OLÉ & OBRIGADO

WINE & SPIRITS WITH HEART & SOUL

Xisto Cru Branco

For nearly two decades, Luis Seabra has been at the center of a cultural shift in Portuguese winemaking, leading a movement of young, independent winemakers making history by reclaiming historical vineyards, grape varieties, and techniques. Seabra is dedicated to proving that fresh, elegant, terroir-driven still wines can be made in the Douro Valley. His fundamental understanding of soil coupled with his philosophy of minimal intervention in the vineyard and winery have launched him into the international eye as a leader of the New Portugal; according to Eric Asimov, he "is now making some of Portugal's most compelling wines, both white and red."

Luis Seabra works with old vineyards because he believes that old vines are more resilient and well-equipped to handle the region's intense weather; this makes them the best candidates to faithfully communicate special terroirs. When he started his solo project in 2013, he created the "Cru" series of wines, which revolve not around grape varieties, but vineyard sites. In Seabra's own words: "we did this to show how we can put the place in the bottle."

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: Xisto Cru Branco is a single vineyard wine—a rare find in the Douro—that Seabra says is a "magical place that no one can replicate." It is intended as a clear expression of terroir and place. Sustainably farmed vines, and vinified using only spontaneous fermentation and indigenous yeasts. This way he removes all potential variability other than the soil type as an expression of terroir.

RATING HISTORY: 2021 96W&S, 91WS; 2020 92WA; 2018 93WA; 2017 93D, 91+WA; 2016 93WS, 92WA, 93VFTC ; 2014 94 WA

GRAPE: 70% Rabigato, remaining balance field blend of Códega (10%) , Gouveio (10%) and Viosinho Dozelino Branco (10%) . Sustainably farmed vineyards planted from 1920-1933. Tended in mica schist soil from 650-700 m (2,133-2,297 ft) elevation. This is a vegan wine.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: This mineral wine begs for bivalves of all sorts, particularly raw. Oysters, clams, mussels. Also makes a terrific pair with bright cheese like chevre.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: The grapes are spontaneously fermented in small used barrels using indigenous yeast. The wine spends a total of 12 months in used French oak barrels that are dedicated solely to making Xisto Cru Branco and which never spend more than a day or two empty. No batonnage. This wine goes through full malolactic and is bottled with no added stabilizers.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: The vineyard, called "Soalheira," or "sandy," is in the southern part of Douro Superior, in eastern Douro near the Spanish border. The soil here is mica schist, which is Seabra's favorite for making white wines. The extreme elevation (2,000+ feet) plus a sunny southern exposure makes for long, consistent ripening, and this site is the latest harvest but still, the wines only fall between 12-13% abv.

TASTING NOTES Brilliant straw. On the nose, high toned and mineral driven aromas of sour peach, flowers, fresh fennel bulb and savory. On the palate, more peach, citrus zest and fennel, with white pepper and floral tones rounding out the finish.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 12.5%

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