2007 port vintage declared

26 Mar 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Proud parents of toddlers born in 2007 need worry no more about what to lay down for their offspring to commemorate the year of their birth. The Symingtons kicked off open season for declarations of 2007 vintage port today and most other significant port shippers are expected to follow suit, though little of it will be shipped down the Douro as shown here.

I plan to taste as many as possible when they are shown at a tasting in London organised by the Institute of Masters of Wine during the week beginning 18 May (not now 7 May) and will of course report on what I find. Not least on the prices.

'We are really confident and proud of our wines', said Paul Symington of his family's various ports, which include Graham, Warre and Dow. Johnny Symington said of Dow, 'We are pleased to announce the declaration of our Dow's 2007 vintage port, a wine of very great quality with the pedigree of such wines as the Dow's 1896, 1908, 1945, 1966 and 2000.

'As so often happens in great vintage years, conditions were less than perfect through some stages of the viticultural cycle and 2007 was no different. A drier than usual winter was followed by a most untypically cool and damp spring, requiring a great deal of hard work to safeguard the developing fruit. Fortunately, things changed for the better during August, which although cooler than average, was also very dry. The scene was set for a perfect period of grape maturation, the cool days and nights proving ideal for a full and balanced ripening of the crop. Dry weather continued into September leading up to the vintage, which got under way in perfect conditions.

'2007 was undoubtedly one of the best years we have ever seen for Touriga Nacional, a variety that can suffer from excessive heat. The cooler temperatures registered during the final growing period paved the way for ideal maturations, lending the Nacional excellent sugar/acidity balance and ideal phenolic ripeness. We therefore decided on a final blend that comprised of 54% Touriga Nacional. The latter was sourced from low-yielding parcels of the Bomfim vineyard, which produced wines with Dow's typically austere character and also from Senhora da Ribeira, which by comparison delivered slightly richer wines.

'The other key component (26%) of the Dow's 2007 is the Touriga Franca, which realised its full development potential given its late ripening characteristics, well suited to the cooler conditions of the year. Sourced from Senhora da Ribeira and the neighbouring and family owned Santinho and Cerdeira vineyards, the Franca shows prominent violet aromas and softer, sweeter tannins which complement the Touriga Nacional.

'As in previous vintages, we have remained true to the Dow's house style, making a wine that is not merely meant to flatter when young but, more importantly, to stay the course and to express the outstanding pedigree of Dow's Vintage Port over many decades. The Dow '07 will prove to be a sensational wine when the world's economies have long moved on from their current troubles.'

And he may well be right.

Even if the economic climate will not make selling these wines that easy, the sun at least is shining on the Douro. Paul Symington reports today, 'We are having summer here, vines I planted just ten days ago are already pushing out leaves, I will have to water them unless it rains.'