QUINTA DO VALE MEÃO

While Quinta do Vale Meão only began bottling under its own label in 1999, the estate has an incredible history. Vale Meão was one of the shrewd acquisitions of the celebrated Douro landowner Dona Antónia Adelaide Ferreira. In 1877 she purchased 270 hectares of land near Vila Nova de Foz Côa in the Upper Douro, and over the course of the next decade established a model winery, planting all the vineyards from scratch.

The Quinta remained in the family and is owned today by Francisco Javier de Olazabal. Francisco Javier was previously president of the highly regarded A.A. Ferreira, where the fruit of his family's estate formed the bulk of the legendary Barca Velha, renowned for decades as Portugal's greatest table wine. First produced in 1952, Barca Velha has become a legend, commanding lofty prices at auctions. Today it continues to be revered, and is still considered Portugal's undisputed "First Growth".

In 1998, when Francisco left Ferreira, he decided to use the grapes from his family's estate to make his own wine. The old cellar has been completely renovated. While the traditional architecture and beautiful old granite lagares remain intact, modern elements such as temperature controlled vats have also been put in place, creating a judicious balance between old and new. The estate's vineyards are planted in blocks, broadly organized by the diverse soils of the region with blocks containing schist, granite and alluvial soils. This multiplicity of soils adds a great deal of complexity to the wines, which are considered to be among the "Douro's finest" by the Wine Advocate.

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