

NEWS FROM LA ROSA - 2018

We have come a long way since our first 1988 Vintage port under our own La Rosa label 30 years ago. In a generation we have seen Quinta de la Rosa establish itself as a quality brand – in fact La Rosa ranked 13th in a recent survey of 350 London restaurants just below such names as Domaine Faiveley, Fontodi and Allegrini. To mark our 30th anniversary, we launched a simply delicious 30 year old tawny. Once again, Jorge Moreira showed us his skill at blending this.

My father, Tim, lived to see La Rosa develop into a successful wine and tourism business. He was proud of what we achieved and it was with great sadness that he died in June.

Investments: My father's last visit to la Rosa was at Easter when we went together to inspect the fabulously sculpted new vineyards Jorge, Alvaro and Nuno have developed, replacing 10 hectares of Cerejinha and Dona Clara. The rainy spring meant we weren't able to finish the vineyard this year but we managed to plant almost 5 hectares of white starting from the top down. This was a year to focus on our vineyards and we spent much effort in Vale do Inferno where, returning to traditional methods, we employed ponies to plough between the vines. It was quite a nostalgic moment.

Year in the vineyards: Overall the year was very difficult and atypical for the Douro and emotionally hard for the family as it was the first without Tim.

The winter was very dry. No rain fell from the end of June 2017 to February 2018 which helped the initial bulldozing of the new vineyards but when northern Europe had a heatwave, in early summer it was rainy and cold in the Douro. More rain fell in April to the end of June, than had ever fallen in living memory. On Monday 28th May we had a terrifying thunderstorm and severe flashflooding in Pinhão. Many nearby vineyards lost much of their crop to hail but we were lucky, only losing a little at the top of the estate.

The late wet spring weather meant there was much humidity in the vineyard so there was a high risk of mildew. With good viticultural management we managed to control much of this but generally it meant yields were down and maturations a little delayed. The later part of the summer was generally dry and hot, with one very hot weekend where extreme temperatures impacted some of the more vulnerable vineyards. We were lucky and not too badly affected but it did mean that the grapes less protected from the sun suffered from dehydration. At vintage time, careful selection in the vineyard was again of utmost importance with the older vines holding up better than the younger ones.

The vintage was delayed compared to 2017 and we only started picking on Monday 17th September finishing on Saturday 6th October with perfect weather throughout - at times quite hot. Yields were significantly down but despite all the challenges Jorge is initially pleased with the overall quality.



Special bottlings: The excitement surrounding the Vintage 2016 declaration was helpful in getting more notice for the vintage port. We were thrilled to be awarded 95 points Cellar Selection by Wine Enthusiast for our 2016 Vintage. I have already mentioned the 30 year old tawny – a must for everyone to taste & drink! Our Waitrose In Partnership relationship continued with a Vintage 2015 port on its shelves in time for Christmas.

Visitors/Sales: One of my father's dreams was to be on the Wine Society list. He was thrilled when La Rosa Douro Estate red 2016 made it onto the list, followed shortly after by our La Rosa Reserve red. The Wine Society's buyer, Jo Locke, returned in June for her second visit to La Rosa with a group of Society friends.

I remember receiving our first ever order for 30 x 12 cases of Vintage 1988 by letter from Edwin Booth. We still work closely with Booths and they sent a team of 10 to film the vintage this year. I finally met Edwin at a dinner we held at the Portuguese Embassy in London to celebrate our 30th anniversary where we toasted with the La Rosa Vintage 1988. It was lovely to see so many old supporters and friends around the table, many dating back to the 1990s. We also hosted a reciprocal celebratory dinner at the British Ambassador's Residence in Lisbon.

The Douro continues to thrive and we welcomed many visitors and hope many more will continue to come and see us. The feedback from our restaurant, now open for more than year, has been very positive and Chef Pedro Cardoso hosted some 'Four Hands' dinners inviting local chefs from nearby restaurants to come and cook with him.

Team: We have a new, professional team now at Sabrosa with Hugo Rodrigues as Assistant Wine Maker (ably assisted by promoted João Esteves), Carina Batista (invoice, orders, stocks and labelling) and Cilina Vilela (payment, salaries and lots more). Nelson Gonçalves, as fourth generation, continues to sort orders and the stock. My life is much easier and more organised thanks to them!

Opposite Hill Challenge: My knee injury kept me away but Jorge and brother, Philip, hosted a fun team at this year's Challenge. Do put next year's challenge in the diary – Saturday 22nd June 2019.

Other News: We welcomed the Court of the Worshipful Company of Vintners to stay at La Rosa. I am now a Court Apprentice to this wonderful 14th Century Livery Company whose motto is "Wine cheers the Spirit" (Vinum Exhilarat Animum).

