OLÉ & OBRIGADO

WINE & SPIRITS WITH HEART & SOUL

Rosé Vulcânico

Just one short decade after launching Fitapreta Vinhos in sunny Alentejo, António and two other partners founded the Azores Wine Company on the island of Pico (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) after becoming inspired by their shared work recovering the indigenous Terrantez do Pico varietal—not to mention António's many childhood trips to his father's Azorean homeland. The initial bottling of Terrantez do Pico made a splash in the wine world, receiving a top score from Wine Spectator, and a mention in their article "Breaking the Mold" in 2016. António and his partners own 100 hectares of extremely low-yield, walled vineyards (primarily on Pico) and purchase fruit from an additional 30 hectares across the archipelago, from regions such as DOP Graciosa, São Miguel, and others. These sites range from sea level to 500 meters in altitude, with the oldest vines averaging up to 80 years. It is from this stony volcanic terroir that according to Antonio, "these singular, saline wines are born, or should we say, erupt." On cold and wet Pico Island, vines struggle to escape the volcano's rain shadow grasping for sunlight along the island's edge, where 500-year-old volcanic stone walls (known as currais) are all that stand between the plants and dangerously salty Atlantic winds. Making wine on Pico, according to António, is a constant "battle between the sea and the mountain" and he is one of very few who have succeeded in achieving ripeness in red grapes here.

WHAT MAKES THIS WINE UNIQUE?: This is a micro-production wine from the tiny island of Pico in the Azores. It is grown in volcanic basalt at sea level, less than 50m from the Atlantic. This terroir and the varietal imbue this wine with incredible minerality and purity, as well as unmistakable salinity. Perhaps the most maritime rosé in existence.

RATING HISTORY: 2019 90WA; 2017 93W&S

GRAPE: 25% Saborinho, 25% Agronomica, 25% Aragones, 25% Touriga Nacional. Sustainably grown tiny plots (2 to 6 bush trained vines per square) planted in 1991 in volcanic soil at sea level.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: This is a wine that performs beautifully with all sorts of seafood, owing to its salinity and minerality. Shellfish and freshly prepared fish dishes are brilliant pairs, particularly those with some heat.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Hand harvested to 40kg baskets, heavy triage, then racked to small stainless steel tanks until December. No maceration, free run and direct press. Spontaneous fermentation with wild yeast.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Pico, in the Azores, is about 1000 miles off the coast of Portugal. It is dominated by the volcano Ponta do Pico, Portugal's highest mountain. The soil is entirely black basalt, which puts enormous stress on the vines, lowering yields. Vines are the only crop to speak of on Pico, as other plant life has a difficult time surviving. The average elevation of the vineyards is sea level (0m). Temperature from April to October is 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit (15-21 C), with annual rainfall of 1200mm (47").

TASTING NOTES Pale salmon pink, with edges running to orange. Aromas of wild strawberry, sea spray, blood orange and sour cherry comingle with iodine, black pepper and oyster shell. On the palate, clean, fresh flavors of strawberry and watermelon are carried by high toned minerality and persistent salinity. Thirst quenching and stunningly easy to drink.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 2016: 12.5% / 2017:12%

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