel into another is called). As the colour turns lighter and Tawnier (hence the name of the style), the primary black fruit character of the wine becomes more and more dried-fruity, spicy and nutty (nuttness being the signature character of the Tawny style of Port). When it comes to put Tawny Port to market, the master blender skilfully mixes wines from different vintages and different levels of development in order to achieve a required style and ensure product consistency. Man is the master here, not nature. The wine is bottled ready-to-drink and can be poured straight from the bottle into the glass for immediate drinking. The wine won't actually improve in the bottle. The reason why consumers love Tawny Port so much is because the style is instantly gratifying. One can come back to their favourite Tawny Port time and time again, they will always experience the exact same joy they felt the first time they tried it, which is why David Guimaraens likes to call Tawny Port "the no-brainer".

### **VINTAGE PORT:**

As for Vintage Port, it is a wine from one single vintage year as the name suggests. It only spends two winters in large containers of seasoned wood before it is bottled with no treatment or filtration. Young Vintage Port looks almost opaque in the glass and tastes like a fruit bomb. Its solid tannic structure does only mellow very slowly over decades of maturation in the bottle. Nature is the true winemaker with Vintage Port. The wine is indeed the most direct expression of the terroir of the Douro with little intervention from man. The aromatic profile of a Vintage Port bears the signature of the particular location and season over which it was grown. Pull the cork at every stage of its incredibly slow development in the bottle and Vintage Port will offer you a snapshot of the past and speak of its journey to the present! Vintage Port is a time capsule in essence. The drinking experience might not always prove fulfilling, for there is such a thing as pulling the cork too early, but it will always be a stimulating one. Sometimes Vintage Port is in no mood to talk and likes to keep everything to itself. Whilst this can frustrate the more average drinkers (let alone the fact that Vintage Port throws a heavy sediment in the bottle and requires decanting before serving), Vintage Port is an almost endless source of pleasure for connoisseurs.

## **THREE SUB-CATEGORIES OF VINTAGE PORT:**

The Fladgate Partnership produces little in terms of commercial wines in what is known as the Standard Category, which is why TFP only ranks as the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest producer of Port wines. The focus of the partnership is on quality wines in the so-called Special Category. In that respect, TFP is a leading producer of premium Port with 1/3 of the production. Vintage Port is a rather specialist side of the business, representing no more than 2 to 3% of the output at TFP and hardly 1% as a whole across the industry.

The historic style of Vintage Port is Classic Vintage Port and this is the style that most people are familiar with. Classic Vintage Port will only be produced in exceptional years. The quality of the vintage is assessed over the two winters the wine spends in seasoned wood prior to bottling. On average, three vintages per decade will be declared. Traditionally, British shippers declare a Classic Vintage Port on Saint-George's day once a blend reflective of the given style of a Port house is achieved. Classic Vintage Port is indeed a blend of wines of different origins across the region. Therefore, Classic Vintage Port is an expression of the terroir of the Douro as a whole. Since components must have contrasting qualities in the blend in order for Classic Vintage Port to be stylistically balanced, one can safely say that Classic Vintage Port offers a complete experience.

The 1950s saw rising demand for Vintage Port as the middle classes started regaining some buying power after the restrictions of the Second World War. In response, Taylor's decided to release Quinta de Vargellas 1958, the top wine of its flagship single estate. Other shippers followed suit, using the "Single-quinta" designation in good intervening years when the quality of the vintage would not yield the level of excellence required for the blending of a Classic Vintage Port. Single-quinta Vintage Port therefore expresses the terroir of a particular corner of the Douro, giving a clear idea of what a particular component can contribute to a Classic Vintage Port blend.

In the early 1930s, Fonseca had already come up with a different solution that remains a singularity amongst shippers today. Whilst the Port house would blend a Classic Vintage Port in exceptional years under the "Fonseca" label, they would also blend a Non-classic Vintage Port in good intervening years under the "Guimaraens" label.

The first four wines in this presentation are examples of all the Single-quinta Vintage Ports produced by The Fladgate Partnership:

- Quinta da Roêda Vintage Port for Croft
- Quinta do Panascal Vintage Port for Fonseca
- Quinta de Terra Feita Vintage Port and Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port for Taylor's

Then we will look into Fonseca's singular Non-classic Vintage Port blend:

- Guimaraens Vintage Port

Finally, we will explore three examples of Classic Vintage Port. The three vintages selected here are particularly dear to David Guimaraens for a variety of reasons. We will taste one Classic Vintage Port for each of the three Port houses that have come to define The Fladgate Partnership:

- Taylor's Vintage Port
- Fonseca Vintage Port
- Croft Vintage Port

**Tutored Port Tasting**  
**DECONSTRUCTING VINTAGE PORT**

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Speaker: Technical Director and Winemaker David Guimaraens of The Fladgate Partnership

Transcription of David GUIMARAENS' narrative by Head Sommelier Eric LAGRE

Tasting notes by Head Sommelier Eric LAGRE and Sommelier Magda KOTLARCZYK, WSET Diploma graduates  
(with the participation of WSET Diploma student Nora ESPINOSA CORONEL)



**1 Fonseca « Quinta do Panascal » 1999 Vintage Port**

**2 Taylor's « Quinta de Terra Feita » 2001 Vintage Port**

**3 Croft « Quinta da Roêda » 2002 Vintage Port**

**4 Taylor's « Quinta de Vargellas » 2004 Vintage Port**

**5 Fonseca « Guimaraens » 2015 Vintage Port** *(Bicentenary)*

**6 Croft** *(Est. 1588)* **2003 Vintage Port**

**7 Taylor's** *(Est. 1692)* **1992 Vintage Port** *(Tercentenary)*

**8 Fonseca** *(Est. 1815)* **1985 Vintage Port**



These are the years when a significant amount of any of the three styles of Vintage Port produced by the house of Fonseca were respectively declared then shipped to Britain or elsewhere. Small parcels of Vintage Port might have been bottled for particular customers or markets but the years when such restricted bottlings were made are not included in this list.

1977, 1978  
 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988  
 1991, 1996  
 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008



1931, 1933, 1934  
 1942, 1944, 1946  
 1952, 1954, 1957, 1958  
 1961, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968  
 1972, 1974, 1976, 1978  
 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988  
 1991, 1995, 1996, 1998  
 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008  
 2012, 2013, 2015



1840, 1844, 1846, 1847  
 1951, 1854  
 1863, 1865, 1868  
 1870, 1872, 1873, 1878  
 1881, 1884, 1887  
 1890, 1892, 1896  
 1900, 1904, 1906, 1908  
 1912,  
 1920, 1922, 1927  
 1931, 1933, 1934  
 1945, 1948  
 1955  
 1960, 1963, 1966  
 1970, 1975, 1977  
 1980, 1983, 1985,  
 1002, 1994, 1997  
 2000, 2003, 2007, 2009  
 2011, 2016

## **SINGLE-QUINTA VINTAGE PORT:**

If one can speak of the terroir of the Douro as a whole, the region will be better understood as a mosaic of vineyards with their own individual microclimatic singularities. The river banks of the Douro are dotted with vineyard estates called quintas, each quinta producing wine that is an expression of its local terroir.

Close to Pinhão, to the East, is where Quinta da Roêda is situated. 2002 is the first ever vintage of the wine to have been produced by David Guimaraens himself after Quinta da Roêda was acquired by TFP from Diagio in 2001. Quinta da Roêda yields a style of wine of such elegance and fruit vibrancy that one can easily understand why the estate has long been considered one of the jewels in the Douro crown. More generally, the cooler, gentler microclimate of the Pinhão Valley, north of the Douro River in the Cima Corgo, is responsible for the freshest and juiciest style of Vintage Port that can possibly be produced. It is therefore not surprising that most Port houses own quintas in the Pinhão Valley, for the wines that come out of those estates have incredible fruit intensity and this is one key component of a Classic Vintage Port blend.

Quinta do Panascal is also situated in the Cima Corgo but to the opposite side of the Douro River in the south on the right bank of the Tavora confluent. In contrast, the Tavora Valley benefits from a particularly hot microclimate that results in wines with a solid structure and incredible depth. One can easily understand why Fonseca would blend the robust wines of Panascal with the more vibrant, plump and fresh wines of Quinta de Santo António and Quinta de Cruzeiro in the Pinhão Valley in order to create a more balanced and complete Classic Vintage Port.

The purpose of blending can actually be experienced through the wines of Taylor's, for Taylor's produces two Single-quinta Vintage Ports when the norm is to produce one only, traditionally from the flagship estate of any given Port house. Taylor's produces Quinta de Terra Feita in the Pinhão Valley and Quinta de Vargellas in the Douro Superior, deeper in the Douro Valley. The climate of the Douro Superior is baking-hot and arid but thankfully, the vineyards at Quinta de Vargellas, which are located on the south bank of the Douro River, are north-facing. This allows the grapes to ripen in temperatures that are 2°C below average. The resulting wine remains fresh as a result. A Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port is typically lean and densely tannic, yet elegant and flowery. Both Quintas within the house of Taylor's contribute contrasting qualities that are essential in the making of a Classic Vintage Port blend. Whilst the wine of Terra Feita is plump and fruity, the wine of Vargellas is solidly structured. By combining fruit concentration and firmness of structure together, Taylor's Vintage Port can age fabulously and provide a wine experience that is both complete and balanced. David Guimaraens actually suggested to the members who were attending the tasting event to mix their Terra Feita together with their Vargellas in the same glass to get a sense of what a Taylor's Vintage Port should taste like.

A member asked David Guimaraens if he thought that it was desirable for a Vintage Port to take such a long time to age. David answered that it is what Vintage Port needs but since Single-quinta Vintage Port is intrinsically not as complete a style as a Classic Vintage Port blend, its potential for ageing is not nearly as long. A Single-quinta Vintage Port will become enjoyable to drink after 10 years or so and will be released onto the market at half the price; win, win!

<b>Port:</b>	Fonseca, Quinta do Panascal 1999 Vintage Port <i>Quinta do Panascal is located in the Tavora Valley. When Fonseca acquired this Grade A estate (or quinta) in 1978, Panascal's wines had been forming the backbone of the company's Classic Vintage blend for the previous 20 years. In 1985, Fonseca bought the adjoining Quinta do Val do Muros, taking the estate to 78ha, 51 of which are under vines. The steep vineyard was extendedly replanted on patamares during the 1980s but a small area of vertical planting was carried out towards the top of the property.</i>
<b>Style:</b>	Single-quinta <b>Vintage Port</b> (Special Category) <i>Vintage Port is produced in most years, yet styles vary hugely depending on the quality of the vintage. A Classic Vintage Port will only be made in the finest or "declared" vintage years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in the top Grade A estates of a Port House. Classic vintage years are declared no more than three times per decade on average and British shippers traditionally declare them on Saint-George's day, one and a-half years after production, when the wine is about to be bottled. Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration. In years when the quality of the harvest is very good but not outstanding, no Vintage Port will be produced, except Single-quinta Vintage Port from the best grapes consistently grown in a Port House's flagship quinta alone (while Classic Vintage Port is a blend of wines of different origins, Single-quinta Vintage Port is a single-estate wine). Single-quinta Vintage Port is earlier maturing, yet it remains concentrated enough to require at least a decade of maturation in the bottle in order to become ready to drink, at which stage it is released onto the market for immediate consumption. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving any Vintage Port.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>1999</b> bottled in 2001 by <a href="#">Quinta &amp; Vineyard Bottlers- Vinhos SA</a> in Vila Nova de Gaia, where the wine is left to mature. <i>Very cold and dry winter conditions delayed budburst. Wet conditions in spring were welcomed, even though they coincided with flowering. The early summer was so hot that a large number of bunches with small berries were allowed to grow. Harvest started mid-September during one week of heavy rain. However, very good Port was made as conditions eventually turned dry and warm.</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Fonseca (Est. 1815) <a href="http://www.fonseca.pt">www.fonseca.pt</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	David Guimaraens
<b>Capacity:</b>	75cl
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork <i>(Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)</i>
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	95.5 g/l = 3.1°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	3.77 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	3.7
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	£14.98 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£30.00 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium ruby in colour with a garnet rim. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean. It exhibits a medium-plus intensity of developing aromas. The savoury scent of cheese rind, roast meat and bacon fat is accentuated by dry notes of clove, black pepper, mocha and walnut. The aromatic profile of the wine is dry and savoury, yet it is underpinned by the sticky sweetness of fig and sultana. Hints of fresh herbs and mint bring freshness.

### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. There is a firm grip of medium-plus tannins. The flavour profile of medium-plus intensity is dominated by cherry liqueur and chocolate. The resulting effect is reminiscent of Black Forest gâteau. Fig, sultana and crystallised fruit, plus hints of sweet spices linger in the finish of medium-plus length.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Single-quinta Vintage Port is very good. The alcohol is well-integrated and in balance with the deep and brooding aromatic profile of the wine. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

<b>Port:</b>	<b>Taylor's Quinta de Terra Feita 2001 Vintage Port</b> <i>Quinta de Terra Feita is Taylor's largest property. It forms a spectacular amphitheatre of terraced vineyard on the right bank of the Pinhão River. Taylor's acquired Quinta de Terra Feita de Baixo in the 1970s then Quinta de Terra Feita de Cima in 1990, thereby taking the estate to 48ha of vineyard. The Grade A property's vines have been supplying Taylor's with grapes since the 1890s. Together with those of Quinta de Vargellas, the wines of Terra Feita form the backbone of Taylor's Classic Vintage Port.</i>
<b>Style:</b>	<b>Single-quinta <u>Vintage Port</u> (Special Category)</b> <i>Vintage Port is produced in most years, yet styles vary hugely depending on the quality of the vintage. A Classic Vintage Port will only be made in the finest or "declared" vintage years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in the top Grade A estates of a Port House. Classic vintage years are declared no more than three times per decade on average and British shippers traditionally declare them on Saint-George's day, one and a-half years after production, when the wine is about to be bottled. Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration. In years when the quality of the harvest is very good but not outstanding, no Vintage Port will be produced, except Single-quinta Vintage Port from the best grapes consistently grown in a Port House's flagship quinta alone (while Classic Vintage Port is a blend of wines of different origins, Single-quinta Vintage Port is a single-estate wine). Single-quinta Vintage Port is earlier maturing, yet it remains concentrated enough to require at least a decade of maturation in the bottle in order to become ready to drink, at which stage it is released onto the market for immediate consumption. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving any Vintage Port.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>2001</b> bottled in 2003 by <u><a href="#">Quinta &amp; Vineyard Bottlers- Vinhos SA</a></u> in Vila Nova de Gaia, where the wine is left to mature. <i>Following one of the wettest winters on record, the weather became more settled in the spring. The summer saw moderately hot temperatures and continuous light winds that kept the vines free of disease, yet a total lack of rain caused some stress to those vines. Harvest was disrupted by two days of untimely rain but most of the picking occurred under dry conditions.</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Taylor's (Est. 1692) <a href="http://www.taylor.pt">www.taylor.pt</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	David Guimaraens
<b>Capacity:</b>	75cl
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork (Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	99.8 g/l = 3.3°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	4.4 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	3.6
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	£15.81 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£31.00 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. Its colour is deep ruby and quite fresh and youthful in appearance. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean. It seems to be at a sleeping stage of development, to the point that the developing aromas come across as no more than medium in intensity. The cassis, blackberry, cherry and plum fruit is lifted by mint, eucalyptus, fresh herbs and blue flowers. A hint of green walnut husk and forest floor adds an extra layer of complexity.

### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. The palate feels very balanced and fresh as a result. The tannins are high but of very fine and ripe quality. The flavours of medium-plus intensity start very fruity, herby and flowery but soon turn quite spicy, with hints of dry liquorice and clove. Thanks to notes of dried fruit, the wine tastes almost like Christmas pudding in the finish of medium-plus length.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Single-quinta Vintage Port is very good. It is the freshest of the four on display here. The nose feels simpler than the palate, yet the wine has the potential to develop complexity then provide quite a complete drinking experience. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

<b>Port:</b>	Croft, Quinta da Roêda 2002 Vintage Port <i>Roêda belonged to the Fladgates of Taylor, Fladgate &amp; Yeatman until the quinta was acquired by Croft in 1889. The Grade A estate went full circle in 2001 when Croft was bought by TFP. Poet Vega Cabral once described Roêda as the diamond in the gold ring of Portugal that is the Douro Valley, but the quinta suffered a steady decline from 1911 under the stewardship of various international corporations. Now that the 130ha of vineyard have been replanted, first class wines are being produced once again.</i>
<b>Style:</b>	Single-quinta <b>Vintage Port</b> (Special Category) <i>Vintage Port is produced in most years, yet styles vary hugely depending on the quality of the vintage. A Classic Vintage Port will only be made in the finest or "declared" vintage years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in the top Grade A estates of a Port House. Classic vintage years are declared no more than three times per decade on average and British shippers traditionally declare them on Saint-George's day, one and a-half years after production, when the wine is about to be bottled. Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration. In years when the quality of the harvest is very good but not outstanding, no Vintage Port will be produced, except Single-quinta Vintage Port from the best grapes consistently grown in a Port House's flagship quinta alone (while Classic Vintage Port is a blend of wines of different origins, Single-quinta Vintage Port is a single-estate wine). Single-quinta Vintage Port is earlier maturing, yet it remains concentrated enough to require at least a decade of maturation in the bottle in order to become ready to drink, at which stage it is released onto the market for immediate consumption. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving any Vintage Port.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>2002</b> bottled in 2004 by <u><a href="#">Quinta &amp; Vineyard Bottlers- Vinhos SA</a></u> in Vila Nova de Gaia, where the wine is left to mature. <i>The 2001-2002 Viticultural year was one of the driest years on record. Winter was bitterly cold, with parts of the Pinhão River completely freezing over at Christmas. Had the condition of the grapes not been so healthy, the heavy rain that plagued the harvest in early September might have compromised production altogether. Thankfully, clear, hot weather returned eventually.</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Croft (Est. 1588) <a href="http://www.croftport.com">www.croftport.com</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	David Guimaraens
<b>Capacity:</b>	75cl
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork (Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	91 g/l = 2.8°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	4.1 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	3.6
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	£13.00 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£25.00 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium ruby in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean. It exhibits a medium-plus intensity of developing aromas. The perfume of Gum-cistus is said to be the signature scent of the wines of Roêda. Since we are not familiar with the way the fragrant shrub is meant to smell like, we would not be able to tell. There is definitely some mint and eucalyptus here. The cassis liqueur and black cherry fruit is underpinned by notes of raisin, bitter mocha and brown sugar.

### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. The tannins are medium-plus but of fine and ripe quality. The fruit profile is dark, with a mixture of fresh and dried fruits, notably black cherry, cassis, plum, prune and raisin. Dark-bitter chocolate, coffee bean, vanilla and cinnamon add loads of spiciness to the finish of medium-plus length.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Single-quinta Vintage Port is very good. Considering the difficulties of the vintage, the wine turns out to be quite complex and very well balanced and fresh. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

<b>Port:</b>	Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas 2004 Vintage Port <i>High in the Douro Superior, Vargellas was established in the 1800s as a self-contained community, complete with its own railway station. Three properties of the same name were merged into one by Taylor, Fladgate and Yeatman between 1893 and 1896. Between 1993 and 1999, Taylor's added to its terraced vineyard the adjacent Quinta do São Xisto, which they planted in vertical rows using the vinha ao alto technique. The acquisition increased Quinta de Vargellas to 191 ha, 76 of which are under vines.</i>
<b>Style:</b>	Single-quinta <b>Vintage Port</b> (Special Category) <i>Vintage Port is produced in most years, yet styles vary hugely depending on the quality of the vintage. A Classic Vintage Port will only be made in the finest or "declared" vintage years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in the top Grade A estates of a Port House. Classic vintage years are declared no more than three times per decade on average and British shippers traditionally declare them on Saint-George's day, one and a-half years after production, when the wine is about to be bottled. Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration. In years when the quality of the harvest is very good but not outstanding, no Vintage Port will be produced, except Single-quinta Vintage Port from the best grapes consistently grown in a Port House's flagship quinta alone (while Classic Vintage Port is a blend of wines of different origins, Single-quinta Vintage Port is a single-estate wine). Single-quinta Vintage Port is earlier maturing, yet it remains concentrated enough to require at least a decade of maturation in the bottle in order to become ready to drink, at which stage it is released onto the market for immediate consumption. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving any Vintage Port.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>2004</b> bottled in 2006 by <u><a href="#">Quinta &amp; Vineyard Bottlers- Vinhos SA</a></u> in Vila Nova de Gaia, where the wine is left to mature. <i>The winter of 2003-2004 was very dry. It only rained 1/3 of the average quantity recorded in previous years. The lack of water in the spring and early summer led to some diseases and a concern about the risk of stunted growth. Unusual rainfalls in August salvaged the vintage. Harvest took place in still cool, overcast conditions but very good wines were eventually produced.</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Taylor's (Est. 1692) <a href="http://www.taylor.pt">www.taylor.pt</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	David Guimaraens
<b>Capacity:</b>	75cl
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork ( <i>Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle</i> )
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	93.5 g/l = 3°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	4.7 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	3.6
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	£17.67 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£36.00 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



## Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is deep ruby in colour with a garnet rim. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

## Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits an elegant rather than pronounced intensity of very precise aromas (far more precise than in any of the three previous wines). The aromas of medium-plus intensity are developing. The dryness of liquorice, dark-bitter chocolate and coffee bean is freshened up by mint, eucalyptus and mixed herbs. The underlying fruit character is as complex as that of a fruit cake.

## Palate:

This full-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. The tannins are high and of incredibly fine and ripe quality. The palate displays a pronounced intensity of flavours. The freshness of mint, eucalyptus and fresh herbs combines with the dry spiciness of dark-bitter chocolate, coffee bean and clove to produce an effect that is very reminiscent of After Eight. Notes of cherry, prune, fig and raisin last through the long length of the finish.

## Assessment of Quality:

This Single-quinta Vintage Port is outstanding in comparison to the previous three examples. The elegant wine is precise and fresh. It is still very young and the scope for development is huge. This wine of great depth is pleasant now but will prove far more rewarding in the near future. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

## **NON-CLASSIC VINTAGE PORT:**

Within The Fladgate Partnership, Guimaraens Vintage Port is as emblematic as Quinta de Vargellas Vintage Port. After Quinta de Vargellas 1958 was released by Taylor's, many other shippers followed suit and started producing Non-Classic Vintage Port under a "Single-quinta" label in good intervening years. However, it is Fonseca who first put to market a Non-Classic Vintage Port in the early 1930s but in the shape of a proper Vintage Port blend under the "Guimaraens" label rather than the "Fonseca" label, the latter being strictly reserved to Classic Vintage Port blends. Blending is what Port shippers have always done and since Fonseca would not own quintas of their own before the 1970s, the logic was to release a Vintage Port blend.

The last vintage to have been bottled as a Classic Vintage Port prior to 2015 was 2011. 2015 was so good a vintage that some Port houses decided to declare it a classic vintage year. The tannins are particularly dense in a wine that was just bottled last year but the wine is a fruit bomb that one could almost enjoy now. David Guimaraens stresses that, at this starting point in its development, Guimaraens Vintage Port tastes like the ultimate style of Ruby Port. Vintage Port is held as the king style of Port within the industry indeed.



*Quinta do Panascal*



*Quinta de Cruzeiro*



*organic vineyard at Quinta de Santo António*

**Port:** Fonseca (Bicentenary 1815-2015) Guimaraens 2015 Vintage Port

**Style:** Non-classic **Vintage Port** (Special Category)

Prior to the phylloxera devastation of 1968, many estates owned by individual growers were well known on the export market for the quality of their Single-quinta Vintage Ports but vineyard yields fell to such low levels during the crisis that their wines were absorbed into the Classic Vintage blends of established shippers. The independent growers deep in the Douro Valley lost their independence from the shippers downriver in Oporto on the Atlantic coast as a result. That divorce between growers and shippers was eventually sealed by the creation of the "entrepoto" of Vila Nova de Gaia in 1927. By law all Port wines destined for export had to be shipped through that tightly delimited area across the Douro River from Oporto. Since all the lodges were situated in Vila Nova de Gaia the new regulation that came into existence in a context of economic and political unrest effectively handed the established shippers complete control of the industry. Although there were notable exceptions like Quinta do Noval, which retained its autonomy throughout, quintas only began to recapture lost ground in the early 1960s. Rising demand for Vintage Port led Taylor's to release Quinta de Vargellas 1958 as a Single-quinta Vintage Port. Other shippers followed suit, using the "quinta" designation in good intervening years when the quality of the vintage didn't yield the level excellence required for the blending of a Classic Vintage Port. Following Portugal's accession to the EU in 1986, the monopolistic legislation of 1927 was revoked, giving independent growers direct access to overseas markets once again. This gave birth to the so-called "Single-quinta Movement". Regulation required producers to have accumulated stocks of back vintages prior to trading in Port wines. Independent growers therefore started to produce light wines under the "Douro" appellation as a transitional source of income. As it was the tradition before 1927, they would eventually release their Single-quinta Vintage Ports in every good vintage regardless of whether established shippers declared them classic vintage years or not. Fonseca has been run by six generations of Guimaraens since its creation back in 1915. The family-owned company wasn't to purchase quintas of their own before the 1970s, which is probably why they decided to create a second Vintage Port blend under the "Guimaraens" label in non-classic years, starting with the 1934 vintage. By doing so, Fonseca was going against the tradition of releasing vintage blends in declared years only. Such a non-classic vintage blend remains a singularity amongst shippers. "Guimaraens" is produced the same way as a Classic Fonseca Vintage Port but it is earlier maturing and only takes a decade or more of maturation in the bottle to become ready to drink, at which stage it is released onto the market. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving any Vintage Port.



**Vintage:** 2015 bottled in 2017 by [Quinta & Vineyard Bottlers- Vinhos SA](#) in Vila Nova de Gaia, where the wine is left to mature.

The preceding winter was very wet, with rainfall 30% above average around Pinhão. In contrast, the growing season between April and August was particularly dry. The season started quite cool then turned very hot in July, which accelerated véraison. Some rainfall in early September helped to round off the ripening. Harvesting conditions were excellent.

**Brand:** Fonseca (Est. 1815) [www.fonseca.pt](http://www.fonseca.pt)

**Group:** The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) [www.fladgatepartnership.com](http://www.fladgatepartnership.com)

TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese & Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.

**Winemaker:** David Guimaraens

**Capacity:** 75cl

**Closure:** Natural cork (Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)

**Blend:** Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...

**Alcohol:** 20%abv

**Residual Sugar:** 99 g/l = 3.3°Baumé

**Total Tartaric Acidity:** 4.28g/l

**PH:** 3.7

**Wholesale Price:** £18.86 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) [www.mentzendorff.co.uk](http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk)

**UK average retail price:** £40.75 inc. VAT as per [www.wine-searcher.com](http://www.wine-searcher.com) on 09/11/18

### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is opaque and the purple colour is only visible on the rim. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean. It exhibits a medium-plus intensity of youthful aromas. The freshness of the cherry, plum, blackberry, raspberry and cassis fruit is enhanced by flowery undertones of violet and cornflower, as well as herbaceous notes of cassis leaf, rhubarb, sorrel and other fresh herbs.

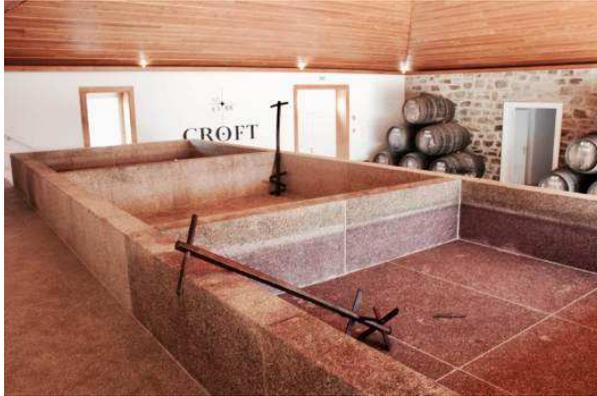
### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol. The palate feels a bit hot in alcohol at this stage of development, and so regardless of the medium-plus level of acidity. The tannins are medium-plus and of very fine and ripe quality. The palate displays a medium-plus intensity of cherry liqueur. The entire range of forest fruits can be tasted here. The finish of medium-plus length is full of dark-bitter chocolate.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Non-classic Vintage Port is very good. The delightful fruit vibrancy and intensity of this young Vintage Port makes it the ultimate style of Ruby Port (as David Guimaraens puts it). However, complexity needs plenty of time to develop. With time, the alcohol will integrate and the tannic structure will soften. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

## CLASSIC VINTAGE PORT:



*Lagares at Quinta da Roêda*



*Port Toes at Quinta da Nogueira*

## **CROFT 2003:**

2003 was the year of the “canicule”, but Port copes well with the heat. David Guimaraens holds Croft 2003 as the Vintage Port of his career. TFP had just bought Croft from Diagio in 2001. Under the leadership of the multinational, the focus was on more commercial styles of wines. The vineyard suffered and the winemaking facilities were striped to the bare minimum. As soon as Roêda entered TFP’s portfolio, a replanting programme was put into place to return the vineyard to its former glory and the lagares were rebuilt in 2002. Croft 2003 was therefore the first Classic Vintage Port made at Quinta da Roêda by treading grapes under foot in a lagar since 1968. This was an opportunity for David Guimaraens to bring out Croft’s individuality of character once again. Bear in mind that a Croft Classic Vintage Port is 85-90% made from the grapes grown at Roêda itself. In other words, the Single Quinta yields wines that are almost complete and balanced on their own in exceptional years, which is why Roêda is so special. Croft Vintage Port is aromatically pungent and structurally silky smooth.



Foot-treading of the grapes in shallow fermenting troughs known as lagares is a tradition that TFP are sticking with despite the challenges that arose in the 1980s. One of those challenges was a lack of available workforce in the Douro. David studied technological solutions in Australia for five years and when he came back home to the Douro in 1990, he developed plunger tanks called Port Toes to try and make do without the human foot. One does not make different styles of Port by asking their team to tread left at Fonseca and right at Taylor’s. There is an actual method to treading grapes and that method applies universally throughout the Douro. The clear and defined sequencing of the foot-treading process explains why it has been so easy to introduce mechanisation in the valley. However, even though mechanisation yields good wines, those wines are different. Port toes are routinely used for the making of Late-bottled Vintage Port at TFP, but when it comes to making Vintage Ports, the partnership exclusively relies on foot-treading in lagares. When primitive methods have yielded good results for generations, why change them?! This is very much the conclusion that David Guimaraens has drawn from his experience. In all fairness, a degree of mechanisation is used to complement foot-treading in the making of Vintage Port wines at TFP, but only overnight whilst the team tries to rest and regain some energy to face yet another backbreaking day of picking then foot-treading, starting in the early hours till late into the evening.

**Port:** Croft 2003 Vintage Port  
**Style:** Classic Vintage Port (Special Category)

*When it comes to Port, a classic vintage is as good as it gets. Such top-quality wine is only made in the very finest or "declared vintage" years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in Croft's only estate, namely [Quinta da Roêda](#) near Pinhão. Roêda belonged to the Fladgates of Taylor, Fladgate & Yeatman when the quinta was acquired by Croft in 1889. The Grade A estate went full circle in 2001 when Croft was bought by The Fladgate Partnership. Poet Vega Cabral once described Roêda as the diamond in the gold ring of Portugal that is the Douro Valley, but the quinta suffered a steady decline from 1911 under the stewardship of various international corporations. Having replanted the vineyard, rebuilt the lagares and modernised the winery, TFP is on course to restore Croft to its former glory. A Classic Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration and put to market straight away. It is so concentrated that decades of maturation in the bottle are needed for it to become ready to drink. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving.*

**Vintage:** 2003 bottled in 2005 by [Quinta & Vineyard Bottlers–Vinhos S.A.](#) in Vila Nova de Gaia.

*The winter preceding the 2003 harvest was very wet. Flowering took place in warm weather. The first two weeks of August provided the intense heat that usually heralds a great vintage. The second half of the month was cooler, with two days of timely rain that helped ripen off the grapes at the end of the month. The picking season in September was warm and dry and the yields were even across all cultivars hence balance and complexity in the wines. 2003 was universally declared by all the Port Houses.*

**Brand:** Croft (Est. 1588) [www.croftport.com](http://www.croftport.com)

**Group:** The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) [www.fladgatepartnership.com](http://www.fladgatepartnership.com)

*TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese & Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.*

**Winemaker:** David Guimaraens

**Capacity:** 75cl

**Closure:** Natural cork (Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)

**Blend:** Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...

**Alcohol:** 20.5%abv

**Residual Sugar:** 85 g/l = 2.5°Baumé

**Total Tartaric Acidity:** 4.92g/l

**PH:** 3.7

**Wholesale Price:** £35.78 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) [www.mentzendorff.co.uk](http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk)

**UK average retail price:** £49.00 inc. VAT as per [www.wine-searcher.com](http://www.wine-searcher.com) on 09/11/18



## Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is deep ruby in colour throughout. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

## Nose:

The wine smells clean. One could easily mistake the nose of this fortified wine for that of a still, light wine. The aromatic profile of this wine is slightly closed-in hence the developing aromas come across as no more than medium in intensity. However, one can sense the power underneath it all. The cherry and wild forest fruit is freshened up by an aromatic scent of gum-cistus. Notes of wood spice, liquorice and clove, dark-bitter chocolate and dry coffee bean add depth and complexity.

## Palate:

This full-bodied wine tastes sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. The tannins are high and incredibly fine and ripe. That tannic structure provides a comforting quality of texture. All the components are so well-balanced that this Vintage Port tastes almost like wine as a result, with not a hint of fortifying brandy in sight. This solidly structured, yet fresh Vintage Port tastes almost like a hybrid between flower-flavoured dark chocolate and Black Forest gâteau. The finish of very long length sees rum-socked raisin spiced with vanilla and cinnamon emerge from the mocha-dominated flavour profile of this wine.

## Assessment of Quality:

This Classic Vintage Port is outstanding. This fortified wine is so well-balanced and elegant that one could easily mistake it for still, light wine. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

## TAYLOR'S 1992:

Contrary to Bordeaux, where every year seems to be the best year from what David Guimaraens gathers, Port producers have to be very selective and rigorous. Declaring a Classic Vintage Port is not a decision to be taken lightly. The wine is of such longevity that a Port house will have to bear the consequences of that decision for decades. Put a poor Classic Vintage Port to market and that will certainly damage the credibility and reputation of the business, putting off consumers from investing for a generation!

1991 was the first classic vintage year to be declared since 1985. 1991 was a beautiful vintage and the appetite for a new declaration was so great that 1991 was declared almost universally by most Port houses, except Taylor's and Fonseca. David had just come back home from Australia in 1990 to take over the position of head winemaker at TFP from his father, though Bruce Guimaraens would remain closely involved till 1995. The team at Taylor Fonseca SA thought that their 1992s were far superior in quality to their 1991s hence they took the decision to declare their 1992s against the rest of the industry. This is a typical case of what is known as "a split declaration". The competition accused Taylor's of privileging their 1992 over their 1991, for 1992 marked the tercentenary of the house. They were eventually proven wrong when Taylor's 1992 Vintage Port was awarded Robert Parker's first ever perfect score for a Port wine. Today, the wine has become one of the rarest and most treasured Classic Vintage Ports on the market, one that the East India Club has plenty of in their cellars thanks to their rigorous purchase policy. The wine now sells in the Dining Room well below its retail value.



*Quinta de Vargellas*



*Quinta de Terra Feita*



*Quinta do Junco*

<b>Port:</b>	Taylor's 1992 Vintage Port
<b>Style:</b>	Classic <b>Vintage Port</b> (Special Category) <i>When it comes to Port, a Classic vintage is as good as it gets. Such top-quality wine is made in the very finest or "declared vintage" years only, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in Taylor's own estates, namely <b>Quinta de Vargellas</b> on the left bank of the Douro River in the Douro Superior and <b>Quinta de Terra Feita</b>, 20 miles apart, on the right bank of the Pinhão River in the Cima Corgo. Vargellas, the flagship quinta, was bought in 1893. Quinta de Terra Feita de Baixo was purchased in the 1970s then Quinta de Terra Feita de Cima was added to the estate in 1990. The wines from <b>Quinta do Junco</b> would become blended into Taylor's Vintage Port from the time it joined the company's portfolio in 1997. A Classic Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration and put to market straight away. It is so concentrated that decades of maturation in the bottle are needed for it to become ready to drink. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>1992</b> bottled in 1994 by <b>Taylor, Fladgate &amp; Yeatman– Vinhos SA</b> in Vila Nova de Gaia. <i>An unusually dry winter led to an equally dry spring. Flowering came early. The long, hot summer was broken by a few heavy showers at the end of the ripening season then the weather at harvest became ideal for winemaking. The vintage corresponded with the tercentenary of Taylor's, but it is the quality of the wines that led Taylor Fonseca SA to declare 1992 a classic vintage year when most Port houses had declared the 1991 vintage instead. Robert Parker did indeed award Taylor's 1992 his first perfect 100-point score for a Port wine and James suckling celebrated Fonseca 1992 as "the best Fonseca since the perfect 1977".</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Taylor's (Est. 1692) <a href="http://www.taylor.pt">www.taylor.pt</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	David Guimaraens
<b>Capacity:</b>	75cl
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork <i>(Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)</i>
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	90 g/l = 2.8°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	4.7 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	3.6
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	No longer available from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£172.00 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium garnet in colour throughout. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean. It exhibits a medium-plus intensity of developing aromas. Mint and flowery notes freshen up the dried-fruity character of fig, prune and sultana. Cedar wood, mocha, almond chocolate and walnut bring something lean and dry to the nose. That austere edge is counterbalanced by the sweetness of Demerara sugar, cinnamon and vanilla.

### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine tastes sweet, even though nutty notes of roasted almond and walnut give the palate a dry edge. This wine is fortified to a high level of alcohol, yet that potency is offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. The tannins are medium-plus and incredibly fine and ripe. The palate exhibits a pronounced intensity of dried fruit soaked in a mixture of cherry liqueur and mocha. The combination of brown sugar, cinnamon and raisin is reminiscent of baked apple in the finish of very long length.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Classic Vintage Port is outstanding+++ (positively in a league of its own). What a difference a few years make! David Guimaraens first introduced our members to this wine back in 2015. It was still in its teenage years and at an awkward stage of development back then. Now, all the components are coming together, resulting in a miracle of balance and integration. The wine has developed layers of complexity, yet its structure remains firm and its fruit profile somewhat fresh. Those qualities explain why Taylor's Vintage Port has often been described as "an iron fist in a velvet glove." Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.

## FONSECA 1985:

1985 is the year when Bruce Guimaraens bought his son a one-way ticket to Australia, so that David would know how things are done in the New World. Hopefully, it would have David return home with new ideas and a greater respect for traditions. 1985 would turn out to be the last classic vintage that Bruce Guimaraens produced. Fonseca 1985 Vintage Port is the oldest Classic Vintage Port in the line-up but the one that looks almost the freshest in the glass. Yet it is one that will never display as good a quality of alcoholic balance as those made by David Guimaraens since then and so for a historical reason.

Port is achieved by adding grape spirit to fermenting grape juice once half the sugars in that juice have been metabolised into alcohol by yeast. That addition is made to a ratio of one part grape spirit to four parts fermenting juice. By fortifying the wine to a high level of alcohol of around 20.5%abv the yeast is killed, thereby interrupting the fermentation process. Since the grape spirit is added in the middle of the fermentation process, 80 to 100 g/l of residual sugars are preserved in the wine, which means that Port is always sweet.

Grapes are very expensive to grow in the Douro hence the grape spirit used by the industry to fortify their Port wines has always been sourced from regions of Europe like France and Spain. Not only is spirit cheaper to produce in the so-called "European wine lake" but it is produced in cooler climatic conditions that help yield a spirit of much finer quality. The fortifying brandy that Port producers use is typically 77% proof. Therefore, that raw grape spirit is by no means neutral aromatically speaking. When spirit has the potential to impact the aromatic profile of a Port wine, the quality of that spirit is paramount to producers, this goes without saying.

David Guimaraens teased the members of the East India Club by claiming that there are advantages in being part of the European Union. Portugal joined the EU in 1986, which allowed Port houses to file a complaint against the Port authorities' monopoly of supply of fortifying brandy. Port houses were forced to use whatever fortifying brandy the Casa do Douro would give them until 1991, when that monopoly was broken by a decision of the European Court of Justice. The quality of that brandy was sometimes questionable and producers in Australia loved to joke about it to the expense of David Guimaraens whilst he was studying in the antipodes.

Grape spirit represents 20% of the content in a bottle of Port. Since it is not totally neutral, David Guimaraens is grateful for the ability he now has to source a fortifying brandy of the purest quality. That choice was denied to his father. If Classic Vintage Port is a time capsule, it is almost like a person too, with all the growing up that is entailed. In a young Port, a cleaner spirit brings out the purity of fruit character. It also helps smooth out the transition when Vintage Port enters its teenage years in its early 20s, still full of puppy fruit but with something more to say for itself. It eventually helps the wine develop greater complexity over many more years of full maturity. In other words, greater quality spirit makes for greater quality Vintage Port.

As far as David Guimaraens is concerned, terroir is what determines the house style of a Vintage Port and he doesn't want the grape spirit to become a stylistic feature of his wines. This is the reason why he uses the same fortifying brandy across all the houses of The Fladgate Partnership: Taylor's, Fonseca and Croft.

<b>Port:</b>	Fonseca 1985 Vintage Port
<b>Style:</b>	Classic <b>Vintage Port</b> (Special Category)
	<i>When it comes to Port, a Classic vintage is as good as it gets. Such top-quality wine is only made in the very finest or "declared vintage" years, primarily from grapes grown then trodden under foot in Fonseca's own estates, namely <a href="#">Quinta do Cruzeiro</a>, <a href="#">Quinta do Panascal</a> and <a href="#">Quinta de Santo António</a>, respectively purchased in 1973, 1978 and 1979. If all these quintas are situated in the Cima Corgo. Quinta de Panascal (Fonseca's flagship quinta) sits on the right bank of the Tavora River whereas Cruzeiro and Santo António almost face each other across the Pinhão River. A Classic Vintage Port is held two winters in seasoned wood before it is blended then bottled with no treatment or filtration and put to market straight away. It is so concentrated that decades of maturation in the bottle are needed for it to become ready to drink. Decanting is an absolute necessity before serving.</i>
<b>Vintage:</b>	<b>1985</b> bottled in 1987 by <a href="#">Fonseca Guimaraens–Vinhos SA</a> in Vila Nova de Gaia. <i>The 1985 vintage was preceded by an exceptionally cold and wet winter. Berry set was excellent. The summer was hot throughout the Douro valley, with no rainfall during July and August. Fonseca picked earlier than most shippers and the harvest was brought in under ideal conditions before the rain in late September. Conditions were ideal for fermentation, resulting in must of exceptional colour and weight. 1985 was declared unanimously. However, while a few outstandingly good wines for the long term were produced, volatility and bacterial spoilage was rife in some cases. Fonseca proved out to be a standout wine in 1985.</i>
<b>Brand:</b>	Fonseca (Est. 1815) <a href="http://www.fonseca.pt">www.fonseca.pt</a>
<b>Group:</b>	The Fladgate Partnership (Est. 1962) <a href="http://www.fladgatepartnership.com">www.fladgatepartnership.com</a> <i>TFP was founded in 1962 as Dick Yeatman of Taylor's gave partnerships to Bruce Guimaraens of Fonseca. The partnership was actually known as Taylor Fonseca SA until 2002. Having just bought Croft from Diagio, the partnership was renamed after the famous shipper John Fladgate, Baron of Roêda, who had historic associations with all 3 firms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. TFP is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Port producer but it is a leader in the special categories with one third of the total production of premium Port wines. Taylor's (Est. 1692) own Fonseca (Est. 1815) since 1949, Croft (Est. 1588) since 2001 and Wiese &amp; Krohn (Est. 1865) since 2013.</i>
<b>Winemaker:</b>	Bruce Guimaraens <i>Bruce Guimaraens retired in 1989 but carried on making wine till 1995 to try and pass some of his wisdom on to his son David and help him carry on the family tradition as head winemaker of the partnership (David joined Taylor Fonseca SA in 1990).</i>
<b>Capacity:</b>	150cl <i>the wine comes in a magnum but prices are quoted for the 75cl equivalent.</i>
<b>Closure:</b>	Natural cork <i>(Natural cork = cellaring and decanting needed / T-top cork = wine ready to drink straight from the bottle)</i>
<b>Blend:</b>	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Cão, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca...
<b>Alcohol:</b>	20.5%abv
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	95 g/l = 3.05°Baumé
<b>Total Tartaric Acidity:</b>	3.53 g/l
<b>PH:</b>	≤ 4 g/l
<b>Wholesale Price:</b>	£51.98 DPD ex. VAT from Mentzendorff (Est. 1858) <a href="http://www.mentzendorff.co.uk">www.mentzendorff.co.uk</a>
<b>UK average retail price:</b>	£87.50 inc. VAT as per <a href="http://www.wine-searcher.com">www.wine-searcher.com</a> on 09/11/18



### **Appearance:**

This red wine looks clear and bright. There is a hint of garnet on the rim but the deep ruby colour of this wine still conveys a sense of freshness and youthfulness. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

### **Nose:**

The wine smells clean but both a hint of volatility and the headiness of the spirit lets you know that the wine was produced before the monopoly of the Casa do Douro was broken in 1991, subsequently giving Port houses the freedom to source higher quality brandy themselves. The wine exhibits a medium-plus intensity of developing aromas. Notes of mossy wood, undergrowth and forest floor are reminiscent of a mature Pinot Noir. Added hints of black pepper give the nose an almost savoury edge. The rich prune and sultana fruit is lifted by the fresh scent of mint and eucalyptus.

### **Palate:**

This medium-plus-bodied wine tastes sweet. It is fortified to a high level of alcohol and a medium-plus level of acidity does not manage to offset that potency. Now that most of the tannins have precipitated to the bottom of the bottle into a heavy sediment, the fine and ripe tannins that remain in the wine feel no more than medium in the mouth. The flavours are medium-plus in intensity. There are still undertones of fresh dark fruit beneath the sweet-spiced brandy prune character of this wine. The finish of long length tails off into notes of mature Cognac.

### **Assessment of Quality:**

This Classic Vintage Port is very good. The wine displays an incredible degree of freshness but one cannot help but think that there is something a bit mono-dimensional and alcoholically unbalanced about it. Walnuts are an excellent accompaniment to Vintage Port, as are various cheeses such as Stilton and Dorset Blue Vinny. So too are dried fruits such as apricots and figs. Alternatively, simply savour the unadulterated taste in a good glass with good company.