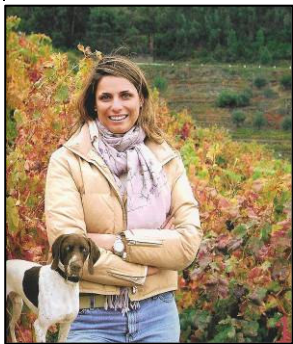


WINE

ENTHUSIAST

SANDRA TAVARES DA SILVA
Quinta do Vale Donna Maria
Douro Valley, Portugal



For decades in Portugal's Douro Valley, women weren't allowed to tread grapes in the *lagares* to make Port. At one quinta I visited only a few years ago, I was told that the tradition still persisted. But that hasn't stopped wine maker Sandra Tavares da Silva from jumping in with

both feet. She was born outside the Douro and modeled internationally before settling on winemaking as a career.

Tavares's full time job is winemaker at Quinta do Vale Dona Maria, a 47-acre estate with 25 acres of 40-year-old vines in the Rio Torto region of the Douro. The estate is managed by Christiano van Zeller (former owner of Quinta do Noval), whose wife's family has owned the quinta for more than 150 years; up until the mid 1990s the property was leased to the Symington group. Now, in addition to producing Port, Tavares is making table wines to rival Portugal's best, from such native grape varieties as Tinta Amarela, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, Touriga Francesa, Touriga Nacional and others.

Besides Dona Maria, Tavares has her hands full of other winemaking projects: Van Zeller's Quinta do Vale da Mina (also in the Douro) and Pintas, a Douro wine she is developing with her husband, Jorge Serôdio Borges (winemaker for Niepoort). The first vintage of Pintas should be the 2001. There's also Quinta do Chocapalha, her family's estate in Estremadura. All of her wines show modern suppleness and mouthfeel married to the traditional flavors of regional grape varieties.

— JOE CZERWINSKI