

NEW RELEASE · VARGELLAS VINHA VELHA 2017 · VINTAGE PORT



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In addition to a classic Taylor's Vintage, Taylor's has announced that it will bottle a Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port from the exceptional 2017 harvest. Comments on the release are as follows:

**Adrian Bridge, Managing Director:**

"Rare wine enthusiasts and collectors will be excited to hear that Taylor's will release a 2017 Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port. This will be only the eighth Vargellas Vinha Velha ever to be released and quantities are very limited. As usual, it is an extraordinary wine, a showcase of the old vines' ability to deliver multiple layers and dimensions of aroma."

**David Guimaraens, Head Wine Maker:**

Commenting on the viticultural year: "Two factors stood out in the 2017 viticultural year. There was hardly any rainfall during the spring growing period with drought conditions continuing throughout the summer. Also, the vineyard cycle was well in advance of the normal calendar and the start of the harvest at Quinta de Vargellas was the earliest for a generation. Not since the iconic vintage of 1945, one of the greatest of the 20th century, has picking at Vargellas started so early. As often occurs in dry years, the oldest vines, with their extensive root system and reserves of stored energy, produced stunning results."

Commenting on the wine: "I think 2017 Vargellas Vinha Velha is a superb example of what the old vineyards are capable of achieving. The wine has all the density and depth of the 2017 vintage but is wonderfully multidimensional, the diversity of vines varieties in the five historic vineyard plots contributing to its aromatic complexity."

**TASTING NOTE**

Impenetrable ruby black core and narrow purple rim. As usual with the Vargellas Vinha Velha, the nose is beautifully balanced and complete, revealing multiple layers and dimensions of aroma as it opens up in the glass. The base is a coulis of dense, dark berries, with brambly woodland fruit, cassis and black cherry aromas. The voluptuous richness of the fruit is tempered by an attractive flinty, mineral edge and the discreet pungency of wild herbs and cedar wood. As the wine evolves, evocative aromas emerge, such as beeswax, leather and cigar box, like the unexpected resonances of an antique instrument. The palate is supported by thick granular tannins and is packed with dense black and red berry fruit flavour that rises in a crescendo on the finish. A wine of majestic scale and proof, if any were needed, that 2017 was an exceptional year for old vines. •

**NOTES ON THE 2017 VITICULTURAL YEAR AND HARVEST**

Following a wet 2016, the year started with cold and dry winter conditions, with a fifth less rainfall than the thirty-year average. Bud burst occurred relatively early, around 10th March. The dry



conditions continued into Spring and the warm weather in April and May encouraged the rapid growth of the vines. The first three weeks of June were extremely hot, causing damage to the new bunches in some areas of the Douro. The early cycle continued with véraison around 18th June, one month earlier than the previous year. Apart from some thunderstorms and rainfall early in July, conditions remained dry until the end of September although temperatures for much of the ripening season were moderate. As expected, the crop ripened very early, showing high sugar levels which led to longer fermentations and very effective colour extraction. Picking started at Taylor's Quinta de Vargellas on 1st September, the earliest in a generation. The last time picking was recorded as having started this early was in 1945 – one of the greatest of the 20th century vintages – when the first fruit was picked on 3rd September. Temperatures at harvest time were mild, with cool nights, leading to balanced fermentations and excellent extraction. The musts were dense and marked by exceptional depth of colour and impressive phenolics. •



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# TAYLOR'S®

Taylor's was founded over three centuries ago in 1692 and has been family owned and run throughout its history. Taylor's is recognised as a benchmark for Vintage Port, its classic Vintages attracting the highest scores and auction prices. Known for their elegance, longevity and distinctive scented character, they are blended from the finest wines of the firm's own 'quintas' or estates. These three famous properties – Vargellas, Terra Feita and Junco – occupy distinct geographic locations and each contributes its own unique character and dimension to the subtle harmony of the blend. These properties represent the best of innovation and tradition, combining the most advanced viticultural practices with traditional foot treading, still unsurpassed as a method for making Vintage Port. •

## QUINTA DE VARGELLAS

The wines of Quinta de Vargellas traditionally form the 'backbone' of the Taylor's Vintage Port blend. This outstanding estate, recognised as one of the world's finest vineyards, was acquired by Taylor's in 1893 although its reputation as a source of the finest ports dates back to the 1820's. Located in the remote eastern reaches of the Douro Valley, Vargellas is known for its elegant, scented wines, with their fine focused fruit and well integrated sinewy tannins. It is also known as a source of one of the rarest and most collectible Vintage Ports of all, Vargellas Vinha Velha, made in very small quantities from the produce of the oldest vines on the estate. Only seven have been released to date and the 2017 will be the eighth. The terraced plots containing the oldest vines on the property account for over 15% of the

estate's total production. The Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage Port represents a very limited selection of the production of these old vines and seldom accounts for more than about 2% of the total production of the property.

By far the largest part of the production of the old vineyards is incorporated into the traditional Quinta de Vargellas single-quinta Vintage Port or the declared Taylor's Vintage, or into other wines when no Vintage Port is made. The Vargellas Vinha Velha Vintage is selected from five individual plots of old vineyard: Polverinho, Renova do Depósito, Renova do Armazém, Gricha and Vinha Grande. The age of the old vines on these plots varies from around 80 to 120 years. Each plot, which is harvested individually, produces wine with its own distinct character and contains a

wide variety of grape varieties in which no one variety predominates. The exception is the Polverinho vineyard, which was the site of the first single-variety batch planting experiments in 1927 by Taylor's partner Dick Yeatman, whose pioneering work underpins the firm's thorough understanding of the classic Douro grape varieties.

Winemaker David Guimaraens noted: "The remarkable characteristic of the Vinha Velha Vintage Ports is their multi-dimensional complexity and their distinctive and subtle personality. This derives from the rich diversity of grape varieties planted on these old terraces, many of which are traditional varieties not widely used today." •

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