

FONSECA 2009 VINTAGE DECLARATION



Fonseca is pleased to announce that it has declared the 2009 vintage.

Fonseca's CEO, Adrian Bridge, commented, 'I am delighted to announce that Fonseca will bottle a declared vintage port from 2009. It is very unusual to have a string of four great vintages in a decade. This is a reminder that, although we can tip the balance in our favour through investment in our vineyards, ultimately it is nature which is in control.'

2009 will be remembered as a year of low yields which produced wines of massive density and scale. This was partly the result of the small amount of fruit produced across all grape varieties and also to the very dry summer during which there was almost no rainfall from July through to harvest time in September.

Fonseca's head winemaker David Guimaraens remarked: 'The'09s have higher colour intensity and tannin levels than we have seen for the last two decades. They also have exceptional fruit quality as can be seen from the wonderfully opulent nose of the Fonseca.'

Blender Mario Araújo, who celebrates his 50th year working in the Fonseca tasting room, noted: 'This is one of the most impressive young vintage ports that I can remember. In many ways it reminds me of the 1970 with its firm tannins and powerful fruit.'

The Fonseca 2009 blend is based on wines from Quinta do Panascal and Quinta do Cruzeiro. There is also a small amount of wine from Quinta de Santo António, the first time that the estate has contributed to a classic vintage port blend since it was converted to organic viticulture.

The low yields at the harvest mean that the quantities of Fonseca 2009 are small compared to the preceding three vintages.



David Guimaraens

Tasting Notes:

Impenetrable black colour. A classic Fonseca nose dominated by an exuberant, hedonistic fruitiness, a powerful redolence of dark dense blackberry and blackcurrant which slowly releases a heady mix of spicy and herbal aromas, seductive notes of coffee and cocoa, hints of prune and wild scents of gumcistus. The thick velvety tannins give the wine a voluptuous density, integrating effortlessly with the sumptuous infusion of blackberry jam, dark chocolate and liquorice which coats the palate. The tannins are also present on the finish which brims with blackberry and blackcurrant flavour.





Quinta do Panascal

One of the most highly reputed port vineyards, Quinta do Panascal occupies a south west facing location on the steep right bank of the Távora river, the important tributary which runs northwards into the Douro. In the words of a local saying, 'From Roncão and Panascal come the finest wines of Portugal'. A supplier of grapes to Fonseca for many decades, the property was finally acquired by the company in 1978. Since its acquisition the estate has been the object of major investment intended, not only to bring new life to the vineyard, but to ensure that the estate produces wines completely consistent with the Fonseca house style. As a result the property now produces outstanding wines which today form the backbone of the Fonseca Vintage Port blend. These are recognised for their rich, voluptuous fruitiness and above all for their mouth filling density and velvety texture. Quinta do Panascal was one of the first vineyards in the Douro Valley to practise organic viticulture.



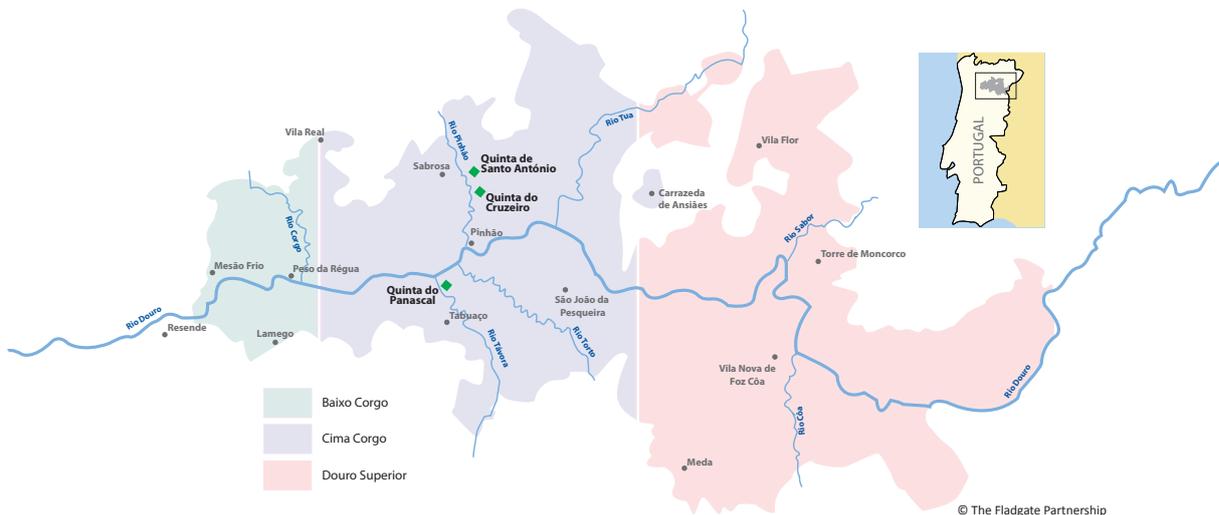
Quinta do Cruzeiro

Quinta do Cruzeiro has been supplying the firm since the 1870's, giving it the longest association with Fonseca of all the company's properties. Cruzeiro has contributed to the Fonseca vintage port blend since 1912 and remains a key component today. The property is a historic one and is recorded as having been awarded feitoria status (the highest vineyard classification of the time) in 1761. It occupies a warm west facing position on the lowest slopes of the valley on the left bank of the Pinhão River. The vineyard underwent extensive renovation in the 1970's - including the building of the first modern terraces - but still contains a large number of very old vines. The wines of Cruzeiro are noted for their fine, focused fruit and for their firm tannic grip which gives structure and vigour to the Fonseca vintage port blend.



Quinta de Santo António

Quinta de Santo António is located on a steep hillside facing southwards down the Pinhão Valley. The estate shares Quinta do Cruzeiro's long association with Fonseca and achieved its feitoria status in the same year. Its wines have also contributed regularly to the Fonseca vintage port blend since early in the last century. However the estate is smaller in area and has recently undergone extensive renovation. As a result, Santo António is now a model estate, incorporating the latest techniques of vineyard landscaping and trellising. The estate is managed according to organic viticultural principles with the benefit of experience gained by Fonseca at Quinta do Panascal and in 2010 received full organic certification.



Notes on the 2009 viticultural year and harvest

The 2009 viticultural year started early with the first buds appearing within the first few days of March. Vegetative growth was healthy and vigorous but vine fertility was low, with all varieties producing only a small amount of fruit. The colouring of the grapes (véraison) also started earlier than usual. The relatively cool conditions in July meant that ripening was initially slow but this accelerated in August with the onset of very hot weather. Both July and August were extremely dry, with hardly any rainfall, and the arid conditions continued into September. The harvest on the Fonseca properties began relatively early. The first property to start picking was Quinta do Panascal where the harvest started on 10th September. The two Pinhão Valley properties, Cruzeiro and Santo António, followed a few days later on 15th and 20th September respectively. The reduced yields, resulting from low vine productivity and the very dry summer, resulted in dense and concentrated musts with high levels of tannin, sugar and colour.