

Quinta do Noval

March 26th 2026



Act I

Silence is not the absence of sound.

Silence is the moment when everything within me and around me holds its breath.

It is when the room is still there – yet everything within it suddenly feels larger. When even the smallest movement becomes an event: a chair shifting a few millimeters, a floorboard giving way, a breath growing heavier, a heartbeat sounding just a little too loud in the chest.

In intense silence, I become aware of things I normally do not hear: the pulse of blood in my ears, the cotton of a shirt brushing against the skin, thoughts making far more noise than anything from the outside world.

It can be heavy, like snow falling over a landscape at night.
Or sharp, like an empty church after the final note has faded.

And sometimes silence feels almost physical — like a pressure in the air, as if the world leans in, listening for something not yet spoken.

It is there, in the silence, that everything important emerges... and the silence dissolves into a crescendo of aromas, flavours, clinking glasses and increasingly uninhibited observations around the table.

An overview of the glasses, their colours, and a first attempt to place the wines. Glasses are lifted. Noses lean toward the rim, and the room fills once more with concentrated silence, as each person tries to capture the wines' first signals. The first small sips are taken. Eyes drop to the glasses. Some nod almost imperceptibly, others lean back, letting the taste gather before words begin to form.

First a single remark. Then another.

Soon, words begin to move around the table like small waves – dark fruit, lighter tones, spice, warmth, structure. Tentative assessments become opinions, and opinions turn into discussions. Do they need more air?

The silence that filled the room just moments ago is gone.
The tasting has begun.



Intermezzo

The path to this evening, however, had its own small dilemma – right up until the final minutes before the tasting.

The decision to host a tasting of wines from Quinta do Noval had been discussed at several board meetings before being made. Deciding how to execute it proved almost as difficult.

The challenge lay in a name that makes all of us listen more closely: Nacional. Four vintages were to be presented. But for three of them, only a single bottle existed.

And so the question arose. One of those questions that is, in truth, a luxury problem – yet no less a real dilemma:

Should the experience be reserved for a smaller group of fifteen, allowing for slightly more generous pours? Should a second bottle be acquired, increasing the cost of the tasting by 2–4 thousand kroner?

Or should thirty members gather around the table and accept smaller pours – just enough for the nose to find the glass and the palate to form an impression?

Two paths. Both tempting. Neither without compromise.

In the end, the choice was relatively clear.

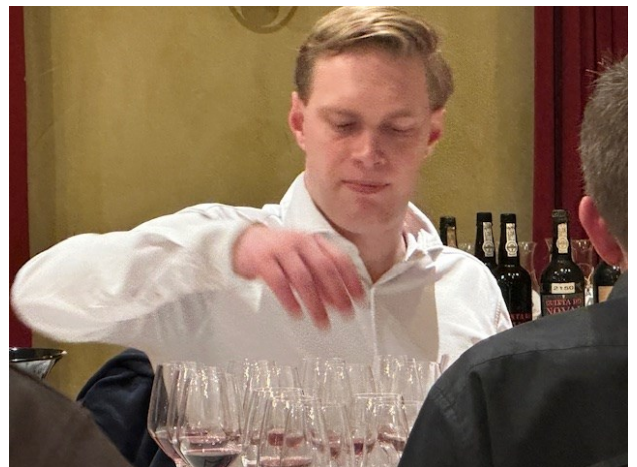
If something this rare is opened, it must be shared.

Which led to the next challenge: upon closer inspection, the 1964 showed a low fill level. Had it been exposed to too much air? Was it flawed?

A reserve had to be called upon. A 1996 was brought along – just in case the 1964 failed.

Fortunately, it did not.

And so the 1996 was sent back into the darkness.



Main Course

And so, thirty now sit around the table. Not every glass is filled – but each contains exactly what is needed.

Perhaps that is precisely why each glass is lifted just a little more slowly. Why every aroma is examined a little more carefully. Why each sip is considered beforehand and allowed to linger just a moment longer. When there is only a little in the glass, attention inevitably becomes greater.

It is felt around the table. No one rushes. Glasses are turned slowly, thoughtfully, as the colour is studied against the light. Noses return to the glass. First cautiously, then with more insistence. The aromas begin to unfold: dark fruit, perhaps blackcurrant, perhaps boysenberry. Something spicy. Something warm.

The first words are spoken. Not loudly – not yet – but clearly enough to set thoughts in motion around the table.

Has it crossed into tawny territory?

Does it smell and taste better than the colour suggests?

More return to the glass. Taste again. Let the wine roll once more across the palate, as if the answer might be hiding there.

Soon, reflections move around the table. Vintages are named. The four different ruby styles are debated. Some nod, others gently shake their heads.

And this is where it truly begins – the quiet pursuit of understanding what actually lies in the glass.



Not just one glass at a time, but a sequence of wines slowly unfolding. Aroma after aroma. Taste after taste. Judgments shifting as the wines are revisited and evolve in the glass.

As always with tastings of this kind, the wines do not present themselves uniformly. Some step forward immediately, revealing their qualities without hesitation. Others require more time before they show themselves. And a few reveal a less fortunate side – as sometimes happens with bottles that have aged for decades.

Yet as the glasses are gradually emptied and the discussions settle slightly, the outlines begin to form. A picture of the evening. Of the wines – and how they were experienced around the table.

Epilogue

The glasses are gradually emptied, and the impressions of the evening begin to gather.

Tastings with bottles of this age almost always present a varied picture. Some wines stand exactly as hoped – vibrant, complex, with the depth that has made Quinta do Noval a name that raises expectations long before the glass is lifted. Others bear traces of their long journey through time; a hint of fatigue here, a slight imbalance there. Such are the conditions when wine has had decades to evolve in bottle.

Yet one thing remains clear.

Even when a Nacional does not show itself from its very best side, there is an intensity and a composure in the wine that is unmistakable.

It is not just great wine.

It is wine that makes an entire table listen more closely.

Later, chairs are pushed back, conversations fade, and the door closes behind the last guests.

At the table, a few glasses still remain, each with a dark residue at the bottom. The scent of wine lingers in the air. The silence has returned.

The same silence as before it all began – but now with an experience richer.

And that is, in truth, what I take with me.

Great wines are not only found in the bottle – but in the moment in which they are shared.



The Verdict

There was one bottle of Noval LBV 1991 (magnum), as well as Nacional 1964, 1975, and 1978. All 30 participants therefore had wine from the same bottle for each of these wines in their glasses.

Nacional 1964 and 1975 appeared significantly lighter, with yellow-brown hues, which led to a discussion about how Parker's scoring scale should be interpreted and points awarded. While most agreed that these wines tasted magnificent, some felt they did not perform as expected for wines of this calibre, resulting in a deduction in points.

Noval Vintage Port 1997 was found to be corked at Table A.

Participants' scores:

Rank	Wine	Points
1	Quinta do Noval VP 1970	90.9
2	Quinta do Noval VP 1982	90.8
3	Quinta do Noval VP 2000	89.0
4	Quinta do Noval VP Silval 2001	88.5
5	Quinta do Noval VP Nacional 1975	87.4
6	Quinta do Noval LBV 2016	87.1
7	Quinta do Noval VP Nacional 1978	86.9
8	Quinta do Noval VP 1991	86.7
9	Quinta do Noval VP Nacional 1980	86.6
10	Quinta do Noval VP Nacional 1964	85.4
11	Quinta do Noval LBV 1991	84.3
12	Quinta do Noval VP 1997	80.7

We would like to thank everyone who participated – we look forward to seeing you again.