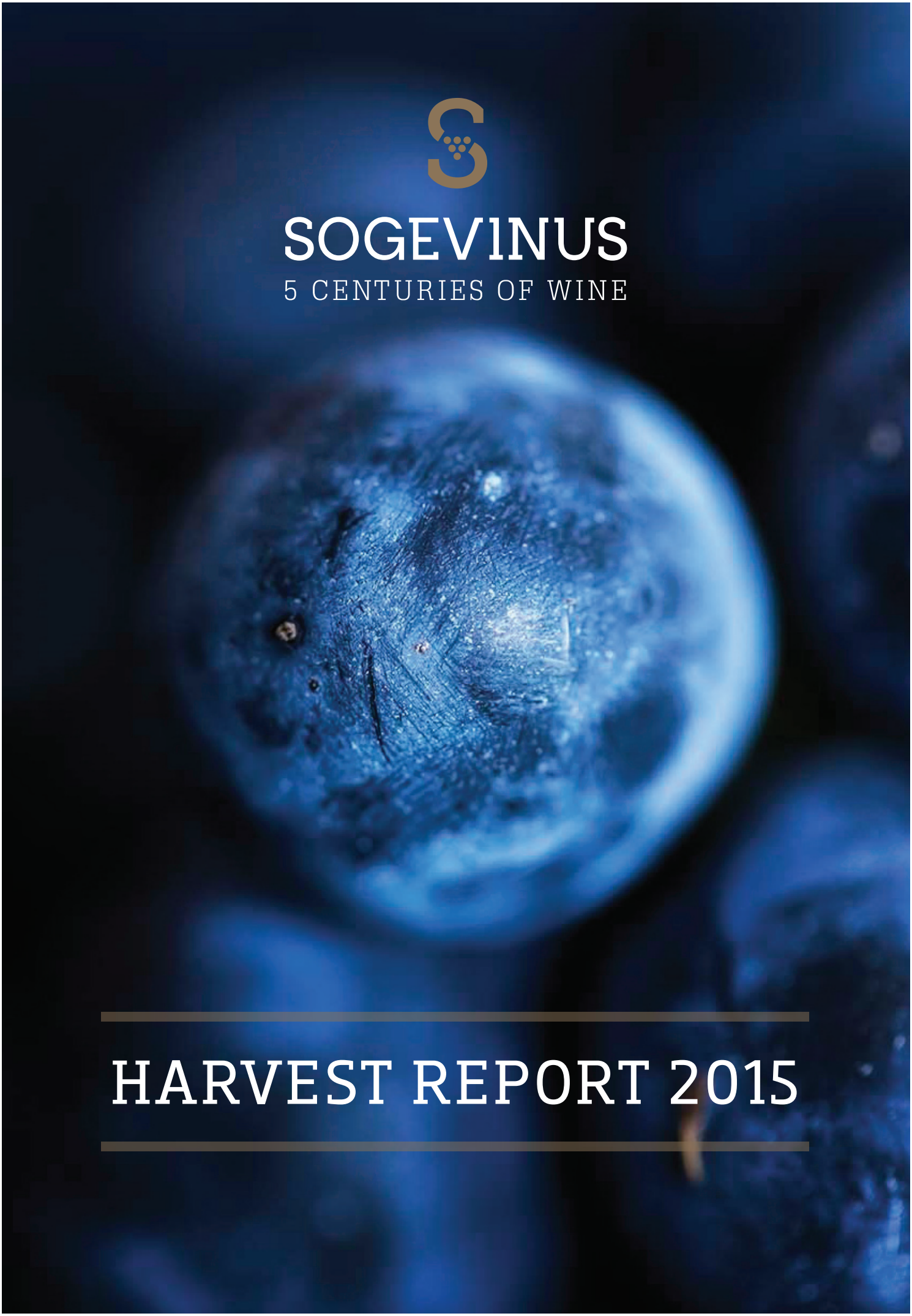
SOGEVINUS

5 CENTURIES OF WINE



HARVEST REPORT 2015

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STORIES OF THE HARVEST IN THE DOURO.

At Sogevinus, the preparation for the harvest happens throughout the company at every level. Everyone is involved, each one contributing, so the end result is the best possible!
Nature, on the other hand, will either help or thwart the end result, something we have learned to respect and take on as a challenge, every year that goes by.

NO MATTER HOW THE YEAR GOES, IN AUGUST THINGS ALWAYS HEAT UP.

At the end of April, Márcio, Sogevinus' head of viticulture revealed his observing character by pointing out the amount of blossoming on the vines. He shared a photograph in which one could see a blackbird's nest with the following caption: "Mother Nature is telling us that this will be a relatively dry spring: the blackbird has nested on the ground, in a soil that usually is flooded at this time of the year, instead of on the tree, as usual." In May, after the grapes started growing, Márcio gave us his production forecasts.

This year's weather conditions during the blossoming were indeed very favourable. It is worth noting that in our Quinta de S. Luiz the accumulated precipitation at that time was 63% lower than the average of the last 30 years. We also experienced the effects of El Niño, which is a sign of exceptionally warm summers in Europe.

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HEALTHY GRAPES IN THE RIPENING STAGE.

By mid August, during the first inspections of the grapevines (both on our own Quintas and our viticulturers') to control their ripening stage, we discovered good development of the grapes, and some precociousness compared to 2014. The vine-growing year was excellent in terms of the grape's health. However, due to the dry weather, the vines suffered from water recess very prematurely, which prompted the production of small clusters. In spite of this, it is expected to be an excellent year, as the grapes are healthy. August's cool nights have helped the vines to retain some water.

GOALS REACHED AND EXCEEDED.

Sogevinus' Port wine oenologist, Carlos, and our DOC Douro table wine oenologist, Ricardo, had predicted a difficult year because of the drought, which can cause irregular ripening. That didn't happen this time. In fact, the production was higher than 2014. Our goals were to reach 7 million litres of Port wine and 1.3 million litres of DOC Douro table wine.

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OUR HARVEST, TRADITION AND TECHNIQUE.

The harvest began in Quinta de S. Luiz on 26 August at 7 in the morning – one week earlier than last year. We started with the grape variety Viosinho, used for DOC Douro wines.

In the first week of September, we began harvesting our white Port wines and some super premium plots with specific red grapes varieties, used for both Port and DOC Douro wines. The first day is always quite hectic! Despite the fact that all equipment is tested before the harvesting, there are always things to be tuned so that everything runs smoothly.

The first grapes received in the Winery of S. Martinho (our Winemaking Centre for Port wine) were of the variety Touriga Nacional, arriving from Quinta do Arnozelo in the Upper Douro subregion. The grapes were considered to be excellent quality. The winemaking team was looking forward to tasting the first musts, and Carlos and Ricardo were overheard whispering that this will be an excellent year! Yet the good years are not necessarily easy years. By the third day of the harvesting of the Port wine red grapes, the first musts were not fermenting due to the decrease of the room temperature, and a worried Carlos even pondered whether to heat up the "lagares" so that the natural yeasts would initiate the fermentation.

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THE RAIN CAME AND ONCE AGAIN THE DOURO SMELLED OF WET EARTH.

Tradition says that during the harvesting there is always rain, and this year was no exception. In the middle of September we had to halt the grape cutting for three days at Quintas de S. Luiz e Arnozelo. 19th September was a record day in terms of receiving grapes in our winery: 127,000 kilos!

We often find grapes are unevenly ripened, even from the same vineyard. Our work in the winery is vital in solving this problem – by deciding which grape varieties to blend and what is the ideal moment to extract the best of each one.

TIME REFINES A GOOD WINE. ALL GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT.

The Port wines that have been made this year are superb. The white Ports are rather aromatic and full-bodied, and the red are deep in colour, with smooth tannins and a rather extraordinarily complex nose. However, when talking about Port Wines, we know that they need time to reveal all their qualities. And so, to be able to confirm our opinions about the 2015 wines, we need to be patient. We shall wait for winter to arrive in the Douro region and only afterwards will these precious liquids show us all their exuberance.

"WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL IN THIS WORLD, AND BRINGS US JOY, IS TO FIND THAT IN THE HARVEST OF EVERY DREAM, THE ROOSTOCK REMAINS, DREAMING OF ITS NEXT ADVENTURE."

Miguel Torga

Portuguese poet from the Douro Valley