



## WINE TALK

## Small is beautiful

By PATRICK STUART  
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Some of the most interesting wines I have tried over recent years have been those produced by small "off the radar" producers and this is what drew me to attend a wine tasting event last weekend at *Wine Emotions* in Carvoeiro.

This small wine distribution company, catering mostly to the restaurant trade, has gathered together a portfolio of producers that whilst including some of the better-known names in Portuguese wine, such as Niepoort and Luís Pato, has earned itself a reputation for championing tiny producers whose production is so small that it is unlikely to ever reach the export market or, much less, the shelves of supermarkets.

These are pet projects, designed and nurtured by people who had a dream of creating their own wine and have done so with true passion.

The producer I was most keen to meet at the tasting was Tiago Teles, whose Gilda red from the Bairrada region I have already written about in this column.

But I was even more impressed with Maria da Graça, a red with just 11% alcohol that in structure is somewhere between a Pinot Noir and a Beaujolais, yet is produced entirely from local grape varieties.

I was equally pleased to see the familiar face of Vitor Claro at the tasting. Chef/owner of the excellent Claro Restaurant in Paço de Arcos near Lisbon, Vitor has been producing small quantities of wine at his vineyard near Portalegre, in the upper reaches of the Alentejo, for a few years now, although I had not had the chance to try them before. Whenever I have visited his restaurant, they have been sold out! His wines are elegant and beautifully balanced, quite unlike anything from the lower plains of the Alentejo.

Elsewhere at the tasting, I sampled some outstanding bottle-aged Alvarinhos from San Joanne in the Minho. Their Superior label from the 2007 and 2009 vintage both demonstrate how well the Alvarinho grape



Tiago Teles



Vitor Claro

is suited to producing wines of structure and substance with serious ageing potential.

And another surprise was Quinta das Bageiras, a Bairrada producer whose name I knew mostly from their *aguardente velha* (brandy). But they produce some outstanding sparkling wines, especially their 2004 vintage, along with an impressive range of Bairrada reds and whites.

These lesser known wines offered for sale by Wine Emotions are not easy to find but all are available from the Terroir wine shop and restaurant in Carvoeiro.

## Charity wine tasting dinner



**FOOD BANK** || A wine tasting dinner to raise funds for the Algarve Food Bank is being held on April 16 at Restaurant/Garrafeira Veneza, near Paderne, at 8pm.

Organised by the Algarve chapter of the Rotarian Wine Appreciation Fellowship, the event will take place in the wine-drenched atmosphere of the *garrafeira* (cellar).

The Rotary Clubs in the Algarve have supported the Food Bank with various projects in the past. Funds are once again being raised for this vital association, this time to purchase equipment needed at the Portimão satellite warehouse.

With the May food collection drive fast approaching, the Food Bank needs additional equipment to handle the increase in stock.

Several wines will be presented and served with appropriately matched food.

The event is sponsored by Herdade do Mouchão (pictured) and distributor Heritage Wines. Director David Ferreira will be there to personally introduce the wines, which will also be available for sale on the evening at special promotional prices.

*The price for the evening is €35, with €10 from each ticket to benefit the charity.*

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