



Press release
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REBORN, QUINTA DE COVELA RELEASES ITS FIRST WINES SINCE 2008, AND LAUNCHES ITS FIRST-EVER VINHO VERDE, A SUCCULENT AVESSE

Escolha Branco 2012, a Covela classic, is reborn, while with Edição Nacional 2012, the new owners of Covela launch the estate's first-ever Vinho Verde. 100% Avesse, this refreshing wine will be released in Portugal around Easter-time.

The passion for excellence has returned to Quinta de Covela. Two foreign investors decided in 2011 to make a bet on the quality and potential of Portuguese wines when they acquired the charming, terraced estate on the banks of the Douro River. Now, after their first harvest in 2012, Covela is relaunching its classic, Avesse-Chardonnay assemblage, Covela Escolha Branco, and has surprised the market with Edição Nacional (National Edition), a wholly new, elegant wine made 100% from Avesse, which is the estate's first-ever Vinho Verde.

Perched high over the right bank of the Douro river in the granitic territory of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region, home to Portugal's renowned and refreshing Vinhos Verdes, Quinta de Covela has seen a lot of transformations since its founding in the 16th Century. In its time, Covela has been the property of one of Europe's most celebrated film-makers, Manoel de Oliveira, and also of one of the scions of the Ramos Pinto port wine dynasty. In 2011, it passed into the hands of Brazilian entrepreneur Marcelo Lima and Tony Smith, a British journalist. One year and about one million euros of investments later, the new owners are now releasing their first wines:

COVELA Edição Nacional the quinta's first-ever Vinho Verde, is an elegant, rounded white made 100% from Avesse, the grape that is king along the banks of the Douro in this region. Fruitful and aromatic, this is a Verde to be sipped by the pool, on the terrace at sundown, or to pair all sorts of food - from sushi, through grilled seafood, to a roast leg of pork - thanks to its freshness and buoyant acidity. However, unlike many run-of-

the-mill Verdes, this is not fizzy or sweet, but rather an elegant, light white with a surprisingly long finish. The Covela partners believe that Avesso, one of Portugal's lesser-known grapes, is on the cusp of being "discovered" for what it is - a fruity, versatile white, ideal for pairing with all sorts of food.

COVELA Edição Nacional 2012

Alcohol: 13%vol.; acidity 7,1g/l; pH 3,3; residual sugar 4,0g/l. Best served at 7°C - 8°C.

COVELA Escolha Branco 2012 has traditionally been the estate's best-seller, conquering sippers and foodies alike with its distinctive blend of Avesso, Chardonnay and a couple of other "secret ingredient" grapes. After a hiatus of four years, this Portuguese classic is back - and with the same profile as ever, according to winemaker, Rui Cunha, who has been involved in making and blending Covela wines since 1992. Made from organic grapes and harvested by hand, as all Covela wines, this is a serious white, great with food, which deserves to be aged longer than is the tradition in Portugal. However, its peachy nose and a palate that tantalizes with both fruit and minerality, make it easy to understand why few have the patience to keep it in the bottle...

Avesso, one of Portugal's still undiscovered grapes, is versatile like Chardonnay or Riesling, and is excellent with foods, especially fish and seafood, though its minerality gives it the strength to stand up to poultry, pork and even some game dishes.

COVELA Escolha Branco 2012

Alcohol: 14%vol.; acidity 6,0g/l; pH 3,4; residual sugar 2,5g/l. Best served at 12°C - 14°C.

The Vineyard

Overlooking the Douro in a natural amphitheatre facing directly south on the river's right bank, Quinta de Covela is located in the so-called transition zone, between the granitic soil of the Minho and the slate/schist terroir of the upper Douro. Spread over 34 hectares (of which 14 are planted with vines) and enjoying a Mediterranean micro-climate, the estate produces wines that combine the freshness and minerality of the Minho with the power and strength characteristic the Douro.

In addition to the traditional stone houses, winery and water mill, surrounded not only by vines, but also by cork oak forests, orchards and gardens, the estate has three modern houses and an imposing ruined manor house dating from the 16th century. This building

is currently under study by a team of archaeologists and the plan is to transform it into the estate's visitors' reception centre.

A Cinematographic Estate

Today's Quinta de Covela is the result of the union of two smaller estates: the original Covela and the Quinta dos Casaínhos. The estate once belonged to Manoel de Oliveira, one of the foremost European film makers of the second half of the 20th century, who is still alive and working today at 104. During the 1950s, it was de Oliveira who decided to rebuild the winery and the estate's two main houses. And this after he had already carried out a virtual revolution on the farm by dotting the property with reservoirs and water tanks and linking them with "levadas" - basically aqueducts made from local granite of course. De Oliveira sold the property on in the late 1980s to Nuno Araújo, a scion of the Ramos Pinto Port wine family, who planted the vineyards and created the Covela brand. He built up the winery and eventually took Covela organic, then biodynamic. But after two decades of growing national and international success, Covela's prowess was halted in its tracks by a failed investment in real estate. Lima and Smith acquired the estate after it had been abandoned for a couple of years.

Commitment to quality, organic wines

Given their respect for the excellent reputation enjoyed by Covela and its wines, the new owners immediately decided to reconstitute the estate's old team. They started by re-hiring all local staff and restoring as winemaker Rui Cunha, who had been involved with the original Covela project since the early 1990s.

With the owners particularly interested in keeping the wines as natural and as true to the terroir as possible, the extensive renovation carried out so far in the winery, warehouse and - most importantly - in the vineyards, has all been carried out according to organic - though not biodynamic - farming principles.

In the vineyard, the latest investments made by Lima and Smith aim to increase the relative percentage of Portuguese grape varieties, such as Avesso and Arinto, and increase production of white wines, for which the estate is particularly well-known. On the red side, local grapes such as Touriga Nacional will also be reinforced vis-à-vis the Bordeaux classics such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot that currently complement the Touriga.

Despite all these changes, the main intention is to maintain and respect the traditional characteristics of the Covela wines: dry, strong personality and full of freshness.

"We are extremely pleased with the results of our first harvest at Covela", says Smith. "We have managed to respect Covela's heritage by producing an Escolha Branco that is identical in profile to those in years gone by, while at the same time innovating by bringing to market Edição Nacional, the estate's first-ever Vinho Verde."

About the owners

Marcelo Lima is economist and shareholder of the Brazilian group Artesia, with interests in several areas, such as commercial cooling systems (he is owner of Metalrio, world's second biggest company of this area of business), clothing industry (brands Le Lis Blanc, Bo-Bô e Johnjohn) and banking (C1 Bank of Florida, USA). Lima is also a landowner in Brazil, with properties in the State of Minas Gerais.

Tony Smith is journalist whose ties with Portugal go back to 1988. Smith worked several years in Portugal first as a correspondent and then as a magazine editor before leaving in 2000 for Brazil where worked for The Associated Press and The New York Times. He later became Director Brazil for magazine publisher Condé Nast International before returning to Portugal in 2011 to head up the new Covela project.

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