

NICOLAU^{DE} ALMEIDA

QUINTA DO MONTE XISTO

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01 Label from the former wine company from João Nicolau de Almeida's family ancestors.



A BIT OF HISTORY



01

A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1976 João Rosas Nicolau de Almeida married Graça Eça de Queiroz Cabral in the Porto city. An extremely “ethylic” union considering previous generations from both sides.

João’s father, Fernando Nicolau de Almeida, was the winemaker at Casa Ferreirinha where he created the famous Barca Velha wine. Long before this, back in 1870, his grandfather had founded a port wine company, António Nicolau de Almeida Junior & Brother, which was later integrated into the Real Companhia Velha (1963). João’s mother was a great-niece to Adriano Ramos Pinto, who in 1880 founded Ramos Pinto port house. It was in that iconic company that João would conduct most of his work.

On the other side of this union, one of Graça’s great-grandfathers, Afonso Pereira Cabral, was the owner of two wineries in the Douro Region – the Quinta do Monsul and the Quinta do Cachão. He was in love with this region and contributed greatly to its study and opening up through innumerable publications.

Also, another of Graça’s ancestors, one of her great, great, great grandfathers, José Maria Rebello Valente, was one of the owners of Quinta do Noval, where he made a relevant contribution to its prosperity.

Long story short – with so much ‘yeast’ running through their veins, then a lively ‘fermentation’ was to be expected! First, they proceeded to have three children: Mateus, João, and Mafalda. The two boys followed in the vein of wine alchemy, and the daughter pursued arts and culture.

Then, in 1993, João (the father) found an extraordinary piece of land for wine production in the area of Vila

Nova de Foz Côa, Douro. Little by little, he started to purchase pieces of that terrain until the Quinta Monte do Xisto was formed. In 2005, they began to plant the vineyard and the perspectives and knowledge of two generations (father and children) were united. As each new layer of schist was broken up, a new reality came to light, and everything started to make sense. Working as a family, they laugh, discuss, talk, about the schist, the tractors, the vine, the stems, the wine and life itself!

And so was born João Nicolau de Almeida & Sons, represented by a star (once a symbol of the former company of the Nicolau de Almeida branch), carrying on a centuries-old presence of this family in wine production.



⁰² Quinta do Monte Xisto in 1993. The majority of the vineyard implantation at Quinta do Monte Xisto was at the recent past a cereal crop field.

⁰³ Quinta do Monte Xisto currently.

JOÃO ROSAS NICOLAU DE ALMEIDA

It's no easy task to summarize the course and contribution that João made to the modernization and development in vitiviniculture in the Douro Region. To begin, we have to go back to the 70s, when we could still hear the squeaking of the ox carts carrying the barrels to the rabelo boats. At that point in time, most of the Port Wine Houses were in Gaia, far removed from Douro and the vineyards. The profession of oenologist, as we know it today, didn't even exist in Portugal.

In 1970, destiny took him to study oenology in France (Dijon and Bordeaux), with some of the most relevant names in that field, such as Emile Peynaud, Jean Riberau Gayon, among others. In 1976, inspired by all the scientific knowledge he had acquired, he set out on his course. In the Ramos Pinto House, as Director of Oenology and Viticulture, encouraged by his uncle José Antonio Ramos Pinto Rosas, the administrator of the House at that time and a great connoisseur of the Douro viticulture, João initiated a series of vitiviniculture studies.

In 1981, they presented the results of their studies, selecting 5 red grape varieties and 3 white, which they considered to be the most suitable for the production of Port wine, as well as for dry wine, or Douro wine: Touriga National, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, and Tinto Cão, plus the whites Rabigato, Viozinho e Arinto. The whole region would later adopt this selection.

With the support of his uncle and Casa Ramos Pinto, João, in collaboration with various experts, continued



⁰⁴ Golf is a sport that has always been part of João's family's universe. As he says, a good wine needs a good swing. A continuous movement, balanced and

with a good finish. A move that looks easy but takes a lot of practice.

to develop several studies with applied and verified results. He introduced the vertical planting for better mechanization and greater planting density, studied and selected rootstocks, plus studied and implemented irrigation systems. He always shared this newly obtained information since his objective was, not only to better his company's vines and wine quality, but also to help develop the region's vitiviniculture.

In 1990, João launched the first dry red wine from Ramos Pinto – Duas Quintas, one of the first opening the door for a new era in Douro. Then in 1994, he launched the Duas Quintas white version.

Thus he became a innovator for the modernization of Douro's vitiviniculture, accumulating a series of awards at national and international levels, as "Man of the Year 1998" by the Wines & Spirits Magazine, Doctor Honoris Causa by the Vila Real University, Grande Oficial da Ordem de Mérito Agrícola da República Portuguesa, Cavaleiro da Ordem de Mérito Agrícola da República Francesa, amongst others.

From 2000 on, he held the positions of Director of Oenology as well as CEO of Casa Ramos Pinto, retiring in 2017. From that time on he dedicated himself entirely to his new family adventure, alongside his children.

QUINTA DO MONTE XISTO



QUINTA DO MONTE XISTO

LOCATION/ CLIMATE

The location of the Douro demarcated wine region contributes to its uniqueness. Situated in deep valleys and protected by the mountain chains of Marão and Montemuro, which create a natural barrier to the humid westerly winds, the region is characterized by rigorous winters and very hot and dry summers.

The Douro region is divided into three sub-regions: Baixo Corgo, Cima Corgo and Douro Superior. The first zone is a Mediterranean/Atlantic climate, the second a Mediterranean climate, and the third is a Mediterranean/Continental one.

The Quinta Monte Xisto is situated in the Douro Superior, in Vila Nova de Foz Côa, on the Douro River's left margin. This is the sub-region that registers the lowest levels of precipitation, with an annual average of 400mm.





⁰⁵ Sunrise at Quinta do Monte Xisto. Douro River in the background. View of the Quinta facing south.



⁰⁶ At Quinta do Monte Xisto, in addition to vineyards there are almond trees and partridges that wonder about what are we doing there.

⁰⁷ The freshness and lightness of orange groves. Maybe it's hard to find oranges so tasty. The balance between sugar and acidity is amazing.

⁰⁸ An olive tree grows between the schist. One more culture, that of the olive tree, typical of a mediterranean climate.

⁰⁹ This is where the family welcomes its guests. Throughout the Quinta there are buildings of rural architecture that are being recovered for different purposes.

EXPOSURE

Ultimately why did João consider this Quinta such an extraordinary place for wine production?

Usually the Douro River runs from east to west, rendering all the terrain exposure from north to south. In the Vila Nova de Foz Côa area, due to a tectonic fault – the Vilarica Fault – a specific set of curves was created that affords a very distinct solar exposure. Here the river runs from south to north, which allows all this terrain to partake of all the different solar exposures. To the north we get grapes with higher acidity and freshness, to the south more maturity and body. As João says “all the piano keys are here, we just have to make the music!”



¹⁰ North Side

¹¹ South Side



¹² Vertical planting. Douro River in the background.
View of the Quinta facing north.



VINEYARD PLANTATION

Vertical. Parcels with separated and mixed varieties.

VARIETIES

Red

Touriga Nacional

Touriga Francesa

Tinto Cão

Tinta da Barca

Tinta Francisca

Sousão

Roriz

White

Rabigato

PRUNING

Unilateral cordon and traditional.

SOIL

Schist integrated in the Desejosa Formation

ALTITUDE

220-320m

AREA

62ha of which 10 are vineyards



¹⁴ One of the most special places in Quinta do Monte Xisto it's Vale de Cabrões. A stronghold of a plural rural universe that they intend to preserve.



^{15/16} On and against the schist rocks, hovels, walls, little steps and bridges were built, seeking to make the most of the cultivation of this land.

A stream runs through the valley making it the cooler, more fertile.



AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

Diversity is related to concepts of difference, opposition, different perspectives or ways of approaching issues, and mutual tolerance.

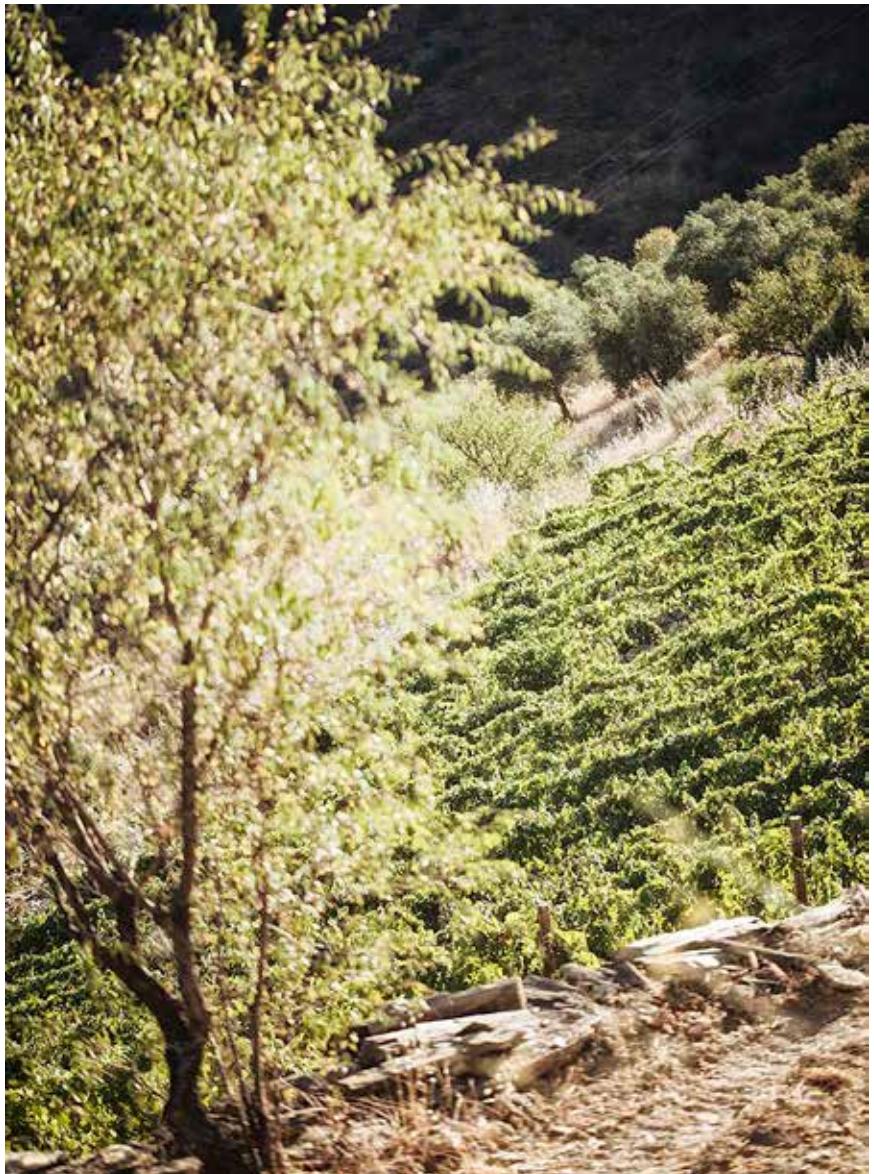
To the family this concept of diversity is very important and so the choice of organic agriculture was clear from the start. Such an approach, besides excluding the use of chemical products, also preserves and even promotes bio-diversity by working a cultural mosaic. Besides vines, the Quinta has a significant area of forest comprised by juniper, kermes oak, and the turpentine tree, also an olive grove, almond trees and an orange grove. Following a logic of prevention, diverse plants infusions are sprayed on the vineyards that prevent diseases and protect the vines against the heat. Other plants are also intermingled in the soil, and these act as fertilizer.

This type of practice contributes to the Quinta's self-sufficiency, seeking to achieve a natural dynamic of needs. All the steps, methods, and strategies in viticulture have as a goal the best possible adaptation of the vines to the climate and soil of Douro. It's valued the continual and organic process of research and learning, combining the wisdom of former generations and current scientific knowledge. "We are part of a whole, and it is in that whole that we sought to integrate our Quinta."

¹⁷ An old barrel serves as a vessel for a plant infusion.



¹⁸ The so-called “engine house”.



¹⁹ The mediterranean trio: the almond tree, the vine and the olive tree. An agricultural and cultural mosaic.

VILA NOVA DE GAIA WINE CELLARS



03

VILA NOVA DE GAIA WINE CELLARS

Quite far from Quinta de Monte Xisto, at the mouth of the Douro River where its waters meet the sea, separating the Porto city from Vila Nova de Gaia, the so-called “terroir” continues. It’s truly impossible to disassociate the Douro from Porto and Gaia, as they’re historically interlinked by socio-economic, climatic conditions, and logistic reasons.

Believing in the importance of this complex “terroir” and its integration in an organic logic they try to follow from the vine to the glass, the wines are transported to Gaia after the vinification is done in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. Upon arrival they are aged and bottled. The Mediterranean climate of Douro contrasts with the Atlantic climate of Gaia. They are opposites: extreme temperatures versus mild temperatures; a dry climate versus a humid one. In addition to these factors there’s the coolness of the granite soil in Gaia and its buildings that allow a great thermal stability, which is essential for the aging of the wines.

João Nicolau de Almeida and his children found in Gaia a natural and ideal place to finish the process of making their wines, as well as a place to share their stories about the vines, the wine and life!





²⁰ To age the wines, they use barrels with different volumes and work with several cooperages in France, Italy and Austria.



²¹ Finished product area, where the wine is labelled and packaged.

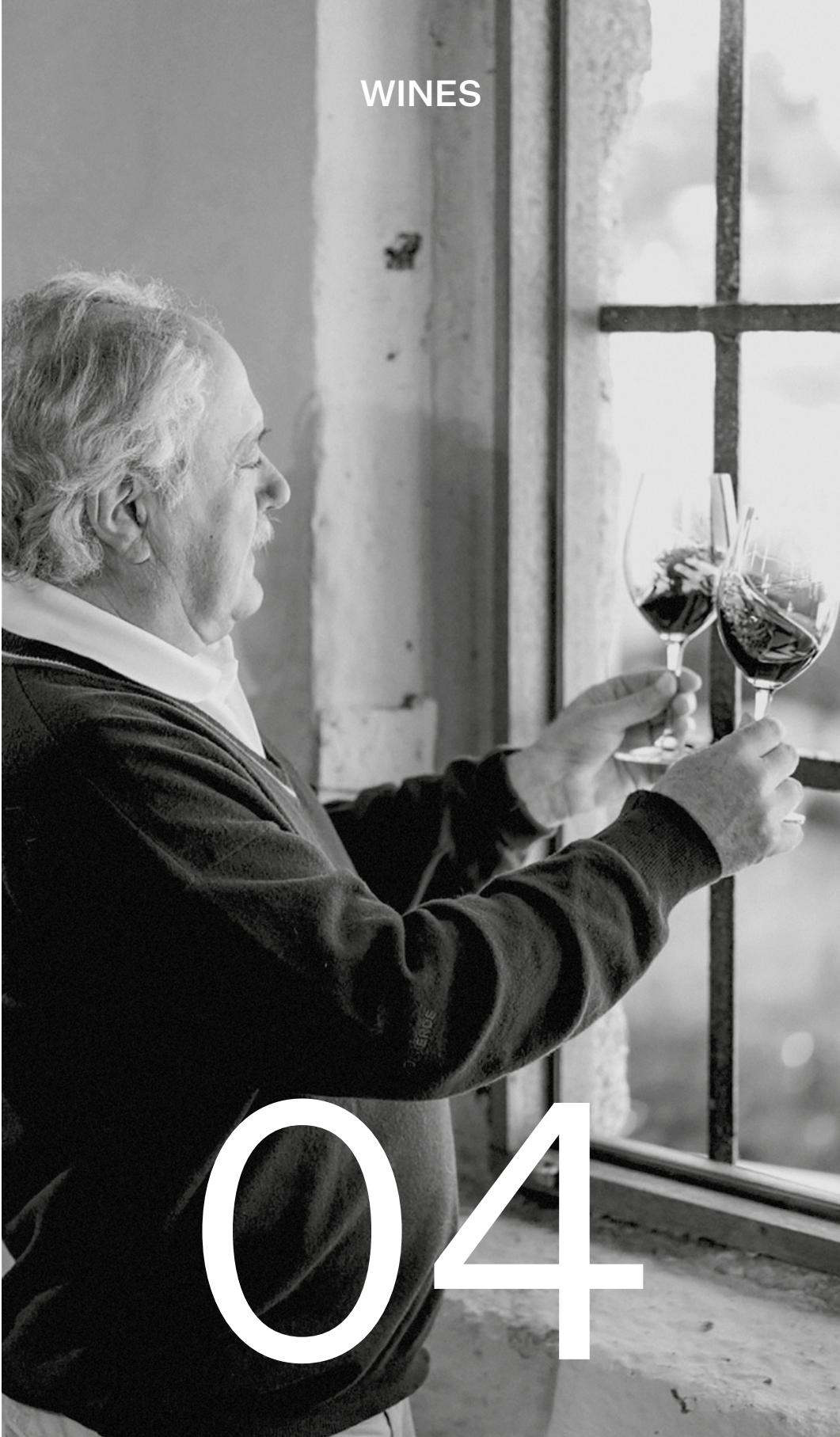
²² The wine cellar's granite structure contributes for temperature maintenance.



²³ Works at Gaia's wine cellar.

WINES

04



WINES

It's in the vineyard that we start to make the wine. "We believe that the simpler the vinification process, the better to transcribe the specificity of a wine and all of its 'terroir'. The less we intervene the more true will be the result". In this sense, the vinification is an interpretation of what Quinta Monte Xisto has to offer, in the pursuit of valuing its specific characteristics. Oenology transmits what the vine, the "terroir" has to show.

The onset for harvesting is crucial and the decision is made almost row by row. It's done manually and the grapes are transported to the winery in 20kg boxes. All the wines are vinified at Vila Nova de Foz Vila Nova de Foz Côa and aged in Vila Nova de Gaia.



²⁴ Bunch of grapes shaded by leaves.

²⁵ Fermentation in granite "lagar".



²⁶ The wines are labelled bottle by bottle at Gaia's cellars.



QUINTA DO MONTE XISTO

The Quinta do Monte Xisto is made with grapes from some of the Quinta's best parcels, some with exposure to the north and some to the south, in an attempt to find the proper balance between structure/body and elegance/acidity. The composition is made up of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa and Sousão. Fermentation takes place in a granite 'lagar' using indigenous yeast and it lasts about 6 days. This is followed by an 18 month ageing in 2000L and 600L wood vats and barrels.



QMX ORIENTE

The Quinta Monte Xisto Orienté is a wine that comes from 2 small parcels with exposure to the east. This exposure along with the different varieties used in it, create a fresh and smooth wine, not with such depth in color with a sophisticated elegance and spices notes.

One of parcels is of Tinto Cão, and the other Tinta Francisca. The fermentation occurs in a cement vat using indigenous yeast, followed by an 18 month ageing in 600L barrels.



ÓRBITA

This wine comes from a field blend plot and also from Touriga Nacional that surround or 'orbit' the vineyard area of the Quinta, with different solar exposures. The search of a less concentrated wine, less woody.

Fermentation is done in a cement vat with indigenous yeast. This is followed by an 18 month ageing in cement vats and 600L barrels.



VINTAGE PORT

Made from a careful selection of Quinta do Monte Xisto grapes with both north and south exposures. The blend is composed by Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa and Sousão. The grapes go into the granite "lagar" without crushing and are foot trodden.

The fermentation occurs throughout 6 days in the "lagar" using indigenous yeast, with a later addition of fine wine spirit. This is followed by an 18 month ageing in Vila Nova de Gaia.



LIGHT DRY WHITE PORT

This category of white Port (Light Dry) is rarely used. It's characterized by having the lowest alcohol content allowed and low sugar. Made with Rabigato from Quinta do Monte Xisto, with exposure to the north, it results in an original and exquisite wine, approximating a more ancestral style of Port wine. It's vinified in cement vats macerated on the skins for 3 days, followed by pressing to end fermentation and later addition of fine wine spirit. The ageing it's done in cement vats and the final blend it's from 4 different vintages.



The figure present on the Port Wine labels was taken from a painting by Fernando Nicolau de Almeida, João's father, entitled "The Taster".

The author combined his fascination with the Middle Ages and his endless humour applied to strained moment when the winemakers finally taste the wine.

FAMILY TEAM

05





²⁷ A family team. In the centre João (father), from left to right Graça, João (son), Mafalda and Mateus. João is the head of the board administration operated by his 3 sons.



²⁸ Mateus

²⁹ João

³⁰ Mafalda

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