



WEALTH

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DRINKS

Portugal's Wine Revolutionaries

The Douro Boys make stellar dry reds in a region known for port.

BY ELIN McCOY



MIGUEL ROQUETTE, inset, helps run family estate **QUINTA DO CRASTO** in the picturesque Douro Valley.

COURTESY OF QUINTA DO CRASTO

► **ONE HAND ON** the wheel, former investment banker Joao Ferreira Alvares Ribeiro casually maneuvers his four-wheel-drive Mercedes up a winding, rutted track through alarmingly steep, rocky vineyards in northwest Portugal's Douro Valley. This isolated region of terraced vines and tile-roofed, whitewashed houses is famous as the source of grapes for sweet fortified port. Ferreira—who works at Quinta do Vallado, his family's estate—belongs to a band of five ambitious vintners making sophisticated dry table wines here. Known as the Douro Boys, they ignited a local revolution with their earthy, ageworthy reds.

At 1,000 feet (300 meters) above the Douro River (which is called the Duero in Spain, where it originates), Ferreira, 53, and I stop by gnarled, 80-year-old vines. They're a mix of red varieties, most of which are little known outside Portugal, including *touriga nacional*, *touriga franca* and *tinta cao*. Long used in port, these grapes give the region's dry reds their brooding dark-fruit-and-mineral taste.

"The first modern Douro table wine, Barca Velha, was made at a relative's *quinta* in 1952," says Ferreira, as we head down to the estate's tasting room. I'm surprised to learn he makes whites and even a smoky, perfect-with-barbecue rose made entirely from *touriga nacional*. His four reds, though, are the stars. He recently sold 40,000 bottles of them to brokers in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

As the sun sets, two other group members show up with their wines for a typical Portuguese meal of *cabrito* (young goat) cooked in a wood-fired oven. Francisco Olazabal—who, with his father, presides over Quinta do Vale Meao farther up the river—makes only two blends. From Cristiano van Zeller's Quinta do Vale Dona Maria, there are three reds and one white. The wines are all high quality, yet their styles differ, ranging from smooth and powerful to more savory and elegant.

The following afternoon, Miguel Roquette shows me around the white stucco buildings of his family estate, Quinta do Crasto, which looks like a modest fortress on top of a cone-shaped hill. "Real interest in making table wines only started in 1986, when the law changed," Roquette, 43, says. "Before Portugal joined the European Union, individual *quintas* weren't permitted to export

wine directly and sold the best grapes to the port shippers who bottled the wine downriver near Porto.”

Like Vallado, Crasto produces a range of dry wines, from a juicy, spicy bargain red to a 100 percent touriga nacional bottling, to top single-vineyard field blends like the intense, smooth 2000 Vinha da Ponte we taste with Portuguese cheeses at the end of dinner. “One of the big challenges here is to tame the tannins,” Roquette says, adding that picking at the right time and crushing grapes by foot help.

At Quinta de Napoles, owned by Dirk Niepoort’s family, I find a more playful and experimental sensibility and more-earthly, -mineral and -distinctive reds and whites. Niepoort, 46, who pulled the group of friends and relations together as the Douro Boys in 2002, made his first table wine 20 years ago. And the family, which has been making



Quinta do Vallado’s **JOAO FERREIRA** **ALVARES RIBEIRO**, top, and **DIRK NIEPOORT** of Quinta de Napoles, above

▶ THE BEST OF THE DOURO BOYS

2008 Quinta do Vallado Touriga Nacional (\$35) Licorice and fruity-spicy flavors with an iron tang and rich structure

2008 Quinta do Vale Dona Maria (\$50) A complex, raspberry-inflected field blend of 41 varietals

2008 Quinta do Vale Meao (\$70) A dark, chocolaty, spicy, modern blend of touriga nacional and touriga franca

2008 Niepoort Batuta (\$85) Violet

aroma and layers of savory flavors; elegant and distinctive

2000 Quinta do Crasto Vinha da Ponte (\$80) Massive and dense, with velvety, smoothed-out tannins

TWO EVERYDAY BARGAINS
Dark, rich **2009 Quinta do Vallado Douro Red** (\$20) and juicy, plummy, vibrant **2009 Quinta do Crasto Douro Red** (\$15)

E.Mc.

port for more than 150 years, bought its first vineyards only in 1987.

A day later, I join Niepoort at his home in Porto. We sip his 2004 Redoma white while he cooks up tiny, salty clams in a sauce of garlic and spices and then fish with Brussels sprout leaves. “Everyone laughed and thought I was crazy when I made my first red, as though it were a ‘garage’ wine, but I discovered the Douro has great potential,” he says. “We don’t know all the best vineyard spots yet, but the region’s combination of great *terroir*, unique varieties and old vines doesn’t exist elsewhere on the planet.”

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RIDES

A FAMILY FERRARI

The new FF features four seats and four-wheel drive. **BY TOMMASO EBHARDT**

FERRARI SPA is targeting a new group of buyers: drivers who want to take their high-performance supercar golfing or to the grocery store. The Ferrari Four, or FF, is a family car, with four seats, four-wheel drive for snowy days and plenty of trunk space for your clubs or bags of tomato sauce and pasta. The price for this convenience: 260,000 euros (\$361,000).

Ferrari, which is Fiat SpA’s most profitable unit, aims to build 800 FFs for Europe in 2011; they’re all sold already,

including a white one for Fiat Chief Executive Officer Sergio Marchionne. The first FF is expected to be delivered in May.

“Four-wheel drive is a revolution for Ferrari,” says Fabio Barone, chairman of the Passione Rossa owners’ club, who has two Ferraris. “You can finally drive a real Ferrari, with its extreme performance, to take your family skiing.”

And you can transport yourself to the ski resort fast.

CHECKING THE SPECS

ENGINE A 382-cubic-inch V-12 produces 660 hp

SPEED 0 to 100 kph in 3.7 seconds

PRICE €260,000



The FF’s 660-horsepower engine accelerates to 100 kilometers (62 miles) an hour in 3.7 seconds.

One destination for future FFs is China, where Ferrari sales were up 44 percent last

year. Ferrari’s profits rose 27 percent to €303 million in 2010 as revenue reached €1.9 billion.

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