



QUINTA DE LA ROSA

2011 NEWSLETTER

La Rosa's wines continue to get fabulous press coverage. Our La Rosa Reserve has done exceedingly well from getting a Five Star award in Decanter to 93 points from Parker and Wine Enthusiast and coming top in a 50 wine Douro tasting. But I cannot pretend that things are easy and times are tough especially in Portugal where we saw our sales drop by 20% - first time sales have dropped here. Fortunately other markets performed better so overall our sales are at the same level as 2010.

Year in the vineyards: Nuno is doing a great job managing all our vineyards, not an easy task especially during the relatively wet spring. It was a complicated year overall but we managed to keep on top of things and ended up producing some good fruit. As usual when to pick was the most difficult decision Jorge had to make all year. The wet spring and hot summer meant that some of the grapes ripened very early and we found ourselves starting to pick on 9th August! We stopped and started throughout much of the following two months enabling us to pick each vineyard at its 'optimum' ripeness. We eventually stopped picking on 31 of September, a long, slow vintage! Jorge managed to make the right decisions and the fruit came into the winery in excellent condition - any later it would have been dried raisin or Amarone?! It was a fine balance of getting enough phenolic ripeness and not too much alcohol. There was plenty of concentration of juice so we ended up making very little rose. The weather remained virtually perfect throughout.

It is rare that we have any outside helpers during the harvest as we have an experienced team who have worked well together for many years. So we were unsure how Roberto, the Italian, would fit in when he insisted he wanted to come to help us and was 'willing to sleep on a pallet'. He was a great addition to the team, a hard worker and ended up cooking delicious pasta for us whilst speaking a mixture of all languages.

Differentiation: This year saw the launch of a Harvey Nichols Douro red wine with a wonderful steam train on the label. The TONNIX range for Mark Hix and Mitch Tonks continues to give me much fun and pleasure - we are now producing magnums of wine. Waitrose Douro Valley Reserve has also been selling well.

New importers: We continue to expand our network of importers whilst retaining and working well with our old, faithful friends. Eclipse Wine in Calgary has been a new and a surprisingly good find (I am on my way to visit in January) together with Connoisseur Wines in Chicago. We spent the whole year sorting out paperwork and registrations to prepare our entry into China – first order is about to leave. We are now selling into Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island in Canada!

Visitors: Two long standing importers who have worked with La Rosa from virtually the beginning came to stay for the first time....finally! Jean Philippe (Rezin, Montreal) and Jim Nicholson (Nicholsons, Ireland) I hope they won't wait so long to return. FMV (UK importers) came over a couple of times with various fun groups – much appreciated visitors were Ercan (Boisdale) and Andrew (Harvey Nichols). Jasper Morris and his cricket team descended on us to throw plenty of lemons in the pool. Most memorable dinner of all was with Axel Probst and David Guimeraes drinking Feueheerd port on the mirante.

Other News: We celebrated my father's 80th Birthday party this year at La Rosa in July. He wanted to have everyone who had worked and was working at La Rosa for lunch. It was a very merry occasion – David Baverstock (our ex wine maker) and Ricardo Nicolau d'Almeida turned up. The family dinner that night was served in the old fashioned way – we even found my grandmother's maid's outfits – and with a 1931 Niepoort colheita. Thank you Dirk!

Building work – after eight years of decision making, planning permission and sleepless nights, we have started rebuilding La Rosa! The wine and tourism buildings are now in rubble and a large crane towers over La Rosa. I am launching a Wine Bond to help finance it – investors get interest payments in wine rather than cash and become part of a La Rosa Patron's group. Let me know if you know anyone who might be interested.

All the building should all be ready in time for the vintage and even my brother, Philip's 50th and Eleanor's (my daughter) 21st! Philip is bravely managing the whole project.