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WINE TALK

Covela Reserva Branco 2012 A white that make us forget about reds

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I attended a wine tasting dinner some years ago in Lisbon that was one of the most memorable I have taken part in. Entitled "Branco que fazem esquecer os tintos" (whites that make us forget about reds), it was a formative event for me, cementing my appreciation for white wines which not only have great depth and body but also that benefit from bottle ageing.

It was some years later that I fell in love with the white "Selecionada" produced until 2007 by Covela under the winery's original ownership. On a visit to Quinta da Covela in 2008, I had the chance to try various different vintages going right back to 1994 and I bought a few bottles of the 2004 and 2007 to lay up and enjoy a few years later. I still have a couple of them and the last one I tried just a few months ago, a 2007, was simply stunning.

Quinta da Covela closed down in 2009, the result of an ill-fated real estate project developed by the owner on the site and was finally reopened under new ownership ready for the 2012 vintage.

Located in a sheltered low altitude valley on the northern bank of the Douro River, the winery is technically

part of the Minho region and now, as before, produces what I consider to be some of Portugal's finest white wines (along with a rosé and some reds).

The premium label today is this Branco Reserva, replacing the old Selecionada label but in essence a very similar wine, produced mainly from a blend of Avesso and Chardonnay but now with a little Viognier added.

Made from selected grapes from the quinta's best vines, fermented on the lees and aged (unfiltered) for 14 months in French oak, this is a white of great concentration. At this young age, after just two years in the bottle, it is lush and already complex on the nose with intense aroma of honeysuckle and tropical fruits. In the mouth it is full and rich with solid acidity and a very long, dry finish. But give it a few years and it will start to develop the notes of burned honey on the nose and a deep complexity in the mouth that can justify the hefty price tag (€34.95 in Apolónia).

This wine is a perfect accompaniment to a good cheese board but equally well-suited to white meats, fowl and especially duck.



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