

THE HOUSE OF SKEFFINGTON

The distinguished port house of Skeffington has its origins in the late 19th century. Charles Neville Skeffington worked as the resident partner for the Yeatman family whose business interests included the port firm of Taylor, Fladgate and Yeatman. His role in running the operations in Portugal led him to forge strong links with growers in the Douro region. It was this intimate knowledge, and the strong relationships that he formed with farmers, that allowed him to source the very best grapes for the production of port.

In recognition of this work a company was formed in his name. The company has a full range of ports the grapes for which are now sourced from the ancestors of the original farmers with which Charles Skeffington worked so closely.

Its vintage port, which is only made in exceptional years, comes, in part, from the Grade A Quinta de Vale dos Muros, a property situated in the Tavora valley. These vintage ports are elegant and supple offering excellent value in a smooth, approachable style.

At the Skeffington lodge in Vila Nova de Gaia, the wood ports are carefully nurtured to maturity before being offered to the market. These wines are sold around the world and in particular in the United Kingdom where some appear under as a buyer's own brand for several quality retailers.

The spirit of Charles Skeffington continues not only with the quality port that he loved but through his other passion - golf. One of the oldest golf courses in Europe, just south of Oporto, is known as the 'Skeffington Links' in recognition of his help in establishing the course.

1983 Vintage

The wet spring of 1983, following an extremely cold winter, disrupted the flowering and resulted in a poor bud set. July and August were not good ; the former being too dry and the latter too wet. By late August most people had resolved themselves to the fact that it would be a poor harvest. However, as so often happens, nature surprised, and late August and September saw temperatures five degrees Centigrade higher than normal. This completely changed the situation and when harvest began in early October the fruit was full and sweet. The resulting wines were rich and aromatic.

The wines have developed well into lovely smooth soft wines. They are jammy on the mouth with a delicious finish. Though at their peak now they should last for several more years.

1985 Vintage

The weather pattern of 1985 followed a more classic pattern. The cold wet winter was followed by a good spring and long hot summer. Picking as a result started early in September under ideal conditions - warm days but cool nights which helps these foot trodden wines to reach their full potential.

The Skeffington 1985 is no exception. The wine is inky with a berry fruit nose. On the mouth it is full and rich, still showing some tannins which are a mark of its aging ability. Drinking well now but should improve over the next five years.

1994 Vintage

Following 1993, a washed out vintage, the rains continued in early Spring and ensured that the water table was replenished after some dry years. Sadly the rains continued during flowering resulting in a crop reduction of 40% in some parts. From then on the conditions were perfect with picking starting in mid September. Though small, the crop was of exceptional quality with good colour and high sugar levels. During treading it was evident that the wines that would be produced would have a rich, fruity nose with real fruit and power on the mouth - very reminiscent of the young 1985's.

The wines are deep purple in colour. The nose shows good fruit and depth, with hints of chocolate. In the mouth the wine shows its intensity of fruit and flavour with the accompanying strong tannins. This is fine example of some of the best young vintage port in years.

2000 Vintage

The viticultural year was overall quite dry, following a wet 1999 vintage year. The lack of water during the beginning of the year limited the budburst development and therefore reduced the potential yields. Rain did however arrive in the Douro over the months of April and May. The region received almost half the annual average rainfall in a space of two months. This did have an impact on the berry formation, reducing the yields from the region to around a 1/3 of the 1999 vintage. This wet spell was followed by a warm dry growing season that finish with perfect ripening conditions during the end of August and the beginning of September. The ripening of the grapes was rounded off by a few days of light rain between the 10th - 18th of September, allowing the harvest to start on the 20th of September.

The resulting wines were dark purple in colour, full of rich black fruit aromas. A well rounded wine with structure, surrounded by a rich intensity of blackberry and chocolate flavours with good tannin balance.

2003 Vintage

The 2002/2003 winter was also very wet, which helped to replenish the water reserves that were depleted during the previous year's dry growing season. Budburst occurred in the 3rd week of March and flowering at the end of May in almost perfect conditions. Warm growing conditions continued until the first week of August when the region saw its first intense heat wave. This lasted for two weeks after which the temperatures cooled down with two days of light rain that help the ripening of the grapes. Picking began on the 12th of September in the Douro Superior. The harvest occurred in excellent conditions with a short heat wave during the second half September, cooled down with 2 days of rain during the last week of September. This was followed by perfect weather until the end of the harvest on the 10th of October. Yields were above average across all vine varieties helped by the excellent growing conditions earlier in the season. 2003 could well be considered a 'text book year' for good port production.

Very intense purple colour with a bright magenta rim. Wonderfully complex, multi-dimensional nose redolent of cedar, gumscistus and rich plummy fruit, with attractive delicate spicy notes. The palate is round and full, showing an abundance of luscious jammy flavour and a solid framework of muscular tannins.