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Herdade do Rocim

Since my first visit to Herdade do Rocim back in the autumn of 2010, I was happy to find that this superb estate now has an American importer (Langdon-Shiverick) and the wines are now quite available here in the states. On my most recent trip, I did not have an opportunity to visit the estate, but was fortunate to have samples sent of several of their new releases for inclusion in this article. Rather than rewrite background information on the winery, I have culled some facts from the last article on the region and include them here for new subscribers who may not have seen the feature on the estate in Issue 31. As I noted in my first piece on the region back in Issue 31, Herdade do Rocim is widely recognized as one of the top two or three estates in the entire Alentejo, with both their reds and their whites ranked amongst the very best that region has to offer at the present time. The domaine is located in the southern Alentejo, between the towns of Vidigueira and Cuba. The very

talented young woman behind the wines is the charming Catarina Vieira, whose family created Herdade do Rocim in 2000, purchasing the one hundred hectare ranch that is now home to the winery and which already had a few parcels of older vine Trincadeira, Aragonez, Arinto and Antão Vaz planted here when they purchased the property. Further vineyards were laid out to bring the land under vine on the estate up to just over sixty hectares, with Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah added to the mix of grape varieties planted on the property. The family also set about building a new winery and have created one of the most architecturally striking in the Alentejo, with its clean and modern lines burrowing into the surrounding hillside and really at one with its surroundings. The interior of the winery is strikingly modern, with an airy and casual aesthetic that is a beautiful foil to the refined and very complex wines produced here. As is the case with several other of the top estates in the Alentejo, the winery offers a wide range of amenities, with a superb restaurant, wine bar and conference center, and there are plans well under way to build a small hotel to complete the compound.

On my visit to the winery in October of 2010, there had been two distinct labels at the winery- Rocim for the more basic bottlings and Olho de Mocho for the Reservas. There were also several specific bottlings in addition these two, which include a big and oaky Grande Rocim and a superb wine from a family vineyard planted in the outskirts of Lisbon, called Vale da Mata. Today there is an additional layer of bottlings, that appear under the Mariana label and are now the entry level wines from the property. While a few of the bottlings at the winery are raised in entirely new wood (naturally the Grande Rocim falls into this category), in the few short years that the winery has been open, the oak regimen has evolved briskly in the direction away from a high percentage of new oak, and many of the Reservas are now done with fifty percent new wood or less. Sagely, Catarina Vieira did not send me any of the oakier cuvées for inclusion in this article, so I am not even sure if she is still producing these wines. Herdade do Rocim is clearly one of the shining stars in the Alentejo.



2012 Mariana Branco- Herdade do Rocim

The 2012 Mariana Branco from Herdade do Rocim is comprised of a blend of sixty percent Antão Vaz, thirty percent Arinto and ten percent Alvarinho, with the wine fermented and raised entirely in stainless steel tanks. The 2012 comes in at a cool 12.5 percent alcohol and offers up a lovely and vibrant bouquet of pear, lime blossoms, lovely, white soil tones, a touch of fresh almond and wild fennel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively light on its feet, with a good core, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. A fine bottle. 2013-2016. 89+.

2012 Herdade do Rocim Vinho Branco

The 2012 Rocim Branco is made from a blend of Antão Vaz, Arinto and Roupeiro and tips the scales at a ripe and civilized thirteen percent octane. The wine is raised entirely stainless steel as well and offers up lovely precision and vibrancy on both the nose and palate. The aromatic constellation of the 2012 wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of tart pear, green melon, a touch of green olive, salty soil tones, beeswax, wild fennel, lime peel and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, with a deep core of fruit, lovely soil signature, sound framing acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex and beautifully focused finish. This seems just a touch softer than the Mariana Branco 2012, and I suspect that it should probably be drunk a bit sooner. A beautiful wine for near-term consumption. 2013-2015. 91.

2011 Olho de Mocho Branco “Reserva”- Herdade do Rocim

While I have only tasted a couple of vintages of the Olho de Mocho Branco, I find it is quickly becoming one of my favorite white wines in the region, as its gently oaky and classy personality really works well at the table. The 2011 Olho de Mocho Branco Reserva was made entirely from Antão Vaz, from the domaine’s oldest vines and came in at a ripe, but again, quite civilized thirteen percent alcohol. The bouquet is deep, complex and beautifully presented, offering up scents of tart pear, beeswax, lovely, white soil tones, wild fennel, spring flowers and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with excellent focus and balance, a rock solid core, a generous, but well-measured framing of new wood, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and elegant finish. This is a white wine of high aspiration and the 2011 version has really turned out beautifully. High class juice and a beautiful barometer of just how good the white wines can be in the Alentejo. 2013-2018. 93+.

2011 Mariana Tinto- Herdade do Rocim

The cépages of the 2011 Mariana Tinto from Herdade do Rocim is made up of Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet and Cabernet Sauvignon and the wine is raised entirely in stainless steel tanks prior to bottling, and then held in the cellars an additional three months in bottle to allow the wine to blossom a bit prior to release. The 2011 is fourteen percent alcohol and excellent, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of roasted meat, cigar ash, a nice base of soil and just a touch of leafy tones from the Alicante. I really like the influence of the Cabernet on the blend, which gives the wine a nice vein of Médoc-like aromatics. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off plenty of mid-palate depth, moderate tannins and excellent focus and grip on the very long, slightly chewy and quite complex finish. High class juice. 2013-2023. 90.

2011 Herdade do Rocim Vinho Tinto

The 2011 Herdade do Rocim Vinho Tinto is a more complex blend of grape varieties than the Mariana Tinto, as it includes Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Trincadeira, Aragonez and Syrah. The wine sees a touch of new wood during its élevage, but the wood is handled very suavely on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up a superb blend of cassis, black cherries, bitter chocolate, cigar smoke, a beautiful base of soil, a touch of new leather and a gentle base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and still quite primary, with a great core of pure fruit, excellent soil inflection, firm, well-integrated tannins and stunning length and grip on the still very youthful and palate staining finish. This wine comes in at fourteen percent alcohol and really shows that this is the “sweet spot” for ripeness in the region, as this wine is perfectly balanced for long-term cellaring. A superb wine. 2017-2030+. 93.

2010 Olho de Mocho Tinto “Reserva”- Herdade do Rocim

The 2010 Olho de Mocho Tinto Reserva is a superb wine that really shows off the elegance found in all of this estate’s wines. The bouquet is a complex blend of black cherries, sweet cassis, dark chocolate, a bit of garrigue, a lovely base of soil, fresh herb tones and a nice framing cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, ripe tannins and excellent focus and grip on the well-balanced, complex and very classy finish. This wine will age very well, though it is so nicely balanced that it is eminently approachable today. My inclination would be to tuck it away in the cellar for at least a few years to allow its secondary layers to start to emerge. Fine and very classy juice. 2015-2030+. 92+.