

# Vinalu®

'Luxembourg's first Online Wine Magazine'

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*Vinalu Special Reports Brazil / Serra Gaucha  
(Part II)*

*Mercedes-Benz EQB 350 4Matic AMG Line  
Testdrive*

# **VINALU SPECIAL REPORTS BRAZIL/ SERRA GAÚCHA ( Part II )**

*by Liliane Turmes, Helen Latour and Harry Montagnola*

*The Serra Gaúcha wine region*



## MYTHOS BRAZIL

Brazil is a fascinating country of extremes, with a renowned attraction for the joie de vivre of the Brazilians, the Samba, the famous carnival of Rio de Janeiro, the Copacabana, for the exotic paradise, the rainforest, the spectacular waterfalls, the exuberance of fauna and flora, for the great coffee and last but not least for the top sparkling wines. What probably some are not so familiar with, is the high quality of the Brazilian fine wine production.

## THE SERRA GAÚCHA WINE REGION

We had the pleasure to discover, together with Rafael Romagna, the experienced gerente of Wines of Brazil, the astonishing wine region of the Serra Gaúcha, situated 120 km Northwest of Porto Alegre, in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, the 'coldest' part of Brazil, neighboring Argentina and Uruguay. The Serra Gaúcha, with its wine capital Bento Gonçalves, with its valleys and hillsides, the serras, with many micro regions, with a moderate and wet climate and with the most wellknown and greatest concentration of wineries, is home to the famous 'Vale dos Vinhedos'. An average altitude of 600 meters above the sea level ensures the freshness and acidity of the wines; the clay and basaltic soils offer the minerality.

The Rio Grande do Sul region, where immigrants from Italy made the first sparkling in the early 19th century, is standing for 90% of the wine production of the country and is a reference for the cultivation of grapes.

In 1875 the great take-off in the Brazilian wine production occurred with the arrival of Italian immigrants to Rio Grande del Sul, as they brought the knowledge and the culture of wine to Brazil. In the 1970ies multinational wineries brought their new technics to the vineyards and the grape cultivation areas expanded. Despite that there are six wine regions in Brazil, the Serra Gaúcha is the cradle of most of the traditional wineries and also the center of the wine tourism in the country. The most common white varietals in Serra Gaúcha are the Chardonnay, the Italic Riesling (Welschriesling), the Moscato grapes, for the labels inspired by the Italian sparkling wines from the Asti region of Piedmont, with the sweetness and the aromatic characteristics with the Moscato Giallo, Moscato Bianco, Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat Hamburg and the Glera, used in the Prosecco production. The reds planted are mainly Merlot, Pinot Noir, Tannat, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon.

## FAMOUS VALE DOS VINHEDOS & ALTOS DE PINTO BANDEIRA

The famous pioneer subregion of Serra Gaúcha, the Vale dos Vinhedos, recognized for its Chardonnay and Merlot wines and for the sparkling wines produced with the traditional method got the Geographical Indication GI protection in 2002 and the Denomination of Origin DO in 2012. Besides the flagship sparkling wine production, which has become an important part of Brazil's winegrowing identity, another highlight of the Vale dos Vinhedos, is the Merlot, which holds since 2002 a denomination of origin. The wines produced in the Denomination of Origin DO of Vale dos Vinhedos are essentially based on this grape, the only red varietal certified in this region. Another subregion of the Serra Gaúcha is the Altos Pinto Bandeira, with its high quality traditional method sparklings and with the only DO from the New World, exclusive to sparkling wines. To receive the seal, the sparkling has to be produced with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling Italic grapes... the 'typical Brazilian assemblage', as they say...



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# THE PRESTIGIOUS VINICOLA SALTON

## *HISTORY AND VISIT*

Antonio Domenico Salton, the patriarch of the Salton family, left the Italian Veneto in 1878 to settle in Bento Gonçalves in the Rio Grande do Sul estate, opening 'The Casa di Pasto', a grocery store, where the family sold cheese and sausages and served meals, together with the wines from their own vineyards.

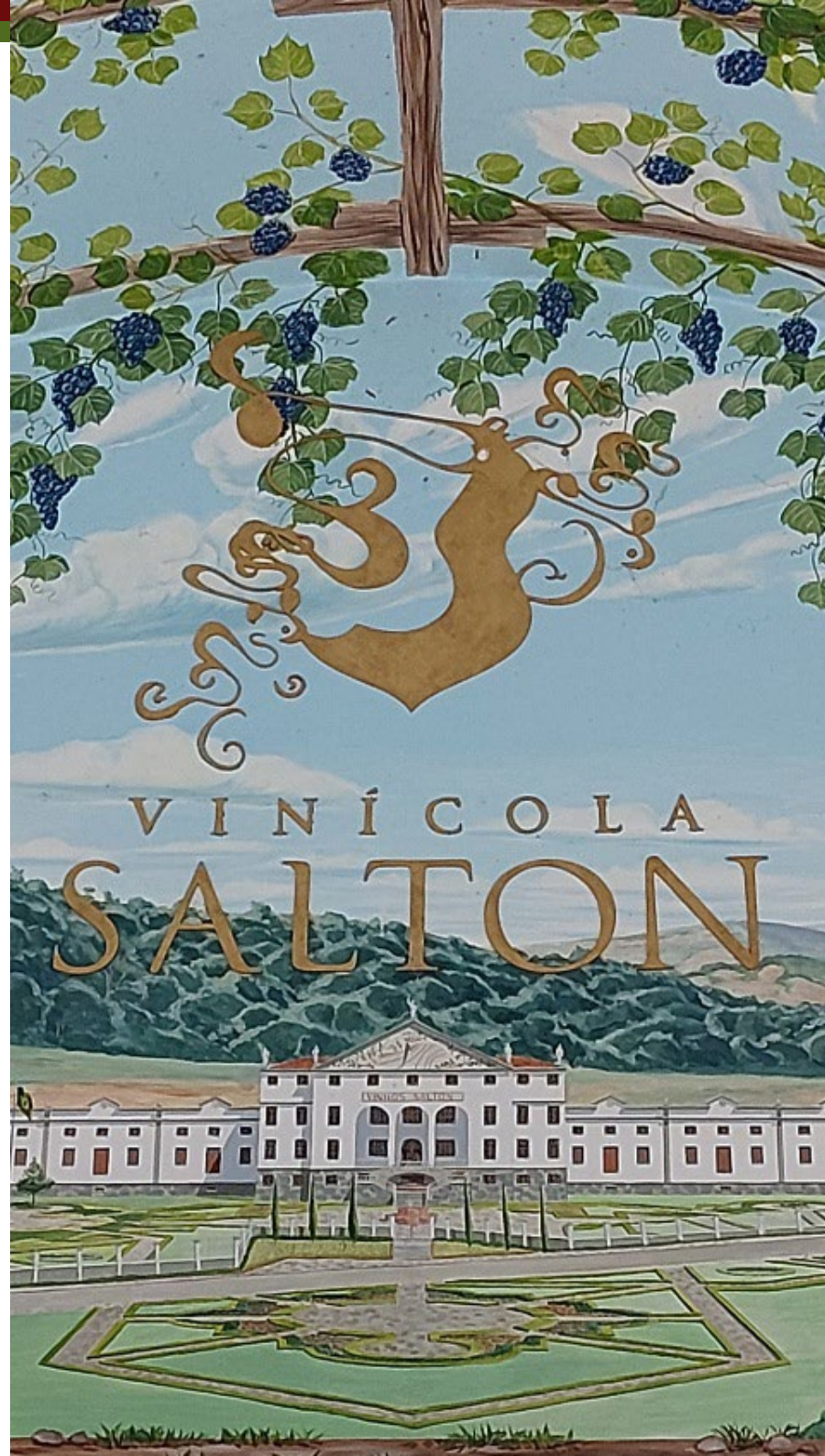
The commercial winery, founded by the 7 Salton brothers, was officially established in 1910, with a business unit in São Paulo, the main economic center in Latin America.

In the 1930ies the family started making sparkling wines; the production of vitis vinifera wines with the Salton classic line began only in 1999, with the idea of producing high quality fine wines with international standards and in 2004 the production was moved to the new plant with the highest technology, located in Bento Gonçalves. Nowadays, Salton is one of the main Brazilian wineries and one of the leaders in the commercialization of the national sparkling wines in Brazil, with an incredible production of 12000 bottles per hour and 46.000.000 bottles per year.

In 2012 the activities expanded, with the Azienda Domenico, to the Campanha region for the first stage of winemaking and transporting the raw material then from Campanha to Bento Gonçalves in Serra Gaúcha, where it is processed to wines and sparkling wines.

During our visit at Vinícola Salton Nicole Salton, a member of the 4th generation of the family, marketing manager and coordinator for art and cellar, receives us in a beautifully painted gallery, showing the history of the family and of the company. And as she explains, the philosophy of the familia Salton is also the biggest challenge of the new generation, in preserving the tradition and values of a century old company in constant transformation.

*Vinicola Salton*





*Espumantes since 1930*



*Nicole Salton in the tank cellar*

## THE TASTING:

### SALTON OURO EXTRA BRUT,

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Welsch Riesling from Serra Gaúcha, Charmat method, 12%

In the glass: straw colour

On the nose: yellow grapefruit, apples

On the palate: citrus fruits, ripe yellow fruits, pleasant creaminess

SALTON 'ÉVIDENCE' ROSÉ, brut rosé, 60% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, from Campanha and Serra Gaúcha regions, traditional method, 12 months on the lees, 12%

In the glass: bright pink colour, persistent bubbles

On the nose: almonds and brioche

On the palate: ripe red fruits with a delicate freshness

DOMENICO SALTON CAMPANHA 2017, 78% Marselan, 22% Tannat from Campanha region, the concept brand, honoring Antonio Domenico, the patriarch of Vinícola Salton, 21 months in French oak, 13,50%

In the glass: ruby colour

In the nose: almond cake, spices, violets

On the palate: red and black ripe fruits, marzipan, complex in the mouth in a long aftertaste

SALTON 'DESEJO' 2018, ( Desire ) 100 % Merlot, launched in 2006, 12 months in oak, hand harvested, 13%

In the glass: purple colour

In the nose: red currant, spices

On the palate: red berries, well balanced, with soft tannins, a nice acidity and well structured

SALTON SEPTIMUM 2020 with 7 grape varieties for the blend, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Tannat, Marselan, Arinarnoa and Alicante Bouschet, an homage to the 7 brothers, who founded the company, 17 months in French oak barrels, 13%

In the glass: cherry colour

On the nose: Cassis, floral, with a complex bouquet

On the palate: raspberries, black fruits, well integrated tannins, anis, full bodied

### SALTON GERACÕES, Sparkling

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Welsch Riesling, 20 months on the lees, traditional method

In the glass: fine persistent perlage

In the nose: bread and yeast, candied fruits

On the palate: freshness of citrus fruits, red currant pleasant acidity.

Address: Vinícola Salton, rua Mario Salton, Bento Gonçalves Brazil.



*Red brick  
barrel cellar*



*Tasting with Nicole Salton and Cesar Baldasso*



*The iconic Septimum 2019*

# COOPERATIVA AURORA, THE LARGEST COOPERATIVE IN BRAZIL

## THE HISTORY

16 families united in 1930 to realize their dream in founding the winery and cooperative Aurora, named after the daughter of one of the founding families and also synonym of the sunrise.

Currently the cooperative consists of 1100 associated members, with each family cultivating between 3 and 4 ha, meaning in total numbers about 2800 ha, with 85 million kg of grapes and 68 million litres of wine...meaning also that the Aurora cooperative is the largest winery in Brazil, with big exchanges of volumes, working together with many wineries and with reaching the whole area in the country.

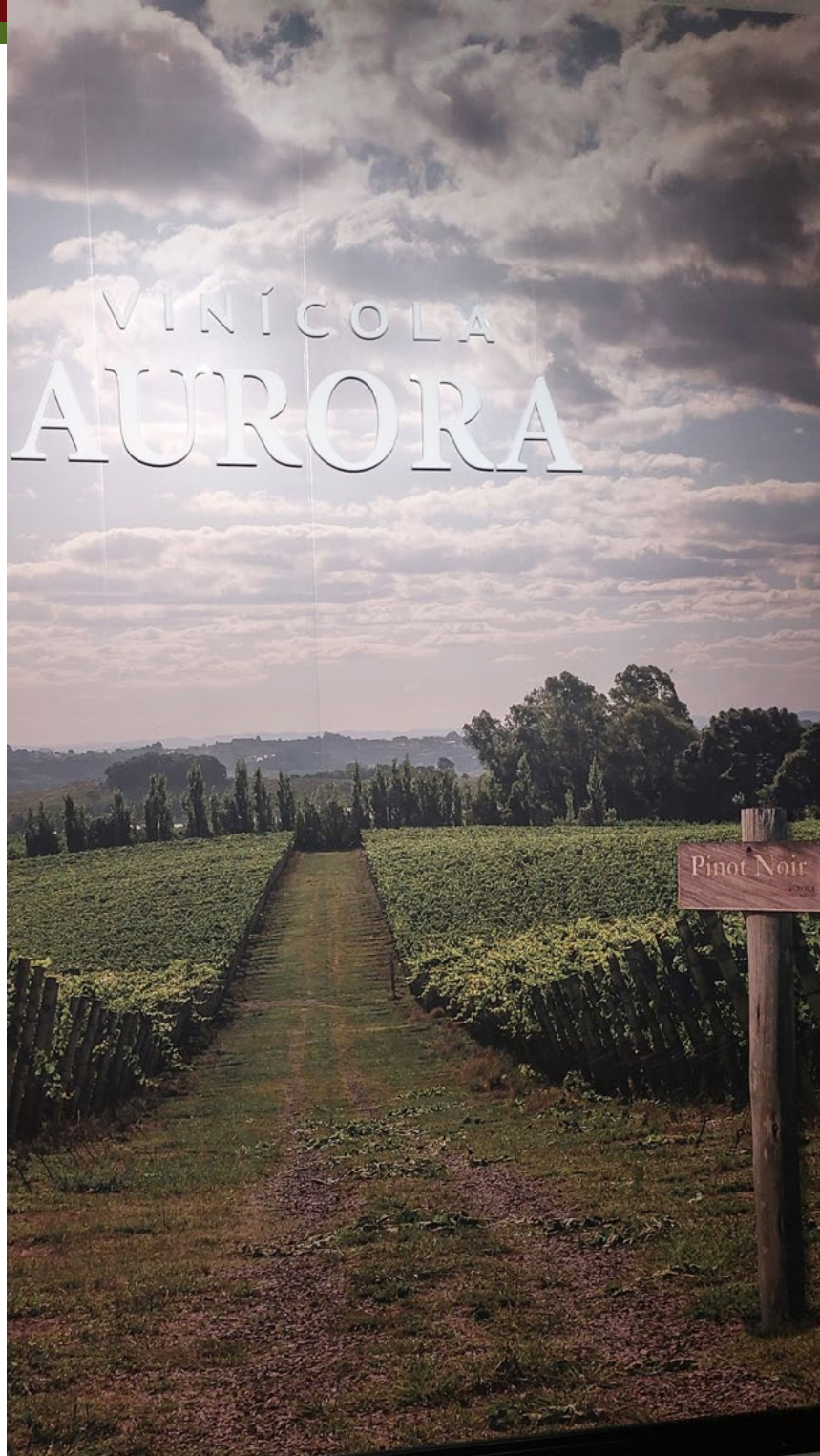
Most of the families are in long term relations with the cooperative, which is also promoting the social welfare for their community.

In 1999 Aurora launches the first sparkling wine, a Moscatel label after that came labels such as Moscatel Rosé, Aurora Brut and Aurora Moscatel White Sparkling, one of the most acclaimed labels in Brazil. Besides sparkling wines, the pure grape juice is one of the top sellers of the company. In 2019 Aurora opened the new unit in Bento Gonçalves, situated in the Vale dos Vinhedos, with big investments in top technics, also boosting the development of their export markets, with the commitment to high quality fine wines.

*Vinicola Aurora Pinto Bandeira*







*Aurora Pinot Noir vineyards*



*Giorgia & Julia our guides*

## THE TASTING

### AURORA PINTO BANDEIRA EXTRA BRUT,

60% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, 10% Riesling Itálico, from Pinto Bandeira, traditional method, 12months on the lees , 13%

In the glass: pale yellow

On the nose: abricots, almonds

On the palate: citrus fruits, ripe peaches, balanced acidity

AURORA RIESLING ITÁLICO 2022, 100% Riesling Itálico, from Pinto Bandeira, 3 months aging in American oak barrels, 13%

In the glass:greenish yellow

On the nose:citrus fruits and pears

On the palate: well balanced, good structure and a nice acidity

AURORA CHARDONNAY 2022, 100% Chardonnay, from Pinto Bandeira, 3 months in American oak barrels, 13%

In the glass: light yellow

On the nose: citrus fruits, floral

On the palate: buttery, ripe yellow fruits, yeast, soft tannins and pleasant creaminess

AURORA PINOT NOIR 2022, 100% Pinot Noir from Pinto Bandeira, launched in 2012 , 6 months in American oak barrels, 13%

In the glass: purple colour

On the nose: spices, dried fruits

On the palate: soft tannins, red and black fruits, pepper, elegant

AURORA BRUT ROSÉ, 95% Glera, 5% Merlot ( for the colour) , from Serra Gaúcha, 12gr sugar, method Charmat, 11,50%

In the glass: light rose colour, fine perlage

On the nose: melon, brioche

On the palate: equilibrated, red fruits, red currant, with a good freshness

AURORA ESPUMANTE MOSCATEL ROSÉ, 100%

Moscato, from Serra Gaúcha, 7,5%, bestseller, very popular also in Bolivia and Ecuador

In the glass: delicate pink colour

On the nose: floral, red berries

On the palate: strawberries, red fruits and balanced freshness.

Address: Vinícola Aurora, R. Olavo Bilac, 500-Cidade Alta, Bento Gonçalves-RS 95700362 Brazil



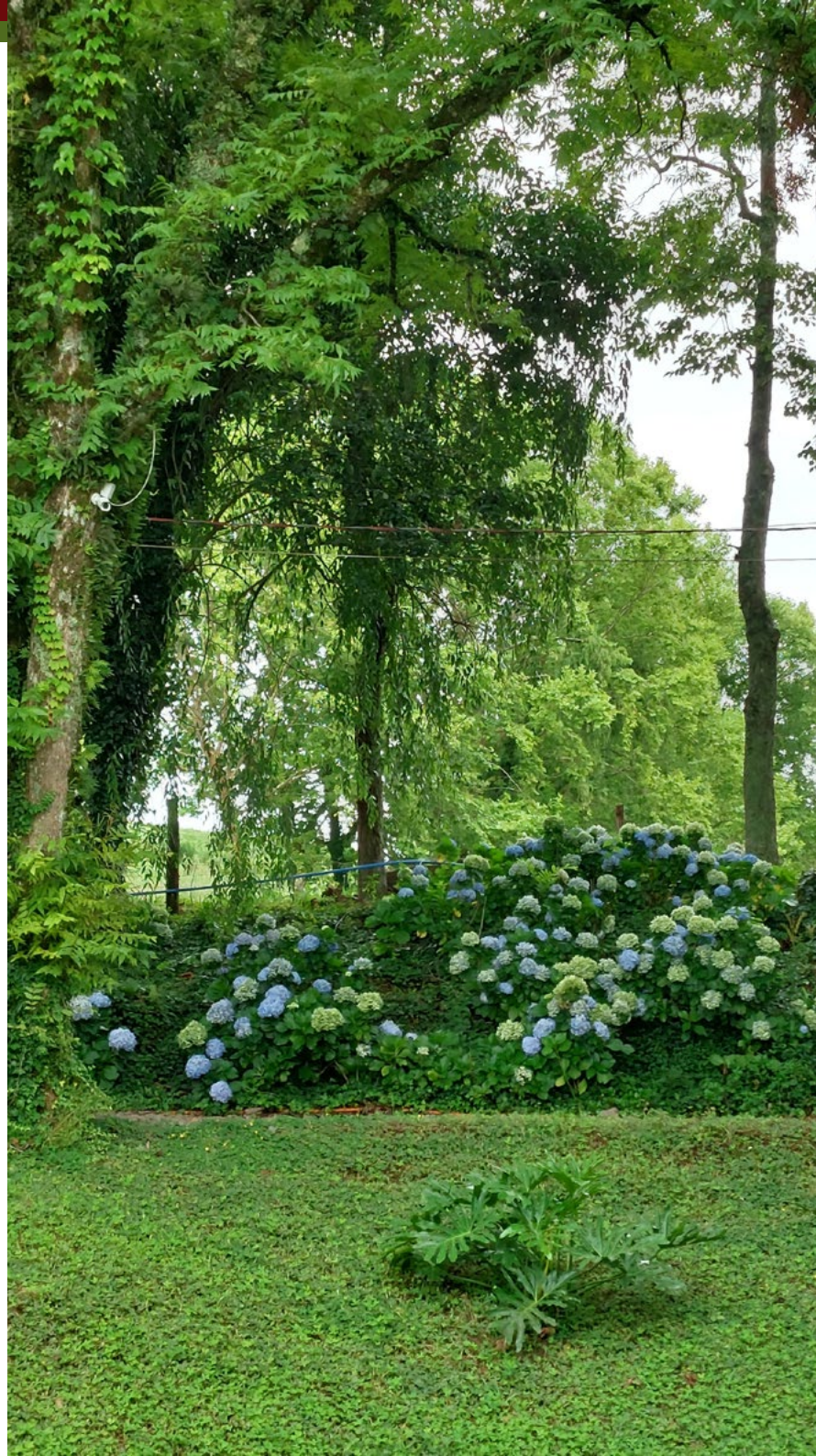
*Aurora Brut Rose*

## A MEMORABLE SUMMERTIME - VISIT AT VINÍCOLA DON GIOVANNI

Vinícola Don Giovanni, a biodynamic winery, is located in a historic building in the Pinto Bandeira /Serra Gaúcha region. The producer, Daniel Panizzi, responsible at the winery, is also the vice-president of Consevitis-RS, the Institute of Management, Planning and Development of Viticulture of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, with the objective of maintaining and promoting the wine sector in Rio Grande do Sul.

The Don Giovanni brand, founded in 1982, then only producing still wines, is nowadays, with the fourth generation of winegrowers, focused on the production of fine sparkling wines, elaborated mainly with the traditional method. The 14ha in Serra Gaúcha/Pinto Bandeira region, with the best terroir, are mostly planted with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes, giving an annual production of 100.000 bottles.

*Parc at Don Giovanni  
winery with...*





*... a pipa*



*Don Giovanni wines & pieces of art*

## TASTING

We tasted the 2 icon wines, representing the heart of the winery:

**DON GIOVANNI BRUT**, 75% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir from Pinto Bandeira/Serra Gaúcha, 24 months on the lees, traditional method, first edition in 1997

In the glass: greenish light yellow, brilliant, intense bubbles

On the nose: bouquet of herbs, flowers, citrus fruits, toast

On the palate: pleasant freshness, ripe yellow fruits, yellow grapefruit, elegant, great balance, long in the aftertaste

**DON GIOVANNI NATURE**, 75% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir from Pinto Bandeira/Serra Gaúcha, 24 months on the lees, traditional method, 12,6%

In the glass: golden colour, persistent perlage

On the nose: yeast, brioche, floral

On the palate: pleasant creaminess, nice acidity, complex, good structure.

The perfect gastronomic wine.

Furthermore, the winery produces the 'Don Giovanni Stravaganza' line, light and easy to consume and the well known red still wine 'Don Giovanni Cuvée Quarto Acto', with a blend of 4 varieties and elaborated in barrique for 18 months.

After the interview and the tasting with Daniel Panizzi in the beautiful wine cellar, we enjoy a relaxed lunch al fresco, at the winery's own restaurant 'Nature Vinho e Gastronomia'. The chef Rafael Jacobi, suggests a tasteful beef tartar, cut 'au couteau', with mini toasts, a strong mustard (reminding us the best French mustard 'Mailly') and with a full bodied, local olive oil, served obviously with a Don Giovanni sparkling.

For those, who like to have a closer look at the vineyards and surroundings, the property offers as well stays in their fully renovated mansion, transformed in a guest house, right next to the winery.

Address: VINÍCOLA DON GIOVANNI, Amadeu Line, KM12-Interior  
Pinto Bandeira, Rio Grande do Sul BRAZIL



*Daniel Panizzi, owner  
and vice-president of  
Consevitis-RS*



*The beef tartar is ready*



*Don Giovanni nature*

## BEST DISCOVERY OF THE YEAR IN BRAZIL

Eduardo Tocchetto, a descendant of Italian immigrants, founded the Vita Eterna winery in 2017. The chosen name, meaning eternal life, is standing in honor to his grandfather Narciso José Tocchetto.

The organic and biodynamic project in Pinto Bandeira/ Serra Gaúcha, with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Riesling planted, consists of 5ha, with a production of 20.000 bottles. In the sparkling wine production only the traditional method is used; the elaboration is as natural as possible, also to show the authenticity of the basaltic terroir.

In 2024 Vita Eterna is elected the best winery of the year by the Descorchados Wine Guide and is known as one of the best discoveries in the Brazilian wine scene.

*The Vita Eterna vineyards in a beautiful nature*





*Eduardo Tocchetto, vintner & owner*



*Vita Eterna Nature 2020*



*Vita Eterna Extra Brut 2020*



## THE TASTING

VITA ETERNA NATURE 2020, from Pinto Bandeira/ Serra Gaúcha, 70% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, 24 months on the lees, traditional method, 10% of the Chardonnay is aged in oak, 13,40%. Elected best Pinto Bandeira sparkling in 2023 .

In the glass: amber yellow

On the nose: mineral, exotic fruits

On the palate: full bodied, good structure, pleasant freshness, an elegant sparkling

VITA ETERNA EXTRA BRUT 2020 , from Pinto Bandeira / Serra Gaúcha, 80% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir, 24 months on the lees, fermentation with native yeast, 12,50%

In the glass: fine perlage, golden colour

On the nose: citrus fruits, yeast

On the palate: nice acidity of lemon, herbs, mineral

VITA ETERNA Vinho LARANJA, orange wine, from Pinto Bandeira/Serra Gaúcha, 100% Chardonnay, with 25 days of maceration, unfiltered

In the glass: amber colour

On the nose: gunpowder, spices

On the palate: pepper, citrus fruits

VITA ETERNA MOSCATEL2023, 100% white muscat grapes,

In the glass: yellow colour

On the nose: roses, floral bouquet, candied fruits

On the palate: sweet ripe fruits, harmonious, excellent, with a light alcohol of 7,60%. A great summer wine for parties.

Cheers!

Address: Vinícola Vita Eterna, Linha Marcolino Moura S/N, Zona Rural, Pinto Bandeira RS 95717 Brazil



*Vita Eterna Laranja*



*Vita Eterna Moscatel 2023*

Mercedes-Benz EQB 350 4Matic AMG Line:

# VINALU'S TOP CAR CHOICE

by *Sully Prud'homme*  
pictures Mercedes-Benz

When people talk about electric cars nowadays, the argument that almost always comes up is range. However, this is not always the ultimate consideration, especially in a small and compact country like Luxembourg.

LIFESTYLE - THE TESTDRIVE



As evidence, the Mercedes-Benz EQB 350 4Matic can be cited, which has a range of only around 350 kilometers, but knows how to score points in style, finesse, and smartness. Let's be honest: who in this country drives 350 km to work every day? Fully charging in the home garage or at the employer's premises, for example at a wallbox with alternating current, can be done in 7 hours overnight or during the workday. If you need it faster, you can go to a charging station with direct current and have around 80% of the charge in the 66.5-kWh battery within 30 minutes. The sockets for AC and DC charging are protected by sturdy covers, offering a much more comfortable handling than the fiddly rubber caps on the EQS. While driving, one should know how to control their temperament, as the powerful drive with 292 hp and 520 Nm of torque, with one electric motor each on the front and rear axles, delivers pure, all-wheel-drive driving fun but also quickly drains the reserves after 200

km. The sprint from 0 to 100 km/h is accomplished in 6.2 seconds, and the top speed is limited to 160 km/h.

The interface between vehicle and driver is the Mercedes operating system MBUX, which offers the driver a variety of input options via touch function or voice control. However, instead of the touchpad on the steering wheel, one would appreciate a simple rotary knob for adjusting the multimedia system's volume. The system's connectivity covers all possible requirements, and the navigation system's route planning even takes topography and weather into account for range calculation. However, you will search in vain for a CD drive and an AUX connection. Like the other derivatives of the A-Class, the EQB also offers an extensive range of assistance systems.

As a mid-size SUV, the vehicle comes standard with 5 seats, and can optionally be upgraded to a seven-seater

with two fold-down seats in the rear. The interior is solidly built with good material quality. Getting in and out is convenient, although the raised door sills - typical for Mercedes - take some getting used to. The grab handles on the headliner at all outer seats are a positive feature. The cargo area with electrically operated tailgate holds 350 liters, and after folding down the rear seats, the cargo space expands to 630 liters, offering room for 11 crates of beverages. The EQB 350 comes standard with a conventional suspension; optionally, a suspension with active dampers and a sport mode is available.

The test vehicle we drove, the Mercedes-Benz EQB 350 4Matic AMG Line, costs from 66,573.00 Euros including VAT. Prices in Luxembourg, as of July 2024. We thank MB Belgium and Merbag Luxembourg for providing the test vehicle.



# Impressum

Based on an idea by Romain Batya



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