Port/Douro vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 in the Douro saw drought and hail conspire to reduce yields significantly, by as much as 40% in places. The resultant small berries have made wines of high colour and notable acidity.

2011 The rain of 2010 was crucial in this much dryer year, to sustain the vines through a hot summer. There was, finally, much needed precipitation in late August and September with dry, warm conditions thereafter which were perfect for picking. Looks to be a gerat quality vintage.

2010 An exceptionally wet winter brought challenging erosion to the Douro, but welcome restoration of ground water. A very hot July then retarded ripening (because the vines shut down in the excessive temperatures) but the weather was more agreeable later in the season with good conditions for harvest and increased yields compared to 2008 and 2009.

2009 An exceptionally hot summer led to an early vintage with great potential for Port, but extremely high alcohols in the unfortified wines, with some unripe tannins and shrivelled berries. Higher altitude sites will be crucial to making these wines work.

2008 A dry but, like 2007, cool year. Some growers picked early for fear of rain, but those that risked it were rewarded with ideal ripening conditions late in the season. Not universally declared, although Quinta do Noval have.

2007 A vintage year, and one that has produced exceptionally approachable Ports at a young age. The growing season was fairly cool for the Douro, leading to later than usual harvest and no of the grape desiccation that can confer raisined character.

2006 A wet year with rain inconveniently timed in September. But some grapes were also shrivelled by extreme heat. Far from a textbook year.

2005 An exceptionally dry growing season in which only old vines triumphed. Very early harvest produced unusual musts - the Douro's answer to 2003?

2004 The usual hot summer, then rain in early September but late September saw sugar levels zoom up. There will be some fine vintage and single quinta ports.

2003 Some great vintage ports, not harmed by the hot summer and helped by newfound alternative techniques to foot treading.

2002 The usual very dry summer was followed by an unusually wet September which compromised both the health and ripeness of those grapes that were picked. A most unusual harvest and extremely unlikely to produce vintage port.

2001 Some very good vintage port. Exceptionally wet winter - an unprecedented five months of rain - was followed by early budburst slowed by a cool spring. The crop was reduced by a heatwave in June but conditions were favourable throughout the rest of the summer. Useful quantity with good not great quality.

2000 Mild and exceptionally dry winter was followed by a wet spring which delayed the growth cycle. An unusually hot September gave the grapes a late boost just before harvest in benign conditions. The result of this, together with the introduction of new, mechanised alternatives to foot-treading in some houses, is a range of particularly luscious, ripe vintage ports.

1999 At the end of August growers were looking forward to a distinct improvement on 1998 but hopes were washed away by continuous rain in September, although the thick-skinned port grapes suffered much less than table wine grapes elsewhere in Portugal.

1998 Definitely not a year for vintage port.

1997 Some fine vintage ports. Early flowering was followed by a fairly cool, wet summer so the ports are more structured than the 1994s.

1996 Not a year for vintage port but some fine single quinta wines were made.

1995 Some real potential for vintage port.

1994 Potentially exceptional year for vintage port. Very rich but not overripe wines.

1992 Taylor and Fonseca chose to declare this instead of 1991.

1991 Great potential, very rich with considerable structure. A long-term vintage.

1985 A flattering year: luscious and fragrant for mid-term drinking.

1983 A shade behind 1985. Good, sometimes exceptional. Widely declared and maturing relatively fast.

1982 Declared by only a few houses, these are supple and for early drinking.

1980 A medium weight year. Reliable without hitting the heights

1977 Initially destined to be legendary, these have great weight, backbone and and power but the vintage has proved much less consistent than expected.

1975 Widely declared and inexpensive but whilst pleasant, hardly vintage material.

1970 Superb, big, full and deep. Should last very many years.

1966 Rich, fragrant and lovely now.

1963 A benchmark year, sensational from many houses and only very, very slowly commencing their decline.