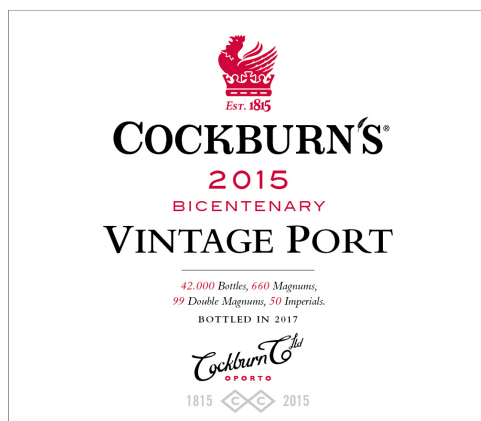




LAUNCH SHEET



In a letter dated 24th December 1817, Robert Cockburn, founder of the company wrote, 'The quality of the wine — that is the first thing to be looked to'. It was this defining principle that guided Cockburn's winemaking and was embodied in the outstanding quality of its Vintage Ports of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After a half-century of corporate tenure, Cockburn's rediscovered greatness following a return to family ownership through its full acquisition by the Symington family in 2010.

The 2011, the debut Vintage made by the Symington family marked a watershed for Cockburn's, reviving its standing as one of the premier Vintage Port producers. Much was learned from the seminal tastings organized by the family in 2012, which involved tasting Cockburn's wines back to the legendary 1896, and in 2015 with another retrospective tasting of Vintages further back still, to the 1863. These memorable tastings allowed the family to identify the style, which had given Cockburn's its commanding position for over 100 years. Charles Symington, head winemaker, absorbed these lessons and put them to good use when preparing the final blend of the acclaimed 2011 Vintage.

2015: The year in the making

Abundant rainfall marked the start of the viticultural year, replenishing depleted soil water reserves. This was to prove crucial due to the very dry winter, spring and summer that followed. The effects of the very dry winter were attenuated by below average temperatures. Conversely, the period between the start of the vegetative cycle and the initial stages of the ripening season was simultaneously the hottest and driest of the last 36 years. It was the hottest June of the last half-century.

Fortunately, in the Douro Superior — Cockburn's heartland and usually the hottest and driest sub-region — rain came in May precisely when temperatures began to rise. Furthermore, it fell evenly, allowing the soil to gradually absorb the precious water at Quinta dos Canais and Quinta do Vale Coelho. This rain was of enormous benefit and helped sustain the vines during the very hot, dry months of June and July. July and August were cooler than usual and the effects of the continuing drought were thus partially offset. The colder than usual August nights proved decisive in preserving the natural acidity in the berries. Encouragingly, in the run up to the vintage the crop was looking very healthy and the Touriga Franca looked especially promising.



2015: The vintage

In early September the grapes were in fine condition, although phenolic development was incomplete and there were signs of hydric stress due to the continuing absence of rain. The vintage started tentatively at Canais on September 7th, picking the vulnerable younger vines still in the hope that much needed rain would arrive to conclude the final ripening of the grapes. Although risky, Charles decided to hold off picking the most valuable grapes. He noted: “we held back and on the morning of the 15th [September] a massive storm hit the Douro which lasted until early next morning, the skies then cleared and temperatures dropped to ideal ripening conditions...perfect! The vines responded to this miraculous rain and within 4 days the Touriga Nacional was transformed, skins having softened and flavours developed. At Canais picking resumed on the 21st and the Nacional was in fantastic condition and a week later the pickers moved on to the Touriga Franca, which was considerably advanced and showing great promise, possibly the most promising Franca I have seen.”

Charles cannot extol enough the exceptional quality of the Touriga Franca in 2015, a variety that acts as one of the surest barometers of a Vintage declaration. From the maturation studies it was evident that the Franca had tremendous potential, the flavour and colour in August was unprecedented. This was partly due to the small number of bunches, which themselves were small and with tiny berries allowing for ripening to progress quickly. Franca is a variety that enjoys heat and dry weather and that is exactly what was experienced during the growing season. The end result of these low yields, averaging 1 Kg per vine, and the made-to-order conditions for this variety produced the best Franca in memory.

2015: The wine

Unsurprisingly, Touriga Franca constitutes the largest component of the Cockburn's 2015 with 41% (compared with 30% in the 2011). It is followed by Touriga Nacional with 37% — this variety also excelled at Canais where it was sourced from the distinctive, mature 30 years Bico de Pato (duck's bill) vineyard. This was picked 8 days after the rain of the 15th, from which it greatly benefited. The perfectly ripe berries delivered just 0.96 Kg/vine, giving the wine its velvety tannins and incomparable finesse and elegance.

The superb Touriga Franca was sourced principally from Canais, complemented by a smaller quantity from Vale Coelho. The balance of the blend was made up of old mixed vines (9%); Sousão (7%) and Alicante Bouschet (6%), the latter from Quinta do Cachão de Arnozelo, which contributed to the structure of the wine. A co-fermentation from Vale Coelho of old mixed vines, yielding just 0.36 Kg/vine, combined with Sousão and Touriga Franca added great concentration, freshness and grip to the wine.

Provenance of the Cockburn's 2015 Vintage Port:

- Quinta dos Canais: (68%)
- Quinta do Vale Coelho: (26%)
- Quinta do Cachão de Arnozelo: (6%)



Just 10% of the combined production of Quinta dos Canais, Quinta do Vale Coelho and Quinta do Cachão de Arnozelo was selected for bottling as Cockburn's 2015 Bicentenary Vintage Port, which corresponds to the equivalent of 3,701 9L cases (in several bottle sizes).

Vinification of the grapes from the three properties was at the nearby Senhora da Ribeira winery in whose modern lagares they were trodden. This small, specialist winery is in close proximity of Canais, Cachão de Arnozelo and Vale Coelho.

Winemakers and their harvest testimonials:
Charles Symington and Ricardo Carvalho

Charles Symington (Head Winemaker): "It is amazing how much difference 4 or 5 days can make. It is clear that this rain [Sept. 15th] was actually heaven-sent and helped the unpicked grapes realize their full potential. Without it the final phase of maturation of the Touriga Nacional and especially the Touriga Franca would not have been ideal, as dehydration would certainly have occurred after such a prolonged period with no rain."
Ricardo Carvalho (Quinta dos Canais winemaker): "From then onwards [after the rain], the berries appeared to get better and better with each passing day, with colour, softer grape skins and ideal Baumés to make good wines (...) To conclude I think this was a very good vintage in which quality is very much in evidence, especially for those professional producers who knew how to bide their time."

Wine Specification:

- Alcohol by volume v/v (20° C): 20%
- Total Acidity g/l tartaric acid: 5.0
- Baumé: 3.8
- Bottling during May 2017 with no filtration or fining

Tasting notes (from cask samples, Symington tasting room, March 2017):
Great vitality and purity of fruit, focused and precise. Exudes freshness, which springs out of the glass. Aromas of fleshy, black plums and eucalyptus fragrance. Flavours of red cherries on the palate. Well-toned and muscular, full-flavoured with typical Cockburn's 'grip'.

Production

3,500 Cases (2x6x75cl)
660 Magnus (1,5 L)
99 Double-Magnus (3 L)
50 Imperials (6 L)