

Interview with Dorina Lindemann



It's in the region of Central Alentejo, in Portugal, that we can find Quinta da Plansel. Founded by Dorina Lindemann, Hans Jörg Böhm's daughter, natural from the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, this wine making society has been in the spotlight, nationally and internationally.

In the ambit of the current Erasmus+ project, in which the Secondary School of Montemor-o-Novo takes part and has as theme "Migrations" and the aspects that it involves, including, in this case, agriculture and business, we decided to contact the owner and enologist of this winery.

Name

Dorina Lindemann

Age

52 years old – December 1, 1965

Country of birth

Germany

Dorina spent all her academic life in Germany, including college education. She has a degree in enology and viticulture engineering, and came to Portugal in the February of 1993.

Q – Your father arrived in Portugal in an accidental way, what was it that made him stay and invest on this land that would be Quinta da Plansel?

A – My father decided to make a trip around the world but already without water, stayed in the Portuguese coast for a few days. Between lots of obstacles, he ended up remaining in Portugal for about 2 to 3 months and then returned to Germany. However, he fell in love with this country and decided to come back to Portugal after an opportunity to buy a property.

Here he started studying the variety of wines in Portugal and found out that it has more than 340 native castes.

Between 1993 and 1997, in the University of Évora, I was in charge of the micro vinifications so that at the end of a decade we could verify if certain varieties always present the same quality.

In 1997, we started producing the first wine of the Plansel brand and among other products, we launched the very first sparkling wine of Alentejo, using always Portuguese native castes.

Q – In the same way, that passion is something that your daughters got from you and that made them invest in this business too?

A – My eldest daughter, Julia, studied in Lisbon and got a degree in Marketing and has been investing in the events organization field and social media. Besides this, she also has a project in hands in collaboration with WSET, from London, a global organization that provides courses and exams about wine and spirits and teaches how to taste and drink wine among other things about this “world”.

My youngest daughter, Luísa, is currently studying enology in an university in Geisenheim, Germany, where my father and I studied.

Q – What reason/reasons made your daughter choose to study in Germany?

A – She chose it because she didn't want to forget the German language. I think that the kids have to go out and see the world. Even though my daughter had learned German, she only knew how to speak it, she never learned how to write in German.

Nowadays, I think it's fundamental that you (new generation) learn and know how to speak more than one language. Even in exportation, I see that we can only sell outside the country if we're able to communicate with each other.

Q – For you, what does it mean to be a migrant, having all these resources nowadays?

A – It has everything to do with your character. You have to like travelling; you have to be someone who's not afraid to speak and to make some grammar mistakes; you have to like people. I found it relatively easy to adapt myself [...] I wouldn't have any problems living in Asia or Brazil, I consider us Europeans very easy to adapt ourselves, we're very open.

Q – Do you consider that being from another country influenced/contributed in any way to your success?

A – No, I honestly think it did not. My team is Portuguese and even when it wasn't great, what could I do, alone and being German?

The way people work here is different than in Germany, and so are the mentalities too, but I believe that the combination of the two is amazing!

Q – Do you believe that it was important for your daughters to have contact with these three different countries such as Portugal, Germany and England?

A – Yes, I think that's important! It's good to see what's happening in the world. And also the countries in Asia, it's very important to know what's happening there, they are going to be really big investors in Europe.

Q – Can the same caste of grapes have changes in the flavour and texture of the wine depending on the region where it's planted?

A – There are castes with international value, which means that wherever they're planted, they always present the same characteristics, being that in Portugal or Germany, for example.

Q – This industry is linked to foreign trade. In what way do migrations foment foreign trade and contribute to your business?

A – Nowadays it's very hard to find someone who wants to work in the countryside. Right now I'm looking for people from Thailand and the Philippines because in Europe no one wants to work in this part of the country, they're already people with higher education and they don't want this type of work nor the low salary.

Q – Do you have any funny story of anything that happened to you in your career?

A – What happens many times has to do with the words and what we say, with that I've had lots of laughs [...] I never forgot this story: when I went to China, I thought that I had to learn Chinese, it's so hard but I wanted to be able to talk, to communicate with people. At the airport I bought some CD's with the different vocals used in Chinese. I took them to the airplane and then, seated there, I was very focused and started making sounds trying to imitate those vocals, and when I looked back... the whole airplane was laughing at me! I was so embarrassed! Those CD's went straight to the garbage. (laughing)

Before going to another country, we must study and know more about its' culture.

Q – What are the positive and negative aspects of your job?

A – It only has positive aspects [...] you always have to like what you do. This is a family company and we do what we like, this is our passion. I think that we can always sell if we believe in the product.

Q – Enoturism is growing in Portugal. Do you consider that enoturism has been stimulating migrations or that migrations have been stimulating enoturism?

A – Both. You know... people search for safe places and they have been discovering Lisbon, the Portuguese coast and its' clean beaches, and in the last five years it has been more and better explored. Wherever I go, I always find Portuguese people! I always feel at home!

Q – To finish this interview, what advice would you like to leave to someone who is thinking about moving somewhere else,

establish himself/herself in another country, and create a business that he/she can expand beyond borders?

A – When you don't feel fulfilled where you are, it's always good to move to another place and you have more possibilities of exploring a company in another country, depending on what you want to do. When you're good, professional and you like what you do, you can find a place here just as well as you can find it "out there". Just don't take the easiest path and don't be lazy, and always think for yourself on what you want to do!

Author: Joana Neves