

Overview of the Douro 2014 vintage

During late August 2014, in the lead up to the vintage, conditions pointed to a very promising year. Maturation studies indicated high sugar readings and thanks to the cool summer, acidity levels were also showing well. Phenolic ripeness was lagging but developing very favourably and our viticulturists and winemakers were buoyed by the excellent condition of the crop, with the Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca and Sousão varieties showing particular promise.

The vintage started at most of our quintas relatively early, from the first week of September, due to the advanced ripening cycle. Some untimely rainfall arrived towards the end of that first week and this meant reviewing the picking schedule to allow the finest grape varieties more time on the vines to dry off completely. In most of our finest quintas in the Cima Corgo and Douro Superior, we were able to pick the best Touriga Nacional and Sousão vineyards before more persistent rain began to come down from the middle of the month. Charles Symington commented that one of the most surprising aspects of the vintage was the pockets of the Douro that were much less affected by the rain, highlighting the region’s great diversity of microclimates.

**Defining aspects of the 2014 Douro harvest:**

* A cooler than usual summer (average temperatures for July and August 1.2°C below the mean) contributed to good acidity levels, balancing the high sugar graduations.
* Those who picked the Touriga Nacional and Sousão before the rains arrived were rewarded with exceptional wines made from these varieties. Flexibility in constantly rescheduling the picking order in each and every Quinta was key.
* Quintas in the right locations (north bank of the Cima Corgo and pockets of the Douro Superior) and with a high percentage of Touriga Nacional in their composition undoubtedly produced the finest wines.
* The late ripening Touriga Franca, which had shown great potential at the start of the vintage was affected by the rains which were a constant in large swathes of the Douro Valley, roughly from halfway through the vintage.
* The wine profile of the small releases of Quinta Vintage Port from 2014 inevitably reflects the predominance of the Touriga Nacional. This variety benefited enormously from the cooler ripening cycle through July and August, delivering very aromatic and elegant wines with superb balance. The Sousão, which provides good acidity, complemented the Touriga Nacional exceptionally well, giving the wines focus, freshness and appealing spicy notes.

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