



The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2005 Quinta de Chocapalha Chocapalha Reserva

Rating: 88  
Drink: 2009-2015

The 2005 "CHOCAPALHA RESERVA" is the flagship wine, formerly just called "Chocapalha." It is a blend of Tinta Roriz (25%) and Touriga Nacional (75%). It has a fleshier feel with a more velvety texture than the Cabernet Sauvignon. It spent 19 months in 80% new French oak. Like the Cabernet Sauvignon, it has a bright demeanor and some tannin, but the extra flesh and depth here provide somewhat better balance, although with air, it, too, shows a certain acidic demeanor and an increasingly hard and austere finish. It seems somewhat more approachable than the Cabernet Sauvignon at first, but there are very definitely tannins lurking underneath. Drink 2009-2015. There were approximately 580 cases produced, plus 50 magnums.

Importer: Europvin, New York, N.Y.; tel: (212) 243-1236....

- Mark Squires (December, 2007)

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2005 Lemos And Van Zeller (Cristiano Van Zeller) Cv (Curriculum Vitae) (Quinta Vale D Maria)

Rating: 94  
Drink: 2009-2020

The 2005 CV (CURRICULUM VITAE) is another fine CV. As tends to be the case, this small production bottling adds a layer or two of depth to the Vale D. Maria Tinto. In this vintage, however, it seems unusually graceful and charming in addition. It retains its typically delicious fruit, reasonable depth and fine structure, although it may not be quite as intense or deep as the beautiful and more muscular 2004. It is hard to decide which is better—they both excel, but for different reasons. I'm not sure if this was my favorite Douro red in 2005, but it is certainly on my short list. This should age well and be delicious most every step of the way. Retasted the next day, it hardly seemed to have lost a step, showing flavorful fruit and fine structure still. It was hard to believe it had been opened 24 hours earlier. It tasted young, and tasted better. Don't let this wine's elegance fool you—it still has depth and structure. Yet, it is also impeccably balanced. This is a vintage that melds nicely with CVs normal style, thus allowing the wine to retain depth and power, while adding elegance. Drink 2009—2020.

Importer: Tri-Vin Imports, Mt. Vernon, NY; tel. (914) 664-3155....

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### 2005 Quinta do Vale Meao Meandro Do Vale Meao

Rating: 91  
Drink: 2009-2018

The 2005 MEANDRO DO VALE MEAO is a blend of Tinta Roriz (40%), Touriga Nacional (25%), Touriga Franca (25%), Tinta Barroca (5%) and Tinta Amarela (5%). It is the second wine of this estate, and not surprisingly, given how fine its big brother is, it is quite successful in this vintage. Bright, elegant and refreshing, it also has plenty of power, a tannic grip on the end that supports the attractive fruit. Its structure, intensity and balance make it one of the finest buys in this report. It took a good while to get open fruit, but when it opens it is very attractive. It will ultimately seem graceful with an elegant mid-palate, but its intensity rules the day at the moment. I liked it better than its '04 counterpart. It is simply a terrific Meandro. Drink 2009-2018.

Importer: W.J. Deutsch & Sons, Harrison, N.Y.; tel: (914) 251-3209....

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2006 Herdade de Malhadinha Nova Monte Da Peceguina

Rating: 87  
Drink: 2007-2013

"Monte da Peceguina (Peh-say-GEEN-uh) is named after the family that once owned the large house on the premises. The 2006 MONTE DA PECEGUINA red is a blend of Aragonez (45%), Alicante Bouschet (20%), Touriga Nacional (10%), Trincadeira (10%) and Syrah. It spent six months in French oak. It is a bit creamy in texture and there is also a touch of green on the finish. The rather light mid-palate is dominated, however, by appealing, red fruit flavors, and the longer this airs out, the tastier it becomes. It is a bit compact, but it is flavorful and focused and has some considerable charm for short to mid-term drinking. The red berry aromatics are also quite attractive. Drink now-2013.

Importer: Quintessential, Napa, CA; tel. (914) 725-3479....

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2005 Wine And Soul Pintas

Rating: 95  
Drink: 2009-2022

The 2005 PINTAS is from the talented husband/wife winemaking team of Jorge Serodio Borges and Sandra Tavares da Silva. Pintas means "spots" in Portuguese, referencing wine splatter. This young winery (the tops of the corks are stamped with a number indicating how many vintages they have made of each bottling—this one says "5") is improving every year, and has the advantage of having recently purchased its 74 year old vineyard. I've been having this running debate with Jorge about which is better, the fine 2004 Pintas or this 2005. In the middle of 2006, I thought the '05, from barrel, was better—and he strongly preferred the '04. In the middle of 2007, we flip flopped positions. Having loved the second wine, the '05 "Character," I was looking forward to retasting this in the USA with some time to play with it, and settle the debate. In short, it has come together brilliantly and shows much better. It is close, but this is likely the best wine yet produced at this young winery, as much, I think, because the winemaking has been steadily improving as the winemakers learn their vineyard, rather than simply being a matter of the vintage itself. This is powerful and focused, intense and gripping, with good concentration in the context of this vintage in the mid-palate. Its aromatics are rather fine, too, as the wine is a pleasure to just smell once it opens up. It is bursting with flavor, reminding me a bit of Vale D. Maria's Tintos, and rather sexy. It takes a few hours to hi...

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2004 Dona Maria Reserva

Rating: 91  
Drink: 2007-2016

There were 19,000 cases made, of which 4,000 were imported. The 2004 RESERVA is 25% Syrah, 50% Alicante (an Alicante Bouschet hybrid), and the rest divided equally between Cabernet Sauvignon and Aragones. It is a solid wine, projecting a feel of fullness in the mouth, without being overbearing in the least. It is very flavorful, nuanced with cherries, with tannins lurking underneath. As it comes into focus with air, it becomes more tightly wound, gripping and quite intense, but the sweet mid-palate fruit is always persistent. It should develop some character in the cellar, and after having it open for three hours, it was still a bit closed. It drank as well or better the next day. There were 4,200 cases produced, of which 2,000 were imported. Drink now-2016.

In theory, this is a new winery, its first Tinto released in 2003, but the Quinta has roots dating back to 1718, and owner Julio Bastos was a former owner of Quinta do Carmo, one of Alentejo's long standing flagship wineries. The new operation is not firing on all burners quite yet, but the future here is bright, significant resources have been invested, and Bastos is an experienced hand in the region. I predict that this is a winery that people will be talking about a lot in a few years.

Importer: Grape Moments, a Division of Sintra Imports, New Bedford, MA; tel. (508) 997-0100....

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### 2005 Quinta do Passadouro Reserva

Rating: 90  
Drink: 2009-2017

The 2005 RESERVA is, not surprisingly, more intense than the Tinto, with more of a certain mouth-coating aspect to it. It is rather elegant in the mid-palate, and gripping on the finish. While focused and persistent, it is a more compact and lighter wine than the superb 2004. Drink 2009-2017.

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### 2005 Quinta do Crasto Reserva Old Vines

Rating: 91  
Drink: 2009-2019

The 2005 RESERVA OLD VINES (7,500 cases produced from 70 year old vines) is the latest in a long line of Crasto Old Vines bottlings that I have generally found to be among the Douro's best bargains, usually exceptional wines for relatively reasonable money. This bottling is a creature of its vintage, more reserved, compact and lighter than the 2003 and 2004, yet with charming, refreshing and pristine fruit. It takes a good hour or so before there is any structure apparent, at which point I was relieved to see some power and some grip on the finish. This isn't as shy as it first appears, and in fact it has intensity to go with its tasty fruit and soft texture. Over two hours of aeration it became more, not less, perceptibly tannic, and it kept improving for some five hours in a decanter—not a bad performance for a wine you can probably get on the street for around \$30. It is also enlivened by some brightness on the finish. Notwithstanding the many charms of this fine, persistent and graceful wine, I would give the nod to the decadent 2003 or the delicious 2004 in recent vintages. Its oak treatment seems far more neutral than on the 2003, though. Drink 2009-2019.

Importer: Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, Ca.; (415) 931-1725....

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### 2004 Dona Maria Tinto

Rating: 86  
Drink: 2008-2011

The 2004 TINTO is a blend of local and international varieties. Some lots of the 2003 Tinto had substantial TCA problems and frequently did not perform up to snuff, an unfortunate occurrence in the winery's first vintage. To his credit, owner Julio Bastos addressed the matter candidly with me. This 2004 is certainly a step up. While quite flavorful when I had it at the winery after several hours of decanting, it was completely closed when retasted in the USA. It took a long while to evolve and resemble a flavorful wine again. The tannins are powerful early on, but resolve nicely. Its mid-palate is a bit delicate by comparison. Keep in mind that this is a wine that sells for around 5 Euros in Portugal, which makes it a lot of wine for nominal money, at least in Portugal. The alcohol was noticeable on occasion, but not often and not significantly. Drink 2008-2011.

In theory, this is a new winery, its first Tinto released in 2003, but the Quinta has roots dating back to 1718, and owner Julio Bastos was a former owner of Quinta do Carmo, one of Alentejo's long standing flagship wineries. The new operation is not firing on all burners quite yet, but the future here is bright, significant resources have been invested, and Bastos is an experienced hand in the region. I predict that this is a winery that people will be talking about a lot in a few years.

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### 2005 Herdade de Malhadinha Nova Tinto

Rating: 90  
Drink: 2009-2016

The 2005 TINTO, the flagship wine, is a blend of Aragones, Alicante Bouschet, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Touriga Nacional aged for 14 months in French oak. It is only 29 Euros at the winery, but exchange rates and other problems do not allow that to translate well here these days. It initially shows lovely and persistent fruit flavors tinged with cherries and other red fruits on a moderately long finish. It is a bit closed, but should come around quickly. It may be a bit light for its USA price range and supposed status, but it coats the tongue, as if a liquid film were laid onto it. The tannins seemed considerable on opening, but actually resolve very fast, unlike the more powerful 2004. The fruit is open and fragrant, and there is a certain bright succulence to the finish. As good as it tasted on opening, it needed a couple of hours to really open and show what it has. The wine is more charming and more open than the 2004, but it did eventually flatten out more quickly than the 2004 did with extended air. It still drank well on Day 2. I think 2004 was a better vintage overall, but this young winery compensates here in many respects with increasing skill. Drink 2009—2016. There were 1,330 cases made (or 2,660 six packs).

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### 2006 Quinta do Crasto Tinto

Rating: 85  
Drink: 2007-2011

The 2006 TINTO continues a downward trend with this wine, which, until recently, was Crasto's entry level red. The overachieving 2003 was awfully good, and an excellent value in the lineup. I also had the '04 at the winery, which for some reason did not make it into the USA, and it was rather fine, too. The 2005 was a notable step back. That year, Crasto began using fruit from outside the Quinta proper, thus denominating this wine as just "Crasto," indicating only the name of the winery rather than "Quinta do Crasto," which is a vineyard/terroir indicator as well. Whether it was the new vineyard sources, or just a lesser vintage, or a combination of the two, the 2005 was not as interesting as its near predecessors. 2006 does not look to be a great Douro vintage, so, in fairness, it is no surprise that this bottling does not right itself in this year. The good news is that it is rather tasty, with easygoing, grapey fruit that is kind of fun. It is soft, a bit hollow and short, however. There is not much structure here, either. It is not a bad wine, and in fact may be a reasonably commendable effort in the vintage for a lower level wine in a questionable year, but at least at the moment, it is no longer the bargain it was in Crasto's lineup. Drink now-2011.

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### 2003 Quinta Do Mouro (Miguel Louro) Tinto

Rating: 90  
Drink: 2008-2018

The 2003 TINTO is a blend of 50% Aragones, 20% Alicante Bouschet, 20% Touriga Nacional and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows beautiful fruit, sweet, sexy and succulent, but note that this can become powerful and penetrating, as the underlying tannins assert themselves. However, a bottle I had in the USA was far more advanced than what I saw at the winery, and a little gamier. The sweet and delicious fruit coupled with the good structure should make a harmonious whole. It finishes brightly, delivering lots of flavor to the palate. Drink 2008-2018.

This winery, owned by personable dentist Miguel Louro, is one of the more interesting in Alentejo. It is one of the wineries that makes every effort to rebut the stereotype of Alentejo as a region that makes easy, fruity wines. The wines here have power and loads of tannin. They require patience and can age. At times, frankly, the tannins seem rather too hard and a bit rustic, a comment that scared Louro. Nonetheless, these are some of the best and most serious wines in the region, and it is worth pointing out a few library wines as well. The flagship is the Tinto.

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## 2004 Quinta Do Mouro (Miguel Louro) Tinto

Rating: 92  
Drink: 2011-2022

The 2004 TINTO has a lush initial attack, but it has power to spare, and there are serious tannins lurking underneath. It has layers of fruit to match the tannins, and should evolve well. It shows well initially, but the underlying structure will cause this to shut down hard, I suspect. Call this a preview review, as this tight, young wine certainly needs to be reevaluated. It should be a winner when its parts begin to knit together. Drink 2011-2022.

This winery, owned by personable dentist Miguel Louro, is one of the more interesting in Alentejo. It is one of the wineries that makes every effort to rebut the stereotype of Alentejo as a region that makes easy, fruity wines. The wines here have power and loads of tannin. They require patience and can age. At times, frankly, the tannins seem rather too hard and a bit rustic, a comment that scared Louro. Nonetheless, these are some of the best and most serious wines in the region, and it is worth pointing out a few library wines as well. The flagship is the Tinto.

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## 2001 Quinta do Vale Meao Tinto

Rating: 91  
Drink: 2017-

The 2001 TINTO, focused and powerful, is a creature of its vintage. Its fruit is restrained, but the wine is tightly wound, and not fully ready to drink, although approachable. This will never be the sexy wine that the '03 and '04 are, but it is worthy in its own right, precise as well as tasty. Drink now-2017.

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## 2002 Quinta do Vale Meao Tinto

Rating: 90  
Drink: 2007-2014

The 2002 TINTO is maturing and seems older than the 2001, but it is surprisingly powerful, with a kick on the finish. Its fruit is opening nicely, though, and projecting fine flavors. It has a velvety mouthfeel. It is a super wine for the vintage, if a little farther along. That seems to be its only concession to a difficult year. Drink now -2014.

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## 2003 Quinta do Vale Meao Tinto

Rating: 93  
Drink: 2007-2018

The 2003 TINTO is a sexy bookend to the utterly charming 2004 reviewed last year. It is big and powerful, but coats your mouth with lush fruit. It has an intensely flavorful finish, and fine density. It should age beautifully. The 2004 (reviewed last year, 93 points) has more charm perhaps. This has more richness. Pick 'em. Drink now-2018.

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## 2005 Quinta do Vale Meao Tinto

Rating: 95  
Drink: 2012-2028

The 2005 TINTO is a fine wine, but this bottling from the hot Douro Superior does not seem to be like most other 2005s. It is backward and powerfully constructed, and has lots of everything, including fruit, alcohol and tannins. It is a very different wine than the elegant and charming 2004. A far greater proportion of the juice was raised in oak this year than in most years, yet it doesn't show oaky at all. It was closed for quite awhile after opening. It took 90 minutes to get any flavor from the fruit, and three hours to get anything interesting. When the fruit finally appeared, it had some of the same delicious flavors as the 2004, a little brighter, perhaps, but surprisingly rich and quite delicious. The texture is quite seductive. This went from a wine that I feared might be a bit too rustic and a little old-fashioned to a wine I liked quite a lot, although there were some moments towards the end when I had a little remaining concern about its balance. Although, as noted, it does not seem quite like the generally elegant and graceful 2005s turned out elsewhere in the Douro, its mid-palate is nonetheless more elegant than you might think at first taste, considering the power inherent in the wine. I think this will resolve into something special. I am betting that it all works out, meaning the tannins on this backward wine have to balance out with the fruit with a few years of cellaring. If it does, it might even merit a score increase, and it will likely be the wine ...

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## 2005 Lemos And Van Zeller (Cristiano Van Zeller) Tinto (Quinta Vale D Maria)

Rating: 92  
Drink: 2009-2020

The 2005 TINTO (QUINTA VALE D. MARIA) continues one trend that I see from this Quinta—the wines are always simply delicious. Some years, they have better balance than others. Some years, they have better structure than others. Some years they have more depth. One constant, however, is that they are, year-in, year-out, some of the most flavorful wines made in the Douro. I should add that they manage to do this without artificial, candied notes. They always seem like wine, not Kool-Aid. A creature of its vintage, the 2005 seems rather light in the mid-palate, a bit delicate at times, despite the tannins lurking underneath and the persistent flavor it throws off. With air it does expand in the glass. While it doesn't have the depth of its sibling, the "CV," it does have a brighter feel with lingering and persistent flavor. Drink 2009-2020.

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2005 Quinta do Crasto Touriga Nacional

Rating: 91  
Drink: 2009-2020

The 2005 TOURIGA NACIONAL is in most years one of the best single varietal reds that Portugal has to offer. This is a very elegant Touriga Nacional, with a relatively modest mid-palate, but delicious young fruit. There are hints of mint and licorice on the finish. Comparing this graceful version to the big and very ripe (perhaps a touch overripe?) 2003 is a study in contrasts. This is focused and precise, with some subtlety. Yet, however restrained it sometimes seems, the fruit is persistent and wonderfully flavorful. There is also power lurking underneath, and some drying tannins appear with air. This fine and flavorful Touriga Nacional was more and more enjoyable the longer it aired out. It could use some time to settle down, but it is surprisingly approachable at the moment, and far more open and expansive, if not quite as deep, than the '04 was at a similar stage. Drink 2009-2020.

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### 2005 Quinta do Crasto Vinha Maria Teresa

Rating: 94  
Drink: 2009-2021

There were 250 cases imported out of a total produced of 1,580. The 2005 VINHA MARIA TERESA, sourced from vines generally exceeding 90 years in age, is one of Portugal's most prestigious and sought after bottlings. It is usually Crasto's most hedonistic wine, bursting with flavor—yet also beautifully structured, elegant and built to last. The hedonism remains here, although it is a much lighter, smaller scaled wine than the '03. The best feature of this wine is, hands down, the aromatics. You could simply sit there and smell it and be happy. The fruit is gorgeous, sweet and delectable, yet surrounded by ripe tannins that make it seem like a graceful, Burgundian-styled wine, an impression reinforced by its elegant mid-palate. There were moments when I thought this was a bit too delicate and understated for its status. Once you taste the delectable fruit, though, intellectual evaluation may not be your first priority. You will simply be more interested in having another glass. While this does not have the power and depth of the last release, the 2003, nor its persistence, it has many charms of its own, including unforgettably delicious fruit, and arguably better balance. It is ethereal and delicate, but often quite amazing. It could use a couple of years to settle down, but it is surprisingly approachable at the moment. Expect to be impressed with finesse, not power. If you're looking for a big, thick fruit bomb—this is not it. Drink 2009-2021. In 2005, 165 cases were impo...

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The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

### 2004 Herdade de Mingorra (Henrique Uva) Vinhas Da Ira

Rating: 87  
Drink: 2009-2017

The amusingly named 2004 VINHAS DA IRA (a take-off on the Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck) produced about 683 cases. It is made only in the years the winery considers to be the best. A blend of Talhao and Alfrocheiro from 24 year old vines, it is a very intense, slightly tart wine that has a big, gripping finish with a hint of olive. The finish is astringent, and this is something that needs a decanter. Although it has some potential, it is not terribly charming, and there is some reason to question its balance. It is a lot of wine, though, for the 15 Euro price tag at the winery. Drink 2009-2017....

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## 2006 Dona Maria Branco

Rating: 90  
Drink: 2007-2010

There were 4,200 cases produced, of which 1,000 were imported. The 2006 BRANCO is a blend of Antao Vaz, Roupeiro, Arinto and a field blend of other varietals. It is exuberant and a bit grassy, pungent and chock full of personality. This feels solid in the mid-palate, and the acidity drives home the fruit, which lingers on the finish quite respectably. It is clean, refreshing, penetrating and perky. The more I had this, the more I liked it. It was one of my favorite whites from my Alentejo tour in June, 2007. (This note was, as is almost always the case in this report, based on retasting it in the USA.) It is another example of how surprisingly good the 2006 whites were in Alentejo, despite general vintage difficulties. 5,000 cases were bottled in June, 2007, of which 2,000 were imported. Drink now-2010.

In theory, this is a new winery, its first Tinto released in 2003, but the Quinta has roots dating back to 1718, and owner Julio Bastos was a former owner of Quinta do Carmo, one of Alentejo's long standing flagship wineries. The new operation is not firing on all burners quite yet, but the future here is bright, significant resources have been invested, and Bastos is an experienced hand in the region. I predict that this is a winery that people will be talking about a lot in a few years.

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## 2006 Quinta Do Ameal Loureiro

Rating: 88  
Drink: 2007-2009

The 2006 LOUREIRO, from the sub-region of Lima, is delicate in the mid-palate, yet with a certain intensity on the finish, ending bright and somewhat succulent. It lingers nicely, and if it does not have the class and intensity of the Escolha, it is a very pleasing Vinho Verde for early consumption. Drink now-2009....

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