

Quinta dos Carvalhais,

Dão Branco 2024

Dão, Portugal



PRODUCER

Quinta dos Carvalhais is credited with spearheading the quality renaissance of Dão wines in the early '90s and continues to make some of the region's finest wines today. After being purchased by Sogrape in 1988, significant improvements were made to the winery and vineyards, including the replanting of near-extinct Dão varieties such as Encruzado, a grape now heralded as one of Portugal's finest. Current Quinta dos Carvalhais winemaker Beatriz Cabral de Almeida continues to champion these varieties, making an impressive range of estate wines that show lovely depth, vibrant fruit, and exceptional elegance.

VINEYARDS

The 105-hectare Quinta dos Carvalhais estate is situated at an altitude of 465-500 metres above sea level and has 50 hectares under vine on poor granite soils. Warm days and cool nights at this altitude slow down the grape ripening process and result in wines with lovely depth yet vibrant fruit and a signature freshness. Microzoning studies have been carried out on the estate, identifying nine different soil types and a multitude of different microclimates, and each grape variety has been matched to its ideal plot. All of the vineyards are farmed sustainably and harvesting is carried out by hand.

VINTAGE

Beatriz Cabral de Almeida summarised 2024 as 'high quality in a year of extremes'. A wet spring was followed by April frosts and rains during flowering, which caused coulure. Good weather in late spring allowed the thriving clusters to develop well, but was followed by a hailstorm in June that damaged clusters and plants. Conditions were more settled until harvest, which ran from 2nd to 30th September but was interrupted by wildfires from 16th to 18th. Fortunately only a small part of the Estate's forest and 0.35 hectares of vines were damaged. Timely rain showers on 19th helped to 'cleanse' the grapes still on vine, followed by welcome sunshine and a return to harvesting in full force. Production was down 15% versus 2023. Beatriz particularly noted the quality of the Gouveio grapes, which she deemed as 'marvellous [...] in terms of ripeness', and the Encruzado, which she described as "complex and expressive from the very outset".

VINIFICATION

The grapes were hand harvested into 20kg boxes and vinified separately by grape variety and by plot. Upon arrival at the winery, the grapes were destemmed, gently crushed and pressed. Fermentation with indigenous yeasts took place mostly in stainless-steel tanks at 18°C. However, 35% of the Encruzado and 25% of the Gouveio was fermented in French oak barrels - a combination of new and used oak and a range of sizes from 225 litres to 500 litres - and then aged in these for four months, before the final blend was assembled and left to marry in bottle.

TASTING NOTES

Bright yellow in colour. On the nose, aromas of ripe lemon, lime and white stone fruit are combined with floral hints and subtle brioche aromas from the oak. The flavours are pronounced on the palate and balanced by a crisp acidity which carries them onto the pleasantly fresh finish.