

QUINTA DO NOVAL

The astonishing terraced vineyards of Noval, perched above the Douro and Pinhao rivers, are an infertile schist, and not soil as much as sheer rock.



Nacional Vintage Port 2017 Douro Valley, Portugal

ESTATE

One of the oldest port houses, Quinta do Noval is also arguably the greatest. It is unique among top port houses in that most of the ports are made from estate-grown fruit and, notably, all the vintage Noval wines are from the single Quinta do Noval vineyard. Noval is mentioned in land registries going back to 1715, and has been sold just twice in that time, once in the late 19th century, and to its present owners in 1993. Noval has, however, a reputation for being an innovative, independent producer. Noval is distinguished by dedicated focus to its vineyard and estate ports.

WINE

The name "Nacional" refers to the Portuguese vines growing on native soils with no foreign root stock; they are therefore "attached to the soil of the Nation." The survival of the tiny parcel (6 acres) of legendary ungrafted vines, untouched by phylloxera is a mystery and the National is a unique and extraordinary phenomenon that does not necessarily follow the same rhythm as the rest of the Quinta do Noval. Nacional is every port lover's fantasy and this great wine is a source of pride to the people of Portugal and at its best the finest expression of the extraordinary terroir of Quinta do Noval.

VINEYARD

The Nacional vines lie in an area indistinguishable from and surrounded by the other Noval wines. The parcel is planted with a mix of the noble grape varieties of the Douro. As a vine dies, it is replanted with the cuttings of another vine in the vineyard. Nacional vines are slightly less vigorous, with smaller trunks and less foliage, and with leaves that are slightly less vibrant green. The berries are smaller, giving a higher ratio of skin to juice.

WINEMAKING

Variety: Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinto Cão, Sousão and Tinta Roriz.

Fermentation: Trodden by foot and fermented in the traditional stone "lagares"; temperature control at 82°F

Aging: 18 months in old oak barrels of 640 liters or larger.

Alcohol: 14.0%

VINTAGE

2017 was characterized by a cold, dry winter followed by an exceptionally hot and dry spring and summer. June was the hottest month since 1980, with temperatures reaching 104-111°F in the Douro Valley during a heat wave lasting from June 7 – 24. Due to these extreme weather conditions, all phases of the vine's growth were 15 – 20 days early compared to 2016. The vines weathered the shortage of water and the high temperatures well. Harvest started much earlier than usual due to the weather: from August 17 for the white wines and August 21 for the reds and the Ports, lasting until September 28, with high temperatures and a total absence of rain.

Robert Parker
WINE ADVOCATE

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"Rich and vibrant, this has plenty of stuffing and flavor, more than the regular Noval. Then, it adds layer after layer of power. A couple of hours of air makes both the flavors and tannins more intense. It is simply gripping—yet also remarkably fresh. It's a great Noval, and one of the shortlist candidates for "Wine of the Vintage." - MARK SQUIRES, 6/2019

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James Suckling

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