



WINE CLUB CHRONICLE

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Douro and Lisboa

THIS JUST IN

Just in case you haven't heard yet...we done moved y'all! Our restaurant is now at 340 G Street, formerly Sack's Cafe; and our shop is right next door at 314 G Street. It's been a busy month for us, but things are starting to settle into place. If you haven't been in yet to check out the new spots, do come in soon; we see a lot of potential in our new little corner of downtown, and hope to contribute to its becoming a renewed hub of energy & vitality for the area!

And speaking of renewed energy: we bring you this month some fabulous reds from Portugal, whose winemaking history surpasses that of France, and whose reputation is now reaching the world stage in full force. Thanks as always for your support!

The hand-built terraced vineyards of the Douro



COLLECTOR CLUB

Pintas Character Douro 2014

The intent the winemakers had here was to showcase the rich fruit and striking power of the Douro in both their dry and sweet wines, and I'm convinced! While it drinks rather phenomenally right now, these wines are sometimes rather curious creatures when it comes to aging...some of us liked it best right when the cork was popped, some much more the next day after it had gained some oxygen. In either case, you will do yourself many favors by drinking this alongside a choice steak filet and gorgonzola sauce. **Drink now through 2026 or longer...?**



CELLAR WINE CLUB

Quinta de Chocapalha Castelão 2014

grapes: 100% Castelão

Notes: This wine comes from the region of Lisboa in southern Portugal, and is a real treat for a couple reasons: one, we don't see wines from that area almost ever; and two, it is pretty dang tasty! There's a rich, strike-the-pleasure-center-of-the-monkey-brain sort of sweet fruit right up front, the chocolatey side of cherries or the cherry-fruit side of chocolate....but after that initial hold on the consciousness you get a little bit of smoke and savoriness filling out the mid-palate, and it finishes delightfully, gently drying. **Drink now-2018**, with bagna cauda and pork gyros.



Quinta do Passadouro 'Passa Tinto' Douro 2014

grapes: 40% Touriga Franca, 30% Tinta Roriz, 30% Touriga Nacional

Notes: We were just starting to remark how this reminded us of certain Spanish reds, say a young Rioja or Ribera del Duero...when someone made the smart observation that Tinta Roriz is actually Tempranillo by another name! That being said, there is much less oak on this wine than you typically find in Rioja, even young versions, and the fruit reeeeeeeally pops off the palate without any wood to hold it back. This thing is begging for dry-rubbed meats. **Drink now-2019**



CLUB RED

Quinta de Chocapalha Tinto 2012

grapes: 50% Touriga Nacional, 20% Tinta Roriz, 10% Castelão, 10% Touriga Franca, 10% Alicante Bouschet

winemaking: loads more body on this wine than two Cellar reds, this wine shows the strong influence of two of Portugal's supreme heavyweight red varieties. Touriga Nacional is known for its big tannins; when made right, it happily resolves into a mouth filling style full of rich, chewy fruit. Alicante Bouschet is typically only a small component of blends, as we see here; interestingly, the inner pulp of these grapes is deeply colored as well, and wines made with even a small amount gain a great deal of color, body, and often aging potential. **Drink now-2020** with Crush's new lasagna w/ mushroom ragu!





Amphorae have been in the Portuguese winemaking toolkit for the past four thousand years, and are still going strong



Portugal's influence on the wine world at its most overlooked: harvesting the bark of Quercus suber, the cork oak. Portugal produces 62% of the world's cork supply!

PHOENICIANS, BRITS, AND AMPHORAE OH MY!

Winemaking goes back pretty far in Portugal's history. In fact, back before there was even a thing called Portugal, the Phoenicians had already started planting vineyards in the southern section of the Iberian peninsula, across an area that encompasses modern-day Portugal and much of southern Spain. The Romans came as well, and called the area Lusitania after Lusus, the son of Bacchus; evidence of Portuguese clay amphorae found in archeological digs near Rome attests to the region's acclaim even two thousand years ago. After the fall of Rome, various groups continued spreading the vine through Portugal's northern regions: Celts along the wet northwest coasts, Gothic tribes in the mountainous interior.

In somewhat more modern times, Portugal is known among wine nerds for having the first protected wine region: the Douro became officially recognized in 1756, with its premier terraced vineyards being classified and mapped starting that year. Britain soon became transfixed with the sweet, heady Port wines of the Douro. And then of course there is the cork oaks, without which there would be no cork to stopper those wine bottles, and the lion's share of which are found in Portugal. Unfortunately, for all its early successes, the 20th century saw economic collapse in the country, as well as the rise of large cooperative wineries focused on cheap commodity wine and sugary rosés; while port maintained a foothold as a dessert wine par excellence, the country's dry whites and reds fell off the radar of many.

What does this mean for where we're at now? Well, the wines are delicious, distinctive, and well priced, that's for sure! If word keeps getting out, we may see prices for our beloved *tintos* and *vinho verdes* starting to inch upward...but in truth, they will still remain a great value for many years even if that occurs, and from our vantage point, supporting a four thousand year heritage of traditional winemaking from indigenous grape varietals seems worth it!

