Niepoort 2011 Douro Branco

2 Aug 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From €6.50, 14 Swiss francs, £9.59, 109 Swedish krone, 140 Norwegian krone

Find this wine

Talk about serendipity. At the big Portuguese generic wine tasting in London earlier this year there was one particular wine that stood out as being absolutely delicious, but it was not yet available retail so there was no point in writing about it. Now it is widely available in Europe including the UK - at around £10 at Selfridges, Corks of Cotham and Bottle Apostle - I decided the time is right to share my enthusiasm. Then when I came to look carefully at the label of the British version of this wine, which, with perfect logic, is called Drink Me, I saw that it is 100% Olympic, majoring on synchronised swimming. What perfect timing!

The Douro Valley is proving itself a wonderful playground for white (*branco*) winemakers, with great, characterful wines that nowadays are made with real zip and refreshment - in this particular case by picking in August, suppressing the malolactic fermentation and deliberately choosing fruit from high-altitude vineyards. This particular example is designed for fairly early drinking and, apart from a small trial the previous year, 2011 is the debut vintage for this white version of Dirk Niepoort's very successful red Douro, also designed, originally for the German market, for relatively early drinking.

There is the most brilliantly detailed technical background to the wine on the Niepoort website. Basically it's a blend of the usual white port grapes Côdega de Larinho, Rabigato, Gouveio (Godello), Dona Branca, Viosinho, Bical, etc grown on mica and schist that seem to impart a certain rocky character at 550 to 700m altitude. Alcohol is 13.4% and a quarter of it was aged in oak, all of it on lees but without what is called on the Niepoort tech spec 'steering'.

The only problem about recommending this lovely wine is that, in true whimsical Niepoort fashion, it is sold with a different name and different label, all done by local artists, in each of the 18 different countries it can be found in. The artists who somehow collaborated to produce the swimmers' label were the appropriately named Dominique Goblet and Kai Pfeiffer. As far as I can gather, the following are its international aliases, but it's possible that not all countries have the new white version:

UK Drink Me
US Twisted
Ireland Sásta
Germany Fabelhaft
Belgium Allez Santé
Holland Gestolen Fiets
Denmark Fantasi
Poland Berek
Estonia Öö ja Päev
Norway Fabelaktig
Finland Sarvet
Sweden Rocky
Spain Alonso Quijano
Portugal Diálogo
Brazil Conversa
South Africa Ubuntu
China Putaoya
Japan Eto carta

Well done, Dirk and export team! But what a marketing headache, I'd have thought. The link below takes you to a

heartening number of stockists - for any Niepoort 2011, but the majority of the references at this stage are to this particularly toothsome wine - even though in the US the wine is much more likely to be Niepoort Loureiro 2011 Vinho Verde. This is Julia's tasting note on the 2010, which she scored 16.5 and thought would drink well next year too: 'Highly aromatic, almost grapey, but has a lively mineral and phenolic grip. Delicately floral but mouthwateringly fresh and long. Not bone dry but well balanced. Intense and lively. Great mineral aftertaste.'

I'd love to provide you with as precise a tasting note on Drink Me Branco but unfortunately it is in a tasting booklet at home in London and I am in the Languedoc. I hope anyway that you might be reassured by the fact that this wine's quality lingered in my mind long after tasting it. More than 90,000 bottles were filled.

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