

QUINTA DA ALORNA (TEJO)... BEST KEPT SECRET?

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During the 19th edition of the **CONCOURS MONDIAL DE BRUXELLES** in Guimarães, a great tasting was organized by **WINES OF PORTUGAL** at the **PAÇO DOS DUQUES DE BRAGANÇA**. A big amount of wineries was presenting a selection of their wines to the jurors and staff of the Concours Mondial. It was quite busy and the whole tasting was a great success. Among all wineries, one was a great discovery for me: **QUINTA DA ALORNA** from the **TEJO** wine region (f.k.a. *Ribatejo*) in the South of Portugal.

The charming and charismatic oenologist **MARTTA REIS SIMÕES** produces a wide assortment of wines but, after the meal I just wanted to taste one wine that looked really excitingly attractive to me... A *licoroso* (fortified) wine made from **100% Fernão Pires** grapes. It was for me the most interesting discovery of the whole week!

Just the kind of wines I really appreciate, made from autochthonous grape varieties, with a typical local tradition but produced with modern technology. A wine with a genuine taste, a pure soul and a bit of fado... Not the classic 'saudade' (sad losses, longing) but a more modern version of the Coimbra fado, the night serenade about love and life... A wine to enjoy, a wine for celebration of any informal moment, a convivial wine... and not the least important, an incredibly affordable wine as well!



ALORNA ABAFADO 5 ANOS

This wine is produced from 100% Fernão Pires grapes. After de-stalking, the winemaker adds quality grape spirit (aguardente vinica) to the clarified sweet juices as soon as the fermentation process shyly seems to start. Doing that way, the quasi-totality of the grapes sugar is kept in the wine. (Actually, it is a kind of *mistella*; a liqueur 'wine' like *Pineau des Charentes*, *Floc d'Armagnac*, *Macvin du Jura* etc.) The 'wine' is aged for 5 years in old oak barrels.

The wine I tasted was bottled in 2011, got 17.5% a.b.v., about 4.4 g/l total acidity and a Ph of 3.3... Unfortunately no clue about how much sugar the wine contains, but you won't feel it, thanks to a great balance between freshness and sweetness. The packaging and labelling are just perfect, very attractive, modern in lay-out but classy in content. A great marketing re-look of an old traditional product.

The colour is intense with lovely gradations of straw gold, onion peel and amber gold... The nose is an invitation for sinning, intense and complex, full of dry fruits (almonds, hazelnuts, and figs) and (acacia?) honey on the back. The structure is lovely smooth; no 'brandy burn' or 'soapy tone' like often in this kind of wine (in Portugal or wherever). A fresh, deliciously sweet wine, absolutely not syrupy, well-balanced with soft, well-integrated ageing nuances. Highly drinkable, very enjoyable, and widely gastronomic.

Serve it traditionally cool as old-fashioned sweet aperitif wine (I won't) or as so-called dessert wine with not too sweet desserts like almond cakes (*toucinho do céu*), custard tarts or cups (Portuguese or Brazilian *pasteis de nata* or *pasteis de Belém*, Spanish or South-American *pastel de nata*), fig and/or pecan pie, with a big bowl of fresh fruit (*strawberries!*), and why not at 12-15°C with not too sharp blue cheese, some fresh figs and a hint of acacia honey... Of course you can also use it pure, as after-dinner, lounge, chill-out (or whatever) drink, from 10 to 15°C... **Just enjoy it!**

I wrote that this wine was 'affordable'... Well, it depends where you live! In Portugal a consumer will pay about 7 € for a 75cl bottle. In the Netherlands it will cost between 9.50 and 10.95 €, in the USA (if you are lucky to find it) it will start around 12 € (a bit more than 15 USD)... For the Swiss, sorry, it might go up to 21 € (more than 25 CHF).

NB: for the Dutch readers, please visit the official importer's website, **Bresser & Timmer**

I hardly can wait to discover more wines from this Quinta with nearly 3 centuries and 5 generations of history in quality wines... But the Quinta is much more than quality wines, it is a huge 2.800 ha (6918.950 acres) Estate where you can find agriculture activities (*corn, potato, pea, onion*) but also forests of pines, cork oak and eucalyptus... The whole Estate is managed with respect for sustainability, social responsibility and conservation of the natural fauna and flora environment.



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