Port 2007 - a vintage year?

7 Nov 2007 by JR

The Fladgate Partnership, owners of Taylor's, Fonseca, Croft and Delaforce ports, report on what they consider to be an excellent vintage in the Douro.

Despite heavy summer rainfall, perfect weather conditions during picking late September, which were critical to this year's harvest, produced healthy, evenly ripe grapes fuelling speculation that 2007 will produce outstanding Ports at all our properties.

"We are very excited by the quality which is emerging," stated Adrian Bridge, Managing Director of The Fladgate Partnership. "Although it's far too early to make any decisions, the 2007 is undoubtedly the first year since 2003 which stands a good chance of being declared ... If the wines deliver on their early promise, collectors will be well advised to set aside funds for 2007 Ports, which will be released for sale in 2009."

The growing season was preceded by a wet winter, which helped replenish the Douro Valley's depleted water reserves after four hot, dry years. The weather throughout the summer was not excessively hot but provided plenty of sunshine for complete and balanced ripening of the grapes aided by healthy leaf canopies. It was significant that Touriga Francesa, which represents the largest proportion of plantings in the Fladgate Partnership vineyards, performed particularly well in 2007. This grape variety is an important ingredient in Vintage Port providing structure, intensity and complex scented aromas.

Head Winemaker David Guimaraens was bursting with quiet optimism as grapes arrived in perfect health at each of the company's quintas. "Ripening has been very even and balanced at all our properties and this is already shining through in the wines. There is excellent acidity and structure with attractive, fresh fruitiness."

Reports of outbreaks of oidium (powdery mildew) early summer provided the only somber note in the Douro causing extensive damage to vineyards which failed to take precautions. Preventative action at the Fladgate Partnership's own vineyards and those belonging to their growers with whom they have long-term relationships, ensured that their vineyards were not affected.

The best of the wines will be set aside in vat early next year and re-evaluated in the spring of 2009 having stood the traditional test of "two winters in wood". St George's Day 2009, the traditional date for announcing Declarations by The Fladgate Partnership, will be a moment when the success of the 2007 vintage will be revealed.