OLÉ & OBRIGADO
WINE & SPIRITS WITH HEART & SOUL

Vinha dos Utras Branco







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?: For more than 500 years, vines on this island have been planted in the cracks of the lava bed, a few meters from the ocean. But before the vineyards there were the "Utras", a name that derives from Joss Hurtere, a Flemish seafarer that arrived in 1465 and became Captain of Pico and Fayal. His role was crucial in the development of the islands and vineyards. This vineyard was given to Azores Wine Company by the descendants of this family with the responsibility of its continuation. This small plot is planted the closest to the ocean possible, where you can get the maximum of sunlight exposure and concentration.

RATING HISTORY: 2023 96+WA; 2022 96WA; 2020 96+WA; 2019 92+WA

GRAPE: 95% Arinto dos Açores with the remainder comprised of a field blend of indigenous white grapes (Verdelho, Alicante Branco and Boal)

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: A wine born in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean performs beautifully with all sorts of seafood, owing to its salinity and minerality. It is also a great match to suckling pig and pork belly.

VINIFICATION AND AGING: Grapes are hand-picked and head to the sorting table, then direct press, decanted for 12 hours in cold. The wine undergoes an initial aging period of 18 months on lees. Sixty percent of the first-press juice is vinified in horizontal stainless steel tanks. The remaining forty percent, composed of second-press juice, is fermented in used French oak barrels that are a minimum of three years old. Sulfites are added only at the end of fermentation.

LOCATION, SOIL, CLIMATE: Pico, in the Azores Islands, is about 1,000 miles off the coast of Portugal—nearly halfway to New York City! It is dominated by the volcano of the same name, which is Portugal's highest peak. The vines are planted in the black basalt rock cracks at the foothills of the volcanic mountain 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. Temperature averages 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit, with rainfall averaging 47 inches a year.

TASTING NOTES Yellow citrus-straw color, iodine flavor, salt, linden. In the mouth there is a concentrated dense attack, with bright acidity that cuts in the middle and persists. The finish shows salt and iodine, like a "slap" of the sea.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 12%

UPC CODE: 5600869590329