

RICH AND SATISFYING, BREATHTAKINGLY BEAUTIFUL



QUINTA NOVA and the stunning terraced vineyards of the Douro. (Quinta Nova)



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

More than 150 years and six generations ago, my distinguished forebear, Sir Moses Montefiore, a wine lover, used to drink a bottle of Port every day and he lived to his 101st year, which was way above the life expectancy of the period. In the hours just before he passed away, the story is that he enjoyed three glasses of port!

After his first visit to the Holy Land in 1827, he became a strictly religious Jew, and Port became the tippie of his choice. I imagine he had one pipe (a barrel of 550 liters) of Port made at a time, which was then shipped to England. I have often wondered how the wine was made kosher. Did he choose Port because it was a fortified wine? Maybe a crypto Jew living in Porto made the wine for him? Or there could have been a more creative solution. There is a *Halacha* that says if honey is added to a wine, it would no longer be regarded as wine. Did he instruct the winemaker to add a spoon of honey to the barrel, which would not have been noticeable on the taste? This

question has intrigued me for years. I would be certainly be interested to hear any other theories. Maybe he simply liked Port, which was the choice of the Brits at that time.

In 1703, Britain and Portugal signed the Methuen Treaty, reducing duty on Portuguese wine. Then Britain and France were at odds, and a trading triangle grew, which included dried salted cod from Newfoundland, textiles from Britain and Port wine from Portugal. They swiftly discovered that the Port would be more stable if brandy was added before being shipped, and the famed fortified wine was born. The Douro Valley was demarcated as an official, protected region in 1756. The wine received its name from the seaport city of Porto, where the wines were matured and shipped. In Britain, Port became the most popular wine, before the rise of Claret (Bordeaux red wines).

MY OWN personal great Port experience is more recent. I was privileged to enjoy Warre's Vintage Port 1977 in 2014. The wine was amazing, if not sensational. It was so fresh, so exquisitely balanced, that we drank the bottle during a meal and finished it without really being aware of it. Yes, it was sweet,