



2013 Lemos And Van Zeller (Cristiano Van Zeller) Vinha Do Rio (Quinta Vale D Maria)

A Proprietary Blend Dry Red Table wine from Portugal,,,Douro,Portugal

Review by Mark Squires

eRobertParker.com # 222 (Dec 2015)

Rating: 94

Drink 2017 - 2033

Cost: \$0

The 2013 Vinha Do Rio (Quinta Vale D Maria) is another Old Vines (85-plus years) field blend, aged for 22 months in new French oak barriques. It comes in at 15% alcohol. Probably the biggest and boldest in the lineup these days, replacing the CV as the one most likely to go for the sex appeal, this actually has a somewhat restrained feel to it this year, at least on opening and at least relatively speaking. That's not necessarily a bad thing; sometimes, this bottling can be very big, sometimes to a fault. Not yet convinced that all of them will age well, I've been a bit stingy and conservative with this bottling. This seems like a beauty, though. There is still the typically fine intensity of flavor on the finish, along with some notable oak impact. That latter will fade and it came together brilliantly as it sat in the glass over a couple of hours. It has very fine focus and superlative concentration on opening. It tightened on the finish rather quickly, but it never became overly hard. It just fills the mouth, seeming gentle but gripping at the same time. The big winner of the first day pf tastings of Van Zeller's output, this did well on the second day, but other bottlings either caught up or moved past it. It did not improve as much as they did and suddenly it seemed less rather than more concentrated. Still, it's intriguing as well as very tasty, certainly one of the better balanced Vinha do Rio bottlings yet produced. It is also currently the most expressive of Van Zeller's offerings this year, the one that may make you go "oooooh" and "ahhhh" right now. It will still benefit from aging, though. There were just 2,074 bottles and some large format bottles produced. In a tricky vintage, the good news is that these 2013s show well. They should drink beautifully and make everyone happy. Perhaps one advantage to the vintage here is that they are mostly approachable on the early side this year. If, as a group, they are a bit restrained (not always a bad thing) and a bit less intense, they are sensual and nicely balanced. They also fleshed out nicely the next day, showing surprising concentration, more than I thought that they had, especially CV and Vale d. Maria. How did they manage that? Van Zeller provided to me a long and interesting exposition. I'll let him talk: "In reality, our wines show high or higher degree of concentration over the years, even in what may be considered "weak" or difficult years. This is due to many factors, I believe: - Always low yields (we have a very high percentage of very old vineyards – slightly above 60% of all our hectares – and we do a very strict organic viticulture to ensure the highest quality, not looking at all to quantity). - A very, very big mixture of grape varieties in all our wines (we have 41 grape varieties in the Quinta – as an example the small 1.2 hectares of Vinha do Rio has 29 grape varieties in the mixed planting), which I believe is one of the fundamental components of the complexity and good concentration we have in our wines in most, if not all vintages. - We have mostly old vineyards (between 60- to 90-years-old) and these are the ones we use for our CV, Vinha do Rio and Quinta Vale D. Maria Douro Reds, with a high density of vines per hectare (between 6,000 and 7,000 vines per hectare, compared with the modern terraces with 3,100 to 3,500 plants per hectare). Independently of these being very old vines, I firmly believe that it is the mixture of grape varieties and the high density of planting that plays the most important role (just think that some of the best and most iconic Vintage Ports of the XXth century – 1924, 1927, 1931, 1934/1935 – were produced from vineyards that had no more than 15 to 30 years of age, as the end of phylloxera and the rebuilding of the Douro vineyards started at the end of the XIXth century / beginning of the XXth century). Most of our modern terraced vineyards are directed to our Ports. The

only exception here is Vinha da Francisca (planted between 2004 and 2007, with some 3,100 plants per hectare), but where we do a very low yield viticulture and use specially chosen grape varieties for their concentration in structure and aromas (Sousão, Rufete, Tinta Francisca, Touriga Franca and Touriga Nacional – this last one of no more than 5%). I am such a believer in high density planting and mixed planting that we are now planting a new 6,000 m2 plot with some 4,200 vines and 16 grape varieties. - All our reds are foot-trodden in lagares and with an ever increasing percentage of full fermentation in lagares, which, by years of experience, brings out the best and fullest concentration in wines (and smoothest tannins due to the natural oxygenation of the musts during the fermentation period). We have done many experiences over the years with Touriga Franca, to have it possible to compare, fermenting the same grape variety, of the same plot, picked the same day and crushed the same day, half in a 5,000-kilogram lagar and the other half in a 5,000-kilogram stainless steel tank, and fermented fully in the respective vat at the same temperature and using the same yeasts. The resulting wines were pressed in the same press at the same pressure and went in to similar age, size and producer barriques for exactly the same period. The difference between the two wines was always astonishing, the lagar one being richer, with more color, more concentration, smoother tannins but more tannins. A lot of professional people were "fooled" thinking that these were two completely different grape varieties. This is so important for me that I am selling most of our fermentation stainless steel tanks, and transferring the others only for the fermentation of Rufo and similar wines, and replacing them by at least eight new granite stone lagares." Finally, note that Van Zeller has an array of importers. Not everyone brings in everything. Importer(s): Tri-Vin Imports, One Park Ave, Mt. Vernon, NY 10550 ., (914) 664-3155 , www.tri-vin.com Vinum Importing, 1938-D Occidental Ave, S, Seattle, WA 98134 , (206) 621-8843 , www.vinumimporting.com Dionysos Imports, 11581 Robertson Dr, Suite 101, Manassas, VA 20109, (703) 392-7073 , www.dionysosimports.com Regal Wines, 2 Commerce Drive, Suite 3, Moorestown, NJ 08057, (856) 985-6388, www.regalwine.com Perman Wine Selections, Chicago, IL, (312) 666-4417 Favourite Brands, McAllen, TX, (817) 235-0191 World Of Wine Guide Imports & Distribution, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33304, 954-916-7467, www.worldofwineguide.com The Henry Wine Group, Benicia, CA, 707 745 8500
