

2009 Sidonio de Sousa Garrafeira

The 2009 Garrafeira is all Baga, sourced from calcareous clay soils. It was aged for 24 months in well-used Portuguese oak vats (100 years old; 4,000-liter barrels). It comes in at 13.5% alcohol. The massive bottle is impressive. How's the wine? It's a hard-edged beast that, even with late release, is powerful, acidic and astringent. The mid-palate is a bit less impressive. With 90 minutes or so of air, all of those things improved dramatically, though, and this revealed itself as a pretty serious puppy. Then, the earthier nuances of pure, unadorned and transparent Baga kick in. Dry and gripping, silky in texture, it has a hint of tar, earth and game. With more air, there is just a whisper of menthol, too. Leaning more to the rustic and not even a little sweet, this is not a wine anyone will ever think of calling hedonistic, but I was pleased to see it flesh out a bit with aeration and show better fruit, too. That said, this is most certainly a food wine and you'll be best served treating it as you might an old style Barolo. Eschewing modern formulas, it won't be an easy sipper. It does have some questions to answer in the cellar, but I'm willing to lean up just now for its superior structure and upside potential. Depending on you...

- Mark Squires (January, 2015)

**2012 Sidonio de Sousa Rose Brut
Nature Espumante**

The 2012 Rose Brut Nature Espumante is all Baga. This nice sparkler is from a vintage the winery lauds as exceptional for sparklers. Dry, powerful and a bit bitter on the end, this is a rather intense and very crisp pink that offers a lot of value for the price range. It is also high in character, just a little earthy as well as gripping, with considerable tension on the finish. It won't always seem like your easy, walk-a-round bubbles, the acidity and dryness balancing out the good fruit, but it is pretty fine. Owner Paulo Sousa says this can easily be held if well stored for 2-3 years in the cellar. I have no doubt about that, but I frankly think it will do much better. Let's not gamble too much just yet, but it should be safe for awhile. Drink now-2020.

One thing Americans should all be learning about Bairrada is that it is a great source for inexpensive bubbly that has power and character at a reasonable price. Baga is a nice base for sparklers, with good acidity and that earthy character.

Importer: NLC Wines, Brooklyn, NY; tel. (917) 297-7407

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NLC Wines, Brooklyn, N.Y., (917) 297-7407, WWW.NLCWINES.COM

- Mark Squires (August, 2014)

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TOP 10

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5º VINHO TINTO

6º VINHO TINTO