

PINOT NOIR SUPERLIST • NEW WINE + FOOD DESTINATIONS • SAKE...AND CHEESE?

Wine & Spirits

21st
ANNUAL
RESTAURANT
POLL

EXCLUSIVE REPORT



50 MOST
POPULAR
WINES

WHEN AMERICA DINES OUT



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year's best Douro

Our blind panels tasted **95** new-release Douro wines over the past 12 months.

Joshua Greene, our critic for Portuguese wine, rated **21** as exceptional (90+) and **7** as Best Buys.

For a complete list of wines tasted and reviews for all recommended wines, go to wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

WHITE

93 | Niepoort

\$57

2008 Douro Redoma Branco Reserva A selection from vines with at least 80 years of age, this grows at high altitudes and includes some vineyards on granite soils, which help sustain freshness in the grapes. It expresses its barrel fermentation and aging in complex spice and toasted lees character, the tangy fruit driving through it with flavors of apple and more exotic notes of guava and green tropical fruit. There's also a hint of narcissus, all presented with remarkable delicacy for a Douro white. This will benefit from five years in bottle, needing the time to develop its full expression. *Martine's Wines, Novato, CA*

91 | Niepoort

\$30

2008 Douro Redoma Branco A blend of mixed old-vine, high-altitude fruit, mostly rabigato, codega, donzelinho, vioso and arinto, this is fermented and aged in French oak casks (without malolactic). The oak influence shows in scents of brown butter and exotic spice, but it doesn't overtake the fruit character—fresh pear and chamomile scents, along with riper notes of pineapple. It's both lithe and a little fat in the middle, with enough richness to warrant aging for several years. To serve with grilled sea bass. *Martine's Wines, Novato, CA*

91 | Niepoort

\$33

2008 Douro Tiara Sourced from old vines at high elevations, this unoaked, relatively low-alcohol (12.4 percent) white is designed to be a fresh take on the Douro. The 2008 vintage compared with the winemaker's goals, producing a concentrated, refreshing wine with a breadth of fruit complexity. The region's distinctive varieties lend notes of lime zest, rose, lima bean, sweet lemon and salty minerality. It finishes cool and clean, ready to decant for roast chicken with tarragon. *Martine's Wines, Novato, CA*

88 | Quinta de Ventozelo

\$17

2008 Douro Branco (Best Buy) Initial scents of nutmeg and caramel show off the

wine's oak aging, but give this time in a decanter and that wood gives way to peach and mineral character. It's full bodied and a little rustic, a wine to match roast veal. *Signature Imports, Mansfield, MA*

87 | Quinta de Ventozelo

\$13

2008 Douro QV Branco (Best Buy) A spark of mint, lively pineapple and green lime flavors point up the freshness in this white. There's a salty brine character to balance its citrus fruit sweetness. For roast bacalhau. *Signature Imports, Mansfield, MA*

RED

96 | Quinta do Vallado

\$60

2007 Douro Reserva Once part of Doña Antonia de Ferreira's extensive holdings in Douro, the Quinta do Vallado is still in the hands of her descendents. The property rises above the confluence of the Douro and Corgo rivers, just east of Regua, the wine produced by another Ferreira descendent, Francisco Olazabal, whose family runs the Quinta do Vale Meão. Olazabal's hand is apparent in the wine, which could stand in for a great vintage of Vale Meão in its brilliant richness and acidity. The schist hillsides come through in powerful minerality, the glints of red fruit and black stone reflecting across a vast expanse of flavor. The texture is supple; the heady spice and floral finish last for minutes. This is destined to be a classic, with the potential to develop for a decade or more. *Quintessential, Napo, CA*

95 | Quinta de la Rosa & Poeira

\$36

2007 Douro Passagem Reserva Located in Poçinho, across the river from Vale Meão, the Quinta das Bandeiras is 240 acres of rolling hills in the Douro Superior, one quarter of it planted to vines. Winemaker Jorge Moreira convinced the Bergqvist family of La Rosa to purchase the property and together, they entered into a joint venture to produce Passagem. The 2007, mostly tourigas nacional and franca, combines a sense of 19th century Douro elegance with a downright delicious crush of flavor. The most

compelling aspect is its breezy freshness, the remarkable length of cool dark cherry and dark chocolate flavor that lasts for minutes after each taste. While the tannins are extreme in their power, there's no perceptible astringency; instead, they drape the dark, resinous scents of herbs and purple plum fruit in satin. All of those factors, matched with the vibrant edge to the color of the wine, predicts a long life ahead. *Tri-Vin Imports, Mount Vernon, NY*

94 | Niepoort

\$100

2007 Douro Charme Dirk Niepoort created this wine from 70- to 100-year-old vines in the Vale Mendiz, the center of the Pinhão Valley, fermented in granite *lagares* and aged in French oak. You might expect such a wine to be powerful, dense with extract, juicy and intense. Instead, Charme is light in color and delicate in flavor, as if a Burgundy could be made in Douro. It succeeds as a riff on the idea rather than a blunt imitation (the aroma of oak is the only thing standing between the wine and the Douro). Transparent wild cherry flavors balance the earthy acidity, the wine's intensity of flavor achieved without weight. This should be fascinating to watch as it ages, a brilliant alternative to contemporary Douro styles that may well influence others in years to come. *Martine's Wines, Novato, CA*

94 | Quinta de la Rosa

\$48

2007 Douro Reserva A selection from the top parcels in La Rosa's vineyards, most of this wine is foot trod in granite *lagares*. It starts off with finely modulated intensity, a combination of dark cherry, bitter chocolate, schist and esteva. The earthiness and depth of fruit grow increasingly powerful with air, while the rough cut of the tannin gains silkiness. Impressively rich if you choose to enjoy it now, this is well suited to a long rest in the cellar. *Tri-Vin Imports, Mount Vernon, NY*

93 | Quinta do Noval \$75

2007 Douro Antonio Agrellos blends 50 percent touriga nacional, 40 percent touriga franca and ten percent tinta cão for this top red from Noval, the legendary Vale Mendiz property. The influence of schist soil is apparent straight through the wine, from the initial savory aroma to the gravelly black tannin. The blue fruit sweetens that mineral complexity, creating a mouthwatering balance. Though still closed off, the fruit yields a range of flavors, from green fig to pomegranate, blueberry, plum skin and prune, a complex layering of ripeness that makes the wine feel complete. This is a fine 2007, needing five or six years to absorb its oak and reveal its depths of flavor. *Vintus, Pleasantville, NY*

93 | Quinta do Portal \$36

2003 Douro Grande Reserva Larger than life, in the supercharged mode of a Port, this is a crush of blueberry, huckleberry, bitter chocolate and Douro schist. There's a broad warp and weave to the wine, showing the heat of the vintage in the color's slightly browning edge and in the pervasive earthiness that develops with air. This will likely mature more rapidly than the 2007s, but it is bold and delicious nonetheless. A dramatic wine to tame with rare roast beef. *Al Imports, Coppell, TX*

92 | Niepoort \$100

2007 Douro Batuta This has the freshness and vibrancy of the best 2007s, its youthful fruit spicy and intense but not yet fully expressive. Scents of dried herbs, tobacco and orange zest highlight the deep dark berry and plum flavors. Batuta comes from 70-year-old vines at Niepoort's Quinta do Carril and a selection of 100-year-old vines near Nâpoles. Those old vines lend it the concentration for long aging; it has structural grandeur without any excess weight. *Martini's Wines, Novato, CA*

92 | Quinta do Vale Meão \$84

2007 Douro A vibrant purple-black color shows this wine's intensity, as does the aromatic range of superripe fruit, yielding blueberry, blackberry, date, fig and gingery flavors as the wine builds across the palate. The succulence of the fruit feels perfectly formed, though freighted with oak that bears down on the finish. The oak lasts past the fruit, past the chewy black tannins with their smoky soil tones. The wine will absorb that oak with time, a stylized aspect of what is otherwise a pure and natural beauty. *W.J. Dutch & Sons, Harrison, NY*

92 | Quinta do Vallado \$20

2007 Douro (Best Buy) Ample, perhaps even formidable (certainly for a \$20 wine), this has a beautiful tactile feel to the fruit. It's as plump and sweet as a perfectly ripe red plum, the tannins reserved and elegant, expressed in the soft mode of pencil lead and cedar shavings. Smooth and ready to enjoy, this would make a luscious accompaniment to grilled lamb. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*



92 | Real Companhia Velha \$29

2007 Douro Evel Grande Reserva The vibrant blue-purple color might be the trigger that brings the taste of black raspberries to mind. Oak increases the ample texture of the wine, distracting from the fruit with a milk chocolate character. But that oak recedes with air, shifting into scents of rose and raspberry ganache. The fruit opens and races into the finish, finely presented and ready to decant for roast beef. *Admiral Imports, Cedar Grove, NJ*

91 | D'Eça \$49

2007 Douro Reserva Silky dark cherry flavors smooth out the rasp of mineral tannin in this blend of roriz and touriga nacional from Quinta de Nossa Senhora do Loreto, in Sabrosa. It's tightly structured, finishing with a light touch of fig, esteva and firm, schisty tannin. Built for five to ten years in the cellar, and a thick-cut sirloin, seared rare. *Aidil Wines & Liquors, Newark, NJ*

91 | Jorge Nobre Moreira \$41

2007 Douro Poeira Jorge Moreira, who makes the wines at Quinta de la Rosa, has his own small vineyard in the Pinhão Valley. He has made Poeira from those vines since 2001, a north-facing slope that grew a cool and spicy 2007. This is not in the superripe and heavily extracted style of many bold Douro reds. Instead, it takes a subtler path, with gentle red plum fruit that finishes with bright violet scents. The tannins are tight and firm, balanced by a touch of honeyed fruit. This should age with grace. *Tri-Vin Imports, Mount Vernon, NY*

91 | Quinta de La Rosa \$20

2007 Douro (Best Buy) Most of the fruit for this wine comes from the Lamelas Vineyard at La Rosa, planted by Tim Bergqvist in the late 1980s; the blend includes touriga nacional and francesa and tintas barroca and roriz. Both bottles we sampled were reduced at first, needing long exposure to air to open beyond blackness and astringency. As the detail in the tannin begins to appear, so do the scents of pomegranate and licorice, wildflower pollen and schist. It's a buxom wine, with some fat to the fruit and a sleek, cool finish. Cellar this for several years, then serve with grilled meats. *Tri-Vin Imports, Mount Vernon, NY*

91 | Quinta da Romaneira \$22

2007 Douro R de Romaneira Cool, sour cherry flavors play off this wine's restraint and elegance, a lean Douro red with schisty tannins and scents of rose. Layers of mineral, purple plum and tart cherry give this a quiet power. Ready to drink with roast lamb. *Vintus, Pleasantville, NY*

91 | Quinta do Vallado \$55

2007 Douro Touriga Nacional Purple-black and powerfully ripe, this touriga has a wild floral and herbaceous streak that hasn't been tamed by oak aging. A fascinating example of the variety on its own, this is also a little gruff as a stand-alone wine. Grilled sirloin will bring it into line. *Quintessential, Napa, CA*

90 | Niepoort \$33

2007 Douro Vertente A blend of fruit from Niepoort's Quinta de Nápoles and old vines in the Pinhão Valley, Vertente is partially fermented in *lagares*. The fruit is purple-black, cool and spicy, the finish vibrant. It's a well-modulated 2007, cedary rather than heavily extracted, built to drink over the coming year with seared duck breast. *Martini's Wines, Novato, CA*

90 | Quinta de la Rosa \$17

2007 Douro douRosa (Best Buy) Jorge Moreira makes this wine from purchased grapes, working with old-vine vineyards in the Pinhão Valley neighborhood of La Rosa. It has an old-school feel to it, a little short and austere at first, then settling into its deep well of blue fruit and smoky, schisty tannin. Balanced rather than pushed, this finishes with elegance. *Tri-Vin Imports, Mount Vernon, NY*

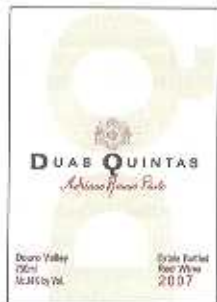


90 | Quinta do Vesuvio \$75

2007 Douro This is the first modern release of a table wine from Vesuvio, the historic vineyard developed by Dona Antonia de Ferreira and renovated by the Symingtons in the early 1990s. A blend of touriga nacional (70 percent) with touriga franca and tinta amarela, this 2007 is elegant and easy to drink, its flavors touching on herbs, roots, blueberries and paprika spice. A savory red for roast duck. *Premium Port Wines, San Francisco, CA*

89 | Quinta do Portal \$18

2007 Douro (Best Buy) This has the sappy green scent of esteva, a plant that grows along the edges of the vineyards in the Douro. There's green peppercorn spice to the fruit, as well as cranberry and vegetal notes. Young, earthy and tense, this needs several years in bottle to mellow. *M. Imports, Coppell, TX*



87 | Ramos Pinto \$15

2007 Douro Duas Quintas DQ (Best Buy) Bright acidity lifts the tart cherry and green anise flavor of this wine. It needs time in a decanter for the fruit to soften up the tannins, then serve it with roast lamb. *Maison Marques & Domains USA, Oakland, CA* ■



how we taste

● *Wine & Spirits* tastings are a two-step process. First, all wines submitted to us or purchased are tasted by screening panels, who are asked to determine which wines stand out as being better than average for their variety and appellation. These panels, conducted by *W&S* staff, are composed of retailers, sommeliers, winemakers and other wine professionals whom we invite to taste with us.

The goal is to draw on a broad universe of tasters to help us decide which wines are worth recommending, and to avoid the prejudices any one critic might exercise, consciously or not, which might prevent certain styles or classes of wine from being considered.

● The wines recommended by our screening panels—generally between 20 and 30 percent of those originally assessed—are then presented at a later date to our critic, who scores each wine and writes the reviews. A second, unopened bottle of each is used for this step. The critic's ratings are based on how well a wine performs within its category as labeled (varietally or regionally).

● Wines from 80 to 85 are recommended as good examples of their variety or region. Wines from 86 to 89 are highly recommended; from 90 to 94 are exceptional examples of their type; and 95 or higher are superlative, rare finds.

● The wines recommended in *W&S* have been selected by a broad range of educated palates, but then rated and described by an individual critic. Our goal with these ratings is for each critic to provide a consistent point of view against which you may measure your own taste over time.

● The label reproductions that appear in our tasting reports are a form of advertising. After our tastings are completed and the results have been recorded, our marketing team offers wineries the opportunity to draw attention to their reviews with label reproductions. There is no obligation to advertise, and our scores and reviews are in no way affected by a winery's decision regarding advertising. Neither does advertising influence our selection of the wines we taste; our tastings are open to all.

● All bottle reproductions in the magazine are purely editorial art.