PRIVATE CELLAR

The 2018 Vintage Port Declaration
by the Fladgate Partnership

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Traditionally, the Fladgate Partnership – Taylor's, Fonseca and Croft – declare a new vintage on St George's Day, two years after the harvest, but 23rd April 2020 saw the world in the grip of the pandemic which has overtaken all our lives; although the 2018 declaration was made, the decision was taken not to release any pricing until we could all get together for a tasting. Little did any of us know just how long that might take but, thanks to the wonders of modern technology, Taylor's despatched samples and organised a virtual launch of the wines. And so, a gloomy lockdown January day was seriously brightened up when the partnership's CEO Adrian Bridge and winemaker David Guimaraens beamed in from Villanova de Gaia for a tasting of Taylor's, Fonseca Guimaraens and Croft Quinta da Roêda, bringing with them a very welcome reminder of the heat of summer and the sheer hedonism of tasting such young, rich wines.

The Douro has seen a particularly good run of vintages in the second half of the current decade after just one declaration in the first half, the textbook 2011. 2015 was good but not universally declared, then 2016 and 2017 became the first back-to-back general declaration for 144 years, so unusual that all the houses found themselves justifying their motives. For Taylor's, releasing the 2018 marks a three-in-a-row, leading Adrian Bridge to state that if the wine is good enough, they will declare – and wonder why no-one made a big deal out of the fact that they declared nothing between 2012 and 2016!

The 2018 growing season began with a cold, dry winter, with the much-needed rains nowhere to be seen; by mid-January, the Portuguese government declared that more than half of Portugal was now in extreme drought. March broke the mould, and 223mm of rain fell, breaking the drought but bringing intense disease pressure on the juvenile buds. Cool, damp weather continued right through until June, something not seen since the late 1980s, retarding the vine growth. Suddenly in early August temperatures began to rise, reaching 44.3°C in the Upper Douro on 5th August, and the fine weather remained all the way through September, allowing the fruit to catch up and ripen beautifully. Picking, which started in the third week of September, was carried out on warm days with warm nights.

David Guimaraens believes that the cool early season has contributed to a lively freshness in the wines whilst the hotter end of summer helped complete the ripening, concentrating the juice in the berries – the best of both worlds. The best conditions were in the Upper Douro, where Taylor's largest vineyard, Quinta de Vargellas, is to be found, whilst conditions were more mixed in Cima Corgo, around Pinhão, where the majority of both Fonseca and Croft's vineyards are, and this is what has led the company to declare a full vintage only for Taylor's, releasing single or blended quintas for the other properties. All three of the wines have an astonishing, vibrant freshness allied to lovely rich fruit, but there is no doubt that the Taylor's stands head and shoulders above the other two – as should be expected.

Nicola Arcedeckne-Butler MW

1st February 2021

		£ per case in bond
	6 bottles per case	£88
Croft Quinta da Roêda 2018	12 halves per case	£93

Bought by the Fladgate Partnership in 2001, with Quinta da Roêda, close to Pinhão, forming the heart of the property; 100-year-old vineyards.

Vibrant purple black, with a nose of orange blossom, cassis, dusty cacao, rockrose, tight but also explosive black skinned fruit. On the palate, rich and sweet, again a hint of rockrose, mineral, with a tasty walnut note leading to a finish which starts quietly and then broadens with cassis, vanilla, some floral tones and a lovely sweet finish. Drink 2026-2045

	6 bottles per case	£120
	12 halves per case	£125
Fonseca Guimaraens 2018	3 magnums per case	£125

A blend of three quintas, all in the central Cima Corgo: Quinta do Panascal, Quinta do Cruzeiro and Quinta de Santo Antonio; Panascal, organically farmed, forms the backbone of a Fonseca vintage port.

Deeper and denser in colour with a nose of tight, dusty black skinned fruit, inky and mineral, perfumed yet more closed too; much more complex on the palate than the Roêda, dusty black fruits, sweet and rich, with a lovely tang of acidity, with substantial supple tannins behind and going to a long, floral, blackcurrant finish which grows and develops. Drink 2030-2050+

	6 bottles per case	£335
	12 halves per case	£340
Taylor's 2018	3 magnums per case	£340

100% Estate grown fruit from three quintas: Quinta do Junco and Quinta di Terra Feita in Pinhão, and Quinta de Vargellas in the Douro Superior; average age of the vines is around 50 years, with some extremely old vines in Vargellas of 80-120 years old.

Dense and dark to the edge with a nose of tight, slightly feral, savoury dark fruits, brooding, nothing truly overt, mineral, with just a touch of rockrose on the edge. On the palate deliciously supple black fruits, rich, ripe, mouth-watering and savoury, with fine but grippy tannins, mineral again with perfumed, even exotic, musky fruits going to a long, layered, multi-faceted, beautifully balanced finish. Just superb. Drink 2040-2060+

To order, please call us on 01353 721 999 or email your salesperson or orders@privatecellar.co.uk.

These wines are offered per case, in bond, subject to remaining unsold, and will be available for delivery in the autumn. Please note that some wines are in very limited supply and may be allocated.
Private Cellar's *en primeur* terms and conditions of sale apply.

E&OE


FONSECA
PORTO
GUIMARAENS
VINTAGE PORT
2018
BOTTLED IN 2020
FONSECA GUIMARAENS , PRODUCT OF PORTUGAL
BOTTLED BY QUINTA AND VINEYARD BOTTLERS - VINHOS SA, V.N. DE GAIA, PORTUGAL
TAYLOR'S
VINTAGE PORT
BOTTLED BY QUINTA AND VINEYARD BOTTLERS-VINHOS S.A.
VILA NOVA DE GAIA, PORTUGAL • PRODUCT OF PORTUGAL
BOTTLED IN 2020
2018
2018
QUINTA DA
ROEDA
VINTAGE PORT
CROFT
est.
1588