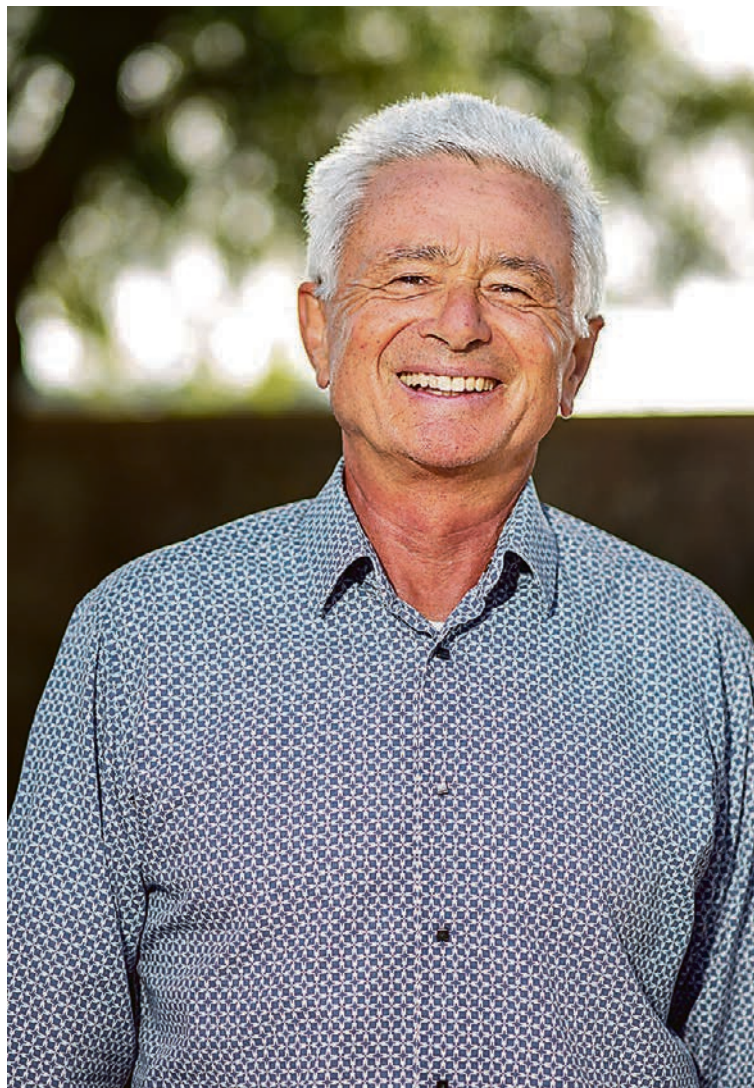


The secrets of wine production

What most wine-experts don't even know



Question 1 – To start things off, please introduce yourself.

KHS – My name is Karl Stock, I am the founder and manager of Quinta dos Vales, one of the leading wineries here in the Algarve. In 2006 I decided to say goodbye to the money-driven business world of my past, and instead I decided to focus on my two passions, wine and art.

That is how Quinta dos Vales was born, and these days we are the most awarded and renowned winery in our region. It has been a long journey but I put the right team around myself and was resolute about approaching wine production in an honest way.

Question 2 – What do you con-

sider to be the most important secret of wine production?

KHS – It may sound like a cliché but the most important factor in wine production is authenticity. A good wine is made out in the field, not in the lab. The idea behind wine production is to nurture and guide the production process, but always allowing nature to lead the way. But unfortunately this is financially challenging, so these days this approach is the exception rather than the rule. It's a lot easier to add substances which enhance flavours or reduce ageing requirements of a wine, the financial advantages are easy to understand.

To give a simple example, when you purchase a Fanta, you know that the flavour doesn't originate from actual oranges, but you are aware of this. Whereas when you buy a wine, you hope and expect the opposite, namely that you are tasting a product that comes from nature. A wine which has not been manipulated in the lab is called a natural wine, but producing a natural wine is exponentially more costly which is why it is now a rarity.

Question 3 – Can you give some examples of this?

KHS – Sure, the easiest example is ageing time. Almost all natural red wines needs years of ageing before they are ready for enjoyment, tannins simply require that prolonged period of micro-oxidation to become round and palatable. Hence the saying "aged like fine wine".

But there's a simple short-cut available, named "Gum Arabic", an extract from the Acacia tree. Add this to a young red wine and all of a sudden it tastes rounded, smooth and full-bodied.

But without a doubt, the example that makes me smile the most is when a young red wine has that recognisable red berry flavour. This flavour can and does develop in natural wines, but this takes years to develop, and before the age of 3-4 years is barely noticeable. So what can give young red wines this pronounced flavour? Berries, actual red berries that are dried, crushed and poured into the wine. This is a common practice, and fully permitted, even in organic wines, as long as the berries are produced organically.

Question 4 – How is it possible that experts are unaware of this?

KHS – Well, it depends on their area of expertise. All wine producers are fully aware of this, it's no secret in those fields. But many, if not most, "experts" who focus on the sensorial aspects of wine do not learn enough about actual wine production. So when we read about the incredible red berry flavour of a wine that's only 1-2 years old all we can do is smile, because without a doubt we know which field this flavour came from, and there are definitely no grapes in that field. I don't discourage anyone from drinking industrial produced wines, I sometimes drink them myself. But when I choose to

drink one I do so knowingly, and don't think of comparing it to a natural wine, because it's simply a completely different world.

Question 5 – So if you are so clearly stating that producing a natural wine is financially the wrong decision, why continue?

KHS – We are fortunate in the sense that wine production was never intended to be profitable for Quinta dos Vales. We produce a completely authentic wine because this is a passion project for me, and it is what I believe in. When I decided to enter the wine world I was aware of this fact, and knew that if I wanted to make a wine that I can be proud of, I would need to make a profit elsewhere. Which is why we have focussed so strongly on wine tourism, the profits generated there allow us to make no compromises in our wine production.

However, having said that, there are of course benefits to this stubborn approach. 2020 was a catastrophe for almost all sectors of our business, but one great positive was our mail order business. Not only did we have a record year in shipping wine all over Europe and the rest of the world, but more important than that is the rate of repeat business. Once people make their first purchase with us, they're almost guaranteed to order again. This encouragement and positive feedback leads back to what we've always preached, quality and authenticity.
<https://www.quintadosvales.pt>

